ЭДВАРД БУЛЬВЕР-ЛИТТОН

THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII

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Содержание

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BOOK THE FIRST

Chapter I.
THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF POMPEII

'HO, Diomed, well met! Do you sup with Glaucus to-night?' said a young man of small stature, who wore his tunic in those loose and effeminate folds which proved him to be a gentleman and a coxcomb.

'Alas, no! dear Clodius; he has not invited me,' replied Diomed, a man of portly frame and of middle age. 'By Pollux, a scurvy trick! for they say his suppers are the best in Pompeii'.

'Pretty well—though there is never enough of wine for me. It is not the old Greek blood that flows in his veins, for he pretends that wine makes him dull the next morning.'

'There may be another reason for that thrift,' said Diomed, raising his brows. 'With all his conceit and extravagance he is not so rich, I fancy, as he affects to be, and perhaps loves to save his amphorae better than his wit.'

'An additional reason for supping with him while the sesterces last. Next year, Diomed, we must find another Glaucus.'

'He is fond of the dice, too, I hear.'

'He is fond of every pleasure; and while he likes the pleasure of giving suppers, we are all fond of him.'

'Ha, ha, Clodius, that is well said! Have you ever seen my wine-cellars, by-the-by?'

'I think not, my good Diomed.'

'Well, you must sup with me some evening; I have tolerable muraenae in my reservoir, and I ask Pansa the aedile to meet you.'

'O, no state with me!—Persicos odi apparatus, I am easily contented. Well, the day wanes; I am for the baths—and you…'

'To the quaestor—business of state—afterwards to the temple of Isis. Vale!'

'An ostentatious, bustling, ill-bred fellow,' muttered Clodius to himself, as he sauntered slowly away. 'He thinks with his feasts and his wine-cellars to make us forget that he is the son of a freedman —and so we will, when we do him the honour of winning his money; these rich plebeians are a harvest for us spendthrift nobles.'

Thus soliloquising, Clodius arrived in the Via Domitiana, which was crowded with passengers and chariots, and exhibited all that gay and animated exuberance of life and motion which we find at this day in the streets of Naples.

The bells of the cars as they rapidly glided by each other jingled merrily on the ear, and Clodius with smiles or nods claimed familiar acquaintance with whatever equipage was most elegant or fantastic: in fact, no idler was better known in Pompeii.

'What, Clodius! and how have you slept on your good fortune?' cried, in a pleasant and musical voice, a young man, in a chariot of the most fastidious and graceful fashion. Upon its surface of bronze were elaborately wrought, in the still exquisite workmanship of Greece, reliefs of the Olympian games; the two horses that drew the car were of the rarest breed of Parthia; their slender limbs seemed to disdain the ground and court the air, and yet at the slightest touch of the charioteer, who stood

behind the young owner of the equipage, they paused motionless, as if suddenly transformed into stone—lifeless, but lifelike, as one of the breathing wonders of Praxiteles. The owner himself was of that slender and beautiful symmetry from which the sculptors of Athens drew their models; his Grecian origin betrayed itself in his light but clustering locks, and the perfect harmony of his features. He wore no toga, which in the time of the emperors had indeed ceased to be the general distinction of the Romans, and was especially ridiculed by the pretenders to fashion; but his tunic glowed in the richest hues of the Tyrian dye, and the fibulae, or buckles, by which it was fastened, sparkled with emeralds: around his neck was a chain of gold, which in the middle of his breast twisted itself into the form of a serpent's head, from the mouth of which hung pendent a large signet ring of elaborate and most exquisite workmanship; the sleeves of the tunic were loose, and fringed at the hand with gold: and across the waist a girdle wrought in arabesque designs, and of the same material as the fringe, served in lieu of pockets for the receptacle of the handkerchief and the purse, the stilus and the tablets.

'My dear Glaucus!' said Clodius, 'I rejoice to see that your losses have so little affected your mien. Why, you seem as if you had been inspired by Apollo, and your face shines with happiness like a glory; any one might take you for the winner, and me for the loser.'

'And what is there in the loss or gain of those dull pieces of metal that should change our spirit, my Clodius? By Venus, while yet young, we can cover our full locks with chaplets—while yet the cithara sounds on unsated ears—while yet the smile of Lydia or of Chloe flashes over our veins in which the blood runs so swiftly, so long shall we find delight in the sunny air, and make bald time itself but the treasurer of our joys. You sup with me to-night, you know.'

'Who ever forgets the invitation of Glaucus!'

'But which way go you now?'

'Why, I thought of visiting the baths: but it wants yet an hour to the usual time.'

'Well, I will dismiss my chariot, and go with you. So, so, my Phylias,' stroking the horse nearest to him, which by a low neigh and with backward ears playfully acknowledged the courtesy: 'a holiday for you to-day. Is he not handsome, Clodius?'

'Worthy of Phoebus,' returned the noble parasite—'or of Glaucus.'

Chapter II

THE BLIND FLOWER-GIRL, AND THE BEAUTY OF FASHION. THE ATHENIAN'S CONFESSION. THE READER'S INTRODUCTION TO ARBACES OF EGYPT.

TALKING lightly on a thousand matters, the two young men sauntered through the streets; they were now in that quarter which was filled with the gayest shops, their open interiors all and each radiant with the gaudy yet harmonious colors of frescoes, inconceivably varied in fancy and design. The sparkling fountains, that at every vista threw upwards their grateful spray in the summer air; the crowd of passengers, or rather loiterers, mostly clad in robes of the Tyrian dye; the gay groups collected round each more attractive shop; the slaves passing to and fro with buckets of bronze, cast in the most graceful shapes, and borne upon their heads; the country girls stationed at frequent intervals with baskets of blushing fruit, and flowers more alluring to the ancient Italians than to their descendants (with whom, indeed, "latet anguis in herba," a disease seems lurking in every violet and rose); the numerous haunts which fulfilled with that idle people the office of cafes and clubs at this day; the shops, where on shelves of marble were ranged the vases of wine and oil, and before whose thresholds, seats, protected from the sun by a purple awning, invited the weary to rest and the indolent to lounge—made a scene of such glowing and vivacious excitement, as might well give the Athenian spirit of Glaucus an excuse for its susceptibility to joy.

'Talk to me no more of Rome,' said he to Clodius. 'Pleasure is too stately and ponderous in those mighty walls: even in the precincts of the court—even in the Golden House of Nero, and the incipient glories of the palace of Titus, there is a certain dulness of magnificence—the eye aches—the spirit is wearied; besides, my Clodius, we are discontented when we compare the enormous luxury and wealth of others with the mediocrity of our own state. But here we surrender ourselves easily to pleasure, and we have the brilliancy of luxury without the lassitude of its pomp.'

'It was from that feeling that you chose your summer retreat at Pompeii?'

'It was. I prefer it to Baiae: I grant the charms of the latter, but I love not the pedants who resort there, and who seem to weigh out their pleasures by the drachm.'

'Yet you are fond of the learned, too; and as for poetry, why, your house is literally eloquent with AEschylus and Homer, the epic and the drama.'

'Yes, but those Romans who mimic my Athenian ancestors do everything so heavily. Even in the chase they make their slaves carry Plato with them; and whenever the boar is lost, out they take their books and their papyrus, in order not to lose their time too. When the dancing-girls swim before them in all the blandishment of Persian manners, some drone of a freedman, with a face of stone, reads them a section of Cicero "De Officiis". Unskilful pharmacists! pleasure and study are not elements to be thus mixed together, they must be enjoyed separately: the Romans lose both by this pragmatical affectation of refinement, and prove that they have no souls for either. Oh, my Clodius, how little your countrymen know of the true versatility of a Pericles, of the true witcheries of an Aspasia! It was but the other day that I paid a visit to Pliny: he was sitting in his summer-house writing, while an unfortunate slave played on the tibia. His nephew (oh! whip me such philosophical coxcombs!) was reading Thucydides' description of the plague, and nodding his conceited little head in time to the music, while his lips were repeating all the loathsome details of that terrible delineation. The puppy saw nothing incongruous in learning at the same time a ditty of love and a description of the plague.'

'Why, they are much the same thing,' said Clodius.

'So I told him, in excuse for his coxcombry—but my youth stared me rebukingly in the face, without taking the jest, and answered, that it was only the insensate ear that the music pleased, whereas the book (the description of the plague, mind you!) elevated the heart. "Ah!" quoth the fat uncle, wheezing, "my boy is quite an Athenian, always mixing the utile with the dulce." O Minerva, how I laughed in my sleeve! While I was there, they came to tell the boy-sophist that his favorite freedman

was just dead of a fever. "Inexorable death!" cried he; "get me my Horace. How beautifully the sweet poet consoles us for these misfortunes!" Oh, can these men love, my Clodius? Scarcely even with the senses. How rarely a Roman has a heart! He is but the mechanism of genius—he wants its bones and flesh.'

Though Clodius was secretly a little sore at these remarks on his countrymen, he affected to sympathize with his friend, partly because he was by nature a parasite, and partly because it was the fashion among the dissolute young Romans to affect a little contempt for the very birth which, in reality, made them so arrogant; it was the mode to imitate the Greeks, and yet to laugh at their own clumsy imitation.

Thus conversing, their steps were arrested by a crowd gathered round an open space where three streets met; and, just where the porticoes of a light and graceful temple threw their shade, there stood a young girl, with a flower-basket on her right arm, and a small three-stringed instrument of music in the left hand, to whose low and soft tones she was modulating a wild and half-barbaric air. At every pause in the music she gracefully waved her flower-basket round, inviting the loiterers to buy; and many a sesterce was showered into the basket, either in compliment to the music or in compassion to the songstress—for she was blind.

'It is my poor Thessalian,' said Glaucus, stopping; 'I have not seen her since my return to Pompeii. Hush! her voice is sweet; let us listen.'

THE BLIND FLOWER-GIRL'S SONG

I

Buy my flowers—O buy—I pray!
The blind girl comes from afar;
If the earth be as fair as I hear them say,
These flowers her children are!
Do they her beauty keep?
They are fresh from her lap, I know;
For I caught them fast asleep
In her arms an hour ago.
With the air which is her breath—
Her soft and delicate breath—
Over them murmuring low!

On their lips her sweet kiss lingers yet,
And their cheeks with her tender tears are wet.
For she weeps—that gentle mother weeps—
(As morn and night her watch she keeps,
With a yearning heart and a passionate care)
To see the young things grow so fair;
She weeps—for love she weeps;
And the dews are the tears she weeps
From the well of a mother's love!

II

Ye have a world of light,
  Where love in the loved rejoices;
But the blind girl's home is the House of Night,
  And its beings are empty voices.

  As one in the realm below,
  I stand by the streams of woe!
  I hear the vain shadows glide,
  I feel their soft breath at my side.
    And I thirst the loved forms to see,
  And I stretch my fond arms around,
  And I catch but a shapeless sound,
  For the living are ghosts to me.

   Come buy—come buy?—
 (Hark! how the sweet things sigh
  For they have a voice like ours),
  `The breath of the blind girl closes
  The leaves of the saddening roses—
 We are tender, we sons of light,
  We shrink from this child of night;
  From the grasp of the blind girl free us—
 We yearn for the eyes that see us—
We are for night too gay,
  In your eyes we behold the day—
    O buy—O buy the flowers!'

'I must have yon bunch of violets, sweet Nydia,' said Glaucus, pressing through the crowd, and dropping a handful of small coins into the basket; 'your voice is more charming than ever.'

The blind girl started forward as she heard the Athenian's voice; then as suddenly paused, while the blood rushed violently over neck, cheek, and temples.

'So you are returned!' said she, in a low voice; and then repeated half to herself, 'Glaucus is returned!'

'Yes, child, I have not been at Pompeii above a few days. My garden wants your care, as before; you will visit it, I trust, to-morrow. And mind, no garlands at my house shall be woven by any hands but those of the pretty Nydia.'

Nydia smiled joyously, but did not answer; and Glaucus, placing in his breast the violets he had selected, turned gaily and carelessly from the crowd.

'So she is a sort of client of yours, this child?' said Clodius.

'Ay—does she not sing prettily? She interests me, the poor slave! Besides, she is from the land of the Gods' hill—Olympus frowned upon her cradle—she is of Thessaly.'

'The witches' country.'

'True: but for my part I find every woman a witch; and at Pompeii, by Venus! the very air seems to have taken a love-philtre, so handsome does every face without a beard seem in my eyes.'

'And lo! one of the handsomest in Pompeii, old Diomed's daughter, the rich Julia!' said Clodius, as a young lady, her face covered by her veil, and attended by two female slaves, approached them, in her way to the baths.

'Fair Julia, we salute thee!' said Clodius.

Julia partly raised her veil, so as with some coquetry to display a bold Roman profile, a full dark bright eye, and a cheek over whose natural olive art shed a fairer and softer rose.

'And Glaucus, too, is returned!' said she, glancing meaningly at the Athenian. 'Has he forgotten,' she added, in a half-whisper, 'his friends of the last year?'

'Beautiful Julia! even Lethe itself, if it disappear in one part of the earth, rises again in another. Jupiter does not allow us ever to forget for more than a moment: but Venus, more harsh still, vouchsafes not even a moment's oblivion.'

'Glaucus is never at a loss for fair words.'

'Who is, when the object of them is so fair?'

'We shall see you both at my father's villa soon,' said Julia, turning to Clodius.

'We will mark the day in which we visit you with a white stone,' answered the gamester.

Julia dropped her veil, but slowly, so that her last glance rested on the Athenian with affected timidity and real boldness; the glance bespoke tenderness and reproach.

The friends passed on.

'Julia is certainly handsome,' said Glaucus.

'And last year you would have made that confession in a warmer tone.'

'True; I was dazzled at the first sight, and mistook for a gem that which was but an artful imitation.'

'Nay,' returned Clodius, 'all women are the same at heart. Happy he who weds a handsome face and a large dower. What more can he desire?'

Glaucus sighed.

They were now in a street less crowded than the rest, at the end of which they beheld that broad and most lovely sea, which upon those delicious coasts seems to have renounced its prerogative of terror—so soft are the crisping winds that hover around its bosom, so glowing and so various are the hues which it takes from the rosy clouds, so fragrant are the perfumes which the breezes from the land scatter over its depths. From such a sea might you well believe that Aphrodite rose to take the empire of the earth.

'It is still early for the bath,' said the Greek, who was the creature of every poetical impulse; 'let us wander from the crowded city, and look upon the sea while the noon yet laughs along its billows.'

'With all my heart,' said Clodius; 'and the bay, too, is always the most animated part of the city.'

Pompeii was the miniature of the civilization of that age. Within the narrow compass of its walls was contained, as it were, a specimen of every gift which luxury offered to power. In its minute but glittering shops, its tiny palaces, its baths, its forum, its theatre, its circus—in the energy yet corruption, in the refinement yet the vice, of its people, you beheld a model of the whole empire. It was a toy, a plaything, a showbox, in which the gods seemed pleased to keep the representation of the great monarchy of earth, and which they afterwards hid from time, to give to the wonder of posterity—the moral of the maxim, that under the sun there is nothing new.

Crowded in the glassy bay were the vessels of commerce and the gilded galleys for the pleasures of the rich citizens. The boats of the fishermen glided rapidly to and fro; and afar off you saw the tall masts of the fleet under the command of Pliny. Upon the shore sat a Sicilian who, with vehement gestures and flexile features, was narrating to a group of fishermen and peasants a strange tale of shipwrecked mariners and friendly dolphins—just as at this day, in the modern neighborhood, you may hear upon the Mole of Naples.

Drawing his comrade from the crowd, the Greek bent his steps towards a solitary part of the beach, and the two friends, seated on a small crag which rose amidst the smooth pebbles, inhaled

the voluptuous and cooling breeze, which dancing over the waters, kept music with its invisible feet. There was, perhaps, something in the scene that invited them to silence and reverie. Clodius, shading his eyes from the burning sky, was calculating the gains of the last week; and the Greek, leaning upon his hand, and shrinking not from that sun—his nation's tutelary deity—with whose fluent light of poesy, and joy, and love, his own veins were filled, gazed upon the broad expanse, and envied, perhaps, every wind that bent its pinions towards the shores of Greece.

'Tell me, Clodius,' said the Greek at last, 'hast thou ever been in love?'

'Yes, very often.'

'He who has loved often,' answered Glaucus, 'has loved never. There is but one Eros, though there are many counterfeits of him.'

'The counterfeits are not bad little gods, upon the whole,' answered Clodius.

'I agree with you,' returned the Greek. 'I adore even the shadow of Love; but I adore himself yet more.'

'Art thou, then, soberly and honestly in love? Hast thou that feeling which the poets describe—a feeling that makes us neglect our suppers, forswear the theatre, and write elegies? I should never have thought it. You dissemble well.'

'I am not far gone enough for that,' returned Glaucus, smiling, 'or rather I say with Tibullus—

He whom love rules, where'er his path may be, Walks safe and sacred.

In fact, I am not in love; but I could be if there were but occasion to see the object. Eros would light his torch, but the priests have given him no oil.'

'Shall I guess the object?—Is it not Diomed's daughter? She adores you, and does not affect to conceal it; and, by Hercules, I say again and again, she is both handsome and rich. She will bind the door-posts of her husband with golden fillets.'

'No, I do not desire to sell myself. Diomed's daughter is handsome, I grant: and at one time, had she not been the grandchild of a freedman, I might have… Yet no—she carries all her beauty in her face; her manners are not maiden-like, and her mind knows no culture save that of pleasure.'

'You are ungrateful. Tell me, then, who is the fortunate virgin?'

'You shall hear, my Clodius. Several months ago I was sojourning at Neapolis, a city utterly to my own heart, for it still retains the manners and stamp of its Grecian origin—and it yet merits the name of Parthenope, from its delicious air and its beautiful shores. One day I entered the temple of Minerva, to offer up my prayers, not for myself more than for the city on which Pallas smiles no longer. The temple was empty and deserted. The recollections of Athens crowded fast and meltingly upon me: imagining myself still alone in the temple, and absorbed in the earnestness of my devotion, my prayer gushed from my heart to my lips, and I wept as I prayed. I was startled in the midst of my devotions, however, by a deep sigh; I turned suddenly round, and just behind me was a female. She had raised her veil also in prayer: and when our eyes met, methought a celestial ray shot from those dark and smiling orbs at once into my soul. Never, my Clodius, have I seen mortal face more exquisitely molded: a certain melancholy softened and yet elevated its expression: that unutterable something, which springs from the soul, and which our sculptors have imparted to the aspect of Psyche, gave her beauty I know not what of divine and noble; tears were rolling down her eyes. I guessed at once that she was also of Athenian lineage; and that in my prayer for Athens her heart had responded to mine. I spoke to her, though with a faltering voice—"Art thou not, too, Athenian?" said I, "O beautiful virgin!" At the sound of my voice she blushed, and half drew her veil across her face. —"My forefathers' ashes," said she, "repose by the waters of Ilissus: my birth is of Neapolis; but my heart, as my lineage, is Athenian."—"Let us, then," said I, "make our offerings together": and, as the priest now appeared, we stood side by side, while we followed the priest in his ceremonial prayer; together we touched the knees of the goddess—together we laid our olive garlands on the altar. I felt a strange emotion of almost sacred tenderness at this companionship. We, strangers from a far and fallen land, stood together and alone in that temple of our country's deity: was it not natural that my

heart should yearn to my countrywoman, for so I might surely call her? I felt as if I had known her for years; and that simple rite seemed, as by a miracle, to operate on the sympathies and ties of time. Silently we left the temple, and I was about to ask her where she dwelt, and if I might be permitted to visit her, when a youth, in whose features there was some kindred resemblance to her own, and who stood upon the steps of the fane, took her by the hand. She turned round and bade me farewell. The crowd separated us: I saw her no more. On reaching my home I found letters, which obliged me to set out for Athens, for my relations threatened me with litigation concerning my inheritance. When that suit was happily over, I repaired once more to Neapolis; I instituted inquiries throughout the whole city, I could discover no clue of my lost countrywoman, and, hoping to lose in gaiety all remembrance of that beautiful apparition, I hastened to plunge myself amidst the luxuries of Pompeii. This is all my history. I do not love; but I remember and regret.'

As Clodius was about to reply, a slow and stately step approached them, and at the sound it made amongst the pebbles, each turned, and each recognized the new-comer.

It was a man who had scarcely reached his fortieth year, of tall stature, and of a thin but nervous and sinewy frame. His skin, dark and bronzed, betrayed his Eastern origin; and his features had something Greek in their outline (especially in the chin, the lip, and the brow), save that the nose was somewhat raised and aquiline; and the bones, hard and visible, forbade that fleshy and waving contour which on the Grecian physiognomy preserved even in manhood the round and beautiful curves of youth. His eyes, large and black as the deepest night, shone with no varying and uncertain lustre. A deep, thoughtful, and half-melancholy calm seemed unalterably fixed in their majestic and commanding gaze. His step and mien were peculiarly sedate and lofty, and something foreign in the fashion and the sober hues of his sweeping garments added to the impressive effect of his quiet countenance and stately form. Each of the young men, in saluting the new-comer, made mechanically, and with care to conceal it from him, a slight gesture or sign with their fingers; for Arbaces, the Egyptian, was supposed to possess the fatal gift of the evil eye.

'The scene must, indeed, be beautiful,' said Arbaces, with a cold though courteous smile, 'which draws the gay Clodius, and Glaucus the all admired, from the crowded thoroughfares of the city.'

'Is Nature ordinarily so unattractive?' asked the Greek.

'To the dissipated—yes.'

'An austere reply, but scarcely a wise one. Pleasure delights in contrasts; it is from dissipation that we learn to enjoy solitude, and from solitude dissipation.'

'So think the young philosophers of the Garden,' replied the Egyptian; 'they mistake lassitude for meditation, and imagine that, because they are sated with others, they know the delight of loneliness. But not in such jaded bosoms can Nature awaken that enthusiasm which alone draws from her chaste reserve all her unspeakable beauty: she demands from you, not the exhaustion of passion, but all that fervor, from which you only seek, in adoring her, a release. When, young Athenian, the moon revealed herself in visions of light to Endymion, it was after a day passed, not amongst the feverish haunts of men, but on the still mountains and in the solitary valleys of the hunter.'

'Beautiful simile!' cried Glaucus; 'most unjust application! Exhaustion! that word is for age, not youth. By me, at least, one moment of satiety has never been known!'

Again the Egyptian smiled, but his smile was cold and blighting, and even the unimaginative Clodius froze beneath its light. He did not, however, reply to the passionate exclamation of Glaucus; but, after a pause, he said, in a soft and melancholy voice:

'After all, you do right to enjoy the hour while it smiles for you; the rose soon withers, the perfume soon exhales. And we, O Glaucus! strangers in the land and far from our fathers' ashes, what is there left for us but pleasure or regret!—for you the first, perhaps for me the last.'

The bright eyes of the Greek were suddenly suffused with tears. 'Ah, speak not, Arbaces,' he cried—'speak not of our ancestors. Let us forget that there were ever other liberties than

those of Rome! And Glory!—oh, vainly would we call her ghost from the fields of Marathon and Thermopylae!'

'Thy heart rebukes thee while thou speakest,' said the Egyptian; 'and in thy gaieties this night, thou wilt be more mindful of Leoena than of Lais. Vale!'

Thus saying, he gathered his robe around him, and slowly swept away.

'I breathe more freely,' said Clodius. 'Imitating the Egyptians, we sometimes introduce a skeleton at our feasts. In truth, the presence of such an Egyptian as yon gliding shadow were spectre enough to sour the richest grape of the Falernian.'

'Strange man! said Glaucus, musingly; 'yet dead though he seem to pleasure, and cold to the objects of the world, scandal belies him, or his house and his heart could tell a different tale.'

'Ah! there are whispers of other orgies than those of Osiris in his gloomy mansion. He is rich, too, they say. Can we not get him amongst us, and teach him the charms of dice? Pleasure of pleasures! hot fever of hope and fear! inexpressible unjaded passion! how fiercely beautiful thou art, O Gaming!'

'Inspired—inspired!' cried Glaucus, laughing; 'the oracle speaks poetry in Clodius. What miracle next!'

Chapter III

PARENTAGE OF GLAUCUS. DESCRIPTION OF THE HOUSES OF POMPEII. CLASSIC REVEL.

HEAVEN had given to Glaucus every blessing but one: it had given him beauty, health, fortune, genius, illustrious descent, a heart of fire, a mind of poetry; but it had denied him the heritage of freedom. He was born in Athens, the subject of Rome. Succeeding early to an ample inheritance, he had indulged that inclination for travel so natural to the young, and had drunk deep of the intoxicating draught of pleasure amidst the gorgeous luxuries of the imperial court.

He was an Alcibiades without ambition. He was what a man of imagination, youth, fortune, and talents, readily becomes when you deprive him of the inspiration of glory. His house at Rome was the theme of the debauchees, but also of the lovers of art; and the sculptors of Greece delighted to task their skill in adorning the porticoes and exedrae of an Athenian. His retreat in Pompeii—alas! the colors are faded now, the walls stripped of their paintings!—its main beauty, its elaborate finish of grace and ornament, is gone; yet when first given once more to the day, what eulogies, what wonder, did its minute and glowing decorations create—its paintings—its mosaics! Passionately enamoured of poetry and the drama, which recalled to Glaucus the wit and the heroism of his race, that fairy mansion was adorned with representations of AEschylus and Homer. And antiquaries, who resolve taste to a trade, have turned the patron to the professor, and still (though the error is now acknowledged) they style in custom, as they first named in mistake, the disburied house of the Athenian Glaucus 'THE HOUSE OF THE DRAMATIC POET'.

Previous to our description of this house, it may be as well to convey to the reader a general notion of the houses of Pompeii, which he will find to resemble strongly the plans of Vitruvius; but with all those differences in detail, of caprice and taste, which being natural to mankind, have always puzzled antiquaries. We shall endeavor to make this description as clear and unpedantic as possible.

You enter then, usually, by a small entrance-passage (called cestibulum), into a hall, sometimes with (but more frequently without) the ornament of columns; around three sides of this hall are doors communicating with several bedchambers (among which is the porter's), the best of these being usually appropriated to country visitors. At the extremity of the hall, on either side to the right and left, if the house is large, there are two small recesses, rather than chambers, generally devoted to the ladies of the mansion; and in the centre of the tessellated pavement of the hall is invariably a square, shallow reservoir for rain water (classically termed impluvium), which was admitted by an aperture in the roof above; the said aperture being covered at will by an awning. Near this impluvium, which had a peculiar sanctity in the eyes of the ancients, were sometimes (but at Pompeii more rarely than at Rome) placed images of the household gods—the hospitable hearth, often mentioned by the Roman poets, and consecrated to the Lares, was at Pompeii almost invariably formed by a movable brazier; while in some corner, often the most ostentatious place, was deposited a huge wooden chest, ornamented and strengthened by bands of bronze or iron, and secured by strong hooks upon a stone pedestal so firmly as to defy the attempts of any robber to detach it from its position. It is supposed that this chest was the money-box, or coffer, of the master of the house; though as no money has been found in any of the chests discovered at Pompeii, it is probable that it was sometimes rather designed for ornament than use.

In this hall (or atrium, to speak classically) the clients and visitors of inferior rank were usually received. In the houses of the more 'respectable', an atriensis, or slave peculiarly devoted to the service of the hall, was invariably retained, and his rank among his fellow-slaves was high and important. The reservoir in the centre must have been rather a dangerous ornament, but the centre of the hall was like the grass-plot of a college, and interdicted to the passers to and fro, who found ample space in the margin. Right opposite the entrance, at the other end of the hall, was an apartment (tablinum),

in which the pavement was usually adorned with rich mosaics, and the walls covered with elaborate paintings. Here were usually kept the records of the family, or those of any public office that had been filled by the owner: on one side of this saloon, if we may so call it, was often a dining-room, or triclinium; on the other side, perhaps, what we should now term a cabinet of gems, containing whatever curiosities were deemed most rare and costly; and invariably a small passage for the slaves to cross to the further parts of the house, without passing the apartments thus mentioned. These rooms all opened on a square or oblong colonnade, technically termed peristyle. If the house was small, its boundary ceased with this colonnade; and in that case its centre, however diminutive, was ordinarily appropriated to the purpose of a garden, and adorned with vases of flowers, placed upon pedestals: while, under the colonnade, to the right and left, were doors admitting to bedrooms, to a second triclinium, or eating-room (for the ancients generally appropriated two rooms at least to that purpose, one for summer, and one for winter—or, perhaps, one for ordinary, the other for festive, occasions); and if the owner affected letters, a cabinet, dignified by the name of library—for a very small room was sufficient to contain the few rolls of papyrus which the ancients deemed a notable collection of books.

At the end of the peristyle was generally the kitchen. Supposing the house was large, it did not end with the peristyle, and the centre thereof was not in that case a garden, but might be, perhaps, adorned with a fountain, or basin for fish; and at its end, exactly opposite to the tablinum, was generally another eating-room, on either side of which were bedrooms, and, perhaps, a picture-saloon, or pinacotheca. These apartments communicated again with a square or oblong space, usually adorned on three sides with a colonnade like the peristyle, and very much resembling the peristyle, only usually longer. This was the proper viridarium, or garden, being commonly adorned with a fountain, or statues, and a profusion of gay flowers: at its extreme end was the gardener's house; on either side, beneath the colonnade, were sometimes, if the size of the family required it, additional rooms.

At Pompeii, a second or third story was rarely of importance, being built only above a small part of the house, and containing rooms for the slaves; differing in this respect from the more magnificent edifices of Rome, which generally contained the principal eating-room (or caenaculum) on the second floor. The apartments themselves were ordinarily of small size; for in those delightful climes they received any extraordinary number of visitors in the peristyle (or portico), the hall, or the garden; and even their banquet-rooms, however elaborately adorned and carefully selected in point of aspect, were of diminutive proportions; for the intellectual ancients, being fond of society, not of crowds, rarely feasted more than nine at a time, so that large dinner-rooms were not so necessary with them as with us. But the suite of rooms seen at once from the entrance, must have had a very imposing effect: you beheld at once the hall richly paved and painted—the tablinum—the graceful peristyle, and (if the house extended farther) the opposite banquet-room and the garden, which closed the view with some gushing fount or marble statue.

The reader will now have a tolerable notion of the Pompeian houses, which resembled in some respects the Grecian, but mostly the Roman fashion of domestic architecture. In almost every house there is some difference in detail from the rest, but the principal outline is the same in all. In all you find the hall, the tablinum, and the peristyle, communicating with each other; in all you find the walls richly painted; and all the evidence of a people fond of the refining elegancies of life. The purity of the taste of the Pompeians in decoration is, however, questionable: they were fond of the gaudiest colors, of fantastic designs; they often painted the lower half of their columns a bright red, leaving the rest uncolored; and where the garden was small, its wall was frequently tinted to deceive the eye as to its extent, imitating trees, birds, temples, etc., in perspective—a meretricious delusion which the graceful pedantry of Pliny himself adopted, with a complacent pride in its ingenuity.

But the house of Glaucus was at once one of the smallest, and yet one of the most adorned and finished of all the private mansions of Pompeii: it would be a model at this day for the house of 'a single man in Mayfair'—the envy and despair of the coelibian purchasers of buhl and marquetry.

You enter by a long and narrow vestibule, on the floor of which is the image of a dog in mosaic, with the well-known 'Cave canem'—or 'Beware the dog'. On either side is a chamber of some size; for the interior part of the house not being large enough to contain the two great divisions of private and public apartments, these two rooms were set apart for the reception of visitors who neither by rank nor familiarity were entitled to admission in the penetralia of the mansion.

Advancing up the vestibule you enter an atrium, that when first discovered was rich in paintings, which in point of expression would scarcely disgrace a Rafaele. You may see them now transplanted to the Neapolitan Museum: they are still the admiration of connoisseurs—they depict the parting of Achilles and Briseis. Who does not acknowledge the force, the vigour, the beauty, employed in delineating the forms and faces of Achilles and the immortal slave!

On one side the atrium, a small staircase admitted to the apartments for the slaves on the second floor; there also were two or three small bedrooms, the walls of which portrayed the rape of Europa, the battle of the Amazons, etc.

You now enter the tablinum, across which, at either end, hung rich draperies of Tyrian purple, half withdrawn. On the walls was depicted a poet reading his verses to his friends; and in the pavement was inserted a small and most exquisite mosaic, typical of the instructions given by the director of the stage to his comedians.

You passed through this saloon and entered the peristyle; and here (as I have said before was usually the case with the smaller houses of Pompeii) the mansion ended. From each of the seven columns that adorned this court hung festoons of garlands: the centre, supplying the place of a garden, bloomed with the rarest flowers placed in vases of white marble, that were supported on pedestals. At the left hand of this small garden was a diminutive fane, resembling one of those small chapels placed at the side of roads in Catholic countries, and dedicated to the Penates; before it stood a bronzed tripod: to the left of the colonnade were two small cubicula, or bedrooms; to the right was the triclinium, in which the guests were now assembled.

This room is usually termed by the antiquaries of Naples 'The Chamber of Leda'; and in the beautiful work of Sir William Gell, the reader will find an engraving from that most delicate and graceful painting of Leda presenting her newborn to her husband, from which the room derives its name. This charming apartment opened upon the fragrant garden. Round the table of citrean wood, highly polished and delicately wrought with silver arabesques, were placed the three couches, which were yet more common at Pompeii than the semicircular seat that had grown lately into fashion at Rome: and on these couches of bronze, studded with richer metals, were laid thick quiltings covered with elaborate broidery, and yielding luxuriously to the pressure.

'Well, I must own,' said the aedile Pansa, 'that your house, though scarcely larger than a case for one's fibulae, is a gem of its kind. How beautifully painted is that parting of Achilles and Briseis! —what a style!—what heads!—what a-hem!'

'Praise from Pansa is indeed valuable on such subjects,' said Clodius, gravely. 'Why, the paintings on his walls!—Ah! there is, indeed, the hand of a Zeuxis!'

'You flatter me, my Clodius; indeed you do,' quoth the aedile, who was celebrated through Pompeii for having the worst paintings in the world; for he was patriotic, and patronized none but Pompeians. 'You flatter me; but there is something pretty—AEdepol, yes—in the colors, to say nothing of the design—and then for the kitchen, my friends—ah! that was all my fancy.'

'What is the design?' said Glaucus. 'I have not yet seen your kitchen, though I have often witnessed the excellence of its cheer.'

'A cook, my Athenian—a cook sacrificing the trophies of his skill on the altar of Vesta, with a beautiful muraena (taken from the life) on a spit at a distance—there is some invention there!'

At that instant the slaves appeared, bearing a tray covered with the first preparative initia of the feast. Amidst delicious figs, fresh herbs strewed with snow, anchovies, and eggs, were ranged small cups of diluted wine sparingly mixed with honey. As these were placed on the table, young slaves

bore round to each of the five guests (for there were no more) the silver basin of perfumed water, and napkins edged with a purple fringe. But the aedile ostentatiously drew forth his own napkin, which was not, indeed, of so fine a linen, but in which the fringe was twice as broad, and wiped his hands with the parade of a man who felt he was calling for admiration.

'A splendid nappa that of yours,' said Clodius; 'why, the fringe is as broad as a girdle!'

'A trifle, my Clodius: a trifle! They tell me this stripe is the latest fashion at Rome; but Glaucus attends to these things more than I.'

'Be propitious, O Bacchus!' said Glaucus, inclining reverentially to a beautiful image of the god placed in the centre of the table, at the corners of which stood the Lares and the salt-holders. The guests followed the prayer, and then, sprinkling the wine on the table, they performed the wonted libation.

This over, the convivialists reclined themselves on the couches, and the business of the hour commenced.

'May this cup be my last!' said the young Sallust, as the table, cleared of its first stimulants, was now loaded with the substantial part of the entertainment, and the ministering slave poured forth to him a brimming cyathus—'May this cup be my last, but it is the best wine I have drunk at Pompeii!'

'Bring hither the amphora,' said Glaucus, 'and read its date and its character.'

The slave hastened to inform the party that the scroll fastened to the cork betokened its birth from Chios, and its age a ripe fifty years.

'How deliciously the snow has cooled it!' said Pansa. 'It is just enough.'

'It is like the experience of a man who has cooled his pleasures sufficiently to give them a double zest,' exclaimed Sallust.

'It is like a woman's "No",' added Glaucus: 'it cools, but to inflame the more.'

'When is our next wild-beast fight?' said Clodius to Pansa.

'It stands fixed for the ninth ide of August,' answered Pansa: 'on the day after the Vulcanalia —we have a most lovely young lion for the occasion.'

'Whom shall we get for him to eat?' asked Clodius. 'Alas! there is a great scarcity of criminals. You must positively find some innocent or other to condemn to the lion, Pansa!'

'Indeed I have thought very seriously about it of late,' replied the aedile, gravely. 'It was a most infamous law that which forbade us to send our own slaves to the wild beasts. Not to let us do what we like with our own, that's what I call an infringement on property itself.'

'Not so in the good old days of the Republic,' sighed Sallust.

'And then this pretended mercy to the slaves is such a disappointment to the poor people. How they do love to see a good tough battle between a man and a lion; and all this innocent pleasure they may lose (if the gods don't send us a good criminal soon) from this cursed law!'

'What can be worse policy,' said Clodius, sententiously, 'than to interfere with the manly amusements of the people?'

'Well thank Jupiter and the Fates! we have no Nero at present,' said Sallust.

'He was, indeed, a tyrant; he shut up our amphitheatre for ten years.'

'I wonder it did not create a rebellion,' said Sallust.

'It very nearly did,' returned Pansa, with his mouth full of wild boar.

Here the conversation was interrupted for a moment by a flourish of flutes, and two slaves entered with a single dish.

'Ah, what delicacy hast thou in store for us now, my Glaucus?' cried the young Sallust, with sparkling eyes.

Sallust was only twenty-four, but he had no pleasure in life like eating—perhaps he had exhausted all the others: yet had he some talent, and an excellent heart—as far as it went.

'I know its face, by Pollux!' cried Pansa. 'It is an Ambracian Kid. Ho (snapping his fingers, a usual signal to the slaves) we must prepare a new libation in honour to the new-comer.'

'I had hoped said Glaucus, in a melancholy tone, 'to have procured you some oysters from Britain; but the winds that were so cruel to Caesar have forbid us the oysters.'

'Are they in truth so delicious?' asked Lepidus, loosening to a yet more luxurious ease his ungirdled tunic.

'Why, in truth, I suspect it is the distance that gives the flavor; they want the richness of the Brundusium oyster. But, at Rome, no supper is complete without them.'

'The poor Britons! There is some good in them after all,' said Sallust. 'They produce an oyster.'

'I wish they would produce us a gladiator,' said the aedile, whose provident mind was musing over the wants of the amphitheatre.

'By Pallas!' cried Glaucus, as his favorite slave crowned his streaming locks with a new chaplet, 'I love these wild spectacles well enough when beast fights beast; but when a man, one with bones and blood like ours, is coldly put on the arena, and torn limb from limb, the interest is too horrid: I sicken—I gasp for breath—I long to rush and defend him. The yells of the populace seem to me more dire than the voices of the Furies chasing Orestes. I rejoice that there is so little chance of that bloody exhibition for our next show!'

The aedile shrugged his shoulders. The young Sallust, who was thought the best-natured man in Pompeii, stared in surprise. The graceful Lepidus, who rarely spoke for fear of disturbing his features, ejaculated 'Hercle!' The parasite Clodius muttered 'AEdepol!' and the sixth banqueter, who was the umbra of Clodius, and whose duty it was to echo his richer friend, when he could not praise him—the parasite of a parasite—muttered also 'AEdepol!'

'Well, you Italians are used to these spectacles; we Greeks are more merciful. Ah, shade of Pindar!—the rapture of a true Grecian game—the emulation of man against man—the generous strife—the half-mournful triumph—so proud to contend with a noble foe, so sad to see him overcome! But ye understand me not.'

'The kid is excellent,' said Sallust. The slave, whose duty it was to carve, and who valued himself on his science, had just performed that office on the kid to the sound of music, his knife keeping time, beginning with a low tenor and accomplishing the arduous feat amidst a magnificent diapason.

'Your cook is, of course, from Sicily?' said Pansa.

'Yes, of Syracuse.'

'I will play you for him,' said Clodius. 'We will have a game between the courses.'

'Better that sort of game, certainly, than a beast fight; but I cannot stake my Sicilian—you have nothing so precious to stake me in return.'

'My Phillida—my beautiful dancing-girl!'

'I never buy women,' said the Greek, carelessly rearranging his chaplet.

The musicians, who were stationed in the portico without, had commenced their office with the kid; they now directed the melody into a more soft, a more gay, yet it may be a more intellectual strain; and they chanted that song of Horace beginning 'Persicos odi', etc., so impossible to translate, and which they imagined applicable to a feast that, effeminate as it seems to us, was simple enough for the gorgeous revelry of the time. We are witnessing the domestic, and not the princely feast—the entertainment of a gentleman, not an emperor or a senator.

'Ah, good old Horace!' said Sallust, compassionately; 'he sang well of feasts and girls, but not like our modern poets.'

'The immortal Fulvius, for instance,' said Clodius.

'Ah, Fulvius, the immortal!' said the umbra.

'And Spuraena; and Caius Mutius, who wrote three epics in a year—could Horace do that, or Virgil either said Lepidus. 'Those old poets all fell into the mistake of copying sculpture instead of painting. Simplicity and repose—that was their notion; but we moderns have fire, and passion, and energy—we never sleep, we imitate the colors of painting, its life, and its action. Immortal Fulvius!'

'By the way,' said Sallust, 'have you seen the new ode by Spuraena, in honour of our Egyptian Isis? It is magnificent—the true religious fervor.'

'Isis seems a favorite divinity at Pompeii,' said Glaucus.

'Yes!' said Pansa, 'she is exceedingly in repute just at this moment; her statue has been uttering the most remarkable oracles. I am not superstitious, but I must confess that she has more than once assisted me materially in my magistracy with her advice. Her priests are so pious, too! none of your gay, none of your proud, ministers of Jupiter and Fortune: they walk barefoot, eat no meat, and pass the greater part of the night in solitary devotion!'

'An example to our other priesthoods, indeed!—Jupiter's temple wants reforming sadly,' said Lepidus, who was a great reformer for all but himself.

'They say that Arbaces the Egyptian has imparted some most solemn mysteries to the priests of Isis,' observed Sallust. 'He boasts his descent from the race of Rameses, and declares that in his family the secrets of remotest antiquity are treasured.'

'He certainly possesses the gift of the evil eye,' said Clodius. 'If I ever come upon that Medusa front without the previous charm, I am sure to lose a favorite horse, or throw the canes nine times running.'

'The last would be indeed a miracle!' said Sallust, gravely.

'How mean you, Sallust?' returned the gamester, with a flushed brow.

'I mean, what you would leave me if I played often with you; and that is—nothing.'

Clodius answered only by a smile of disdain.

'If Arbaces were not so rich,' said Pansa, with a stately air, 'I should stretch my authority a little, and inquire into the truth of the report which calls him an astrologer and a sorcerer. Agrippa, when aedile of Rome, banished all such terrible citizens. But a rich man—it is the duty of an aedile to protect the rich!'

'What think you of this new sect, which I am told has even a few proselytes in Pompeii, these followers of the Hebrew God—Christus?'

'Oh, mere speculative visionaries,' said Clodius; 'they have not a single gentleman amongst them; their proselytes are poor, insignificant, ignorant people!'

'Who ought, however, to be crucified for their blasphemy,' said Pansa, with vehemence; 'they deny Venus and Jove! Nazarene is but another name for atheist. Let me catch them—that's all.'

The second course was gone—the feasters fell back on their couches—there was a pause while they listened to the soft voices of the South, and the music of the Arcadian reed. Glaucus was the most rapt and the least inclined to break the silence, but Clodius began already to think that they wasted time.

'Bene vobis! (Your health!) my Glaucus,' said he, quaffing a cup to each letter of the Greek's name, with the ease of the practised drinker. 'Will you not be avenged on your ill-fortune of yesterday? See, the dice court us.'

'As you will,' said Glaucus.

'The dice in summer, and I an aedile!' said Pansa, magisterially; 'it is against all law.'

'Not in your presence, grave Pansa,' returned Clodius, rattling the dice in a long box; 'your presence restrains all license: it is not the thing, but the excess of the thing, that hurts.'

'What wisdom!' muttered the umbra.

'Well, I will look another way,' said the aedile.

'Not yet, good Pansa; let us wait till we have supped,' said Glaucus.

Clodius reluctantly yielded, concealing his vexation with a yawn.

'He gapes to devour the gold,' whispered Lepidus to Sallust, in a quotation from the Aulularia of Plautus.

'Ah! how well I know these polypi, who hold all they touch,' answered Sallust, in the same tone, and out of the same play.

The third course, consisting of a variety of fruits, pistachio nuts, sweetmeats, tarts, and confectionery tortured into a thousand fantastic and airy shapes, was now placed upon the table; and the ministri, or attendants, also set there the wine (which had hitherto been handed round to the guests) in large jugs of glass, each bearing upon it the schedule of its age and quality.

'Taste this Lesbian, my Pansa,' said Sallust; 'it is excellent.'

'It is not very old,' said Glaucus, 'but it has been made precocious, like ourselves, by being put to the fire:—the wine to the flames of Vulcan—we to those of his wife—to whose honour I pour this cup.'

'It is delicate,' said Pansa, 'but there is perhaps the least particle too much of rosin in its flavor.'

'What a beautiful cup!' cried Clodius, taking up one of transparent crystal, the handles of which were wrought with gems, and twisted in the shape of serpents, the favorite fashion at Pompeii.

'This ring,' said Glaucus, taking a costly jewel from the first joint of his finger and hanging it on the handle, 'gives it a richer show, and renders it less unworthy of thy acceptance, my Clodius, on whom may the gods bestow health and fortune, long and oft to crown it to the brim!'

'You are too generous, Glaucus,' said the gamester, handing the cup to his slave; 'but your love gives it a double value.'

'This cup to the Graces!' said Pansa, and he thrice emptied his calix. The guests followed his example.

'We have appointed no director to the feast,' cried Sallust.

'Let us throw for him, then,' said Clodius, rattling the dice-box.

'Nay,' cried Glaucus, 'no cold and trite director for us: no dictator of the banquet; no rex convivii. Have not the Romans sworn never to obey a king? Shall we be less free than your ancestors? Ho! musicians, let us have the song I composed the other night: it has a verse on this subject, "The Bacchic hymn of the Hours".'

The musicians struck their instruments to a wild Ionic air, while the youngest voice in the band chanted forth, in Greek words, as numbers, the following strain:—

THE EVENING HYMN OF THE HOURS

I

Through the summer day, through the weary day,
We have glided long;
Ere we speed to the Night through her portals grey,
Hail us with song!—
With song, with song,
With a bright and joyous song;
Such as the Cretan maid,
While the twilight made her bolder,
Woke, high through the ivy shade,
When the wine-god first consoled her.
From the hush'd, low-breathing skies,
Half-shut look'd their starry eyes,
And all around,
With a loving sound,
The AEgean waves were creeping:
On her lap lay the lynx's head;

Wild thyme was her bridal bed;
And aye through each tiny space,
In the green vine's green embrace
The Fauns were slily peeping—
The Fauns, the prying Fauns—
The arch, the laughing Fauns—
The Fauns were slily peeping!

II

Flagging and faint are we
With our ceaseless flight,
And dull shall our journey be
Through the realm of night,
Bathe us, O bathe our weary wings
In the purple wave, as it freshly springs
To your cups from the fount of light—
From the fount of light—from the fount of light,

For there, when the sun has gone down in night,
There in the bowl we find him.
The grape is the well of that summer sun,
Or rather the stream that he gazed upon,
Till he left in truth, like the Thespian youth,
His soul, as he gazed, behind him.

III

A cup to Jove, and a cup to Love,
And a cup to the son of Maia;
And honour with three, the band zone-free,
The band of the bright Aglaia.
But since every bud in the wreath of pleasure
Ye owe to the sister Hours,
No stinted cups, in a formal measure,
The Bromian law makes ours.
He honors us most who gives us most,
And boasts, with a Bacchanal's honest boast,
He never will count the treasure.
Fastly we fleet, then seize our wings,
And plunge us deep in the sparkling springs;
And aye, as we rise with a dripping plume,
We'll scatter the spray round the garland's bloom;
We glow—we glow,
Behold, as the girls of the Eastern wave

Bore once with a shout to the crystal cave
The prize of the Mysian Hylas,
Even so—even so,
We have caught the young god in our warm embrace
We hurry him on in our laughing race;
We hurry him on, with a whoop and song,
The cloudy rivers of night along—
Ho, ho!—we have caught thee, Psilas!

The guests applauded loudly. When the poet is your host, his verses are sure to charm.

'Thoroughly Greek,' said Lepidus: 'the wildness, force, and energy of that tongue, it is impossible to imitate in the Roman poetry.'

'It is, indeed, a great contrast,' said Clodius, ironically at heart, though not in appearance, 'to the old-fashioned and tame simplicity of that ode of Horace which we heard before. The air is beautifully Ionic: the word puts me in mind of a toast—Companions, I give you the beautiful Ione.'

'Ione!—the name is Greek,' said Glaucus, in a soft voice. 'I drink the health with delight. But who is Ione?'

'Ah! you have but just come to Pompeii, or you would deserve ostracism for your ignorance,' said Lepidus, conceitedly; 'not to know Ione, is not to know the chief charm of our city.'

'She is of the most rare beauty,' said Pansa; 'and what a voice!'

'She can feed only on nightingales' tongues,' said Clodius.

'Nightingales' tongues!—beautiful thought!' sighed the umbra.

'Enlighten me, I beseech you,' said Glaucus.

'Know then…' began Lepidus.

'Let me speak,' cried Clodius; 'you drawl out your words as if you spoke tortoises.'

'And you speak stones,' muttered the coxcomb to himself, as he fell back disdainfully on his couch.

'Know then, my Glaucus,' said Clodius, 'that Ione is a stranger who has but lately come to Pompeii. She sings like Sappho, and her songs are her own composing; and as for the tibia, and the cithara, and the lyre, I know not in which she most outdoes the Muses. Her beauty is most dazzling. Her house is perfect; such taste—such gems—such bronzes! She is rich, and generous as she is rich.'

'Her lovers, of course,' said Glaucus, 'take care that she does not starve; and money lightly won is always lavishly spent.'

'Her lovers—ah, there is the enigma!—Ione has but one vice—she is chaste. She has all Pompeii at her feet, and she has no lovers: she will not even marry.'

'No lovers!' echoed Glaucus.

'No; she has the soul of Vestal with the girdle of Venus.'

'What refined expressions!' said the umbra.

'A miracle!' cried Glaucus. 'Can we not see her?'

'I will take you there this evening, said Clodius; 'meanwhile…' added he, once more rattling the dice.

'I am yours!' said the complaisant Glaucus. 'Pansa, turn your face!'

Lepidus and Sallust played at odd and even, and the umbra looked on, while Glaucus and Clodius became gradually absorbed in the chances of the dice.

'By Pollux!' cried Glaucus, 'this is the second time I have thrown the caniculae' (the lowest throw).

'Now Venus befriend me!' said Clodius, rattling the box for several moments. 'O Alma Venus—it is Venus herself!' as he threw the highest cast, named from that goddess—whom he who wins money, indeed, usually propitiates!

'Venus is ungrateful to me,' said Glaucus, gaily; 'I have always sacrificed on her altar.'

'He who plays with Clodius,' whispered Lepidus, 'will soon, like Plautus's Curculio, put his pallium for the stakes.'

'Poor Glaucus!—he is as blind as Fortune herself,' replied Sallust, in the same tone.

'I will play no more,' said Glaucus; 'I have lost thirty sestertia.'

'I am sorry…' began Clodius.

'Amiable man!' groaned the umbra.

'Not at all!' exclaimed Glaucus; 'the pleasure I take in your gain compensates the pain of my loss.'

The conversation now grew general and animated; the wine circulated more freely; and Ione once more became the subject of eulogy to the guests of Glaucus.

'Instead of outwatching the stars, let us visit one at whose beauty the stars grow pale,' said Lepidus.

Clodius, who saw no chance of renewing the dice, seconded the proposal; and Glaucus, though he civilly pressed his guests to continue the banquet, could not but let them see that his curiosity had been excited by the praises of Ione: they therefore resolved to adjourn (all, at least, but Pansa and the umbra) to the house of the fair Greek. They drank, therefore, to the health of Glaucus and of Titus—they performed their last libation—they resumed their slippers—they descended the stairs—passed the illumined atrium—and walking unbitten over the fierce dog painted on the threshold, found themselves beneath the light of the moon just risen, in the lively and still crowded streets of Pompeii.

They passed the jewellers' quarter, sparkling with lights, caught and reflected by the gems displayed in the shops, and arrived at last at the door of Ione. The vestibule blazed with rows of lamps; curtains of embroidered purple hung on either aperture of the tablinum, whose walls and mosaic pavement glowed with the richest colors of the artist; and under the portico which surrounded the odorous viridarium they found Ione, already surrounded by adoring and applauding guests!

'Did you say she was Athenian?' whispered Glaucus, ere he passed into the peristyle.

'No, she is from Neapolis.'

'Neapolis!' echoed Glaucus; and at that moment the group, dividing on either side of Ione, gave to his view that bright, that nymph-like beauty, which for months had shone down upon the waters of his memory.

Chapter IV

THE TEMPLE OF ISIS. ITS PRIEST. THE CHARACTER OF ARBACES DEVELOPS ITSELF.

THE story returns to the Egyptian. We left Arbaces upon the shores of the noonday sea, after he had parted from Glaucus and his companion. As he approached to the more crowded part of the bay, he paused and gazed upon that animated scene with folded arms, and a bitter smile upon his dark features.

'Gulls, dupes, fools, that ye are!' muttered he to himself; 'whether business or pleasure, trade or religion, be your pursuit, you are equally cheated by the passions that ye should rule! How I could loathe you, if I did not hate—yes, hate! Greek or Roman, it is from us, from the dark lore of Egypt, that ye have stolen the fire that gives you souls. Your knowledge—your poesy—your laws—your arts—your barbarous mastery of war (all how tame and mutilated, when compared with the vast original!)—ye have filched, as a slave filches the fragments of the feast, from us! And now, ye mimics of a mimic!—Romans, forsooth! the mushroom herd of robbers! ye are our masters! the pyramids look down no more on the race of Rameses—the eagle cowers over the serpent of the Nile. Our masters—no, not mine. My soul, by the power of its wisdom, controls and chains you, though the fetters are unseen. So long as craft can master force, so long as religion has a cave from which oracles can dupe mankind, the wise hold an empire over earth. Even from your vices Arbaces distills his pleasures—pleasures unprofaned by vulgar eyes—pleasures vast, wealthy, inexhaustible, of which your enervate minds, in their unimaginative sensuality, cannot conceive or dream! Plod on, plod on, fools of ambition and of avarice! your petty thirst for fasces and quaestorships, and all the mummery of servile power, provokes my laughter and my scorn. My power can extend wherever man believes. I ride over the souls that the purple veils. Thebes may fall, Egypt be a name; the world itself furnishes the subjects of Arbaces.'

Thus saying, the Egyptian moved slowly on; and, entering the town, his tall figure towered above the crowded throng of the forum, and swept towards the small but graceful temple consecrated to Isis.

That edifice was then but of recent erection; the ancient temple had been thrown down in the earthquake sixteen years before, and the new building had become as much in vogue with the versatile Pompeians as a new church or a new preacher may be with us. The oracles of the goddess at Pompeii were indeed remarkable, not more for the mysterious language in which they were clothed, than for the credit which was attached to their mandates and predictions. If they were not dictated by a divinity, they were framed at least by a profound knowledge of mankind; they applied themselves exactly to the circumstances of individuals, and made a notable contrast to the vague and loose generalities of their rival temples. As Arbaces now arrived at the rails which separated the profane from the sacred place, a crowd, composed of all classes, but especially of the commercial, collected, breathless and reverential, before the many altars which rose in the open court. In the walls of the cella, elevated on seven steps of Parian marble, various statues stood in niches, and those walls were ornamented with the pomegranate consecrated to Isis. An oblong pedestal occupied the interior building, on which stood two statues, one of Isis, and its companion represented the silent and mystic Orus. But the building contained many other deities to grace the court of the Egyptian deity: her kindred and many-titled Bacchus, and the Cyprian Venus, a Grecian disguise for herself, rising from her bath, and the dog-headed Anubis, and the ox Apis, and various Egyptian idols of uncouth form and unknown appellations.

But we must not suppose that among the cities of Magna Graecia, Isis was worshipped with those forms and ceremonies which were of right her own. The mongrel and modern nations of the South, with a mingled arrogance and ignorance, confounded the worships of all climes and ages. And the profound mysteries of the Nile were degraded by a hundred meretricious and frivolous admixtures

from the creeds of Cephisus and of Tibur. The temple of Isis in Pompeii was served by Roman and Greek priests, ignorant alike of the language and the customs of her ancient votaries; and the descendant of the dread Egyptian kings, beneath the appearance of reverential awe, secretly laughed to scorn the puny mummeries which imitated the solemn and typical worship of his burning clime.

Ranged now on either side the steps was the sacrificial crowd, arrayed in white garments, while at the summit stood two of the inferior priests, the one holding a palm branch, the other a slender sheaf of corn. In the narrow passage in front thronged the bystanders.

'And what,' whispered Arbaces to one of the bystanders, who was a merchant engaged in the Alexandrian trade, which trade had probably first introduced in Pompeii the worship of the Egyptian goddess—'what occasion now assembles you before the altars of the venerable Isis? It seems, by the white robes of the group before me, that a sacrifice is to be rendered; and by the assembly of the priests, that ye are prepared for some oracle. To what question is it to vouchsafe a reply?'

'We are merchants,' replied the bystander (who was no other than Diomed) in the same voice, 'who seek to know the fate of our vessels, which sail for Alexandria to-morrow. We are about to offer up a sacrifice and implore an answer from the goddess. I am not one of those who have petitioned the priest to sacrifice, as you may see by my dress, but I have some interest in the success of the fleet —by Jupiter! yes. I have a pretty trade, else how could I live in these hard times?

The Egyptian replied gravely—'That though Isis was properly the goddess of agriculture, she was no less the patron of commerce.' Then turning his head towards the east, Arbaces seemed absorbed in silent prayer.

And now in the centre of the steps appeared a priest robed in white from head to foot, the veil parting over the crown; two new priests relieved those hitherto stationed at either corner, being naked half-way down to the breast, and covered, for the rest, in white and loose robes. At the same time, seated at the bottom of the steps, a priest commenced a solemn air upon a long wind-instrument of music. Half-way down the steps stood another flamen, holding in one hand the votive wreath, in the other a white wand; while, adding to the picturesque scene of that eastern ceremony, the stately ibis (bird sacred to the Egyptian worship) looked mutely down from the wall upon the rite, or stalked beside the altar at the base of the steps.

At that altar now stood the sacrificial flamen.

The countenance of Arbaces seemed to lose all its rigid calm while the aruspices inspected the entrails, and to be intent in pious anxiety—to rejoice and brighten as the signs were declared favorable, and the fire began bright and clearly to consume the sacred portion of the victim amidst odorous of myrrh and frankincense. It was then that a dead silence fell over the whispering crowd, and the priests gathering round the cella, another priest, naked save by a cincture round the middle, rushed forward, and dancing with wild gestures, implored an answer from the goddess. He ceased at last in exhaustion, and a low murmuring noise was heard within the body of the statue: thrice the head moved, and the lips parted, and then a hollow voice uttered these mystic words:

There are waves like chargers that meet and glow,
There are graves ready wrought in the rocks below,
On the brow of the future the dangers lour,
But blest are your barks in the fearful hour.

The voice ceased—the crowd breathed more freely—the merchants looked at each other. 'Nothing can be more plain,' murmured Diomed; 'there is to be a storm at sea, as there very often is at the beginning of autumn, but our vessels are to be saved. O beneficent Isis!'

'Lauded eternally be the goddess!' said the merchants: 'what can be less equivocal than her prediction?'

Raising one hand in sign of silence to the people, for the rites of Isis enjoined what to the lively Pompeians was an impossible suspense from the use of the vocal organs, the chief priest poured his libation on the altar, and after a short concluding prayer the ceremony was over, and the congregation dismissed. Still, however, as the crowd dispersed themselves here and there, the Egyptian lingered by the railing, and when the space became tolerably cleared, one of the priests, approaching it, saluted him with great appearance of friendly familiarity.

The countenance of the priest was remarkably unprepossessing—his shaven skull was so low and narrow in the front as nearly to approach to the conformation of that of an African savage, save only towards the temples, where, in that organ styled acquisitiveness by the pupils of a science modern in name, but best practically known (as their sculpture teaches us) amongst the ancients, two huge and almost preternatural protuberances yet more distorted the unshapely head—around the brows the skin was puckered into a web of deep and intricate wrinkles—the eyes, dark and small, rolled in a muddy and yellow orbit—the nose, short yet coarse, was distended at the nostrils like a satyr's—and the thick but pallid lips, the high cheek-bones, the livid and motley hues that struggled through the parchment skin, completed a countenance which none could behold without repugnance, and few without terror and distrust: whatever the wishes of the mind, the animal frame was well fitted to execute them; the wiry muscles of the throat, the broad chest, the nervous hands and lean gaunt arms, which were bared above the elbow, betokened a form capable alike of great active exertion and passive endurance.

'Calenus,' said the Egyptian to this fascinating flamen, 'you have improved the voice of the statue much by attending to my suggestion; and your verses are excellent. Always prophesy good fortune, unless there is an absolute impossibility of its fulfilment.'

'Besides,' added Calenus, 'if the storm does come, and if it does overwhelm the accursed ships, have we not prophesied it? and are the barks not blest to be at rest?—for rest prays the mariner in the AEgean sea, or at least so says Horace—can the mariner be more at rest in the sea than when he is at the bottom of it?'

'Right, my Calenus; I wish Apaecides would take a lesson from your wisdom. But I desire to confer with you relative to him and to other matters: you can admit me into one of your less sacred apartments?'

'Assuredly,' replied the priest, leading the way to one of the small chambers which surrounded the open gate. Here they seated themselves before a small table spread with dishes containing fruit and eggs, and various cold meats, with vases of excellent wine, of which while the companions partook, a curtain, drawn across the entrance opening to the court, concealed them from view, but admonished them by the thinness of the partition to speak low, or to speak no secrets: they chose the former alternative.

'Thou knowest,' said Arbaces, in a voice that scarcely stirred the air, so soft and inward was its sound, 'that it has ever been my maxim to attach myself to the young. From their flexile and unformed minds I can carve out my fittest tools. I weave—I warp—I mould them at my will. Of the men I make merely followers or servants; of the women…'

'Mistresses,' said Calenus, as a livid grin distorted his ungainly features.

'Yes, I do not disguise it: woman is the main object, the great appetite, of my soul. As you feed the victim for the slaughter, I love to rear the votaries of my pleasure. I love to train, to ripen their minds—to unfold the sweet blossom of their hidden passions, in order to prepare the fruit to my taste. I loathe your ready-made and ripened courtesans; it is in the soft and unconscious progress of innocence to desire that I find the true charm of love; it is thus that I defy satiety; and by contemplating the freshness of others, I sustain the freshness of my own sensations. From the young hearts of my victims I draw the ingredients of the caldron in which I re-youth myself. But enough of this: to the subject before us. You know, then, that in Neapolis some time since I encountered Ione and Apaecides, brother and sister, the children of Athenians who had settled at Neapolis. The death of their parents, who knew and esteemed me, constituted me their guardian. I was not unmindful of

the trust. The youth, docile and mild, yielded readily to the impression I sought to stamp upon him. Next to woman, I love the old recollections of my ancestral land; I love to keep alive—to propagate on distant shores (which her colonies perchance yet people) her dark and mystic creeds. It may be, that it pleases me to delude mankind, while I thus serve the deities. To Apaecides I taught the solemn faith of Isis. I unfolded to him something of those sublime allegories which are couched beneath her worship. I excited in a soul peculiarly alive to religious fervor that enthusiasm which imagination begets on faith. I have placed him amongst you: he is one of you.'

'He is so,' said Calenus: 'but in thus stimulating his faith, you have robbed him of wisdom. He is horror-struck that he is no longer duped: our sage delusions, our speaking statues and secret staircases dismay and revolt him; he pines; he wastes away; he mutters to himself; he refuses to share our ceremonies. He has been known to frequent the company of men suspected of adherence to that new and atheistical creed which denies all our gods, and terms our oracles the inspirations of that malevolent spirit of which eastern tradition speaks. Our oracles—alas! we know well whose inspirations they are!'

'This is what I feared,' said Arbaces, musingly, 'from various reproaches he made me when I last saw him. Of late he hath shunned my steps. I must find him: I must continue my lessons: I must lead him into the adytum of Wisdom. I must teach him that there are two stages of sanctity—the first, FAITH—the next, DELUSION; the one for the vulgar, the second for the sage.'

'I never passed through the first, I said Calenus; 'nor you either, I think, my Arbaces.'

'You err,' replied the Egyptian, gravely. 'I believe at this day (not indeed that which I teach, but that which I teach not). Nature has a sanctity against which I cannot (nor would I) steel conviction. I believe in mine own knowledge, and that has revealed to me—but no matter. Now to earthlier and more inviting themes. If I thus fulfilled my object with Apaecides, what was my design for Ione? Thou knowest already I intend her for my queen—my bride—my heart's Isis. Never till I saw her knew I all the love of which my nature is capable.'

'I hear from a thousand lips that she is a second Helen,' said Calenus; and he smacked his own lips, but whether at the wine or at the notion it is not easy to decide.

'Yes, she has a beauty that Greece itself never excelled,' resumed Arbaces. 'But that is not all: she has a soul worthy to match with mine. She has a genius beyond that of woman—keen—dazzling —bold. Poetry flows spontaneous to her lips: utter but a truth, and, however intricate and profound, her mind seizes and commands it. Her imagination and her reason are not at war with each other; they harmonize and direct her course as the winds and the waves direct some lofty bark. With this she unites a daring independence of thought; she can stand alone in the world; she can be brave as she is gentle; this is the nature I have sought all my life in woman, and never found till now. Ione must be mine! In her I have a double passion; I wish to enjoy a beauty of spirit as of form.'

'She is not yours yet, then?' said the priest.

'No; she loves me—but as a friend—she loves me with her mind only. She fancies in me the paltry virtues which I have only the profounder virtue to disdain. But you must pursue with me her history. The brother and sister were young and rich: Ione is proud and ambitious—proud of her genius —the magic of her poetry—the charm of her conversation. When her brother left me, and entered your temple, in order to be near him she removed also to Pompeii. She has suffered her talents to be known. She summons crowds to her feasts; her voice enchants them; her poetry subdues. She delights in being thought the successor of Erinna.'

'Or of Sappho?'

'But Sappho without love! I encouraged her in this boldness of career—in this indulgence of vanity and of pleasure. I loved to steep her amidst the dissipations and luxury of this abandoned city. Mark me, Calenus! I desired to enervate her mind!—it has been too pure to receive yet the breath which I wish not to pass, but burningly to eat into, the mirror. I wished her to be surrounded by lovers, hollow, vain, and frivolous (lovers that her nature must despise), in order to feel the want of

love. Then, in those soft intervals of lassitude that succeed to excitement—I can weave my spells—excite her interest—attract her passions—possess myself of her heart. For it is not the young, nor the beautiful, nor the gay, that should fascinate Ione; her imagination must be won, and the life of Arbaces has been one scene of triumph over the imaginations of his kind.'

'And hast thou no fear, then, of thy rivals? The gallants of Italy are skilled in the art to please.'

'None! Her Greek soul despises the barbarian Romans, and would scorn itself if it admitted a thought of love for one of that upstart race.'

'But thou art an Egyptian, not a Greek!'

'Egypt,' replied Arbaces, 'is the mother of Athens. Her tutelary Minerva is our deity; and her founder, Cecrops, was the fugitive of Egyptian Sais. This have I already taught to her; and in my blood she venerates the eldest dynasties of earth. But yet I will own that of late some uneasy suspicions have crossed my mind. She is more silent than she used to be; she loves melancholy and subduing music; she sighs without an outward cause. This may be the beginning of love—it may be the want of love. In either case it is time for me to begin my operations on her fancies and her heart: in the one case, to divert the source of love to me; in the other, in me to awaken it. It is for this that I have sought you.'

'And how can I assist you?'

'I am about to invite her to a feast in my house: I wish to dazzle—to bewilder—to inflame her senses. Our arts—the arts by which Egypt trained her young novitiates—must be employed; and, under veil of the mysteries of religion, I will open to her the secrets of love.'

'Ah! now I understand:—one of those voluptuous banquets that, despite our dull vows of mortified coldness, we, the priests of Isis, have shared at thy house.'

'No, no! Thinkest thou her chaste eyes are ripe for such scenes? No; but first we must ensnare the brother—an easier task. Listen to me, while I give you my instructions.'

Chapter V
MORE OF THE FLOWER-GIRL. THE PROGRESS OF LOVE

THE sun shone gaily into that beautiful chamber in the house of Glaucus, which I have before said is now called the 'Room of Leda'. The morning rays entered through rows of small casements at the higher part of the room, and through the door which opened on the garden, that answered to the inhabitants of the southern cities the same purpose that a greenhouse or conservatory does to us. The size of the garden did not adapt it for exercise, but the various and fragrant plants with which it was filled gave a luxury to that indolence so dear to the dwellers in a sunny clime. And now the odorous, fanned by a gentle wind creeping from the adjacent sea, scattered themselves over that chamber, whose walls vied with the richest colors of the most glowing flowers. Besides the gem of the room—the painting of Leda and Tyndarus—in the centre of each compartment of the walls were set other pictures of exquisite beauty. In one you saw Cupid leaning on the knees of Venus; in another Ariadne sleeping on the beach, unconscious of the perfidy of Theseus. Merrily the sunbeams played to and fro on the tessellated floor and the brilliant walls—far more happily came the rays of joy to the heart of the young Glaucus.

'I have seen her, then,' said he, as he paced that narrow chamber—'I have heard her—nay, I have spoken to her again—I have listened to the music of her song, and she sung of glory and of Greece. I have discovered the long-sought idol of my dreams; and like the Cyprian sculptor, I have breathed life into my own imaginings.'

Longer, perhaps, had been the enamoured soliloquy of Glaucus, but at that moment a shadow darkened the threshold of the chamber, and a young female, still half a child in years, broke upon his solitude. She was dressed simply in a white tunic, which reached from the neck to the ankles; under her arm she bore a basket of flowers, and in the other hand she held a bronze water-vase; her features were more formed than exactly became her years, yet they were soft and feminine in their outline, and without being beautiful in themselves, they were almost made so by their beauty of expression; there was something ineffably gentle, and you would say patient, in her aspect. A look of resigned sorrow, of tranquil endurance, had banished the smile, but not the sweetness, from her lips; something timid and cautious in her step—something wandering in her eyes, led you to suspect the affliction which she had suffered from her birth—she was blind; but in the orbs themselves there was no visible defect—their melancholy and subdued light was clear, cloudless, and serene. 'They tell me that Glaucus is here,' said she; 'may I come in?'

'Ah, my Nydia,' said the Greek, 'is that you I knew you would not neglect my invitation.'

'Glaucus did but justice to himself,' answered Nydia, with a blush; 'for he has always been kind to the poor blind girl.'

'Who could be otherwise?' said Glaucus, tenderly, and in the voice of a compassionate brother.

Nydia sighed and paused before she resumed, without replying to his remark. 'You have but lately returned?'

'This is the sixth sun that hath shone upon me at Pompeii.'

'And you are well? Ah, I need not ask—for who that sees the earth, which they tell me is so beautiful, can be ill?'

'I am well. And you, Nydia—how you have grown! Next year you will be thinking what answer to make your lovers.'

A second blush passed over the cheek of Nydia, but this time she frowned as she blushed. 'I have brought you some flowers,' said she, without replying to a remark that she seemed to resent; and feeling about the room till she found the table that stood by Glaucus, she laid the basket upon it: 'they are poor, but they are fresh-gathered.'

'They might come from Flora herself,' said he, kindly; 'and I renew again my vow to the Graces, that I will wear no other garlands while thy hands can weave me such as these.'

'And how find you the flowers in your viridarium?—are they thriving?'

'Wonderfully so—the Lares themselves must have tended them.'

'Ah, now you give me pleasure; for I came, as often as I could steal the leisure, to water and tend them in your absence.'

'How shall I thank thee, fair Nydia?' said the Greek. 'Glaucus little dreamed that he left one memory so watchful over his favorites at Pompeii.'

The hand of the child trembled, and her breast heaved beneath her tunic. She turned round in embarrassment. 'The sun is hot for the poor flowers,' said she, 'to-day and they will miss me; for I have been ill lately, and it is nine days since I visited them.'

'Ill, Nydia!—yet your cheek has more color than it had last year.'

'I am often ailing,' said the blind girl, touchingly; 'and as I grow up I grieve more that I am blind. But now to the flowers!' So saying, she made a slight reverence with her head, and passing into the viridarium, busied herself with watering the flowers.

'Poor Nydia,' thought Glaucus, gazing on her; 'thine is a hard doom! Thou seest not the earth —nor the sun—nor the ocean—nor the stars—above all, thou canst not behold Ione.'

At that last thought his mind flew back to the past evening, and was a second time disturbed in its reveries by the entrance of Clodius. It was a proof how much a single evening had sufficed to increase and to refine the love of the Athenian for Ione, that whereas he had confided to Clodius the secret of his first interview with her, and the effect it had produced on him, he now felt an invincible aversion even to mention to him her name. He had seen Ione, bright, pure, unsullied, in the midst of the gayest and most profligate gallants of Pompeii, charming rather than awing the boldest into respect, and changing the very nature of the most sensual and the least ideal—as by her intellectual and refining spells she reversed the fable of Circe, and converted the animals into men. They who could not understand her soul were made spiritual, as it were, by the magic of her beauty—they who had no heart for poetry had ears, at least, for the melody of her voice. Seeing her thus surrounded, purifying and brightening all things with her presence, Glaucus almost for the first time felt the nobleness of his own nature—he felt how unworthy of the goddess of his dreams had been his companions and his pursuits. A veil seemed lifted from his eyes; he saw that immeasurable distance between himself and his associates which the deceiving mists of pleasure had hitherto concealed; he was refined by a sense of his courage in aspiring to Ione. He felt that henceforth it was his destiny to look upward and to soar. He could no longer breathe that name, which sounded to the sense of his ardent fancy as something sacred and divine, to lewd and vulgar ears. She was no longer the beautiful girl once seen and passionately remembered—she was already the mistress, the divinity of his soul. This feeling who has not experienced?—If thou hast not, then thou hast never loved.

When Clodius therefore spoke to him in affected transport of the beauty of Ione, Glaucus felt only resentment and disgust that such lips should dare to praise her; he answered coldly, and the Roman imagined that his passion was cured instead of heightened. Clodius scarcely regretted it, for he was anxious that Glaucus should marry an heiress yet more richly endowed—Julia, the daughter of the wealthy Diomed, whose gold the gamester imagined he could readily divert into his own coffers. Their conversation did not flow with its usual ease; and no sooner had Clodius left him than Glaucus bent his way to the house of Ione. In passing by the threshold he again encountered Nydia, who had finished her graceful task. She knew his step on the instant.

'You are early abroad?' said she.

'Yes; for the skies of Campania rebuke the sluggard who neglects them.'

'Ah, would I could see them!' murmured the blind girl, but so low that Glaucus did not overhear the complaint.

The Thessalian lingered on the threshold a few moments, and then guiding her steps by a long staff, which she used with great dexterity, she took her way homeward. She soon turned from the more gaudy streets, and entered a quarter of the town but little loved by the decorous and the sober. But from the low and rude evidences of vice around her she was saved by her misfortune. And at that hour the streets were quiet and silent, nor was her youthful ear shocked by the sounds which too often broke along the obscene and obscure haunts she patiently and sadly traversed.

She knocked at the back-door of a sort of tavern; it opened, and a rude voice bade her give an account of the sesterces. Ere she could reply, another voice, less vulgarly accented, said:

'Never mind those petty profits, my Burbo. The girl's voice will be wanted again soon at our rich friend's revels; and he pays, as thou knowest, pretty high for his nightingales' tongues.

'Oh, I hope not—I trust not,' cried Nydia, trembling. 'I will beg from sunrise to sunset, but send me not there.'

'And why?' asked the same voice.

'Because—because I am young, and delicately born, and the female companions I meet there are not fit associates for one who—who…'

'Is a slave in the house of Burbo,' returned the voice ironically, and with a coarse laugh.

The Thessalian put down the flowers, and, leaning her face on her hands, wept silently.

Meanwhile, Glaucus sought the house of the beautiful Neapolitan. He found Ione sitting amidst her attendants, who were at work around her. Her harp stood at her side, for Ione herself was unusually idle, perhaps unusually thoughtful, that day. He thought her even more beautiful by the morning light and in her simple robe, than amidst the blazing lamps, and decorated with the costly jewels of the previous night: not the less so from a certain paleness that overspread her transparent hues—not the less so from the blush that mounted over them when he approached. Accustomed to flatter, flattery died upon his lips when he addressed Ione. He felt it beneath her to utter the homage which every look conveyed. They spoke of Greece; this was a theme on which Ione loved rather to listen than to converse: it was a theme on which the Greek could have been eloquent for ever. He described to her the silver olive groves that yet clad the banks of Ilyssus, and the temples, already despoiled of half their glories—but how beautiful in decay! He looked back on the melancholy city of Harmodius the free, and Pericles the magnificent, from the height of that distant memory, which mellowed into one hazy light all the ruder and darker shades. He had seen the land of poetry chiefly in the poetical age of early youth; and the associations of patriotism were blended with those of the flush and spring of life. And Ione listened to him, absorbed and mute; dearer were those accents, and those descriptions, than all the prodigal adulation of her numberless adorers. Was it a sin to love her countryman? she loved Athens in him—the gods of her race, the land of her dreams, spoke to her in his voice! From that time they daily saw each other. At the cool of the evening they made excursions on the placid sea. By night they met again in Ione's porticoes and halls. Their love was sudden, but it was strong; it filled all the sources of their life. Heart—brain—sense—imagination, all were its ministers and priests. As you take some obstacle from two objects that have a mutual attraction, they met, and united at once; their wonder was, that they had lived separate so long. And it was natural that they should so love. Young, beautiful, and gifted—of the same birth, and the same soul—there was poetry in their very union. They imagined the heavens smiled upon their affection. As the persecuted seek refuge at the shrine, so they recognized in the altar of their love an asylum from the sorrows of earth; they covered it with flowers—they knew not of the serpents that lay coiled behind.

One evening, the fifth after their first meeting at Pompeii, Glaucus and Ione, with a small party of chosen friends, were returning from an excursion round the bay; their vessel skimmed lightly over the twilight waters, whose lucid mirror was only broken by the dripping oars. As the rest of the party conversed gaily with each other, Glaucus lay at the feet of Ione, and he would have looked up in her face, but he did not dare. Ione broke the pause between them.

'My poor brother,' said she, sighing, 'how once he would have enjoyed this hour!'

'Your brother!' said Glaucus; 'I have not seen him. Occupied with you, I have thought of nothing else, or I should have asked if that was not your brother for whose companionship you left me at the Temple of Minerva, in Neapolis?'

'It was.'

'And is he here?'

'He is.

'At Pompeii! and not constantly with you? Impossible!'

'He has other duties,' answered Ione, sadly; 'he is a priest of Isis.'

'So young, too; and that priesthood, in its laws at least, so severe!' said the warm and bright-hearted Greek, in surprise and pity. 'What could have been his inducement?'

'He was always enthusiastic and fervent in religious devotion: and the eloquence of an Egyptian —our friend and guardian—kindled in him the pious desire to consecrate his life to the most mystic of our deities. Perhaps in the intenseness of his zeal, he found in the severity of that peculiar priesthood its peculiar attraction.'

'And he does not repent his choice?—I trust he is happy.'

Ione sighed deeply, and lowered her veil over her eyes.

'I wish,' said she, after a pause, 'that he had not been so hasty. Perhaps, like all who expect too much, he is revolted too easily!'

'Then he is not happy in his new condition. And this Egyptian, was he a priest himself? was he interested in recruits to the sacred band?

'No. His main interest was in our happiness. He thought he promoted that of my brother. We were left orphans.'

'Like myself,' said Glaucus, with a deep meaning in his voice.

Ione cast down her eyes as she resumed:

'And Arbaces sought to supply the place of our parent. You must know him. He loves genius.'

'Arbaces! I know him already; at least, we speak when we meet. But for your praise I would not seek to know more of him. My heart inclines readily to most of my kind. But that dark Egyptian, with his gloomy brow and icy smiles, seems to me to sadden the very sun. One would think that, like Epimenides, the Cretan, he had spent forty years in a cave, and had found something unnatural in the daylight ever afterwards.'

'Yet, like Epimenides, he is kind, and wise, and gentle,' answered Ione.

'Oh, happy that he has thy praise! He needs no other virtues to make him dear to me.'

'His calm, his coldness,' said Ione, evasively pursuing the subject, 'are perhaps but the exhaustion of past sufferings; as yonder mountain (and she pointed to Vesuvius), which we see dark and tranquil in the distance, once nursed the fires for ever quenched.'

They both gazed on the mountain as Ione said these words; the rest of the sky was bathed in rosy and tender hues, but over that grey summit, rising amidst the woods and vineyards that then clomb half-way up the ascent, there hung a black and ominous cloud, the single frown of the landscape. A sudden and unaccountable gloom came over each as they thus gazed; and in that sympathy which love had already taught them, and which bade them, in the slightest shadows of emotion, the faintest presentiment of evil, turn for refuge to each other, their gaze at the same moment left the mountain, and full of unimaginable tenderness, met. What need had they of words to say they loved?

Chapter VI

THE FOWLER SNARES AGAIN THE BIRD THAT HAD JUST ESCAPED, AND SETS HIS NETS FOR A NEW VICTIM.

IN the history I relate, the events are crowded and rapid as those of the drama. I write of an epoch in which days sufficed to ripen the ordinary fruits of years.

Meanwhile, Arbaces had not of late much frequented the house of Ione; and when he had visited her he had not encountered Glaucus, nor knew he, as yet, of that love which had so suddenly sprung up between himself and his designs. In his interest for the brother of Ione, he had been forced, too, a little while, to suspend his interest in Ione herself. His pride and his selfishness were aroused and alarmed at the sudden change which had come over the spirit of the youth. He trembled lest he himself should lose a docile pupil, and Isis an enthusiastic servant. Apaecides had ceased to seek or to consult him. He was rarely to be found; he turned sullenly from the Egyptian—nay, he fled when he perceived him in the distance. Arbaces was one of those haughty and powerful spirits accustomed to master others; he chafed at the notion that one once his own should ever elude his grasp. He swore inly that Apaecides should not escape him.

It was with this resolution that he passed through a thick grove in the city, which lay between his house and that of Ione, in his way to the latter; and there, leaning against a tree, and gazing on the ground, he came unawares on the young priest of Isis.

'Apaecides!' said he—and he laid his hand affectionately on the young man's shoulder.

The priest started; and his first instinct seemed to be that of flight. 'My son,' said the Egyptian, 'what has chanced that you desire to shun me?'

Apaecides remained silent and sullen, looking down on the earth, as his lips quivered, and his breast heaved with emotion.

'Speak to me, my friend,' continued the Egyptian. 'Speak. Something burdens thy spirit. What hast thou to reveal?'

'To thee—nothing.'

'And why is it to me thou art thus unconfidential?'

'Because thou hast been my enemy.'

'Let us confer,' said Arbaces, in a low voice; and drawing the reluctant arm of the priest in his own, he led him to one of the seats which were scattered within the grove. They sat down—and in those gloomy forms there was something congenial to the shade and solitude of the place.

Apaecides was in the spring of his years, yet he seemed to have exhausted even more of life than the Egyptian; his delicate and regular features were worn and colorless; his eyes were hollow, and shone with a brilliant and feverish glare: his frame bowed prematurely, and in his hands, which were small to effeminacy, the blue and swollen veins indicated the lassitude and weakness of the relaxed fibres. You saw in his face a strong resemblance to Ione, but the expression was altogether different from that majestic and spiritual calm which breathed so divine and classical a repose over his sister's beauty. In her, enthusiasm was visible, but it seemed always suppressed and restrained; this made the charm and sentiment of her countenance; you longed to awaken a spirit which reposed, but evidently did not sleep. In Apaecides the whole aspect betokened the fervor and passion of his temperament, and the intellectual portion of his nature seemed, by the wild fire of the eyes, the great breadth of the temples when compared with the height of the brow, the trembling restlessness of the lips, to be swayed and tyrannized over by the imaginative and ideal. Fancy, with the sister, had stopped short at the golden goal of poetry; with the brother, less happy and less restrained, it had wandered into visions more intangible and unembodied; and the faculties which gave genius to the one threatened madness to the other.

'You say I have been your enemy,' said Arbaces, 'I know the cause of that unjust accusation: I have placed you amidst the priests of Isis—you are revolted at their trickeries and imposture—you think that I too have deceived you—the purity of your mind is offended—you imagine that I am one of the deceitful…'

'You knew the jugglings of that impious craft,' answered Apaecides; 'why did you disguise them from me?—When you excited my desire to devote myself to the office whose garb I bear, you spoke to me of the holy life of men resigning themselves to knowledge—you have given me for companions an ignorant and sensual herd, who have no knowledge but that of the grossest frauds; you spoke to me of men sacrificing the earthlier pleasures to the sublime cultivation of virtue—you place me amongst men reeking with all the filthiness of vice; you spoke to me of the friends, the enlighteners of our common kind—I see but their cheats and deluders! Oh! it was basely done!—you have robbed me of the glory of youth, of the convictions of virtue, of the sanctifying thirst after wisdom. Young as I was, rich, fervent, the sunny pleasures of earth before me, I resigned all without a sign, nay, with happiness and exultation, in the thought that I resigned them for the abstruse mysteries of diviner wisdom, for the companionship of gods—for the revelations of Heaven—and now—now…'

Convulsive sobs checked the priest's voice; he covered his face with his hands, and large tears forced themselves through the wasted fingers, and ran profusely down his vest.

'What I promised to thee, that will I give, my friend, my pupil: these have been but trials to thy virtue—it comes forth the brighter for thy novitiate—think no more of those dull cheats—assort no more with those menials of the goddess, the atrienses of her hall—you are worthy to enter into the penetralia. I henceforth will be your priest, your guide, and you who now curse my friendship shall live to bless it.'

The young man lifted up his head, and gazed with a vacant and wondering stare upon the Egyptian.

'Listen to me,' continued Arbaces, in an earnest and solemn voice, casting first his searching eyes around to see that they were still alone. 'From Egypt came all the knowledge of the world; from Egypt came the lore of Athens, and the profound policy of Crete; from Egypt came those early and mysterious tribes which (long before the hordes of Romulus swept over the plains of Italy, and in the eternal cycle of events drove back civilization into barbarism and darkness) possessed all the arts of wisdom and the graces of intellectual life. From Egypt came the rites and the grandeur of that solemn Caere, whose inhabitants taught their iron vanquishers of Rome all that they yet know of elevated in religion and sublime in worship. And how deemest thou, young man, that that Egypt, the mother of countless nations, achieved her greatness, and soared to her cloud-capt eminence of wisdom?—It was the result of a profound and holy policy. Your modern nations owe their greatness to Egypt—Egypt her greatness to her priests. Rapt in themselves, coveting a sway over the nobler part of man, his soul and his belief, those ancient ministers of God were inspired with the grandest thought that ever exalted mortals. From the revolutions of the stars, from the seasons of the earth, from the round and unvarying circle of human destinies, they devised an august allegory; they made it gross and palpable to the vulgar by the signs of gods and goddesses, and that which in reality was Government they named Religion. Isis is a fable—start not!—that for which Isis is a type is a reality, an immortal being; Isis is nothing. Nature, which she represents, is the mother of all things—dark, ancient, inscrutable, save to the gifted few. "None among mortals hath ever lifted up my veil," so saith the Isis that you adore; but to the wise that veil hath been removed, and we have stood face to face with the solemn loveliness of Nature. The priests then were the benefactors, the civilizers of mankind; true, they were also cheats, impostors if you will. But think you, young man, that if they had not deceived their kind they could have served them? The ignorant and servile vulgar must be blinded to attain to their proper good; they would not believe a maxim—they revere an oracle. The Emperor of Rome sways the vast and various tribes of earth, and harmonizes the conflicting and disunited elements; thence come peace, order, law, the blessings of life. Think you it is the man, the emperor, that thus sways?—no, it is the

pomp, the awe, the majesty that surround him—these are his impostures, his delusions; our oracles and our divinations, our rites and our ceremonies, are the means of our sovereignty and the engines of our power. They are the same means to the same end, the welfare and harmony of mankind. You listen to me rapt and intent—the light begins to dawn upon you.'

Apaecides remained silent, but the changes rapidly passing over his speaking countenance betrayed the effect produced upon him by the words of the Egyptian—words made tenfold more eloquent by the voice, the aspect, and the manner of the man.

'While, then,' resumed Arbaces, 'our fathers of the Nile thus achieved the first elements by whose life chaos is destroyed, namely, the obedience and reverence of the multitude for the few, they drew from their majestic and starred meditations that wisdom which was no delusion: they invented the codes and regularities of law—the arts and glories of existence. They asked belief; they returned the gift by civilization. Were not their very cheats a virtue! Trust me, whosoever in yon far heavens of a diviner and more beneficent nature look down upon our world, smile approvingly on the wisdom which has worked such ends. But you wish me to apply these generalities to yourself; I hasten to obey the wish. The altars of the goddess of our ancient faith must be served, and served too by others than the stolid and soulless things that are but as pegs and hooks whereon to hang the fillet and the robe. Remember two sayings of Sextus the Pythagorean, sayings borrowed from the lore of Egypt. The first is, "Speak not of God to the multitude"; the second is, "The man worthy of God is a god among men." As Genius gave to the ministers of Egypt worship, that empire in late ages so fearfully decayed, thus by Genius only can the dominion be restored. I saw in you, Apaecides, a pupil worthy of my lessons—a minister worthy of the great ends which may yet be wrought; your energy, your talents, your purity of faith, your earnestness of enthusiasm, all fitted you for that calling which demands so imperiously high and ardent qualities: I fanned, therefore, your sacred desires; I stimulated you to the step you have taken. But you blame me that I did not reveal to you the little souls and the juggling tricks of your companions. Had I done so, Apaecides, I had defeated my own object; your noble nature would have at once revolted, and Isis would have lost her priest.'

Apaecides groaned aloud. The Egyptian continued, without heeding the interruption.

'I placed you, therefore, without preparation, in the temple; I left you suddenly to discover and to be sickened by all those mummeries which dazzle the herd. I desired that you should perceive how those engines are moved by which the fountain that refreshes the world casts its waters in the air. It was the trial ordained of old to all our priests. They who accustom themselves to the impostures of the vulgar, are left to practise them—for those like you, whose higher natures demand higher pursuit, religion opens more god-like secrets. I am pleased to find in you the character I had expected. You have taken the vows; you cannot recede. Advance—I will be your guide.'

'And what wilt thou teach me, O singular and fearful man? New cheats—new…'

'No—I have thrown thee into the abyss of disbelief; I will lead thee now to the eminence of faith. Thou hast seen the false types: thou shalt learn now the realities they represent. There is no shadow, Apaecides, without its substance. Come to me this night. Your hand.'

Impressed, excited, bewildered by the language of the Egyptian, Apaecides gave him his hand, and master and pupil parted.

It was true that for Apaecides there was no retreat. He had taken the vows of celibacy: he had devoted himself to a life that at present seemed to possess all the austerities of fanaticism, without any of the consolations of belief It was natural that he should yet cling to a yearning desire to reconcile himself to an irrevocable career. The powerful and profound mind of the Egyptian yet claimed an empire over his young imagination; excited him with vague conjecture, and kept him alternately vibrating between hope and fear.

Meanwhile Arbaces pursued his slow and stately way to the house of Ione. As he entered the tablinum, he heard a voice from the porticoes of the peristyle beyond, which, musical as it was, sounded displeasingly on his ear—it was the voice of the young and beautiful Glaucus, and for the

first time an involuntary thrill of jealousy shot through the breast of the Egyptian. On entering the peristyle, he found Glaucus seated by the side of Ione. The fountain in the odorous garden cast up its silver spray in the air, and kept a delicious coolness in the midst of the sultry noon. The handmaids, almost invariably attendant on Ione, who with her freedom of life preserved the most delicate modesty, sat at a little distance; by the feet of Glaucus lay the lyre on which he had been playing to Ione one of the Lesbian airs. The scene—the group before Arbaces, was stamped by that peculiar and refined ideality of poesy which we yet, not erroneously, imagine to be the distinction of the ancients—the marble columns, the vases of flowers, the statue, white and tranquil, closing every vista; and, above all, the two living forms, from which a sculptor might have caught either inspiration or despair!

Arbaces, pausing for a moment, gazed on the pair with a brow from which all the usual stern serenity had fled; he recovered himself by an effort, and slowly approached them, but with a step so soft and echoless, that even the attendants heard him not; much less Ione and her lover.

'And yet,' said Glaucus, 'it is only before we love that we imagine that our poets have truly described the passion; the instant the sun rises, all the stars that had shone in his absence vanish into air. The poets exist only in the night of the heart; they are nothing to us when we feel the full glory of the god.'

'A gentle and most glowing image, noble Glaucus.'

Both started, and recognized behind the seat of Ione the cold and sarcastic face of the Egyptian.

'You are a sudden guest,' said Glaucus, rising, and with a forced smile.

'So ought all to be who know they are welcome,' returned Arbaces, seating himself, and motioning to Glaucus to do the same.

'I am glad,' said Ione, 'to see you at length together; for you are suited to each other, and you are formed to be friends.'

'Give me back some fifteen years of life,' replied the Egyptian, 'before you can place me on an equality with Glaucus. Happy should I be to receive his friendship; but what can I give him in return? Can I make to him the same confidences that he would repose in me—of banquets and garlands—of Parthian steeds, and the chances of the dice? these pleasures suit his age, his nature, his career: they are not for mine.'

So saying, the artful Egyptian looked down and sighed; but from the corner of his eye he stole a glance towards Ione, to see how she received these insinuations of the pursuits of her visitor. Her countenance did not satisfy him. Glaucus, slightly coloring, hastened gaily to reply. Nor was he, perhaps, without the wish in his turn to disconcert and abash the Egyptian.

'You are right, wise Arbaces,' said he; 'we can esteem each other, but we cannot be friends. My banquets lack the secret salt which, according to rumor, gives such zest to your own. And, by Hercules! when I have reached your age, if I, like you, may think it wise to pursue the pleasures of manhood, like you, I shall be doubtless sarcastic on the gallantries of youth.'

The Egyptian raised his eyes to Glaucus with a sudden and piercing glance.

'I do not understand you,' said he, coldly; 'but it is the custom to consider that wit lies in obscurity.' He turned from Glaucus as he spoke, with a scarcely perceptible sneer of contempt, and after a moment's pause addressed himself to Ione.

'I have not, beautiful Ione,' said he, 'been fortunate enough to find you within doors the last two or three times that I have visited your vestibule.'

'The smoothness of the sea has tempted me much from home,' replied Ione, with a little embarrassment.

The embarrassment did not escape Arbaces; but without seeming to heed it, he replied with a smile: 'You know the old poet says, that "Women should keep within doors, and there converse."'

'The poet was a cynic,' said Glaucus, 'and hated women.'

'He spoke according to the customs of his country, and that country is your boasted Greece.'

'To different periods different customs. Had our forefathers known Ione, they had made a different law.'

'Did you learn these pretty gallantries at Rome?' said Arbaces, with ill-suppressed emotion.

'One certainly would not go for gallantries to Egypt,' retorted Glaucus, playing carelessly with his chain.

'Come, come,' said Ione, hastening to interrupt a conversation which she saw, to her great distress, was so little likely to cement the intimacy she had desired to effect between Glaucus and her friend, 'Arbaces must not be so hard upon his poor pupil. An orphan, and without a mother's care, I may be to blame for the independent and almost masculine liberty of life that I have chosen: yet it is not greater than the Roman women are accustomed to—it is not greater than the Grecian ought to be. Alas! is it only to be among men that freedom and virtue are to be deemed united? Why should the slavery that destroys you be considered the only method to preserve us? Ah! believe me, it has been the great error of men—and one that has worked bitterly on their destinies—to imagine that the nature of women is (I will not say inferior, that may be so, but) so different from their own, in making laws unfavorable to the intellectual advancement of women. Have they not, in so doing, made laws against their children, whom women are to rear?—against the husbands, of whom women are to be the friends, nay, sometimes the advisers?' Ione stopped short suddenly, and her face was suffused with the most enchanting blushes. She feared lest her enthusiasm had led her too far; yet she feared the austere Arbaces less than the courteous Glaucus, for she loved the last, and it was not the custom of the Greeks to allow their women (at least such of their women as they most honored) the same liberty and the same station as those of Italy enjoyed. She felt, therefore, a thrill of delight as Glaucus earnestly replied:

'Ever mayst thou think thus, Ione—ever be your pure heart your unerring guide! Happy it had been for Greece if she had given to the chaste the same intellectual charms that are so celebrated amongst the less worthy of her women. No state falls from freedom—from knowledge, while your sex smile only on the free, and by appreciating, encourage the wise.'

Arbaces was silent, for it was neither his part to sanction the sentiment of Glaucus, nor to condemn that of Ione, and, after a short and embarrassed conversation, Glaucus took his leave of Ione.

When he was gone, Arbaces, drawing his seat nearer to the fair Neapolitan's, said in those bland and subdued tones, in which he knew so well how to veil the mingled art and fierceness of his character:

'Think not, my sweet pupil, if so I may call you, that I wish to shackle that liberty you adorn while you assume: but which, if not greater, as you rightly observe, than that possessed by the Roman women, must at least be accompanied by great circumspection, when arrogated by one unmarried. Continue to draw crowds of the gay, the brilliant, the wise themselves, to your feet—continue to charm them with the conversation of an Aspasia, the music of an Erinna—but reflect, at least, on those censorious tongues which can so easily blight the tender reputation of a maiden; and while you provoke admiration, give, I beseech you, no victory to envy.'

'What mean you, Arbaces?' said Ione, in an alarmed and trembling voice: 'I know you are my friend, that you desire only my honour and my welfare. What is it you would say?'

'Your friend—ah, how sincerely! May I speak then as a friend, without reserve and without offence?'

'I beseech you do so.'

'This young profligate, this Glaucus, how didst thou know him? Hast thou seen him often?' And as Arbaces spoke, he fixed his gaze steadfastly upon Ione, as if he sought to penetrate into her soul.

Recoiling before that gaze, with a strange fear which she could not explain, the Neapolitan answered with confusion and hesitation: 'He was brought to my house as a countryman of my father's, and I may say of mine. I have known him only within this last week or so: but why these questions?'

'Forgive me,' said Arbaces; 'I thought you might have known him longer. Base insinuator that he is!'

'How! what mean you? Why that term?'

'It matters not: let me not rouse your indignation against one who does not deserve so grave an honour.'

'I implore you speak. What has Glaucus insinuated? or rather, in what do you suppose he has offended?'

Smothering his resentment at the last part of Ione's question, Arbaces continued: 'You know his pursuits, his companions his habits; the comissatio and the alea (the revel and the dice) make his occupation; and amongst the associates of vice how can he dream of virtue?'

'Still you speak riddles. By the gods! I entreat you, say the worst at once.'

'Well, then, it must be so. Know, my Ione, that it was but yesterday that Glaucus boasted openly —yes, in the public baths—of your love to him. He said it amused him to take advantage of it. Nay, I will do him justice, he praised your beauty. Who could deny it? But he laughed scornfully when his Clodius, or his Lepidus, asked him if he loved you enough for marriage, and when he purposed to adorn his door-posts with flowers?'

'Impossible! How heard you this base slander?'

'Nay, would you have me relate to you all the comments of the insolent coxcombs with which the story has circled through the town? Be assured that I myself disbelieved at first, and that I have now painfully been convinced by several ear-witnesses of the truth of what I have reluctantly told thee.'

Ione sank back, and her face was whiter than the pillar against which she leaned for support.

'I own it vexed—it irritated me, to hear your name thus lightly pitched from lip to lip, like some mere dancing-girl's fame. I hastened this morning to seek and to warn you. I found Glaucus here. I was stung from my self-possession. I could not conceal my feelings; nay, I was uncourteous in thy presence. Canst thou forgive thy friend, Ione?'

Ione placed her hand in his, but replied not.

'Think no more of this,' said he; 'but let it be a warning voice, to tell thee how much prudence thy lot requires. It cannot hurt thee, Ione, for a moment; for a gay thing like this could never have been honored by even a serious thought from Ione. These insults only wound when they come from one we love; far different indeed is he whom the lofty Ione shall stoop to love.'

'Love!' muttered Ione, with an hysterical laugh. 'Ay, indeed.'

It is not without interest to observe in those remote times, and under a social system so widely different from the modern, the same small causes that ruffle and interrupt the 'course of love', which operate so commonly at this day—the same inventive jealousy, the same cunning slander, the same crafty and fabricated retailings of petty gossip, which so often now suffice to break the ties of the truest love, and counteract the tenor of circumstances most apparently propitious. When the bark sails on over the smoothest wave, the fable tells us of the diminutive fish that can cling to the keel and arrest its progress: so is it ever with the great passions of mankind; and we should paint life but ill if, even in times the most prodigal of romance, and of the romance of which we most largely avail ourselves, we did not also describe the mechanism of those trivial and household springs of mischief which we see every day at work in our chambers and at our hearths. It is in these, the lesser intrigues of life, that we mostly find ourselves at home with the past.

Most cunningly had the Egyptian appealed to Ione's ruling foible—most dexterously had he applied the poisoned dart to her pride. He fancied he had arrested what he hoped, from the shortness of the time she had known Glaucus, was, at most, but an incipient fancy; and hastening to change the subject, he now led her to talk of her brother. Their conversation did not last long. He left her, resolved not again to trust so much to absence, but to visit—to watch her—every day.

No sooner had his shadow glided from her presence, than woman's pride—her sex's dissimulation—deserted his intended victim, and the haughty Ione burst into passionate tears.

Chapter VII

THE GAY LIFE OF THE POMPEIAN LOUNGER. A MINIATURE LIKENESS OF THE ROMAN BATHS.

WHEN Glaucus left Ione, he felt as if he trod upon air. In the interview with which he had just been blessed, he had for the first time gathered from her distinctly that his love was not unwelcome to, and would not be unrewarded by, her. This hope filled him with a rapture for which earth and heaven seemed too narrow to afford a vent. Unconscious of the sudden enemy he had left behind, and forgetting not only his taunts but his very existence, Glaucus passed through the gay streets, repeating to himself, in the wantonness of joy, the music of the soft air to which Ione had listened with such intentness; and now he entered the Street of Fortune, with its raised footpath—its houses painted without, and the open doors admitting the view of the glowing frescoes within. Each end of the street was adorned with a triumphal arch: and as Glaucus now came before the Temple of Fortune, the jutting portico of that beautiful fane (which is supposed to have been built by one of the family of Cicero, perhaps by the orator himself) imparted a dignified and venerable feature to a scene otherwise more brilliant than lofty in its character. That temple was one of the most graceful specimens of Roman architecture. It was raised on a somewhat lofty podium; and between two flights of steps ascending to a platform stood the altar of the goddess. From this platform another flight of broad stairs led to the portico, from the height of whose fluted columns hung festoons of the richest flowers. On either side the extremities of the temple were placed statues of Grecian workmanship; and at a little distance from the temple rose the triumphal arch crowned with an equestrian statue of Caligula, which was flanked by trophies of bronze. In the space before the temple a lively throng were assembled—some seated on benches and discussing the politics of the empire, some conversing on the approaching spectacle of the amphitheatre. One knot of young men were lauding a new beauty, another discussing the merits of the last play; a third group, more stricken in age, were speculating on the chance of the trade with Alexandria, and amidst these were many merchants in the Eastern costume, whose loose and peculiar robes, painted and gemmed slippers, and composed and serious countenances, formed a striking contrast to the tunicked forms and animated gestures of the Italians. For that impatient and lively people had, as now, a language distinct from speech—a language of signs and motions, inexpressibly significant and vivacious: their descendants retain it, and the learned Jorio hath written a most entertaining work upon that species of hieroglyphical gesticulation.

Sauntering through the crowd, Glaucus soon found himself amidst a group of his merry and dissipated friends.

'Ah!' said Sallust, 'it is a lustrum since I saw you.'

'And how have you spent the lustrum? What new dishes have you discovered?'

'I have been scientific,' returned Sallust, 'and have made some experiments in the feeding of lampreys: I confess I despair of bringing them to the perfection which our Roman ancestors attained.'

'Miserable man! and why?'

'Because,' returned Sallust, with a sigh, 'it is no longer lawful to give them a slave to eat. I am very often tempted to make away with a very fat carptor (butler) whom I possess, and pop him slily into the reservoir. He would give the fish a most oleaginous flavor! But slaves are not slaves nowadays, and have no sympathy with their masters' interest—or Davus would destroy himself to oblige me!'

'What news from Rome?' said Lepidus, as he languidly joined the group.

'The emperor has been giving a splendid supper to the senators,' answered Sallust.

'He is a good creature,' quoth Lepidus; 'they say he never sends a man away without granting his request.'

'Perhaps he would let me kill a slave for my reservoir?' returned Sallust, eagerly.

'Not unlikely,' said Glaucus; 'for he who grants a favor to one Roman, must always do it at the expense of another. Be sure, that for every smile Titus has caused, a hundred eyes have wept.'

'Long live Titus!' cried Pansa, overhearing the emperor's name, as he swept patronizingly through the crowd; 'he has promised my brother a quaestorship, because he had run through his fortune.'

'And wishes now to enrich himself among the people, my Pansa,' said Glaucus.

'Exactly so,' said Pansa.

'That is putting the people to some use,' said Glaucus.

'To be sure, returned Pansa. 'Well, I must go and look after the aerarium—it is a little out of repair'; and followed by a long train of clients, distinguished from the rest of the throng by the togas they wore (for togas, once the sign of freedom in a citizen, were now the badge of servility to a patron), the aedile fidgeted fussily away.

'Poor Pansa!' said Lepidus: 'he never has time for pleasure. Thank Heaven I am not an aedile!'

'Ah, Glaucus! how are you? gay as ever?' said Clodius, joining the group.

'Are you come to sacrifice to Fortune?' said Sallust.

'I sacrifice to her every night,' returned the gamester.

'I do not doubt it. No man has made more victims!'

'By Hercules, a biting speech!' cried Glaucus, laughing.

'The dog's letter is never out of your mouth, Sallust,' said Clodius, angrily: 'you are always snarling.'

'I may well have the dog's letter in my mouth, since, whenever I play with you, I have the dog's throw in my hand,' returned Sallust.

'Hist!' said Glaucus, taking a rose from a flower-girl, who stood beside.

'The rose is the token of silence,' replied Sallust, 'but I love only to see it at the supper-table.'

'Talking of that, Diomed gives a grand feast next week,' said Sallust: 'are you invited, Glaucus?'

'Yes, I received an invitation this morning.'

'And I, too,' said Sallust, drawing a square piece of papyrus from his girdle: 'I see that he asks us an hour earlier than usual: an earnest of something sumptuous.'

'Oh! he is rich as Croesus,' said Clodius; 'and his bill of fare is as long as an epic.'

'Well, let us to the baths,' said Glaucus: 'this is the time when all the world is there; and Fulvius, whom you admire so much, is going to read us his last ode.'

The young men assented readily to the proposal, and they strolled to the baths.

Although the public thermae, or baths, were instituted rather for the poorer citizens than the wealthy (for the last had baths in their own houses), yet, to the crowds of all ranks who resorted to them, it was a favorite place for conversation, and for that indolent lounging so dear to a gay and thoughtless people. The baths at Pompeii differed, of course, in plan and construction from the vast and complicated thermae of Rome; and, indeed, it seems that in each city of the empire there was always some slight modification of arrangement in the general architecture of the public baths. This mightily puzzles the learned—as if architects and fashion were not capricious before the nineteenth century! Our party entered by the principal porch in the Street of Fortune. At the wing of the portico sat the keeper of the baths, with his two boxes before him, one for the money he received, one for the tickets he dispensed. Round the walls of the portico were seats crowded with persons of all ranks; while others, as the regimen of the physicians prescribed, were walking briskly to and fro the portico, stopping every now and then to gaze on the innumerable notices of shows, games, sales, exhibitions, which were painted or inscribed upon the walls. The general subject of conversation was, however, the spectacle announced in the amphitheatre; and each new-comer was fastened upon by a group eager to know if Pompeii had been so fortunate as to produce some monstrous criminal, some happy case of sacrilege or of murder, which would allow the aediles to provide a man for the jaws of the

lion: all other more common exhibitions seemed dull and tame, when compared with the possibility of this fortunate occurrence.

'For my part,' said one jolly-looking man, who was a goldsmith, 'I think the emperor, if he is as good as they say, might have sent us a Jew.'

'Why not take one of the new sect of Nazarenes?' said a philosopher. 'I am not cruel: but an atheist, one who denies Jupiter himself, deserves no mercy.'

'I care not how many gods a man likes to believe in,' said the goldsmith; 'but to deny all gods is something monstrous.'

'Yet I fancy,' said Glaucus, 'that these people are not absolutely atheists. I am told that they believe in a God—nay, in a future state.'

'Quite a mistake, my dear Glaucus,' said the philosopher. 'I have conferred with them—they laughed in my face when I talked of Pluto and Hades.'

'O ye gods!' exclaimed the goldsmith, in horror; 'are there any of these wretches in Pompeii?'

'I know there are a few: but they meet so privately that it is impossible to discover who they are.'

As Glaucus turned away, a sculptor, who was a great enthusiast in his art, looked after him admiringly.

'Ah!' said he, 'if we could get him on the arena—there would be a model for you! What limbs! what a head! he ought to have been a gladiator! A subject—a subject—worthy of our art! Why don't they give him to the lion?'

Meanwhile Fulvius, the Roman poet, whom his contemporaries declared immortal, and who, but for this history, would never have been heard of in our neglectful age, came eagerly up to Glaucus. 'Oh, my Athenian, my Glaucus, you have come to hear my ode! That is indeed an honour; you, a Greek—to whom the very language of common life is poetry. How I thank you. It is but a trifle; but if I secure your approbation, perhaps I may get an introduction to Titus. Oh, Glaucus! a poet without a patron is an amphora without a label; the wine may be good, but nobody will laud it! And what says Pythagoras?—"Frankincense to the gods, but praise to man." A patron, then, is the poet's priest: he procures him the incense, and obtains him his believers.'

'But all Pompeii is your patron, and every portico an altar in your praise.'

'Ah! the poor Pompeians are very civil—they love to honour merit. But they are only the inhabitants of a petty town—spero meliora! Shall we within?'

'Certainly; we lose time till we hear your poem.'

At this instant there was a rush of some twenty persons from the baths into the portico; and a slave stationed at the door of a small corridor now admitted the poet, Glaucus, Clodius, and a troop of the bard's other friends, into the passage.

'A poor place this, compared with the Roman thermae!' said Lepidus, disdainfully.

'Yet is there some taste in the ceiling,' said Glaucus, who was in a mood to be pleased with everything; pointing to the stars which studded the roof.

Lepidus shrugged his shoulders, but was too languid to reply.

They now entered a somewhat spacious chamber, which served for the purposes of the apodyterium (that is, a place where the bathers prepared themselves for their luxurious ablutions). The vaulted ceiling was raised from a cornice, glowingly colored with motley and grotesque paintings; the ceiling itself was paneled in white compartments bordered with rich crimson; the unsullied and shining floor was paved with white mosaics, and along the walls were ranged benches for the accommodation of the loiterers. This chamber did not possess the numerous and spacious windows which Vitruvius attributes to his more magnificent frigidarium. The Pompeians, as all the southern Italians, were fond of banishing the light of their sultry skies, and combined in their voluptuous associations the idea of luxury with darkness. Two windows of glass alone admitted the soft and shaded ray; and the compartment in which one of these casements was placed was adorned with a large relief of the destruction of the Titans.

In this apartment Fulvius seated himself with a magisterial air, and his audience gathering round him, encouraged him to commence his recital.

The poet did not require much pressing. He drew forth from his vest a roll of papyrus, and after hemming three times, as much to command silence as to clear his voice, he began that wonderful ode, of which, to the great mortification of the author of this history, no single verse can be discovered.

By the plaudits he received, it was doubtless worthy of his fame; and Glaucus was the only listener who did not find it excel the best odes of Horace.

The poem concluded, those who took only the cold bath began to undress; they suspended their garments on hooks fastened in the wall, and receiving, according to their condition, either from their own slaves or those of the thermae, loose robes in exchange, withdrew into that graceful circular building which yet exists, to shame the unlaving posterity of the south.

The more luxurious departed by another door to the tepidarium, a place which was heated to a voluptuous warmth, partly by a movable fireplace, principally by a suspended pavement, beneath which was conducted the caloric of the laconicum.

Here this portion of the intended bathers, after unrobing themselves, remained for some time enjoying the artificial warmth of the luxurious air. And this room, as befitted its important rank in the long process of ablution, was more richly and elaborately decorated than the rest; the arched roof was beautifully carved and painted; the windows above, of ground glass, admitted but wandering and uncertain rays; below the massive cornices were rows of figures in massive and bold relief; the walls glowed with crimson, the pavement was skillfully tessellated in white mosaics. Here the habituated bathers, men who bathed seven times a day, would remain in a state of enervate and speechless lassitude, either before or (mostly) after the water-bath; and many of these victims of the pursuit of health turned their listless eyes on the newcomers, recognizing their friends with a nod, but dreading the fatigue of conversation.

From this place the party again diverged, according to their several fancies, some to the sudatorium, which answered the purpose of our vapor-baths, and thence to the warm-bath itself; those more accustomed to exercise, and capable of dispensing with so cheap a purchase of fatigue, resorted at once to the calidarium, or water-bath.

In order to complete this sketch, and give to the reader an adequate notion of this, the main luxury of the ancients, we will accompany Lepidus, who regularly underwent the whole process, save only the cold bath, which had gone lately out of fashion. Being then gradually warmed in the tepidarium, which has just been described, the delicate steps of the Pompeian elegant were conducted to the sudatorium. Here let the reader depict to himself the gradual process of the vapor-bath, accompanied by an exhalation of spicy perfumes. After our bather had undergone this operation, he was seized by his slaves, who always awaited him at the baths, and the dews of heat were removed by a kind of scraper, which (by the way) a modern traveler has gravely declared to be used only to remove the dirt, not one particle of which could ever settle on the polished skin of the practised bather. Thence, somewhat cooled, he passed into the water-bath, over which fresh perfumes were profusely scattered, and on emerging from the opposite part of the room, a cooling shower played over his head and form. Then wrapping himself in a light robe, he returned once more to the tepidarium, where he found Glaucus, who had not encountered the sudatorium; and now, the main delight and extravagance of the bath commenced. Their slaves anointed the bathers from vials of gold, of alabaster, or of crystal, studded with profusest gems, and containing the rarest unguents gathered from all quarters of the world. The number of these smegmata used by the wealthy would fill a modern volume—especially if the volume were printed by a fashionable publisher; Amaracinum, Megalium, Nardum —omne quod exit in um—while soft music played in an adjacent chamber, and such as used the bath in moderation, refreshed and restored by the grateful ceremony, conversed with all the zest and freshness of rejuvenated life.

'Blessed be he who invented baths!' said Glaucus, stretching himself along one of those bronze seats (then covered with soft cushions) which the visitor to Pompeii sees at this day in that same tepidarium. 'Whether he were Hercules or Bacchus, he deserved deification.'

'But tell me,' said a corpulent citizen, who was groaning and wheezing under the operation of being rubbed down, 'tell me, O Glaucus!—evil chance to thy hands, O slave! why so rough?—tell me—ugh—ugh!—are the baths at Rome really so magnificent?' Glaucus turned, and recognized Diomed, though not without some difficulty, so red and so inflamed were the good man's cheeks by the sudatory and the scraping he had so lately undergone. 'I fancy they must be a great deal finer than these. Eh?' Suppressing a smile, Glaucus replied:

'Imagine all Pompeii converted into baths, and you will then form a notion of the size of the imperial thermae of Rome. But a notion of the size only. Imagine every entertainment for mind and body—enumerate all the gymnastic games our fathers invented—repeat all the books Italy and Greece have produced—suppose places for all these games, admirers for all these works—add to this, baths of the vastest size, the most complicated construction—intersperse the whole with gardens, with theatres, with porticoes, with schools—suppose, in one word, a city of the gods, composed but of palaces and public edifices, and you may form some faint idea of the glories of the great baths of Rome.'

'By Hercules!' said Diomed, opening his eyes, 'why, it would take a man's whole life to bathe!'

'At Rome, it often does so,' replied Glaucus, gravely. 'There are many who live only at the baths. They repair there the first hour in which the doors are opened, and remain till that in which the doors are closed. They seem as if they knew nothing of the rest of Rome, as if they despised all other existence.'

'By Pollux! you amaze me.'

'Even those who bathe only thrice a day contrive to consume their lives in this occupation. They take their exercise in the tennis-court or the porticoes, to prepare them for the first bath; they lounge into the theatre, to refresh themselves after it. They take their prandium under the trees, and think over their second bath. By the time it is prepared, the prandium is digested. From the second bath they stroll into one of the peristyles, to hear some new poet recite: or into the library, to sleep over an old one. Then comes the supper, which they still consider but a part of the bath: and then a third time they bathe again, as the best place to converse with their friends.'

'Per Hercle! but we have their imitators at Pompeii.'

'Yes, and without their excuse. The magnificent voluptuaries of the Roman baths are happy: they see nothing but gorgeousness and splendor; they visit not the squalid parts of the city; they know not that there is poverty in the world. All Nature smiles for them, and her only frown is the last one which sends them to bathe in Cocytus. Believe me, they are your only true philosophers.'

While Glaucus was thus conversing, Lepidus, with closed eyes and scarce perceptible breath, was undergoing all the mystic operations, not one of which he ever suffered his attendants to omit. After the perfumes and the unguents, they scattered over him the luxurious powder which prevented any further accession of heat: and this being rubbed away by the smooth surface of the pumice, he began to indue, not the garments he had put off, but those more festive ones termed 'the synthesis', with which the Romans marked their respect for the coming ceremony of supper, if rather, from its hour (three o'clock in our measurement of time), it might not be more fitly denominated dinner. This done, he at length opened his eyes and gave signs of returning life.

At the same time, too, Sallust betokened by a long yawn the evidence of existence.

'It is supper time,' said the epicure; 'you, Glaucus and Lepidus, come and sup with me.'

'Recollect you are all three engaged to my house next week,' cried Diomed, who was mightily proud of the acquaintance of men of fashion.

'Ah, ah! we recollect,' said Sallust; 'the seat of memory, my Diomed, is certainly in the stomach.'

Passing now once again into the cooler air, and so into the street, our gallants of that day concluded the ceremony of a Pompeian bath.

Chapter VIII
ARBACES COGS HIS DICE WITH PLEASURE AND WINS THE GAME

THE evening darkened over the restless city as Apaecides took his way to the house of the Egyptian. He avoided the more lighted and populous streets; and as he strode onward with his head buried in his bosom, and his arms folded within his robe, there was something startling in the contrast, which his solemn mien and wasted form presented to the thoughtless brows and animated air of those who occasionally crossed his path.

At length, however, a man of a more sober and staid demeanor, and who had twice passed him with a curious but doubting look, touched him on the shoulder.

'Apaecides!' said he, and he made a rapid sign with his hands: it was the sign of the cross.

'Well, Nazarene,' replied the priest, and his face grew paler; 'what wouldst thou?'

'Nay,' returned the stranger, 'I would not interrupt thy meditations; but the last time we met, I seemed not to be so unwelcome.'

'You are not unwelcome, Olinthus; but I am sad and weary: nor am I able this evening to discuss with you those themes which are most acceptable to you.'

'O backward of heart!' said Olinthus, with bitter fervor; and art thou sad and weary, and wilt thou turn from the very springs that refresh and heal?'

'O earth!' cried the young priest, striking his breast passionately, 'from what regions shall my eyes open to the true Olympus, where thy gods really dwell? Am I to believe with this man, that none whom for so many centuries my fathers worshipped have a being or a name? Am I to break down, as something blasphemous and profane, the very altars which I have deemed most sacred? or am I to think with Arbaces—what?' He paused, and strode rapidly away in the impatience of a man who strives to get rid of himself. But the Nazarene was one of those hardy, vigorous, and enthusiastic men, by whom God in all times has worked the revolutions of earth, and those, above all, in the establishment and in the reformation of His own religion—men who were formed to convert, because formed to endure. It is men of this mould whom nothing discourages, nothing dismays; in the fervor of belief they are inspired and they inspire. Their reason first kindles their passion, but the passion is the instrument they use; they force themselves into men's hearts, while they appear only to appeal to their judgment. Nothing is so contagious as enthusiasm; it is the real allegory of the tale of Orpheus —it moves stones, it charms brutes. Enthusiasm is the genius of sincerity, and truth accomplishes no victories without it.

Olinthus did not then suffer Apaecides thus easily to escape him. He overtook and addressed him thus:

'I do not wonder, Apaecides, that I distress you; that I shake all the elements of your mind: that you are lost in doubt; that you drift here and there in the vast ocean of uncertain and benighted thought. I wonder not at this, but bear with me a little; watch and pray—the darkness shall vanish, the storm sleep, and God Himself, as He came of yore on the seas of Samaria, shall walk over the lulled billows, to the delivery of your soul. Ours is a religion jealous in its demands, but how infinitely prodigal in its gifts! It troubles you for an hour, it repays you by immortality.'

'Such promises,' said Apaecides, sullenly, 'are the tricks by which man is ever gulled. Oh, glorious were the promises which led me to the shrine of Isis!'

'But,' answered the Nazarene, 'ask thy reason, can that religion be sound which outrages all morality? You are told to worship your gods. What are those gods, even according to yourselves? What their actions, what their attributes? Are they not all represented to you as the blackest of criminals? yet you are asked to serve them as the holiest of divinities. Jupiter himself is a parricide and an

adulterer. What are the meaner deities but imitators of his vices? You are told not to murder, but you worship murderers; you are told not to commit adultery, and you make your prayers to an adulterer! Oh! what is this but a mockery of the holiest part of man's nature, which is faith? Turn now to the God, the one, the true God, to whose shrine I would lead you. If He seem to you too sublime, two shadowy, for those human associations, those touching connections between Creator and creature, to which the weak heart clings—contemplate Him in His Son, who put on mortality like ourselves. His mortality is not indeed declared, like that of your fabled gods, by the vices of our nature, but by the practice of all its virtues. In Him are united the austerest morals with the tenderest affections. If He were but a mere man, He had been worthy to become a god. You honour Socrates—he has his sect, his disciples, his schools. But what are the doubtful virtues of the Athenian, to the bright, the undisputed, the active, the unceasing, the devoted holiness of Christ? I speak to you now only of His human character. He came in that as the pattern of future ages, to show us the form of virtue which Plato thirsted to see embodied. This was the true sacrifice that He made for man; but the halo that encircled His dying hour not only brightened earth, but opened to us the sight of heaven! You are touched—you are moved. God works in your heart. His Spirit is with you. Come, resist not the holy impulse; come at once—unhesitatingly. A few of us are now assembled to expound the word of God. Come, let me guide you to them. You are sad, you are weary. Listen, then, to the words of God: "Come to me", saith He, "all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!"'

'I cannot now,' said Apaecides; 'another time.'

'Now—now!' exclaimed Olinthus, earnestly, and clasping him by the arm.

But Apaecides, yet unprepared for the renunciation of that faith—that life, for which he had sacrificed so much, and still haunted by the promises of the Egyptian, extricated himself forcibly from the grasp; and feeling an effort necessary to conquer the irresolution which the eloquence of the Christian had begun to effect in his heated and feverish mind, he gathered up his robes and fled away with a speed that defied pursuit.

Breathless and exhausted, he arrived at last in a remote and sequestered part of the city, and the lone house of the Egyptian stood before him. As he paused to recover himself, the moon emerged from a silver cloud, and shone full upon the walls of that mysterious habitation.

No other house was near—the darksome vines clustered far and wide in front of the building and behind it rose a copse of lofty forest trees, sleeping in the melancholy moonlight; beyond stretched the dim outline of the distant hills, and amongst them the quiet crest of Vesuvius, not then so lofty as the traveler beholds it now.

Apaecides passed through the arching vines, and arrived at the broad and spacious portico. Before it, on either side of the steps, reposed the image of the Egyptian sphinx, and the moonlight gave an additional and yet more solemn calm to those large, and harmonious, and passionless features, in which the sculptors of that type of wisdom united so much of loveliness with awe; half way up the extremities of the steps darkened the green and massive foliage of the aloe, and the shadow of the eastern palm cast its long and unwaving boughs partially over the marble surface of the stairs.

Something there was in the stillness of the place, and the strange aspect of the sculptured sphinxes, which thrilled the blood of the priest with a nameless and ghostly fear, and he longed even for an echo to his noiseless steps as he ascended to the threshold.

He knocked at the door, over which was wrought an inscription in characters unfamiliar to his eyes; it opened without a sound, and a tall Ethiopian slave, without question or salutation, motioned to him to proceed.

The wide hall was lighted by lofty candelabra of elaborate bronze, and round the walls were wrought vast hieroglyphics, in dark and solemn colors, which contrasted strangely with the bright hues and graceful shapes with which the inhabitants of Italy decorated their abodes. At the extremity of the hall, a slave, whose countenance, though not African, was darker by many shades than the usual color of the south, advanced to meet him.

'I seek Arbaces,' said the priest; but his voice trembled even in his own ear. The slave bowed his head in silence, and leading Apaecides to a wing without the hall, conducted him up a narrow staircase, and then traversing several rooms, in which the stern and thoughtful beauty of the sphinx still made the chief and most impressive object of the priest's notice, Apaecides found himself in a dim and half-lighted chamber, in the presence of the Egyptian.

Arbaces was seated before a small table, on which lay unfolded several scrolls of papyrus, impressed with the same character as that on the threshold of the mansion. A small tripod stood at a little distance, from the incense in which the smoke slowly rose. Near this was a vast globe, depicting the signs of heaven; and upon another table lay several instruments, of curious and quaint shape, whose uses were unknown to Apaecides. The farther extremity of the room was concealed by a curtain, and the oblong window in the roof admitted the rays of the moon, mingling sadly with the single lamp which burned in the apartment.

'Seat yourself, Apaecides,' said the Egyptian, without rising.

The young man obeyed.

'You ask me,' resumed Arbaces, after a short pause, in which he seemed absorbed in thought —'You ask me, or would do so, the mightiest secrets which the soul of man is fitted to receive; it is the enigma of life itself that you desire me to solve. Placed like children in the dark, and but for a little while, in this dim and confined existence, we shape our spectres in the obscurity; our thoughts now sink back into ourselves in terror, now wildly plunge themselves into the guideless gloom, guessing what it may contain; stretching our helpless hands here and there, lest, blindly, we stumble upon some hidden danger; not knowing the limits of our boundary, now feeling them suffocate us with compression, now seeing them extend far away till they vanish into eternity. In this state all wisdom consists necessarily in the solution of two questions: "What are we to believe? and What are we to reject?" These questions you desire me to decide.'

Apaecides bowed his head in assent.

'Man must have some belief,' continued the Egyptian, in a tone of sadness. 'He must fasten his hope to something: is our common nature that you inherit when, aghast and terrified to see that in which you have been taught to place your faith swept away, you float over a dreary and shoreless sea of incertitude, you cry for help, you ask for some plank to cling to, some land, however dim and distant, to attain. Well, then, have not forgotten our conversation of to-day?'

'Forgotten!'

'I confessed to you that those deities for whom smoke so many altars were but inventions. I confessed to you that our rites and ceremonies were but mummeries, to delude and lure the herd to their proper good. I explained to you that from those delusions came the bonds of society, the harmony of the world, the power of the wise; that power is in the obedience of the vulgar. Continue we then these salutary delusions—if man must have some belief, continue to him that which his fathers have made dear to him, and which custom sanctifies and strengthens. In seeking a subtler faith for us, whose senses are too spiritual for the gross one, let us leave others that support which crumbles from ourselves. This is wise—it is benevolent.'

'Proceed.'

'This being settled,' resumed the Egyptian, 'the old landmarks being left uninjured for those whom we are about to desert, we gird up our loins and depart to new climes of faith. Dismiss at once from your recollection, from your thought, all that you have believed before. Suppose the mind a blank, an unwritten scroll, fit to receive impressions for the first time. Look round the world—observe its order—its regularity—its design. Something must have created it—the design speaks a designer: in that certainty we first touch land. But what is that something?—A god, you cry. Stay—no confused and confusing names. Of that which created the world, we know, we can know, nothing, save these attributes—power and unvarying regularity—stern, crushing, relentless regularity—heeding no individual cases—rolling—sweeping—burning on; no matter what scattered hearts, severed from

the general mass, fall ground and scorched beneath its wheels. The mixture of evil with good—the existence of suffering and of crime—in all times have perplexed the wise. They created a god—they supposed him benevolent. How then came this evil? why did he permit it—nay, why invent, why perpetuate it? To account for this, the Persian creates a second spirit, whose nature is evil, and supposes a continual war between that and the god of good. In our own shadowy and tremendous Typhon, the Egyptians image a similar demon. Perplexing blunder that yet more bewilders us!—folly that arose from the vain delusion that makes a palpable, a corporeal, a human being, of this unknown power—that clothes the Invisible with attributes and a nature similar to the Seen. No: to this designer let us give a name that does not command our bewildering associations, and the mystery becomes more clear—that name is NECESSITY. Necessity, say the Greeks, compels the gods. Then why the gods?—their agency becomes unnecessary—dismiss them at once. Necessity is the ruler of all we see—power, regularity—these two qualities make its nature. Would you ask more?—you can learn nothing: whether it be eternal—whether it compel us, its creatures, to new careers after that darkness which we call death—we cannot tell. There leave we this ancient, unseen, unfathomable power, and come to that which, to our eyes, is the great minister of its functions. This we can task more, from this we can learn more: its evidence is around us—its name is NATURE. The error of the sages has been to direct their researches to the attributes of necessity, where all is gloom and blindness. Had they confined their researches to Nature—what of knowledge might we not already have achieved? Here patience, examination, are never directed in vain. We see what we explore; our minds ascend a palpable ladder of causes and effects. Nature is the great agent of the external universe, and Necessity imposes upon it the laws by which it acts, and imparts to us the powers by which we examine; those powers are curiosity and memory—their union is reason, their perfection is wisdom. Well, then, I examine by the help of these powers this inexhaustible Nature. I examine the earth, the air, the ocean, the heaven: I find that all have a mystic sympathy with each other—that the moon sways the tides—that the air maintains the earth, and is the medium of the life and sense of things—that by the knowledge of the stars we measure the limits of the earth—that we portion out the epochs of time—that by their pale light we are guided into the abyss of the past—that in their solemn lore we discern the destinies of the future. And thus, while we know not that which Necessity is, we learn, at least, her decrees. And now, what morality do we glean from this religion?—for religion it is. I believe in two deities—Nature and Necessity; I worship the last by reverence, the first by investigation. What is the morality my religion teaches? This—all things are subject but to general rules; the sun shines for the joy of the many—it may bring sorrow to the few; the night sheds sleep on the multitude—but it harbors murder as well as rest; the forests adorn the earth—but shelter the serpent and the lion; the ocean supports a thousand barks—but it engulfs the one. It is only thus for the general, and not for the universal benefit, that Nature acts, and Necessity speeds on her awful course. This is the morality of the dread agents of the world—it is mine, who am their creature. I would preserve the delusions of priestcraft, for they are serviceable to the multitude; I would impart to man the arts I discover, the sciences I perfect; I would speed the vast career of civilizing lore: in this I serve the mass, I fulfill the general law, I execute the great moral that Nature preaches. For myself I claim the individual exception; I claim it for the wise—satisfied that my individual actions are nothing in the great balance of good and evil; satisfied that the product of my knowledge can give greater blessings to the mass than my desires can operate evil on the few (for the first can extend to remotest regions and humanize nations yet unborn), I give to the world wisdom, to myself freedom. I enlighten the lives of others, and I enjoy my own. Yes; our wisdom is eternal, but our life is short: make the most of it while it lasts. Surrender thy youth to pleasure, and thy senses to delight. Soon comes the hour when the wine-cup is shattered, and the garlands shall cease to bloom. Enjoy while you may. Be still, O Apaecides, my pupil and my follower! I will teach thee the mechanism of Nature, her darkest and her wildest secrets—the lore which fools call magic—and the mighty mysteries of the stars. By this shalt thou discharge thy duty to the mass; by this shalt thou enlighten thy race. But I will lead thee

also to pleasures of which the vulgar do not dream; and the day which thou givest to men shall be followed by the sweet night which thou surrenderest to thyself.'

As the Egyptian ceased there rose about, around, beneath, the softest music that Lydia ever taught, or Iona ever perfected. It came like a stream of sound, bathing the senses unawares; enervating, subduing with delight. It seemed the melodies of invisible spirits, such as the shepherd might have heard in the golden age, floating through the vales of Thessaly, or in the noontide glades of Paphos. The words which had rushed to the lip of Apaecides, in answer to the sophistries of the Egyptian, died tremblingly away. He felt it as a profanation to break upon that enchanted strain—the susceptibility of his excited nature, the Greek softness and ardour of his secret soul, were swayed and captured by surprise. He sank on the seat with parted lips and thirsting ear; while in a chorus of voices, bland and melting as those which waked Psyche in the halls of love, rose the following song:

THE HYMN OF EROS

By the cool banks where soft Cephisus flows,
A voice sail'd trembling down the waves of air;
The leaves blushed brighter in the Teian's rose,
The doves couch'd breathless in their summer lair;

While from their hands the purple flowerets fell,
The laughing Hours stood listening in the sky;—
From Pan's green cave to AEgle's haunted cell,
Heaved the charm'd earth in one delicious sigh.

Love, sons of earth! I am the Power of Love!
Eldest of all the gods, with Chaos born;
My smile sheds light along the courts above,
My kisses wake the eyelids of the Morn.

Mine are the stars—there, ever as ye gaze,
Ye meet the deep spell of my haunting eyes;
Mine is the moon—and, mournful if her rays,
'Tis that she lingers where her Carian lies.

The flowers are mine—the blushes of the rose,
The violet—charming Zephyr to the shade;
Mine the quick light that in the Maybeam glows,
And mine the day-dream in the lonely glade.

Love, sons of earth—for love is earth's soft lore,
Look where ye will—earth overflows with ME;
Learn from the waves that ever kiss the shore,
And the winds nestling on the heaving sea.

'All teaches love!'—The sweet voice, like a dream,
Melted in light; yet still the airs above,
The waving sedges, and the whispering stream,
And the green forest rustling, murmur'd 'LOVE!'

> As the voices died away, the Egyptian seized the hand of Apaecides, and led him, wandering, intoxicated, yet half-reluctant, across the chamber towards the curtain at the far end; and now, from behind that curtain, there seemed to burst a thousand sparkling stars; the veil itself, hitherto dark, was now lighted by these fires behind into the tenderest blue of heaven. It represented heaven itself—such a heaven, as in the nights of June might have shone down over the streams of Castaly.
>
> Here and there were painted rosy and aerial clouds, from which smiled, by the limner's art, faces of divinest beauty, and on which reposed the shapes of which Phidias and Apelles dreamed. And the stars which studded the transparent azure rolled rapidly as they shone, while the music, that again woke with a livelier and lighter sound, seemed to imitate the melody of the joyous spheres.

'Oh! what miracle is this, Arbaces,' said Apaecides in faltering accents. 'After having denied the gods, art thou about to reveal to me…'

'Their pleasures!' interrupted Arbaces, in a tone so different from its usual cold and tranquil harmony that Apaecides started, and thought the Egyptian himself transformed; and now, as they neared the curtain, a wild—a loud—an exulting melody burst from behind its concealment. With that sound the veil was rent in twain—it parted—it seemed to vanish into air: and a scene, which no Sybarite ever more than rivalled, broke upon the dazzled gaze of the youthful priest. A vast banquet-room stretched beyond, blazing with countless lights, which filled the warm air with the scents of frankincense, of jasmine, of violets, of myrrh; all that the most odorous flowers, all that the most costly spices could distil, seemed gathered into one ineffable and ambrosial essence: from the light columns that sprang upwards to the airy roof, hung draperies of white, studded with golden stars. At the extremities of the room two fountains cast up a spray, which, catching the rays of the roseate light, glittered like countless diamonds. In the centre of the room as they entered there rose slowly from the floor, to the sound of unseen minstrelsy, a table spread with all the viands which sense ever devoted to fancy, and vases of that lost Myrrhine fabric, so glowing in its colors, so transparent in its material, were crowned with the exotics of the East. The couches, to which this table was the centre, were covered with tapestries of azure and gold; and from invisible tubes the vaulted roof descended showers of fragrant waters, that cooled the delicious air, and contended with the lamps, as if the spirits of wave and fire disputed which element could furnish forth the most delicious odorous. And now, from behind the snowy draperies, trooped such forms as Adonis beheld when he lay on the lap of Venus. They came, some with garlands, others with lyres; they surrounded the youth, they led his steps to the banquet. They flung the chaplets round him in rosy chains. The earth—the thought of earth, vanished from his soul. He imagined himself in a dream, and suppressed his breath lest he should wake too soon; the senses, to which he had never yielded as yet, beat in his burning pulse, and confused his dizzy and reeling sight. And while thus amazed and lost, once again, but in brisk and Bacchic measures, rose the magic strain:

ANACREONTIC

In the veins of the calix foams and glows
The blood of the mantling vine,
But oh! in the bowl of Youth there glows
A Lesbian, more divine!
Bright, bright,
As the liquid light,

Its waves through thine eyelids shine!

Fill up, fill up, to the sparkling brim,
The juice of the young Lyaeus;
The grape is the key that we owe to him
From the gaol of the world to free us.
Drink, drink!
What need to shrink,
When the lambs alone can see us?

Drink, drink, as I quaff from thine eyes
The wine of a softer tree;
Give the smiles to the god of the grape—thy sighs,
Beloved one, give to me.
Turn, turn,
My glances burn,
And thirst for a look from thee!

As the song ended, a group of three maidens, entwined with a chain of starred flowers, and who, while they imitated, might have shamed the Graces, advanced towards him in the gliding measures of the Ionian dance: such as the Nereids wreathed in moonlight on the yellow sands of the AEgean wave—such as Cytherea taught her handmaids in the marriage-feast of Psyche and her son.

Now approaching, they wreathed their chaplet round his head; now kneeling, the youngest of the three proffered him the bowl, from which the wine of Lesbos foamed and sparkled. The youth resisted no more, he grasped the intoxicating cup, the blood mantled fiercely through his veins. He sank upon the breast of the nymph who sat beside him, and turning with swimming eyes to seek for Arbaces, whom he had lost in the whirl of his emotions, he beheld him seated beneath a canopy at the upper end of the table, and gazing upon him with a smile that encouraged him to pleasure. He beheld him, but not as he had hitherto seen, with dark and sable garments, with a brooding and solemn brow: a robe that dazzled the sight, so studded was its whitest surface with gold and gems, blazed upon his majestic form; white roses, alternated with the emerald and the ruby, and shaped tiara-like, crowned his raven locks. He appeared, like Ulysses, to have gained the glory of a second youth—his features seemed to have exchanged thought for beauty, and he towered amidst the loveliness that surrounded him, in all the beaming and relaxing benignity of the Olympian god.

'Drink, feast, love, my pupil!' said he, 'blush not that thou art passionate and young. That which thou art, thou feelest in thy veins: that which thou shalt be, survey!'

With this he pointed to a recess, and the eyes of Apaecides, following the gesture, beheld on a pedestal, placed between the statues of Bacchus and Idalia, the form of a skeleton.

'Start not,' resumed the Egyptian; 'that friendly guest admonishes us but of the shortness of life. From its jaws I hear a voice that summons us to ENJOY.'

As he spoke, a group of nymphs surrounded the statue; they laid chaplets on its pedestal, and, while the cups were emptied and refilled at that glowing board, they sang the following strain:

BACCHIC HYMNS TO THE IMAGE OF DEATH

I

Thou art in the land of the shadowy Host,
  Thou that didst drink and love:
By the Solemn River, a gliding ghost,
  But thy thought is ours above!
    If memory yet can fly,
    Back to the golden sky,
  And mourn the pleasures lost!
By the ruin'd hall these flowers we lay,
  Where thy soul once held its palace;
When the rose to thy scent and sight was gay,
  And the smile was in the chalice,
    And the cithara's voice
    Could bid thy heart rejoice
  When night eclipsed the day.

Here a new group advancing, turned the tide of the music into a quicker and more joyous strain.

II

Death, death is the gloomy shore
  Where we all sail—
Soft, soft, thou gliding oar;
  Blow soft, sweet gale!
Chain with bright wreaths the Hours;
  Victims if all
Ever, 'mid song and flowers,
  Victims should fall!

Pausing for a moment, yet quicker and quicker danced the silver-footed music:

Since Life's so short, we'll live to laugh,
  Ah! wherefore waste a minute!
If youth's the cup we yet can quaff,
  Be love the pearl within it!

A third band now approached with brimming cups, which they poured in libation upon that strange altar; and once more, slow and solemn, rose the changeful melody:

III

Thou art welcome, Guest of gloom,
From the far and fearful sea!
When the last rose sheds its bloom,
Our board shall be spread with thee!
All hail, dark Guest!
Who hath so fair a plea
Our welcome Guest to be,
As thou, whose solemn hall
At last shall feast us all
In the dim and dismal coast?
Long yet be we the Host!
And thou, Dead Shadow, thou,
All joyless though thy brow,
Thou—but our passing GUEST!

At this moment, she who sat beside Apaecides suddenly took up the song:

IV

Happy is yet our doom,
The earth and the sun are ours!
And far from the dreary tomb
Speed the wings of the rosy Hours—
Sweet is for thee the bowl,
Sweet are thy looks, my love;
I fly to thy tender soul,
As bird to its mated dove!
Take me, ah, take!
Clasp'd to thy guardian breast,
Soft let me sink to rest:
But wake me—ah, wake!
And tell me with words and sighs,
But more with thy melting eyes,
That my sun is not set—
That the Torch is not quench'd at the Urn
That we love, and we breathe, and burn,
Tell me—thou lov'st me yet!

BOOK THE SECOND

Chapter I
A FLASH HOUSE IN POMPEII, AND THE GENTLEMEN OF THE CLASSIC RING

TO one of those parts of Pompeii, which were tenanted not by the lords of pleasure, but by its minions and its victims; the haunt of gladiators and prize-fighters; of the vicious and the penniless; of the savage and the obscene; the Alsatia of an ancient city—we are now transported.

It was a large room, that opened at once on the confined and crowded lane. Before the threshold was a group of men, whose iron and well-strung muscles, whose short and Herculean necks, whose hardy and reckless countenances, indicated the champions of the arena. On a shelf, without the shop, were ranged jars of wine and oil; and right over this was inserted in the wall a coarse painting, which exhibited gladiators drinking—so ancient and so venerable is the custom of signs! Within the room were placed several small tables, arranged somewhat in the modern fashion of 'boxes', and round these were seated several knots of men, some drinking, some playing at dice, some at that more skilful game called 'duodecim scriptae', which certain of the blundering learned have mistaken for chess, though it rather, perhaps, resembled backgammon of the two, and was usually, though not always, played by the assistance of dice. The hour was in the early forenoon, and nothing better, perhaps, than that unseasonable time itself denoted the habitual indolence of these tavern loungers.

Yet, despite the situation of the house and the character of its inmates, it indicated none of that sordid squalor which would have characterized a similar haunt in a modern city. The gay disposition of all the Pompeians, who sought, at least, to gratify the sense even where they neglected the mind, was typified by the gaudy colors which decorated the walls, and the shapes, fantastic but not inelegant, in which the lamps, the drinking-cups, the commonest household utensils, were wrought.

'By Pollux!' said one of the gladiators, as he leaned against the wall of the threshold, 'the wine thou sellest us, old Silenus'—and as he spoke he slapped a portly personage on the back—'is enough to thin the best blood in one's veins.'

The man thus caressingly saluted, and whose bared arms, white apron, and keys and napkin tucked carelessly within his girdle, indicated him to be the host of the tavern, was already passed into the autumn of his years; but his form was still so robust and athletic, that he might have shamed even the sinewy shapes beside him, save that the muscles had seeded, as it were, into flesh, that the cheeks were swelled and bloated, and the increasing stomach threw into shade the vast and massive chest which rose above it.

'None of thy scurrilous blusterings with me,' growled the gigantic landlord, in the gentle semi-roar of an insulted tiger; 'my wine is good enough for a carcass which shall so soon soak the dust of the spoliarium.'

'Croakest thou thus, old raven!' returned the gladiator, laughing scornfully; 'thou shalt live to hang thyself with despite when thou seest me win the palm crown; and when I get the purse at the amphitheatre, as I certainly shall, my first vow to Hercules shall be to forswear thee and thy vile potations evermore.'

'Hear to him—hear to this modest Pyrgopolinices! He has certainly served under Bombochides Cluninstaridysarchides,' cried the host. 'Sporus, Niger, Tetraides, he declares he shall win the purse from you. Why, by the gods! each of your muscles is strong enough to stifle all his body, or I know nothing of the arena!'

'Ha!' said the gladiator, coloring with rising fury, 'our lanista would tell a different story.'

'What story could he tell against me, vain Lydon?' said Tetraides, frowning.

'Or me, who have conquered in fifteen fights?' said the gigantic Niger, stalking up to the gladiator.

'Or me?' grunted Sporus, with eyes of fire.

'Tush!' said Lydon, folding his arms, and regarding his rivals with a reckless air of defiance. 'The time of trial will soon come; keep your valor till then.'

'Ay, do,' said the surly host; 'and if I press down my thumb to save you, may the Fates cut my thread!'

'Your rope, you mean,' said Lydon, sneeringly: 'here is a sesterce to buy one.'

The Titan wine-vender seized the hand extended to him, and griped it in so stern a vice that the blood spirted from the fingers' ends over the garments of the bystanders.

They set up a savage laugh.

'I will teach thee, young braggart, to play the Macedonian with me! I am no puny Persian, I warrant thee! What, man! have I not fought twenty years in the ring, and never lowered my arms once? And have I not received the rod from the editor's own hand as a sign of victory, and as a grace to retirement on my laurels? And am I now to be lectured by a boy?' So saying, he flung the hand from him in scorn.

Without changing a muscle, but with the same smiling face with which he had previously taunted mine host, did the gladiator brave the painful grasp he had undergone. But no sooner was his hand released, than, crouching for one moment as a wild cat crouches, you might see his hair bristle on his head and beard, and with a fierce and shrill yell he sprang on the throat of the giant, with an impetus that threw him, vast and sturdy as he was, from his balance—and down, with the crash of a falling rock, he fell—while over him fell also his ferocious foe.

Our host, perhaps, had had no need of the rope so kindly recommended to him by Lydon, had he remained three minutes longer in that position. But, summoned to his assistance by the noise of his fall, a woman, who had hitherto kept in an inner apartment, rushed to the scene of battle. This new ally was in herself a match for the gladiator; she was tall, lean, and with arms that could give other than soft embraces. In fact, the gentle helpmate of Burbo the wine-seller had, like himself, fought in the lists—nay under the emperor's eye. And Burbo himself—Burbo, the unconquered in the field, according to report, now and then yielded the palm to his soft Stratonice. This sweet creature no sooner saw the imminent peril that awaited her worse half, than without other weapons than those with which Nature had provided her, she darted upon the incumbent gladiator, and, clasping him round the waist with her long and snakelike arms, lifted him by a sudden wrench from the body of her husband, leaving only his hands still clinging to the throat of his foe. So have we seen a dog snatched by the hind legs from the strife with a fallen rival in the arms of some envious groom; so have we seen one half of him high in air—passive and offenceless—while the other half, head, teeth, eyes, claws, seemed buried and engulfed in the mangled and prostrate enemy. Meanwhile, the gladiators, lapped, and pampered, and glutted upon blood, crowded delightedly round the combatants—their nostrils distended—their lips grinning—their eyes gloatingly fixed on the bloody throat of the one and the indented talons of the other.

'Habet! (he has got it!) habet!' cried they, with a sort of yell, rubbing their nervous hands.

'Non habeo, ye liars; I have not got it!' shouted the host, as with a mighty effort he wrenched himself from those deadly hands, and rose to his feet, breathless, panting, lacerated, bloody; and fronting, with reeling eyes, the glaring look and grinning teeth of his baffled foe, now struggling (but struggling with disdain) in the gripe of the sturdy amazon.

'Fair play!' cried the gladiators: 'one to one'; and, crowding round Lydon and the woman, they separated our pleasing host from his courteous guest.

But Lydon, feeling ashamed at his present position, and endeavoring in vain to shake off the grasp of the virago, slipped his hand into his girdle, and drew forth a short knife. So menacing was

his look, so brightly gleamed the blade, that Stratonice, who was used only to that fashion of battle which we moderns call the pugilistic, started back in alarm.

'O gods!' cried she, 'the ruffian!—he has concealed weapons! Is that fair? Is that like a gentleman and a gladiator? No, indeed, I scorn such fellows.' With that she contemptuously turned her back on the gladiator, and hastened to examine the condition of her husband.

But he, as much inured to the constitutional exercises as an English bull-dog is to a contest with a more gentle antagonist, had already recovered himself. The purple hues receded from the crimson surface of his cheek, the veins of the forehead retired into their wonted size. He shook himself with a complacent grunt, satisfied that he was still alive, and then looking at his foe from head to foot with an air of more approbation than he had ever bestowed upon him before:

'By Castor!' said he, 'thou art a stronger fellow than I took thee for! I see thou art a man of merit and virtue; give me thy hand, my hero!'

'Jolly old Burbo!' cried the gladiators, applauding, 'staunch to the backbone. Give him thy hand, Lydon.'

'Oh, to be sure,' said the gladiator: 'but now I have tasted his blood, I long to lap the whole.'

'By Hercules!' returned the host, quite unmoved, 'that is the true gladiator feeling. Pollux! to think what good training may make a man; why, a beast could not be fiercer!'

'A beast! O dullard! we beat the beasts hollow!' cried Tetraides.

'Well, well said Stratonice, who was now employed in smoothing her hair and adjusting her dress, 'if ye are all good friends again, I recommend you to be quiet and orderly; for some young noblemen, your patrons and backers, have sent to say they will come here to pay you a visit: they wish to see you more at their ease than at the schools, before they make up their bets on the great fight at the amphitheatre. So they always come to my house for that purpose: they know we only receive the best gladiators in Pompeii—our society is very select—praised be the gods!'

'Yes,' continued Burbo, drinking off a bowl, or rather a pail of wine, 'a man who has won my laurels can only encourage the brave. Lydon, drink, my boy; may you have an honorable old age like mine!'

'Come here,' said Stratonice, drawing her husband to her affectionately by the ears, in that caress which Tibullus has so prettily described—'Come here!'

'Not so hard, she-wolf! thou art worse than the gladiator,' murmured the huge jaws of Burbo.

'Hist!' said she, whispering him; 'Calenus has just stole in, disguised, by the back way. I hope he has brought the sesterces.'

'Ho! ho! I will join him, said Burbo; 'meanwhile, I say, keep a sharp eye on the cups—attend to the score. Let them not cheat thee, wife; they are heroes, to be sure, but then they are arrant rogues: Cacus was nothing to them.'

'Never fear me, fool!' was the conjugal reply; and Burbo, satisfied with the dear assurance, strode through the apartment, and sought the penetralia of his house.

'So those soft patrons are coming to look at our muscles,' said Niger. 'Who sent to previse thee of it, my mistress?'

'Lepidus. He brings with him Clodius, the surest better in Pompeii, and the young Greek, Glaucus.'

'A wager on a wager,' cried Tetraides; 'Clodius bets on me, for twenty sesterces! What say you, Lydon?'

'He bets on me!' said Lydon.

'No, on me!' grunted Sporus.

'Dolts! do you think he would prefer any of you to Niger?' said the athletic, thus modestly naming himself.

'Well, well,' said Stratonice, as she pierced a huge amphora for her guests, who had now seated themselves before one of the tables, 'great men and brave, as ye all think yourselves, which of you will fight the Numidian lion in case no malefactor should be found to deprive you of the option?'

'I who have escaped your arms, stout Stratonice,' said Lydon, 'might safely, I think, encounter the lion.'

'But tell me,' said Tetraides, 'where is that pretty young slave of yours—the blind girl, with bright eyes? I have not seen her a long time.'

'Oh! she is too delicate for you, my son of Neptune,' said the hostess, 'and too nice even for us, I think. We send her into the town to sell flowers and sing to the ladies: she makes us more money so than she would by waiting on you. Besides, she has often other employments which lie under the rose.'

'Other employments!' said Niger; 'why, she is too young for them.'

'Silence, beast!' said Stratonice; 'you think there is no play but the Corinthian. If Nydia were twice the age she is at present, she would be equally fit for Vesta—poor girl!'

'But, hark ye, Stratonice,' said Lydon; 'how didst thou come by so gentle and delicate a slave? She were more meet for the handmaid of some rich matron of Rome than for thee.'

'That is true,' returned Stratonice; 'and some day or other I shall make my fortune by selling her. How came I by Nydia, thou askest.'

'Ay!'

'Why, thou seest, my slave Staphyla—thou rememberest Staphyla, Niger?'

'Ay, a large-handed wench, with a face like a comic mask. How should I forget her, by Pluto, whose handmaid she doubtless is at this moment!'

'Tush, brute!—Well, Staphyla died one day, and a great loss she was to me, and I went into the market to buy me another slave. But, by the gods! they were all grown so dear since I had bought poor Staphyla, and money was so scarce, that I was about to leave the place in despair, when a merchant plucked me by the robe. "Mistress," said he, "dost thou want a slave cheap I have a child to sell—a bargain. She is but little, and almost an infant, it is true; but she is quick and quiet, docile and clever, sings well, and is of good blood, I assure you." "Of what country?" said I. "Thessalian." Now I knew the Thessalians were acute and gentle; so I said I would see the girl. I found her just as you see her now, scarcely smaller and scarcely younger in appearance. She looked patient and resigned enough, with her hands crossed on her bosom, and her eyes downcast. I asked the merchant his price: it was moderate, and I bought her at once. The merchant brought her to my house, and disappeared in an instant. Well, my friends, guess my astonishment when I found she was blind! Ha! ha! a clever fellow that merchant! I ran at once to the magistrates, but the rogue was already gone from Pompeii. So I was forced to go home in a very ill humor, I assure you; and the poor girl felt the effects of it too. But it was not her fault that she was blind, for she had been so from her birth. By degrees, we got reconciled to our purchase. True, she had not the strength of Staphyla, and was of very little use in the house, but she could soon find her way about the town, as well as if she had the eyes of Argus; and when one morning she brought us home a handful of sesterces, which she said she had got from selling some flowers she had gathered in our poor little garden, we thought the gods had sent her to us. So from that time we let her go out as she likes, filling her basket with flowers, which she wreathes into garlands after the Thessalian fashion, which pleases the gallants; and the great people seem to take a fancy to her, for they always pay her more than they do any other flower-girl, and she brings all of it home to us, which is more than any other slave would do. So I work for myself, but I shall soon afford from her earnings to buy me a second Staphyla; doubtless, the Thessalian kidnapper had stolen the blind girl from gentle parents. Besides her skill in the garlands, she sings and plays on the cithara, which also brings money, and lately—but that is a secret.'

'That is a secret! What!' cried Lydon, 'art thou turned sphinx?'

'Sphinx, no!—why sphinx?'

'Cease thy gabble, good mistress, and bring us our meat—I am hungry,' said Sporus, impatiently.

'And I, too,' echoed the grim Niger, whetting his knife on the palm of his hand.

The amazon stalked away to the kitchen, and soon returned with a tray laden with large pieces of meat half-raw: for so, as now, did the heroes of the prize-fight imagine they best sustained their hardihood and ferocity: they drew round the table with the eyes of famished wolves—the meat vanished, the wine flowed. So leave we those important personages of classic life to follow the steps of Burbo.

Chapter II
TWO WORTHIES

IN the earlier times of Rome the priesthood was a profession, not of lucre but of honour. It was embraced by the noblest citizens—it was forbidden to the plebeians. Afterwards, and long previous to the present date, it was equally open to all ranks; at least, that part of the profession which embraced the flamens, or priests—not of religion generally but of peculiar gods. Even the priest of Jupiter (the Flamen Dialis) preceded by a lictor, and entitled by his office to the entrance of the senate, at first the especial dignitary of the patricians, was subsequently the choice of the people. The less national and less honored deities were usually served by plebeian ministers; and many embraced the profession, as now the Roman Catholic Christians enter the monastic fraternity, less from the impulse of devotion than the suggestions of a calculating poverty. Thus Calenus, the priest of Isis, was of the lowest origin. His relations, though not his parents, were freedmen. He had received from them a liberal education, and from his father a small patrimony, which he had soon exhausted. He embraced the priesthood as a last resource from distress. Whatever the state emoluments of the sacred profession, which at that time were probably small, the officers of a popular temple could never complain of the profits of their calling. There is no profession so lucrative as that which practises on the superstition of the multitude.

Calenus had but one surviving relative at Pompeii, and that was Burbo. Various dark and disreputable ties, stronger than those of blood, united together their hearts and interests; and often the minister of Isis stole disguised and furtively from the supposed austerity of his devotions; and gliding through the back door of the retired gladiator, a man infamous alike by vices and by profession, rejoiced to throw off the last rag of an hypocrisy which, but for the dictates of avarice, his ruling passion, would at all time have sat clumsily upon a nature too brutal for even the mimicry of virtue.

Wrapped in one of those large mantles which came in use among the Romans in proportion as they dismissed the toga, whose ample folds well concealed the form, and in which a sort of hood (attached to it) afforded no less a security to the features, Calenus now sat in the small and private chamber of the wine-cellar, whence a small passage ran at once to that back entrance, with which nearly all the houses of Pompeii were furnished.

Opposite to him sat the sturdy Burbo, carefully counting on a table between them a little pile of coins which the priest had just poured from his purse—for purses were as common then as now, with this difference—they were usually better furnished!

'You see,' said Calenus, that we pay you handsomely, and you ought to thank me for recommending you to so advantageous a market.'

'I do, my cousin, I do,' replied Burbo, affectionately, as he swept the coins into a leathern receptacle, which he then deposited in his girdle, drawing the buckle round his capacious waist more closely than he was wont to do in the lax hours of his domestic avocations. 'And by Isis, Pisis, and Nisis, or whatever other gods there may be in Egypt, my little Nydia is a very Hesperides—a garden of gold to me.'

'She sings well, and plays like a muse,' returned Calenus; 'those are virtues that he who employs me always pays liberally.'

'He is a god,' cried Burbo, enthusiastically; 'every rich man who is generous deserves to be worshipped. But come, a cup of wine, old friend: tell me more about it. What does she do? she is frightened, talks of her oath, and reveals nothing.'

'Nor will I, by my right hand! I, too, have taken that terrible oath of secrecy.'

'Oath! what are oaths to men like us?'

'True oaths of a common fashion; but this!'—and the stalwart priest shuddered as he spoke. 'Yet,' he continued, in emptying a huge cup of unmixed wine, 'I own to thee, that it is not so much the oath that I dread as the vengeance of him who proposed it. By the gods! he is a mighty sorcerer,

and could draw my confession from the moon, did I dare to make it to her. Talk no more of this. By Pollux! wild as those banquets are which I enjoy with him, I am never quite at my ease there. I love, my boy, one jolly hour with thee, and one of the plain, unsophisticated, laughing girls that I meet in this chamber, all smoke-dried though it be, better than whole nights of those magnificent debauches.'

'Ho! sayest thou so! To-morrow night, please the gods, we will have then a snug carousal.'

'With all my heart,' said the priest, rubbing his hands, and drawing himself nearer to the table.

At this moment they heard a slight noise at the door, as of one feeling the handle. The priest lowered the hood over his head.

'Tush!' whispered the host, 'it is but the blind girl,' as Nydia opened the door, and entered the apartment.

'Ho! girl, and how durst thou? thou lookest pale—thou hast kept late revels? No matter, the young must be always the young,' said Burbo, encouragingly.

The girl made no answer, but she dropped on one of the seats with an air of lassitude. Her color went and came rapidly: she beat the floor impatiently with her small feet, then she suddenly raised her face, and said with a determined voice:

'Master, you may starve me if you will—you may beat me—you may threaten me with death —but I will go no more to that unholy place!'

'How, fool!' said Burbo, in a savage voice, and his heavy brows met darkly over his fierce and bloodshot eyes; 'how, rebellious! Take care.'

'I have said it,' said the poor girl, crossing her hands on her breast.

'What! my modest one, sweet vestal, thou wilt go no more! Very well, thou shalt be carried.'

'I will raise the city with my cries,' said she, passionately; and the color mounted to her brow.

'We will take care of that too; thou shalt go gagged.'

'Then may the gods help me!' said Nydia, rising; 'I will appeal to the magistrates.'

'Thine oath remember!' said a hollow voice, as for the first time Calenus joined in the dialogue.

At these words a trembling shook the frame of the unfortunate girl; she clasped her hands imploringly. 'Wretch that I am!' she cried, and burst violently into sobs.

Whether or not it was the sound of that vehement sorrow which brought the gentle Stratonice to the spot, her grisly form at this moment appeared in the chamber.

'How now? what hast thou been doing with my slave, brute?' said she, angrily, to Burbo.

'Be quiet, wife,' said he, in a tone half-sullen, half-timid; 'you want new girdles and fine clothes, do you? Well then, take care of your slave, or you may want them long. Voe capiti tuo—vengeance on thy head, wretched one!'

'What is this?' said the hag, looking from one to the other.

Nydia started as by a sudden impulse from the wall against which she had leaned: she threw herself at the feet of Stratonice; she embraced her knees, and looking up at her with those sightless but touching eyes:

'O my mistress!' sobbed she, 'you are a woman—you have had sisters—you have been young like me, feel for me—save me! I will go to those horrible feasts no more!'

'Stuff!' said the hag, dragging her up rudely by one of those delicate hands, fit for no harsher labor than that of weaving the flowers which made her pleasure or her trade; 'stuff! these fine scruples are not for slaves.'

'Hark ye,' said Burbo, drawing forth his purse, and chinking its contents: 'you hear this music, wife; by Pollux! if you do not break in yon colt with a tight rein, you will hear it no more.'

'The girl is tired,' said Stratonice, nodding to Calenus; 'she will be more docile when you next want her.'

'You! you! who is here?' cried Nydia, casting her eyes round the apartment with so fearful and straining a survey, that Calenus rose in alarm from his seat.

'She must see with those eyes!' muttered he.

'Who is here! Speak, in heaven's name! Ah, if you were blind like me, you would be less cruel,' said she; and she again burst into tears.

'Take her away,' said Burbo, impatiently; 'I hate these whimperings.'

'Come!' said Stratonice, pushing the poor child by the shoulders. Nydia drew herself aside, with an air to which resolution gave dignity.

'Hear me,' she said; 'I have served you faithfully—I who was brought up—Ah! my mother, my poor mother! didst thou dream I should come to this?' She dashed the tear from her eyes, and proceeded: 'Command me in aught else, and I will obey; but I tell you now, hard, stern, inexorable as you are—I tell you that I will go there no more; or, if I am forced there, that I will implore the mercy of the praetor himself—I have said it. Hear me, ye gods, I swear!'

The hag's eyes glowed with fire; she seized the child by the hair with one hand, and raised on high the other—that formidable right hand, the least blow of which seemed capable to crush the frail and delicate form that trembled in her grasp. That thought itself appeared to strike her, for she suspended the blow, changed her purpose, and dragging Nydia to the wall, seized from a hook a rope, often, alas! applied to a similar purpose, and the next moment the shrill, the agonized shrieks of the blind girl, rang piercingly through the house.

Chapter III
GLAUCUS MAKES A PURCHASE THAT AFTERWARDS COSTS HIM DEAR

'HOLLA, my brave fellows!' said Lepidus, stooping his head as he entered the low doorway of the house of Burbo. 'We have come to see which of you most honors your lanista.' The gladiators rose from the table in respect to three gallants known to be among the gayest and richest youths of Pompeii, and whose voices were therefore the dispensers of amphitheatrical reputation.

'What fine animals!' said Clodius to Glaucus: 'worthy to be gladiators!'

'It is a pity they are not warriors,' returned Glaucus.

A singular thing it was to see the dainty and fastidious Lepidus, whom in a banquet a ray of daylight seemed to blind—whom in the bath a breeze of air seemed to blast—in whom Nature seemed twisted and perverted from every natural impulse, and curdled into one dubious thing of effeminacy and art—a singular thing was it to see this Lepidus, now all eagerness, and energy, and life, patting the vast shoulders of the gladiators with a blanched and girlish hand, feeling with a mincing gripe their great brawn and iron muscles, all lost in calculating admiration at that manhood which he had spent his life in carefully banishing from himself.

So have we seen at this day the beardless flutterers of the saloons of London thronging round the heroes of the Fives-court—so have we seen them admire, and gaze, and calculate a bet—so have we seen them meet together, in ludicrous yet in melancholy assemblage, the two extremes of civilized society—the patrons of pleasure and its slaves—vilest of all slaves—at once ferocious and mercenary; male prostitutes, who sell their strength as women their beauty; beasts in act, but baser than beasts in motive, for the last, at least, do not mangle themselves for money!

'Ha! Niger, how will you fight?' said Lepidus: 'and with whom?'

'Sporus challenges me,' said the grim giant; 'we shall fight to the death, I hope.'

'Ah! to be sure,' grunted Sporus, with a twinkle of his small eye.

'He takes the sword, I the net and the trident: it will be rare sport. I hope the survivor will have enough to keep up the dignity of the crown.'

'Never fear, we'll fill the purse, my Hector,' said Clodius:

'let me see—you fight against Niger? Glaucus, a bet—I back Niger.'

'I told you so,' cried Niger exultingly. 'The noble Clodius knows me; count yourself dead already, my Sporus.'

Clodius took out his tablet. 'A bet—ten sestertia. What say you?'

'So be it,' said Glaucus. 'But whom have we here? I never saw this hero before'; and he glanced at Lydon, whose limbs were slighter than those of his companions, and who had something of grace, and something even of nobleness, in his face, which his profession had not yet wholly destroyed.

'It is Lydon, a youngster, practised only with the wooden sword as yet,' answered Niger, condescendingly. 'But he has the true blood in him, and has challenged Tetraides.'

'He challenged me,' said Lydon: 'I accept the offer.'

'And how do you fight?' asked Lepidus. 'Chut, my boy, wait a while before you contend with Tetraides.' Lydon smiled disdainfully.

'Is he a citizen or a slave?' said Clodius.

'A citizen—we are all citizens here,' quoth Niger.

'Stretch out your arm, my Lydon,' said Lepidus, with the air of a connoisseur.

The gladiator, with a significant glance at his companions, extended an arm which, if not so huge in its girth as those of his comrades, was so firm in its muscles, so beautifully symmetrical in its proportions, that the three visitors uttered simultaneously an admiring exclamation.

'Well, man, what is your weapon?' said Clodius, tablet in hand.

'We are to fight first with the cestus; afterwards, if both survive, with swords,' returned Tetraides, sharply, and with an envious scowl.

'With the cestus!' cried Glaucus; 'there you are wrong, Lydon; the cestus is the Greek fashion: I know it well. You should have encouraged flesh for that contest: you are far too thin for it—avoid the cestus.'

'I cannot,' said Lydon.

'And why?'

'I have said—because he has challenged me.'

'But he will not hold you to the precise weapon.'

'My honour holds me!' returned Lydon, proudly.

'I bet on Tetraides, two to one, at the cestus,' said Clodius; shall it be, Lepidus?—even betting, with swords.'

'If you give me three to one, I will not take the odds, said Lepidus: 'Lydon will never come to the swords. You are mighty courteous.'

'What say you, Glaucus?' said Clodius.

'I will take the odds three to one.'

'Ten sestertia to thirty.'

'Yes.'

Clodius wrote the bet in his book.

'Pardon me, noble sponsor mine,' said Lydon, in a low voice to Glaucus: 'but how much think you the victor will gain?'

'How much? why, perhaps seven sestertia.'

'You are sure it will be as much?'

'At least. But out on you!—a Greek would have thought of the honour, and not the money. O Italians! everywhere ye are Italians!'

A blush mantled over the bronzed cheek of the gladiator.

'Do not wrong me, noble Glaucus; I think of both, but I should never have been a gladiator but for the money.'

'Base! mayest thou fall! A miser never was a hero.'

'I am not a miser,' said Lydon, haughtily, and he withdrew to the other end of the room.

'But I don't see Burbo; where is Burbo? I must talk with Burbo,' cried Clodius.

'He is within,' said Niger, pointing to the door at the extremity of the room.

'And Stratonice, the brave old lass, where is she?' quoth Lepidus.

'Why, she was here just before you entered; but she heard something that displeased her yonder, and vanished. Pollux! old Burbo had perhaps caught hold of some girl in the back room. I heard a female's voice crying out; the old dame is as jealous as Juno.'

'Ho! excellent!' cried Lepidus, laughing. 'Come, Clodius, let us go shares with Jupiter; perhaps he has caught a Leda.'

At this moment a loud cry of pain and terror startled the group.

'Oh, spare me! spare me! I am but a child, I am blind—is not that punishment enough?'

'O Pallas! I know that voice, it is my poor flower-girl!' exclaimed Glaucus, and he darted at once into the quarter whence the cry rose.

He burst the door; he beheld Nydia writhing in the grasp of the infuriate hag; the cord, already dabbled with blood, was raised in the air—it was suddenly arrested.

'Fury!' said Glaucus, and with his left hand he caught Nydia from her grasp; 'how dare you use thus a girl—one of your own sex, a child! My Nydia, my poor infant!'

'Oh? is that you—is that Glaucus?' exclaimed the flower-girl, in a tone almost of transport; the tears stood arrested on her cheek; she smiled, she clung to his breast, she kissed his robe as she clung.

'And how dare you, pert stranger! interfere between a free woman and her slave. By the gods! despite your fine tunic and your filthy perfumes, I doubt whether you are even a Roman citizen, my mannikin.'

'Fair words, mistress—fair words!' said Clodius, now entering with Lepidus. 'This is my friend and sworn brother; he must be put under shelter of your tongue, sweet one; it rains stones!'

'Give me my slave!' shrieked the virago, placing her mighty grasp on the breast of the Greek.

'Not if all your sister Furies could help you,' answered Glaucus. 'Fear not, sweet Nydia; an Athenian never forsook distress!'

'Holla!' said Burbo, rising reluctantly, 'What turmoil is all this about a slave? Let go the young gentleman, wife—let him go: for his sake the pert thing shall be spared this once.' So saying, he drew, or rather dragged off, his ferocious help-mate.

'Methought when we entered,' said Clodius, 'there was another man present?'

'He is gone.'

For the priest of Isis had indeed thought it high time to vanish.

'Oh, a friend of mine! a brother cupman, a quiet dog, who does not love these snarlings,' said Burbo, carelessly. 'But go, child, you will tear the gentleman's tunic if you cling to him so tight; go, you are pardoned.'

'Oh, do not—do not forsake me!' cried Nydia, clinging yet closer to the Athenian.

Moved by her forlorn situation, her appeal to him, her own innumerable and touching graces, the Greek seated himself on one of the rude chairs. He held her on his knees—he wiped the blood from her shoulders with his long hair—he kissed the tears from her cheeks—he whispered to her a thousand of those soothing words with which we calm the grief of a child—and so beautiful did he seem in his gentle and consoling task, that even the fierce heart of Stratonice was touched. His presence seemed to shed light over that base and obscene haunt—young, beautiful, glorious, he was the emblem of all that earth made most happy, comforting one that earth had abandoned!

'Well, who could have thought our blind Nydia had been so honored!' said the virago, wiping her heated brow.

Glaucus looked up at Burbo.

'My good man,' said he, 'this is your slave; she sings well, she is accustomed to the care of flowers—I wish to make a present of such a slave to a lady. Will you sell her to me?' As he spoke he felt the whole frame of the poor girl tremble with delight; she started up, she put her disheveled hair from her eyes, she looked around, as if, alas, she had the power to see!

'Sell our Nydia! no, indeed,' said Stratonice, gruffly.

Nydia sank back with a long sigh, and again clasped the robe of her protector.

'Nonsense!' said Clodius, imperiously: 'you must oblige me. What, man! what, old dame! offend me, and your trade is ruined. Is not Burbo my kinsman Pansa's client? Am I not the oracle of the amphitheatre and its heroes? If I say the word, break up your wine-jars—you sell no more. Glaucus, the slave is yours.'

Burbo scratched his huge head, in evident embarrassment.

'The girl is worth her weight in gold to me.'

'Name your price, I am rich,' said Glaucus.

The ancient Italians were like the modern, there was nothing they would not sell, much less a poor blind girl.

'I paid six sestertia for her, she is worth twelve now,' muttered Stratonice.

'You shall have twenty; come to the magistrates at once, and then to my house for your money.'

'I would not have sold the dear girl for a hundred but to oblige noble Clodius,' said Burbo, whiningly. 'And you will speak to Pansa about the place of designator at the amphitheatre, noble Clodius? it would just suit me.'

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.