CHARLES KINGSLEY

HYPATIA. OR NEW FOES WITH AN OLD FACE

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Kingsley C.

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Содержание

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PREFACE

A picture of life in the fifth century must needs contain much which will be painful to any reader, and which the young and innocent will do well to leave altogether unread. It has to represent a very hideous, though a very great, age; one of those critical and cardinal eras in the history of the human race, in which virtues and vices manifest themselves side by side—even, at times, in the same person—with the most startling openness and power. One who writes of such an era labours under a troublesome disadvantage. He dare not tell how evil people were; he will not be believed if he tells how good they were. In the present case that disadvantage is doubled; for while the sins of the Church, however heinous, were still such as admit of being expressed in words, the sins of the heathen world, against which she fought, were utterly indescribable; and the Christian apologist is thus compelled, for the sake of decency, to state the Church's case far more weakly than the facts deserve.

Not, be it ever remembered, that the slightest suspicion of immorality attaches either to the heroine of this book, or to the leading philosophers of her school, for several centuries. Howsoever base and profligate their disciples, or the Manichees, may have been, the great Neo-Platonists were, as Manes himself was, persons of the most rigid and ascetic virtue.

For a time had arrived, in which no teacher who did not put forth the most lofty pretensions to righteousness could expect a hearing. That Divine Word, who is 'The Light who lighteth every man which cometh into the world,' had awakened in the heart of mankind a moral craving never before felt in any strength, except by a few isolated philosophers or prophets. The Spirit had been poured out on all flesh; and from one end of the Empire to the other, from the slave in the mill to the emperor on his throne, all hearts were either hungering and thirsting after righteousness, or learning to do homage to those who did so. And He who excited the craving, was also furnishing that which would satisfy it; and was teaching mankind, by a long and painful education, to distinguish the truth from its innumerable counterfeits, and to find, for the first time in the world's life, a good news not merely for the select few, but for all mankind without respect of rank or race.

For somewhat more than four hundred years, the Roman Empire and the Christian Church, born into the world almost at the same moment, had been developing themselves side by side as two great rival powers, in deadly struggle for the possession of the human race. The weapons of the Empire had been not merely an overwhelming physical force, and a ruthless lust of aggressive conquest: but, even more powerful still, an unequalled genius for organisation, and an uniform system of external law and order. This was generally a real boon to conquered nations, because it substituted a fixed and regular spoliation for the fortuitous and arbitrary miseries of savage warfare: but it arrayed, meanwhile, on the side of the Empire the wealthier citizens of every province, by allowing them their share in the plunder of the labouring masses below them. These, in the country districts, were utterly enslaved; while in the cities, nominal freedom was of little use to masses kept from starvation by the alms of the government, and drugged into brutish good humour by a vast system of public spectacles, in which the realms of nature and of art were ransacked to glut the wonder, lust, and ferocity of a degraded populace.

Against this vast organisation the Church had been fighting for now four hundred years, armed only with its own mighty and all-embracing message, and with the manifestation of a spirit of purity and virtue, of love and self-sacrifice, which had proved itself mightier to melt and weld together the hearts of men, than all the force and terror, all the mechanical organisation, all the sensual baits with

which the Empire had been contending against that Gospel in which it had recognised instinctively and at first sight, its internecine foe.

And now the Church had conquered. The weak things of this world had confounded the strong. In spite of the devilish cruelties of persecutors; in spite of the contaminating atmosphere of sin which surrounded her; in spite of having to form herself, not out of a race of pure and separate creatures, but by a most literal 'new birth' out of those very fallen masses who insulted and persecuted her; in spite of having to endure within herself continual outbursts of the evil passions in which her members had once indulged without cheek; in spite of a thousand counterfeits which sprang up around her and within her, claiming to be parts of her, and alluring men to themselves by that very exclusiveness and party arrogance which disproved their claim; in spite of all, she had conquered. The very emperors had arrayed themselves on her side. Julian's last attempt to restore paganism by imperial influence had only proved that the old faith had lost all hold upon the hearts of the masses; at his death the great tide-wave of new opinion rolled on unchecked, and the rulers of earth were fain to swim with the stream; to accept, in words at least, the Church's laws as theirs; to acknowledge a King of kings to whom even they owed homage and obedience; and to call their own slaves their 'poorer brethren,' and often, too, their 'spiritual superiors.'

But if the emperors had become Christian, the Empire had not. Here and there an abuse was lopped off; or an edict was passed for the visitation of prisons and for the welfare of prisoners; or a Theodosius was recalled to justice and humanity for a while by the stern rebukes of an Ambrose. But the Empire was still the same: still a great tyranny, enslaving the masses, crushing national life, fattening itself and its officials on a system of world-wide robbery; and while it was paramount, there could be no hope for the human race. Nay, there were even those among the Christians who saw, like Dante afterwards, in the 'fatal gift of Constantine,' and the truce between the Church and the Empire, fresh and more deadly danger. Was not the Empire trying to extend over the Church itself that upas shadow with which it had withered up every other form of human existence; to make her, too, its stipendiary slave-official, to be pampered when obedient, and scourged whenever she dare assert a free will of her own, a law beyond that of her tyrants; to throw on her, by a refined hypocrisy, the care and support of the masses on whose lifeblood it was feeding? So thought many then, and, as I believe, not unwisely.

But if the social condition of the civilised world was anomalous at the beginning of the fifth century, its spiritual state was still more so. The universal fusion of races, languages, and customs, which had gone on for four centuries under the Roman rule, had produced a corresponding fusion of creeds, an universal fermentation of human thought and faith. All honest belief in the old local superstitions of paganism had been long dying out before the more palpable and material idolatry of Emperor-worship; and the gods of the nations, unable to deliver those who had trusted in them, became one by one the vassals of the 'Divus Caesar,' neglected by the philosophic rich, and only worshipped by the lower classes, where the old rites still pandered to their grosser appetites, or subserved the wealth and importance of some particular locality.

In the meanwhile, the minds of men, cut adrift from their ancient moorings, wandered wildly over pathless seas of speculative doubt, and especially in the more metaphysical and contemplative East, attempted to solve for themselves the questions of man's relation to the unseen by those thousand schisms, heresies, and theosophies (it is a disgrace to the word philosophy to call them by it), on the records of which the student now gazes bewildered, unable alike to count or to explain their fantasies.

Yet even these, like every outburst of free human thought, had their use and their fruit. They brought before the minds of churchmen a thousand new questions which must be solved, unless the Church was to relinquish for ever her claims as the great teacher and satisfier of the human soul. To study these bubbles, as they formed and burst on every wave of human life; to feel, too often by sad experience, as Augustine felt, the charm of their allurements; to divide the truths at which they aimed from the falsehood which they offered as its substitute; to exhibit the Catholic Church as possessing, in

the great facts which she proclaimed, full satisfaction, even for the most subtle metaphysical cravings of a diseased age;—that was the work of the time; and men were sent to do it, and aided in their labour by the very causes which had produced the intellectual revolution. The general intermixture of ideas, creeds, and races, even the mere physical facilities for intercourse between different parts of the Empire, helped to give the great Christian fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries a breadth of observation, a depth of thought, a large-hearted and large-minded patience and tolerance, such as, we may say boldly, the Church has since beheld but rarely, and the world never; at least, if we are to judge those great men by what they had, and not by what they had not, and to believe, as we are bound, that had they lived now, and not then, they would have towered as far above the heads of this generation as they did above the heads of their own. And thus an age, which, to the shallow insight of a sneerer like Gibbon, seems only a rotting and aimless chaos of sensuality and anarchy, fanaticism and hypocrisy, produced a Clement and an Athanase, a Chrysostom and an Augustine; absorbed into the sphere of Christianity all which was most valuable in the philosophies of Greece and Egypt, and in the social organisation of Rome, as an heirloom for nations yet unborn; and laid in foreign lands, by unconscious agents, the foundations of all European thought and Ethics.

But the health of a Church depends, not merely on the creed which it professes, not even on the wisdom and holiness of a few great ecclesiastics, but on the faith and virtue of its individual members. The *mens sana* must have a *corpus sanum* to inhabit. And even for the Western Church, the lofty future which was in store for it would have been impossible, without some infusion of new and healthier blood into the veins of a world drained and tainted by the influence of Rome.

And the new blood, at the era of this story, was at hand. The great tide of those Gothic nations, of which the Norwegian and the German are the purest remaining types, though every nation of Europe, from Gibraltar to St. Petersburg, owes to them the most precious elements of strength, was sweeping onward, wave over wave, in a steady south-western current, across the whole Roman territory, and only stopping and recoiling when it reached the shores of the Mediterranean. Those wild tribes were bringing with them into the magic circle of the Western Church's influence the very materials which she required for the building up of a future Christendom, and which she could find as little in the Western Empire as in the Eastern; comparative purity of morals; sacred respect for woman, for family life, law, equal justice, individual freedom, and, above all, for honesty in word and deed; bodies untainted by hereditary effeminacy, hearts earnest though genial, and blessed with a strange willingness to learn, even from those whom they despised; a brain equal to that of the Roman in practical power, and not too far behind that of the Eastern in imaginative and speculative acuteness.

And their strength was felt at once. Their vanguard, confined with difficulty for three centuries beyond the Eastern Alps, at the expense of sanguinary wars, had been adopted wherever it was practicable, into the service of the Empire; and the heart's core of the Roman legion was composed of Gothic officers and soldiers. But now the main body had arrived. Tribe after tribe was crowding down to the Alps, and trampling upon each other on the frontiers of the Empire. The Huns, singly their inferiors, pressed them from behind with the irresistible weight of numbers; Italy, with her rich cities and fertile lowlands, beckoned them on to plunder; as auxiliaries, they had learned their own strength and Roman weakness; a *casus belli* was soon found. How iniquitous was the conduct of the sons of Theodosius, in refusing the usual bounty, by which the Goths were bribed not to attack the Empire!—The whole pent-up deluge burst over the plains of Italy, and the Western Empire became from that day forth a dying idiot, while the new invaders divided Europe among themselves. The fifteen years before the time of this tale had decided the fate of Greece; the last four that of Rome itself. The countless treasures which five centuries of rapine had accumulated round the Capitol had become the prey of men clothed in sheepskins and horse-hide; and the sister of an emperor had found her beauty, virtue, and pride of race worthily matched by those of the hard-handed Northern hero who led her away from Italy as his captive and his bride, to found new kingdoms in South France and Spain, and to drive the newly-arrived Vandals across the Straits of Gibraltar into the then blooming

coast-land of Northern Africa. Everywhere the mangled limbs of the Old World were seething in the Medea's caldron, to come forth whole, and young, and strong. The Longbeards, noblest of their race, had found a temporary resting-place upon the Austrian frontier, after long southward wanderings from the Swedish mountains, soon to be dispossessed again by the advancing Huns, and, crossing the Alps, to give their name for ever to the plains of Lombardy. A few more tumultuous years, and the Franks would find themselves lords of the Lower Rhineland; and before the hairs of Hypatia's scholars had grown gray, the mythic Hengist and Horsa would have landed on the shores of Kent, and an English nation have begun its world-wide life.

But some great Providence forbade to our race, triumphant in every other quarter, a footing beyond the Mediterranean, or even in Constantinople, which to this day preserves in Europe the faith and manners of Asia. The Eastern World seemed barred, by some stern doom, from the only influence which could have regenerated it. Every attempt of the Gothic races to establish themselves beyond the sea, whether in the form of an organised kingdom, as the Vandals attempted in Africa; or of a mere band of brigands, as did the Goths in Asia Minor, under Gainas; or of a praetorian guard, as did the Varangens of the middle age; or as religious invaders, as did the Crusaders, ended only in the corruption and disappearance of the colonists. That extraordinary reform in morals, which, according to Salvian and his contemporaries, the Vandal conquerors worked in North Africa, availed them nothing; they lost more than they gave. Climate, bad example, and the luxury of power degraded them in one century into a race of helpless and debauched slave-holders, doomed to utter extermination before the semi-Gothic armies of Belisarius; and with them vanished the last chance that the Gothic races would exercise on the Eastern World the same stern yet wholesome discipline under which the Western had been restored to life.

The Egyptian and Syrian Churches, therefore, were destined to labour not for themselves, but for us. The signs of disease and decrepitude were already but too manifest in them. That very peculiar turn of the Graeco-Eastern mind, which made them the great thinkers of the then world, had the effect of drawing them away from practice to speculation; and the races of Egypt and Syria were effeminate, over-civilised, exhausted by centuries during which no infusion of fresh blood had come to renew the stock. Morbid, self-conscious, physically indolent, incapable then, as now, of personal or political freedom, they afforded material out of which fanatics might easily be made, but not citizens of the kingdom of God. The very ideas of family and national life-those two divine roots of the Church, severed from which she is certain to wither away into that most godless and most cruel of spectres, a religious world-had perished in the East from the evil influence of the universal practice of slaveholding, as well as from the degradation of that Jewish nation whichhad been for ages the great witness for those ideas; and all classes, like their forefather Adam—like, indeed, 'the old Adam' in every man and in every age—were shifting the blame of sin from their own consciences to human relationships and duties—and therein, to the God who had appointed them; and saying as of old, '*The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.*' The passionate Eastern character, like all weak ones, found total abstinence easier than temperance, religious thought more pleasant than godly action; and a monastic world grew up all over the East, of such vastness that in Egypt it was said to rival in numbers the lay population, producing, with an enormous decrease in the actual amount of moral evil, an equally great enervation and decrease of the population. Such a people could offer no resistance to the steadily-increasing tyranny of the Eastern Empire. In vain did such men as Chrysostom and Basil oppose their personal influence to the hideous intrigues and villainies of the Byzantine court; the ever-downward career of Eastern Christianity went on unchecked for two more miserable centuries, side by side with the upward development of the Western Church; and, while the successors of the great Saint Gregory were converting and civilising a new-born Europe, the Churches of the East were vanishing before Mohammedan invaders, strong by living trust in that living God, whom the Christians, while they hated and persecuted each other for arguments about Him, were denying and blaspheming in every action of their lives.

But at the period whereof this story treats, the Graeco-Eastern mind was still in the middle of its great work. That wonderful metaphysic subtlety, which, in phrases and definitions too often unmeaning to our grosser intellect, saw the symbols of the most important spiritual realities, and felt that on the distinction between homoousios and homoiousios might hang the solution of the whole problem of humanity, was set to battle in Alexandria, the ancient stronghold of Greek philosophy, with the effete remains of the very scientific thought to which it owed its extraordinary culture. Monastic isolation from family and national duties especially fitted the fathers of that period for the task, by giving them leisure, if nothing else, to face questions with a lifelong earnestness impossible to the more social and practical Northern mind. Our duty is, instead of sneering at them as pedantic dreamers, to thank Heaven that men were found, just at the time when they were wanted, to do for us what we could never have done for ourselves; to leave to us, as a precious heirloom, bought most truly with the lifeblood of their race, a metaphysic at once Christian and scientific, every attempt to improve on which has hitherto been found a failure; and to battle victoriously with that strange brood of theoretic monsters begotten by effete Greek philosophy upon Egyptian symbolism, Chaldee astrology, Parsee dualism, Brahminic spiritualism-graceful and gorgeous phantoms, whereof somewhat more will be said in the coming chapters.

I have, in my sketch of Hypatia and her fate, closely followed authentic history, especially Socrates' account of the closing scene, as given in Book vii. Para 15, of his *Ecclesiastical History*. I am inclined, however, for various historical reasons, to date her death two years earlier than he does. The tradition that she was the wife of Isidore, the philosopher, I reject with Gibbon, as a palpable anachronism of at least fifty years (Isidore's master, Proclus, not having been born till the year before Hypatia's death), contradicted, moreover, by the very author of it, Photius, who says distinctly, after comparing Hypatia and Isidore, that Isidore married a certain 'Domna.' No hint, moreover, of her having been married appears in any contemporary authors; and the name of Isidore nowhere occurs among those of the many mutual friends to whom Synesius sends messages in his letters to Hypatia, in which, if anywhere, we should find mention of a husband, had one existed. To Synesius's most charming letters, as well as to those of Isidore, the good Abbot of Pelusium, I beg leave to refer those readers who wish for further information about the private life of the fifth century.

I cannot hope that these pages will be altogether free from anachronisms and errors. I can only say that I have laboured honestly and industriously to discover the truth, even in its minutest details, and to sketch the age, its manners and its literature, as I found them-altogether artificial, slipshod, effete, resembling far more the times of Louis Quinze than those of Sophocles and Plato. And so I send forth this little sketch, ready to give my hearty thanks to any reviewer, who, by exposing my mistakes, shall teach me and the public somewhat more about the last struggle between the Young Church and the Old World.

CHAPTER I: THE LAURA

In the four hundred and thirteenth year of the Christian Era, some three hundred miles above Alexandria, the young monk Philammon was sitting on the edge of a low range of inland cliffs, crested with drifting sand. Behind him the desert sand-waste stretched, lifeless, interminable, reflecting its lurid glare on the horizon of the cloudless vault of blue. At his feet the sand dripped and trickled, in yellow rivulets, from crack to crack and ledge to ledge, or whirled past him in tiny jets of yellow smoke, before the fitful summer airs. Here and there, upon the face of the cliffs which walled in the opposite side of the narrow glen below, were cavernous tombs, huge old quarries, with obelisks and half-cut pillars, standing as the workmen had left them centuries before; the sand was slipping down and piling up around them, their heads were frosted with the arid snow; everywhere was silence, desolation-the grave of a dead nation, in a dying land. And there he sat musing above it all, full of life and youth and health and beauty—a young Apollo of the desert. His only clothing was a ragged sheep-skin, bound with a leathern girdle. His long black locks, unshorn from childhood, waved and glistened in the sun; a rich dark down on cheek and chin showed the spring of healthful manhood; his hard hands and sinewy sunburnt limbs told of labour and endurance; his flashing eyes and beetling brow, of daring, fancy, passion, thought, which had no sphere of action in such a place. What did his glorious young humanity alone among the tombs?

So perhaps he, too, thought, as he passed his hand across his brow, as if to sweep away some gathering dream, and sighing, rose and wandered along the cliffs, peering downward at every point and cranny, in search of fuel for the monastery from whence he came.

Simple as was the material which he sought, consisting chiefly of the low arid desert shrubs, with now and then a fragment of wood from some deserted quarry or ruin, it was becoming scarcer and scarcer round Abbot Pambo's Laura at Scetis; and long before Philammon had collected his daily quantity, he had strayed farther from his home than he had ever been before.

Suddenly, at a turn of the glen, he came upon a sight new to him....a temple carved in the sandstone cliff; and in front a smooth platform, strewn with beams and mouldering tools, and here and there a skull bleaching among the sand, perhaps of some workman slaughtered at his labour in one of the thousand wars of old. The abbot, his spiritual father—indeed, the only father whom he knew, for his earliest recollections were of the Laura and the old man's cell-had strictly forbidden him to enter, even to approach any of those relics of ancient idolatry: but a broad terrace-road led down to the platform from the table-land above; the plentiful supply of fuel was too tempting to be passed by.... He would go down, gather a few sticks, and then return, to tell the abbot of the treasure which he had found, and consult him as to the propriety of revisiting it.

So down he went, hardly daring to raise his eyes to the alluring iniquities of the painted imagery which, gaudy in crimson and blue, still blazed out upon the desolate solitude, uninjured by that rainless air. But he was young, and youth is curious; and the devil, at least in the fifth century, busy with young brains. Now Philammon believed most utterly in the devil, and night and day devoutly prayed to be delivered from him; so he crossed himself, and ejaculated, honestly enough, 'Lord, turn away mine eyes, lest they behold vanity!'.... and looked nevertheless....

And who could have helped looking at those four colossal kings, who sat there grim and motionless, their huge hands laid upon their knees in everlasting self-assured repose, seeming to bear up the mountain on their stately heads? A sense of awe, weakness, all but fear, came over him. He dare not stoop to take up the wood at his feet, their great stern eyes watched him so steadily.

Round their knees and round their thrones were mystic characters engraved, symbol after symbol, line below line—the ancient wisdom of the Egyptians, wherein Moses the man of God was learned of old—why should not he know it too? What awful secrets might not be hidden there about the great world, past, present, and future, of which he knew only so small a speck? Those kings who

sat there, they had known it all; their sharp lips seem parting, ready to speak to him.... Oh that they would speak for once!.... and yet that grim sneering smile, that seemed to look down on him from the heights of their power and wisdom, with calm contempt.... him, the poor youth, picking up the leaving and rags of their past majesty .... He dared look at them no more.

So he looked past them into the temple halls; into a lustrous abyss of cool green shade, deepening on and inward, pillar after pillar, vista after vista, into deepest night. And dimly through the gloom he could descry, on every wall and column, gorgeous arabesques, long lines of pictured story; triumphs and labours; rows of captives in foreign and fantastic dresses, leading strange animals, bearing the tributes of unknown lands; rows of ladies at feasts, their heads crowned with garlands, the fragrant lotus-flower in every hand, while slaves brought wine and perfumes, and children sat upon their knees, and husbands by their side; and dancing girls, in transparent robes and golden girdles, tossed their tawny limbs wildly among the throng.... What was the meaning of it all? Why had it all been? Why had it gone on thus, the great world, century after century, millennium after millennium, eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage, and knowing nothing better.... how could they know anything better? Their forefathers had lost the light ages and ages before they were born.... And Christ had not come for ages and ages after they were dead.... How could they know?.... And yet they were all in hell.... every one of them. Every one of these ladies who sat there, with her bushy locks, and garlands, and jewelled collars, and lotus-flowers, and gauzy dress, displaying all her slender limbs-who, perhaps, when she was alive, smiled so sweetly, and went so gaily, and had children, and friends, and never once thought of what was going to happen to her—what must happen to her.... She was in hell.... Burning for ever, and ever, and ever, there below his feet. He stared down on the rocky floors. If he could but see through them.... and the eye of faith could see through them.... he should behold her writhing and twisting among the flickering flame, scorched, glowing.... in everlasting agony, such as the thought of enduring for a moment made him shudder. He had burnt his hands once, when a palm-leaf but caught fire.... He recollected what that was like.... She was enduring ten thousand times more than that for ever. He should hear her shrieking in vain for a drop of water to cool her tongue.... He had never heard a human being shriek but once.... a boy bathing on the opposite Nile bank, whom a crocodile had dragged down.... and that scream, faint and distant as it came across the mighty tide, had rung intolerable in his ears for days.... and to think of all which echoed through those vaults of fire-for ever! Was the thought bearable!—was it possible! Millions upon millions burning forever for Adam's fall .... Could God be just in that?....

It was the temptation of a fiend! He had entered the unhallowed precincts, where devils still lingered about their ancient shrines; he had let his eyes devour the abominations of the heathen, and given place to the devil. He would flee home to confess it all to his father. He would punish him as he deserved, pray for him, forgive him. And yet could he tell him all? Could he, dare he confess to him the whole truth—the insatiable craving to know the mysteries of learning—to see the great roaring world of men, which had been growing up in him slowly, month after month, till now it had assumed this fearful shape? He could stay no longer in the desert. This world which sent all souls to hell—was it as bad as monks declared it was? It must be, else how could such be the fruit of it? But it was too awful a thought to be taken on trust. No; he must go and see.

Filled with such fearful questionings, half-inarticulate and vague, like the thoughts of a child, the untutored youth went wandering on, till he reached the edge of the cliff below which lay his home. It lay pleasantly enough, that lonely Laura, or lane of rude Cyclopean cells, under the perpetual shadow of the southern wall of crags, amid its grove of ancient date-trees. A branching cavern in the cliff supplied the purposes of a chapel, a storehouse, and a hospital; while on the sunny slope across the glen lay the common gardens of the brotherhood, green with millet, maize, and beans, among which a tiny streamlet, husbanded and guided with the most thrifty care, wandered down from the cliff foot, and spread perpetual verdure over the little plot which voluntary and fraternal labour had painfully redeemed from the inroads of the all-devouring sand. For that garden, like everything else

in the Laura, except each brother's seven feet of stone sleeping-hut, was the common property, and therefore the common care and joy of all. For the common good, as well as for his own, each man had toiled up the glen with his palm-leaf basket of black mud from the river Nile, over whose broad sheet of silver the glen's mouth yawned abrupt. For the common good, each man had swept the ledges clear of sand, and sown in the scanty artificial soil, the harvest of which all were to share alike. To buy clothes, books, and chapel furniture for the common necessities, education, and worship, each man sat, day after day, week after week, his mind full of high and heavenly thoughts, weaving the leaves of their little palm-copse into baskets, which an aged monk exchanged for goods with the more prosperous and frequented monasteries of the opposite bank. Thither Philammon rowed the old man over, week by week, in a light canoe of papyrus, and fished, as he sat waiting for him, for the common meal. A simple, happy, gentle life was that of the Laura, all portioned out by rules and methods, which were held hardly less sacred than those of the Scriptures, on which they were supposed (and not so wrongly either) to have been framed. Each man had food and raiment, shelter on earth, friends and counsellors, living trust in the continual care of Almighty God; and, blazing before his eyes, by day and night, the hope of everlasting glory beyond all poets' dreams.... And what more would man have had in those days? Thither they had fled out of cities, compared with which Paris is earnest and Gomorrha chaste,—out of a rotten, infernal, dying world of tyrants and slaves, hypocrites and wantons,—to ponder undisturbed on duty and on judgment, on death and eternity, heaven and hell; to find a common creed, a common interest, a common hope, common duties, pleasures, and sorrows.... True, they had many of them fled from the post where God had placed them, when they fled from man into the Thebaid waste.... What sort of post and what sort of an age they were, from which those old monks fled, we shall see, perhaps, before this tale is told out.

'Thou art late, son,' said the abbot, steadfastly working away at his palm-basket, as Philammon approached.

'Fuel is scarce, and I was forced to go far.'

'A monk should not answer till he is questioned. I did not ask the reason. Where didst thou find that wood?'

'Before the temple, far up the glen.'

'The temple! What didst thou see there?'

No answer. Pambo looked up with his keen black eye.

'Thou hast entered it, and lusted after its abominations.'

'I—I did not enter; but I looked—'

'And what didst thou see? Women?'

Philammon was silent.

'Have I not bidden you never to look on the face of women? Are they not the firstfruits of the devil, the authors of all evil, the subtlest of all Satan's snares? Are they not accursed for ever, for the deceit of their first mother, by whom sin entered into the world? A woman first opened the gates of hell; and, until this day, they are the portresses thereof. Unhappy boy! What hast thou done?'

'They were but painted on the walls.'

'Ah!' said the abbot, as if suddenly relieved from a heavy burden. 'But how knewest thou them to be women, when thou hast never yet, unless thou liest—which I believe not of thee—seen the face of a daughter of Eve?'

'Perhaps—perhaps,' said Philammon, as if suddenly relieved by a new suggestion—'perhaps they were only devils. They must have been, I think, for they were so very beautiful.'

'Ah! how knowest thou that devils are beautiful?'

'I was launching the boat, a week ago, with Father Aufugus; and on the bank,....not very near,....there were two creatures....with long hair, and striped all over the lower half of their bodies with black, and red, and yellow....and they were gathering flowers on the shore. Father Aufugus turned away; but I.... I could not help thinking them the most beautiful things that I had ever seen....so I

asked him why he turned away; and he said that those were the same sort of devils which tempted the blessed St. Anthony. Then I recollected having heard it read aloud, how Satan tempted Anthony in the shape of a beautiful woman.... And so.... and so.... those figures on the wall were very like.... and I thought they might be....'

And the poor boy, who considered that he was making confession of a deadly and shameful sin, blushed scarlet, and stammered, and at last stopped.

'And thou thoughtest them beautiful? Oh utter corruption of the flesh!—oh subtilty of Satan! The Lord forgive thee, as I do, my poor child; henceforth thou goest not beyond the garden walls.'

'Not beyond the walls! Impossible! I cannot! If thou wert not my father, I would say, I will not! —I must have liberty!—I must see for myself—I must judge for myself, what this world is of which you all talk so bitterly. I long for no pomps and vanities. I will promise you this moment, if you will, never to re-enter a heathen temple—to hide my face in the dust whenever I approach a woman. But I must—I must see the world; I must see the great mother-church in Alexandria, and the patriarch, and his clergy. If they can serve God in the city, why not I? I could do more for God there than here .... Not that I despise this work—not that I am ungrateful to you—oh, never, never that!—but I pant for the battle. Let me go! I am not discontented with you, but with myself. I know that obedience is noble; but danger is nobler still. If you have seen the world, why should not I? If you have fled from it because you found it too evil to live in, why should not I, and return to you here of my own will, never to leave you? And yet Cyril and his clergy have not fled from it....'

Desperately and breathlessly did Philammon drive this speech out of his inmost heart; and then waited, expecting the good abbot to strike him on the spot. If he had, the young man would have submitted patiently; so would any man, however venerable, in that monastery. Why not? Duly, after long companionship, thought, and prayer, they had elected Pambo for their abbot—Abba—father—the wisest, eldest-hearted and headed of them—if he was that, it was time that he should be obeyed. And obeyed he was, with a loyal, reasonable love, and yet with an implicit, soldier-like obedience, which many a king and conqueror might envy. Were they cowards and slaves? The Roman legionaries should be good judges on that point. They used to say that no armed barbarian, Goth or Vandal, Moor or Spaniard, was so terrible as the unarmed monk of the Thebaid.

Twice the old man lifted his staff to strike; twice he laid it down again; and then, slowly rising, left Philammon kneeling there, and moved away deliberately, and with eyes fixed on the ground, to the house of the brother Aufugus.

Every one in the Laura honoured Aufugus. There was a mystery about him which heightened the charm of his surpassing sanctity, his childlike sweetness and humility. It was whispered—when the monks seldom and cautiously did whisper together in their lonely walks—that he had been once a great man; that he had come from a great city—perhaps from Rome itself. And the simple monks were proud to think that they had among them a man who had seen Rome. At least, Abbot Pambo respected him. He was never beaten; never even reproved—perhaps he never required it; but still it was the meed of all; and was not the abbot a little partial? Yet, certainly, when Theophilus sent up a messenger from Alexandria, rousing every Laura with the news of the sack of Rome by Alaric, did not Pambo take him first to the cell of Aufugus, and sit with him there three whole hours in secret consultation, before he told the awful story to the rest of the brotherhood? And did not Aufugus himself give letters to the messenger, written with his own hand, containing, as was said, deep secrets of worldly policy, known only to himself? So, when the little lane of holy men, each peering stealthily over his plaiting work from the doorway of his sandstone cell, saw the abbot, after his unwonted passion, leave the culprit kneeling, and take his way toward the sage's dwelling, they judged that something strange and delicate had befallen the common weal, and each wished, without envy, that he were as wise as the man whose counsel was to solve the difficulty.

For an hour or more the abbot remained there, talking earnestly and low; and then a solemn sound as of the two old men praying with sobs and tears; and every brother bowed his head, and

whispered a hope that He whom they served might guide them for the good of the Laura, and of His Church, and of the great heathen world beyond; and still Philammon knelt motionless, awaiting his sentence; his heart filled-who can tell how? 'The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not with its joy.' So thought he as he knelt; and so think I, too, knowing that in the pettiest character there are unfathomable depths, which the poet, all-seeing though he may pretend to be, can never analyse, but must only dimly guess at, and still more dimly sketch them by the actions which they beget.

At last Pambo returned, deliberate, still, and slow, as he had gone, and seating himself within his cell, spoke—

'And the youngest said, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to my share.... And he took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. Thou shalt go, my son. But first come after me, and speak with Aufugus.'

Philammon, like everyone else, loved Aufugus; and when the abbot retired and left the two alone together, he felt no dread or shame about unburdening his whole heart to him. Long and passionately he spoke, in answer to the gentle questions of the old man, who, without the rigidity or pedantic solemnity of the monk, interrupted the youth, and let himself be interrupted in return, gracefully, genially, almost playfully. And yet there was a melancholy about his tone as he answered to the youth's appeal—

'Tertullian, Origen, Clement, Cyprian—all these moved in the world; all these and many more beside, whose names we honour, whose prayers we invoke, were learned in the wisdom of the heathen, and fought and laboured, unspotted, in the world; and why not I? Cyril the patriarch himself, was he not called from the caves of Nitria to sit on the throne of Alexandria?'

Slowly the old man lifted his band, and putting back the thick locks of the kneeling youth, gazed, with soft pitying eyes, long and earnestly into his face.

'And thou wouldst see the world, poor fool? And thou wouldst see the world?'

'I would convert the world!'

'Thou must know it first. And shall I tell thee what that world is like, which seems to thee so easy to convert? Here I sit, the poor unknown old monk, until I die, fasting and praying, if perhaps God will have mercy on my soul: but little thou knowest how I have seen it. Little thou knowest, or thou wouldst be well content to rest here till the end. I was Arsenius.... Ah! vain old man that I am! Thou hast never heard that name, at which once queens would whisper and grow pale. Vanitas vanitatum! omnia vanitas! And yet he, at whose frown half the world trembles, has trembled himself at mine. I was the tutor of Arcadius.'

'The Emperor of Byzantium?'

'Even so, my son, even so. There I saw the world which thou wouldst see. And what saw I? Even what thou wilt see. Eunuchs the tyrants of their own sovereigns. Bishops kissing the feet of parricides and harlots. Saints tearing saints in pieces for a word, while sinners cheer them on to the unnatural fight. Liars thanked for lying, hypocrites taking pride in their hypocrisy. The many sold and butchered for the malice, the caprice, the vanity of the few. The plunderers of the poor plundered in their turn by worse devourers than themselves. Every attempt at reform the parent of worse scandals; every mercy begetting fresh cruelties; every persecutor silenced, only to enable others to persecute him in their turn: every devil who is exorcised, returning with seven others worsethan himself; falsehood and selfishness, spite and lust, confusion seven times confounded, Satan casting out Satan everywhere—from the emperor who wantons on his throne, to the slave who blasphemes beneath his fetters.'

'If Satan cast out Satan, his kingdom shall not stand.'

'In the world to come. But in this world it shall stand and conquer, even worse and worse, until the end. These are the last days spoken of by the prophets,—the beginning of woes such as never have been on the earth before—"On earth distress of nations with perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for the dread of those things which are coming on the earth." I have seen it long.

Year after year I have watched them coming nearer and ever nearer in their course like the whirling sand-storms of the desert, which sweep past the caravan, and past again, and yet overwhelm it after all—that black flood of the northern barbarians. I foretold it; I prayed against it; but, like Cassandra's of old, my prophecy and my prayers were alike unheard. My pupil spurned my warnings. The lusts of youth, the intrigues of courtiers, were stronger than the warning voice of God; then I ceased to hope; I ceased to pray for the glorious city, for I knew that her sentence was gone forth; I saw her in the spirit, even as St. John saw her in the Revelations; her, and her sins, and her ruin. And I fled secretly at night, and buried myself here in the desert, to await the end of the world. Night and day I pray the Lord to accomplish His elect, and to hasten His kingdom. Morning by morning I look up trembling, and yet in hope, for the sign of the Son of man in heaven, when the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the skies pass away like a scroll, and the fountains of the nether fire burst up around our feet, and the end of all shall come. And thou wouldst go into the world from which I fled?'

'If the harvest be at hand, the Lord needs labourers. If the times be awful, I should be doing awful things in them. Send me, and let that day find me, where I long to be, in the forefront of the battle of the Lord.'

'The Lord's voice be obeyed! Thou shalt go. Here are letters to Cyril the patriarch. He will love thee for my sake: and for thine own sake, too, I trust. Thou goest of our free will as well as thine own. The abbot and I have watched thee long, knowing that the Lord bad need of such as thee elsewhere. We did but prove thee, to see by thy readiness to obey, whether thou wert fit to rule. Go, and God be with thee. Covet no man's gold or silver. Neither eat flesh nor drink wine, but live as thou hast lived—a Nazarite of the Lord. Fear not the face of man; but look not on the face of woman. In an evil hour came they into the world, the mothers of all mischiefs which I have seen under the sun. Come; the abbot waits for us at the gate.'

With tears of surprise, joy, sorrow, almost of dread, Philammon hung back.

'Nay—come. Why shouldst thou break thy brethren's hearts and ours by many leave-takings! Bring from the storehouse a week's provision of dried dates and millet. The papyrus boat lies at the ferry; thou shalt descend in it. The Lord will replace it for us when we need it. Speak with no man on the river except the monks of God. When thou hast gone five days' journey downward, ask for the mouth of the canal of Alexandria. Once in the city, any monk will guide thee to the archbishop. Send us news of thy welfare by some holy mouth. Come.'

Silently they paced together down the glen to the lonely beach of the great stream. Pambo was there already, his white hair glittering in the rising moon, as with slow and feeble arms he launched the light canoe. Philammon flung himself at the old men's feet, and besought, with many tears, their forgiveness and their blessing.'We have nothing to forgive. Follow thou thine inward call. If it be of the flesh, it will avenge itself; if it be of the Spirit, who are we that we should fight against God? Farewell.' A few minutes more, and the youth and his canoe were lessening down the rapid stream in the golden summer twilight. Again a minute, and the swift southern night had fallen, and all was dark but the cold glare of the moon on the river, and on the rock-faces, and on the two old men, as they knelt upon the beach, and with their heads upon each other's shoulders, like two children, sobbed and prayed together for the lost darling of their age.

CHAPTER II: THE DYING WORLD

In the upper story of a house in the Museum Street of Alexandria, built and fitted up on the old Athenian model, was a small room. It had been chosen by its occupant, not merely on account of its quiet; for though it was tolerably out of hearing of the female slaves who worked, and chattered, and quarrelled under the cloisters of the women's court on the south side, yet it was exposed to the rattle of carriages and the voices of passengers in the fashionable street below, and to strange bursts of roaring, squealing, trumpeting from the Menagerie, a short way off, on the opposite side of the street. The attraction of the situation lay, perhaps, in the view which it commanded over the wall of the Museum gardens, of flower-beds, shrubberies, fountains, statues, walks, and alcoves, which had echoed for nearly seven hundred years to the wisdom of the Alexandrian sages and poets. School after school, they had all walked, and taught, and sung there, beneath the spreading planes and chestnuts, figs and palm-trees. The place seemed fragrant with all the riches of Greek thought and song, since the days when Ptolemy Philadelphus walked there with Euclid and Theocritus, Callimachus and Lycophron.

On the left of the garden stretched the lofty eastern front of the Museum itself, with its picture galleries, halls of statuary, dining-halls, and lecture-rooms; one huge wing containing that famous library, founded by the father of Philadelphus, which hold in the time of Seneca, even after the destruction of a great part of it in Caesar's siege, four hundred thousand manuscripts. There it towered up, the wonder of the world, its white roof bright against the rainless blue; and beyond it, among the ridges and pediments of noble buildings, a broad glimpse of the bright blue sea.

The room was fitted up in the purest Greek style, not without an affectation of archaism, in the severe forms and subdued half-tints of the frescoes which ornamented the walls with scenes from the old myths of Athene. Yet the general effect, even under the blazing sun which poured in through the mosquito nets of the courtyard windows, was one of exquisite coolness, and cleanliness, and repose. The room had neither carpet nor fireplace; and the only movables in it were a sofa-bed, a table, and an arm-chair, all of such delicate and graceful forms as may be seen on ancient vases of a far earlier period than that whereof we write. But, most probably, had any of us entered that room that morning, we should not have been able to spare a look either for the furniture, or the general effect, or the Museum gardens, or the sparkling Mediterranean beyond; but we should have agreed that the room was quite rich enough for human eyes, for the sake of one treasure which it possessed, and, beside which, nothing was worth a moment's glance. For in the light arm-chair, reading a manuscript which lay on the table, sat a woman, of some five-and-twenty years, evidently the tutelary goddess of that little shrine, dressed in perfect keeping with the archaism of the chamber, in simple old snow-white Ionic robe, falling to the feet and reaching to the throat, and of that peculiarly severe and graceful fashion in which the upper part of the dress falls downward again from the neck to the waist in a sort of cape, entirely hiding the outline of the bust, while it leaves the arms and the point of the shoulders bare. Her dress was entirely without ornament, except the two narrow purple stripes down the front, which marked her rank as a Roman citizen, the gold embroidered shoes upon her feet, and the gold net, which looped back, from her forehead to her neck, hair the colour and gloss of which were hardly distinguishable from that of the metal itself, such as Athene herself might heaven vied for tint, and mass, and ripple. Her features, arms, and hands were of the severest and grandest type of old Greek beauty, at once showing everywhere the high development of the bones, and covering them with that firm, round, ripe outline, and waxy morbidezza of skin, which the old Greeks owed to their continual use not only of the bath and muscular exercise, but also of daily unguents. There might have seemed to us too much sadness in that clear gray eye; too much self-conscious restraint in those sharp curved lips; too much affectation in the studied severity of her posture as she read, copied, as it seemed, from some old vase or bas-relief. But the glorious grace and beauty of every line of face

and figure would have excused, even hidden those defects, and we should have only recognised the marked resemblance to the ideal portraits of Athene which adorned every panel of the walls.

She has lifted her eyes off her manuscript; she is looking out with kindling countenance over the gardens of the Museum; her ripe curling Greek lips, such as we never see now, even among her own wives and sisters, open. She is talking to herself. Listen!

'Yes. The statues there are broken. The libraries are plundered. The alcoves are silent. The oracles are dumb. And yet—who says that the old faith of heroes and sages is dead? The beautiful can never die. If the gods have deserted their oracles, they have not deserted the souls who aspire to them. If they have ceased to guide nations, they have not ceased to speak to their own elect. If they have cast off the vulgar herd, they have not cast off Hypatia. .....

'Ay. To believe in the old creeds, while every one else is dropping away from them.... To believe in spite of disappointments.... To hope against hope.... To show oneself superior to the herd, by seeing boundless depths of living glory in myths which have become dark and dead to them.... To struggle to the last against the new and vulgar superstitions of a rotting age, for the faith of my forefathers, for the old gods, the old heroes, the old sages who gauged the mysteries of heaven and earth—and perhaps to conquer—at least to have my reward! To be welcomed into the celestial ranks of the heroic—to rise to the immortal gods, to the ineffable powers, onward, upward ever, through ages and through eternities, till I find my home at last, and vanish in the glory of the Nameless and the Absolute One!....

And her whole face flashed out into wild glory, and then sank again suddenly into a shudder of something like fear and disgust, as she saw, watching her from under the wall of the gardens opposite, a crooked, withered Jewish crone, dressed out in the most gorgeous and fantastic style of barbaric finery.

'Why does that old hag haunt me? I see her everywhere—till the last month at least—and here she is again! I will ask the prefect to find out who she is, and get rid of her, before she fascinates me with that evil eye. Thank the gods, there she moves away! Foolish!—foolish of me, a philosopher. I, to believe, against the authority of Porphyry himself, too, in evil eyes and magic! But there is my father, pacing up and down in the library.'

As she spoke, the old man entered from the next room. He was a Greek, also, but of a more common, and, perhaps, lower type; dark and fiery, thin and graceful; his delicate figure and cheeks, wasted by meditation, harmonised well with the staid and simple philosophic cloak which he wore as a sign of his profession. He paced impatiently up and down the chamber, while his keen, glittering eyes and restless gestures betokened intense inward thought.... 'I have it.... No; again it escapes—it contradicts itself. Miserable man that I am! If there is faith in Pythagoras, the symbol should be an expanding series of the powers of three; and yet that accursed binary factor will introduce itself. Did not you work the sum out once, Hypatia?'

'Sit down, my dear father, and eat. You have tasted no food yet this day.'

'What do I care for food! The inexpressible must be expressed, the work must be done if it cost me the squaring of the circle. How can he, whose sphere lies above the stars, stoop every moment to earth?

'Ay,' she answered, half bitterly, 'and would that we could live without food, and imitate perfectly the immortal gods. But while we are in this prison-house of matter, we must wear our chain; even wear it gracefully, if we have the good taste; and make the base necessities of this body of shame symbolic of the divine food of the reason. There is fruit, with lentils and rice, waiting for you in the next room; and bread, unless you despise it too much.'

'The food of slaves!' he answered. 'Well, I will eat, and be ashamed of eating. Stay, did I tell you? Six new pupils in the mathematical school this morning. It grows! It spreads! We shall conquer yet!'

She sighed. 'How do you know that they have not come to you, as Critias and Alcibiades did to Socrates, to learn a merely political and mundane virtue? Strange! that men should be content to grovel, and be men, when they might rise to the rank of gods! Ah, my father! That is my bitterest

grief! to see those who have been pretending in the morning lecture-room to worship every word of mine as an oracle, lounging in the afternoon round Pelagia's litter; and then at night—for I know that they do it—the dice, and the wine, and worse. That Pallas herself should be conquered every day by Venus Pandemos! That Pelagia should have more power than I! Not that such a creature as that disturbs me: no created thing, I hope, can move my equanimity; but if I could stoop to hate—I should hate her—hate her.'

And her voice took a tone which made it somewhat uncertain whether, in spite of all the lofty impassibility which she felt bound to possess, she did not hate Pelagia with a most human and mundane hatred.

But at that moment the conversation was cut short by the hasty entrance of a slave girl, who, with fluttering voice, announced—

'His excellency, madam, the prefect! His chariot has been at the gate for these five minutes, and he is now coming upstairs.'

'Foolish child!' answered Hypatia, with some affectation of indifference. 'And why should that disturb me? Let him enter.'

The door opened, and in came, preceded by the scent of half a dozen different perfumes, a florid, delicate-featured man, gorgeously dressed out in senatorial costume, his fingers and neck covered with jewels.

'The representative of the Caesars honours himself by offering at the shrine of Athene Polias, and rejoices to see in her priestess as lovely a likeness as ever of the goddess whom she serves.... Don't betray me, but I really cannot help talking sheer paganism whenever I find myself within the influence of your eyes.'

'Truth is mighty,' said Hypatia, as she rose to greet him with a smile and a reverence.

'Ah, so they say—Your excellent father has vanished. He is really too modest—honest, though—about his incapacity for state secrets. After all, you know, it was your Minervaship which I came to consult. How has this turbulent Alexandrian rascaldom been behaving itself in my absence?'

'The herd has been eating, and drinking, and marrying, as usual, I believe,' answered Hypatia, in a languid tone.

'And multiplying, I don't doubt. Well, there will be less loss to the empire if I have to crucify a dozen or two, as I positively will, the next riot. It is really a great comfort to a statesman that the masses are so well aware that they deserve hanging, and therefore so careful to prevent any danger of public justice depopulating the province. But how go on the schools?'

Hypatia shook her head sadly.

'Ah, boys will be boys.... I plead guilty myself. Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor. You must not be hard on us.... Whether we obey you or not in private life, we do in public; and if we enthrone you queen of Alexandria, you must allow your courtiers and bodyguards a few court licences. Now don't sigh or I shall be inconsolable. At all events, your worst rival has betaken herself to the wilderness, and gone to look for the city of the gods above the cataracts.'

'Whom do you mean?' asked Hypatia, in a tone most unphilosophically eager.

'Pelagia, of course. I met that prettiest and naughtiest of humanities half-way between here and Thebes, transformed into a perfect Andromache of chaste affection.'

'And to whom, pray?'

'To a certain Gothic giant. What men those barbarians do breed! I was afraid of being crushed under the elephant's foot at every step I took with him!'

'What!' asked Hypatia, 'did your excellency condescend to converse with such savages?'

'To tell you the truth, he had some forty stout countrymen of his with him, who might have been troublesome to a perplexed prefect; not to mention that it is always as well to keep on good terms with these Goths. Really, after the sack of Rome, and Athens cleaned out like a beehive by wasps, things begin to look serious. And as for the great brute himself, he has rank enough in his way,—

boasts of his descent from some cannibal god or other,—really hardly deigned to speak to a paltry Roman governor, till his faithful and adoring bride interceded for me. Still, the fellow understood good living, and we celebrated our new treaty of friendship with noble libations—but I must not talk about that to you. However, I got rid of them; quoted all the geographical lies I had ever heard, and a great many more; quickened their appetite for their fool's errand notably, and started them off again. So now the star of Venus is set, and that of Pallas in the ascendant. Wherefore tell me—what am I to do with Saint Firebrand?'

'Cyril?'

'Cyril.'

'Justice.'

'Ah, Fairest Wisdom, don't mention that horrid word out of the lecture-room. In theory it is all very well; but in poor imperfect earthly practice, a governor must be content with doing very much what comes to hand. In abstract justice, now, I ought to nail up Cyril, deacons, district visitors, and all, in a row, on the sandfill out side. That is simple enough; but, like a great many simple and excellent things, impossible.'

'You fear the people?'

'Well, my dear lady, and has not the villainous demagogue got the whole mob on his side? Am I to have the Constantinople riots re-enacted here? I really cannot face it; I have not nerve for it; perhaps I am too lazy. Be it so.'

Hypatia sighed. 'Ah, that your excellency but saw the great duel which depends on you alone! Do not fancy that the battle is merely between Paganism and Christianity—'

'Why, if it were, you know, I, as a Christian, under a Christian and sainted emperor, not to mention his august sister—'

'We understand,' interrupted she, with an impatient wave of her beautiful hand. 'Not even between them; not even between philosophy and barbarism. The struggle is simply one between the aristocracy and the mob,—between wealth, refinement, art, learning, all that makes a nation great, and the savage herd of child-breeders below, the many ignoble, who were meant to labour for the noble few. Shall the Roman empire command or obey her own slaves? is the question which you and Cyril have to battle out; and the fight must be internecine.'

'I should not wonder if it became so, really,' answered the prefect, with a shrug of his shoulders. 'I expect every time I ride, to have my brains knocked out by some mad monk.'

'Why not? In an age when, as has been well and often said, emperors and consulars crawl to the tombs of a tent-maker and a fisherman, and kiss the mouldy bones of the vilest slaves? Why not, among a people whose God is the crucified son of a carpenter? Why should learning, authority, antiquity, birth, rank, the system of empire which has been growing up, fed by the accumulated wisdom of ages,—why, I say, should any of these things protect your life a moment from the fury of any beggar who believes that the Son of God died for him as much as for you, and that he is your equal if not your superior in the sight of his low-born and illiterate deity!' [Footnote: These are the arguments and the language which were commonly employed by Porphyry, Julian, and the other opponents of Christianity.]

'My most eloquent philosopher, this may be—and perhaps is—all very true. I quite agree that there are very great practical inconveniences of this kind in the new—I mean the Catholic faith; but the world is full of inconveniences. The wise man does not quarrel with his creed for being disagreeable, any more than he does with his finger for aching: he cannot help it, and must make the best of a bad matter. Only tell me how to keep the peace.'

'And let philosophy be destroyed?'

'That it never will be, as long as Hypatia lives to illuminate the earth; and, as far as I am concerned, I promise you a clear stage and—a great deal of favour; as is proved by my visiting you

publicly at this moment, before I have given audience to one of the four hundred bores, great and small, who are waiting in the tribunal to torment me. Do help me and advise me. What am I to do?'

'I have told you.'

'Ah, yes, as to general principles. But out of the lecture-room I prefer a practical expedient for instance, Cyril writes to me here—plague on him! he would not let me even have a week's hunting in peace-that there is a plot on the part of the Jews to murder all the Christians. Here is the precious document—do look at it, in pity. For aught I know or care, the plot may be an exactly opposite one, and the Christians intend to murder all the Jews. But I must take some notice of the letter.'

'I do not see that, your excellency.'

'Why, if anything did happen, after all, conceive the missives which would be sent flying off to Constantinople against me!'

'Let them go. If you are secure in the consciousness of innocence, what matter?'

'Consciousness of innocence? I shall lose my prefecture!'

'Your danger would just be as great if you took notice of it. Whatever happened, you would be accused of favouring the Jews.'

'And really there might be some truth in the accusation. How the finances of the provinces would go on without their kind assistance, I dare not think. If those Christians would but lend me their money, instead of building alms-houses and hospitals with it, they might burn the Jews' quarter to-morrow, for aught I care. But now....'

'But now, you must absolutely take no notice of this letter. The very tone of it forbids you, for your own honour, and the honour of the empire. Are you to treat with a man who talks of the masses at Alexandria as "the flock whom the King of kings has committed to his rule and care"? Does your excellency, or this proud bishop, govern Alexandria?'

'Really, my dear lady, I have given up inquiring.'

'But he has not. He comes to you as a person possessing an absolute authority over two-thirds of the population, which he does not scruple to hint to you is derived from a higher source than your own. The consequence is clear. If it be from a higher source than yours, of course it ought to control yours'; and you will confess that it ought to control it—you will acknowledge the root and ground of every extravagant claim which he makes, if you deign to reply.'

'But I must say something, or I shall be pelted in the streets. You philosophers, however raised above your own bodies you may be, must really not forget that we poor worldlings have bones to be broken.'

'Then tell him, and by word of mouth merely, that as the information which he sends you comes from his private knowledge and concerns not him as bishop, but you as magistrate, you can only take it into consideration when he addresses you as a private person, laying a regular information at your tribunal.'

'Charming! queen of diplomatists as well as philosophers! I go to obey you. Ah! why were you not Pulcheria? No, for then Alexandria had been dark, and Orestes missed the supreme happiness of kissing a hand which Pallas, when she made you, must have borrowed from the workshop of Aphrodite.'

'Recollect that you are a Christian,' answered Hypatia, half smiling.

So the prefect departed; and passing through the outer hall, which was already crowded with Hypatia's aristocratic pupils and visitors, bowed his way out past them and regained his chariot, chuckling over the rebuff which he intended to administer to Cyril, and comforting himself with the only text of Scripture of the inspiration of which he was thoroughly convinced—'Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.'

At the door was a crowd of chariots, slaves with their masters' parasols, and the rabble of onlooking boys and market-folk, as usual in Alexandria then, as in all great cities since, who were staring at the prefect, and having their heads rapped by his guards, and wondering what sort of glorious

personage Hypatia might be, and what sort of glorious house she must live in, to be fit company for the great governor of Alexandria. Not that there was not many a sulky and lowering face among the mob, for the great majority of them were Christians, and very seditious and turbulent politicians, as Alexandrians, 'men of Macedonia,' were bound to be; and there was many a grumble among them, all but audible, at the prefect's going in state to the heathen woman's house—heathen sorceress, some pious old woman called her—before he heard any poor soul's petition in the tribunal, or even said his prayers in church.

Just as he was stepping into his curricle a tall young man, as gorgeously bedizened as himself, lounged down the steps after him, and beckoned lazily to the black boy who carried his parasol.

'Ah, Raphael Aben-Ezra! my excellent friend, what propitious deity—ahem! martyr—brings you to Alexandria just as I want you? Get up by my side, and let us have a chat on our way to the tribunal.'

The man addressed came slowly forward with an ostentatiously low salutation, which could not hide, and indeed was not intended to hide, the contemptuous and lazy expression of his face; and asked in a drawling tone—

'And for what kind purpose does the representative of the Caesars bestow such an honour on the humblest of his, etc. etc.—your penetration will supply the rest.'

'Don't be frightened; I am not going to borrow money of you,' answered Orestes, laughingly, as the Jew got into the curricle.

'I am glad to hear it. Really one usurer in a family is enough. My father made the gold, and if I spend it, I consider that I do all that is required of a philosopher.'

'A charming team of white Nisaeans, is not this? And only one gray foot among all the four.'

'Yes.... horses are a bore, I begin to find, like everything else. Always falling sick, or running away, or breaking one's peace of mind in some way or other. Besides, I have been pestered out of my life there in Cyrene, by commissions for dogs and horses and bows from that old Episcopal Nimrod, Synesius.'

'What, is the worthy man as lively as ever?'

'Lively? He nearly drove me into a nervous fever in three days. Up at four in the morning, always in the most disgustingly good health and spirits, farming, coursing, shooting, riding over hedge and ditch after rascally black robbers; preaching, intriguing, borrowing money; baptizing and excommunicating; bullying that bully, Andronicus; comforting old women, and giving pretty girls dowries; scribbling one half-hour on philosophy, and the next on farriery; sitting up all night writing hymns and drinking strong liquors; off again on horseback at four the next morning; and talking by the hour all the while about philosophic abstraction from the mundane tempest. Heaven defend me from all two-legged whirlwinds! By the bye, there was a fair daughter of my nation came back to Alexandria in the same ship with me, with a cargo that may suit your highness.'

'There are a great many fair daughters of your nation who might suit me, without any cargo at all.'

'Ah, they have had good practice, the little fools, ever since the days of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. But I mean old Miriam—you know. She has been lending Synesius money to fight the black fellows with; and really it was high time. They had burnt every homestead for miles through the province. But the daring old girl must do a little business for herself; so she went off, in the teeth of the barbarians, right away to the Atlas, bought all their lady prisoners, and some of their own sons and daughters, too, of them, for beads and old iron; and has come back with as pretty a cargo of Lybian beauties as a prefect of good taste could wish to have the first choice of. You may thank me for that privilege.'

'After, of course, you had suited yourself, my cunning Raphael?'

'Not I. Women are bores, as Solomon found out long ago. Did I never tell you? I began, as he did, with the most select harem in Alexandria. But they quarrelled so, that one day I went out, and

sold them all but one, who was a Jewess—so there were objections on the part of the Rabbis. Then I tried one, as Solomon did; but my "garden shut up," and my "sealed fountain" wanted me to be always in love with her, so I went to the lawyers, allowed her a comfortable maintenance, and now I am as free as a monk, and shall be happy to give your excellency the benefit of any good taste or experience which I may possess.'

'Thanks, worthy Jew. We are not yet as exalted as yourself, and will send for the old Erictho this very afternoon. Now listen a moment to base, earthly, and political business. Cyril has written to me, to say that you Jews have plotted to murder all the Christians.'

'Well—why not? I most heartily wish it were true, and think, on the whole, that it very probably is so.'

'By the immortal—saints, man! you are not serious?'

'The four archangels forbid! It is no concern of mine. All I say is, that my people are great fools, like the rest of the world; and have, for aught I know or care, some such intention. They won't succeed, of course; and that is all you have to care for. But if you think it worth the trouble—which I do not—I shall have to go to the synagogue on business in a week or so, and then I would ask some of the Rabbis.'

'Laziest of men!—and I must answer Cyril this very day.'

'An additional reason for asking no questions of our people. Now you can honestly say that you know nothing about the matter.'

'Well, after all, ignorance is a stronghold for poor statesmen. So you need not hurry yourself.'

'I assure your excellency I will not.'

'Ten days hence, or so, you know.'

'Exactly, after it is all over.'

'And can't be helped. What a comfort it is, now and then, that Can't be helped!'

'It is the root and marrow of all philosophy. Your practical man, poor wretch, will try to help this and that, and torment his soul with ways and means, and preventives and forestallings; your philosopher quietly says—It can't be helped. If it ought to be, it will be—if it is, it ought to be. We did not make the world, and we are not responsible for it.—There is the sum and substance of all true wisdom, and the epitome of all that has been said and written thereon from Philo the Jew to Hypatia the Gentile. By the way, here's Cyril coming down the steps of the Caesareum. A very handsome fellow, after all, though lie is looking as sulky as a bear.'

'With his cubs at his heels. What a scoundrelly visage that tall fellow-deacon, or reader, or whatever he is by his dress—has!'

'There they are—whispering together. Heaven give them pleasant thoughts and pleasanter faces!'

'Amen!' quoth Orestes, with a sneer: and he would have said Amen in good earnest, had he been able to take the liberty—which we shall—and listen to Cyril's answer to Peter, the tall reader.

'From Hypatia's, you say? Why, he only returned to the city this morning.'

'I saw his four-in-hand standing at her door, as I came down the Museum Street hither, half an hour ago.'

'And twenty carriages besides, I don't doubt?'

'The street was blocked up with them. There! Look round the corner now.—Chariots, litters, slaves, and fops.—When shall we see such a concourse as that where it ought to be?'

Cyril made no answer; and Peter went on—'Where it ought to be, my father—in front of your door at the Serapeium?'

'The world, the flesh, and the devil know their own, Peter: and as long as they have their own to go to, we cannot expect them to come to us.'

'But what if their own were taken out of the way?'

'They might come to us for want of better amusement.... devil and all. Well—if I could get a fair hold of the two first, I would take the third into the bargain, and see what could be done with him. But never, while these lecture-rooms last—these Egyptian chambers of imagery—these theatres of Satan, where the devil transforms himself into an angel of light, and apes Christian virtue, and bedizens his ministers like ministers of righteousness, as long as that lecture-room stands and the great and the powerful flock to it, to learn excuses for their own tyrannies and atheisms, so long will the kingdom of God be trampled under foot in Alexandria; so long will the princes of this world, with their gladiators, and parasites, and money-lenders, be masters here, and not the bishops and priests of the living God.'

It was now Peter's turn to be silent; and as the two, with their little knot of district-visitors behind them, walk moodily along the great esplanade which overlooked the harbour, and then vanish suddenly up some dingy alley into the crowded misery of the sailors' quarter, we will leave them to go about their errand of mercy, and, like fashionable people, keep to the grand parade, and listen again to our two fashionable friends in the carved and gilded curricle with four white blood-horses.

'A fine sparkling breeze outside the Pharos, Raphael—fair for the wheat-ships too.'

'Are they gone yet?

'Yes—why? I sent the first fleet off three days ago; and the rest are clearing outwards to-day.'

'Oh!—ah—so!—Then you have not heard from Heraclian?'

'Heraclian? What the-blessed saints has the Count of Africa to do with my wheat-ships?'

'Oh, nothing. It's no business of mine. Only he is going to rebel .... But here we are at your door.'

'To what?' asked Orestes, in a horrified tone.

'To rebel, and attack Rome.'

'Good gods—God, I mean. A fresh bore! Come in, and tell a poor miserable slave of a governor —speak low, for Heaven's sake!—I hope these rascally grooms haven't overheard you.'

'Easy to throw them into the canal, if they have,' quoth Raphael, as he walked coolly through hall and corridor after the perturbed governor.

Poor Orestes never stopped till he reached a little chamber of the inner court, beckoned the Jew in after him, locked the door, threw himself into an arm-chair, put his hands on his knees, and sat, bending forward, staring into Raphael's face with a ludicrous terror and perplexity.

'Tell me all about it. Tell me this instant.'

'I have told you all I know,' quoth Raphael, quietly seating himself on a sofa, and playing with a jewelled dagger. 'I thought, of course, that you were in the secret, or I should have said nothing. It's no business of mine, you know.'

Orestes, like most weak and luxurious men, Romans especially, had a wild-beast vein in him —and it burst forth.

'Hell and the furies! You insolent provincial slave—you will carry these liberties of yours too far! Do you know who I am, you accursed Jew? Tell me the whole truth, or, by the head of the emperor, I'll twist it out of you with red-hot pincers!'

Raphael's countenance assumed a dogged expression, which showed that the old Jewish blood still heat true, under all its affected shell of Neo-Platonist nonchalance; and there was a quiet unpleasant earnest in his smile, as he answered—

'Then, my dear governor, you will be the first man on earth who ever yet forced a Jew to say or do what he did not choose.'

'We'll see!' yelled Orestes. 'Here, slaves!' And he clapped his hands loudly.

'Calm yourself, your excellency,' quoth Raphael, rising. 'The door is locked; the mosquito net is across the window; and this dagger is poisoned. If anything happens to me, you will offend all the Jew money-lenders, and die in about three days in a great deal of pain, having missed our assignation with old Miriam, lost your pleasantest companion, and left your own finances and those of the prefecture in a considerable state of embarrassment. How much better to sit down, hear all I

have to say philosophically, like a true pupil of Hypatia, and not expect a man to tell you what he really does not know.'

Orestes, after looking vainly round the room for a place to escape, had quietly subsided into his chair again; and by the time that the slaves knocked at the door he had so far recovered his philosophy as to ask, not for the torturers, but for a page and wine.

'Oh, you Jews!' quoth he, trying to laugh off matters. 'The same incarnate fiends that Titus found you!'

'The very same, my dear prefect. Now for this matter, which is really important-at least to Gentiles. Heraclian will certainly rebel. Synesius let out as much to me. He has fitted out an armament for Ostia, stopped his own wheat-ships, and is going to write to you to stop yours, and to starve out the Eternal City, Goths, senate, emperor, and all. Whether you will comply with his reasonable little request depends of course on yourself.'

'And that again very much on his plans.'

'Of course. You cannot be expected to—we will euphemise-unless it be made worth your while.'

Orestes sat buried in deep thought.

'Of course not,' said he at last, half unconsciously. And then, in sudden dread of having committed himself, he looked up fiercely at the Jew.

'And how do I know that this is not some infernal trap of yours? Tell me how you found out all this, or by Hercules (he had quite forgotten his Christianity by this time)—by Hercules and the Twelve Gods, I'll—'

'Don't use expressions unworthy of a philosopher. My source of information was very simple and very good. He has been negotiating a loan from the Rabbis at Carthage. They were either frightened, or loyal, or both, and hung back. He knew—as all wise governors know when they allow themselves time—that it is no use to bully a Jew; slid applied to me. I never lend money—it is unphilosophical: but I introduced him to old Miriam, who dare do business with the devil himself; and by that move, whether he has the money or not, I cannot tell: but this I can tell, that we have his secret—and so have you now; and if you want more information, the old woman, who enjoys an intrigue as much as she does Falernian, will get it you.'

'Well, you are a true friend, after all.'

'Of course I am. Now, is not this method of getting at the truth much easier and pleasanter than setting a couple of dirty negroes to pinch and pull me, and so making it a point of honour with me to tell you nothing but lies? Here comes Ganymede with the wine, just in time to calm your nerves, and fill you with the spirit of divination.... To the goddess of good counsels, my lord. What wine this is!'

'True Syrian—fire and honey; fourteen years old next vintage, my Raphael. Out, Hypocorisma! See that he is not listening. The impudent rascal! I was humbugged into giving two thousand gold pieces for him two years ago, he was so pretty—they said he was only just rising thirteen—and he has been the plague of my life ever since, and is beginning to want the barber already. Now, what is the count dreaming of?'

'His wages for killing Stilicho.'

'What, is it not enough to be Count of Africa?'

'I suppose he sets off against that his services during the last three years.'

'Well, he saved Africa.'

'And thereby Egypt also. And you too, as well as the emperor, may be considered as owing him somewhat.'

'My good friend, my debts are far too numerous for me to think of paying any of them. But what wages does he want?'

'The purple.'

Orestes started, and then fell into thought. Raphael sat watching him a while.

‘Now, most noble lord, may I depart? I have said all I have to say; and unless I get home to luncheon at once, I shall hardly have time to find old Miriam for you, and get through our little affair with her before sunset.’

‘Stay. What force has he?’

‘Forty thousand already, they say. And those Donatist ruffians are with him to a man, if he can but scrape together wherewith to change their bludgeons into good steel.’

‘Well, go.... So. A hundred thousand might do it,’ said he, meditating, as Raphael bowed himself out. ‘He won’t get them. I don’t know, though; the man has the head of a Julius. Well—that fool Attalus talked of joining Egypt to the Western Empire.... Not such a bad thought either. Anything is better than being governed by an idiot child and three canting nuns. I expect to be excommunicated every day for some offence against Pulcheria’s prudery.... Heraclian emperor at Rome.... and I lord and master on this side the sea. The Donatists pitted again fairly against the orthodox, to cut each other’s throats in peace.... no more of Cyril’s spying and tale-bearing to Constantinople.... Not such a baddish of fare.... But then-it would take so much trouble!’

With which words, Orestes went into his third warm bath for that day.

CHAPTER III: THE GOTHS

For two days the young monk held on, paddling and floating rapidly down the Nile-stream, leaving city after city to right and left with longing eyes, and looking back to one villa after another, till the reaches of the banks hid them from his sight, with many a yearning to know what sort of places those gay buildings and gardens would look like on a nearer view, and what sort of life the thousands led who crowded the busy quays, and walked and drove, in an endless stream, along the great highroads which ran along either bank. He carefully avoided every boat that passed him, from the gilded barge of the wealthy landlord or merchant, to the tiny raft buoyed up with empty jars, which was floating down to be sold at some market in the Delta. Here and there he met and hailed a crew of monks, drawing their nets in a quiet bay, or passing along the great watery highway from monastery to monastery: but all the news he received from them was, that the canal of Alexandria was still several days' journey below him. It seemed endless, that monotonous vista of the two high clay banks, with their sluices and water-wheels, their knots of palms and date-trees; endless seemed that wearisome succession of bars of sand and banks of mud, every one like the one before it, every one dotted with the same line of logs and stones strewn along the water's edge, which turned out as he approached them to be basking crocodiles and sleeping pelicans. His eye, wearied with the continual confinement and want of distance, longed for the boundless expanse of the desert, for the jagged outlines of those far-off hills, which he had watched from boyhood rising mysteriously at morn out of the eastern sky, and melting mysteriously into it again at even, beyond which dwelt a whole world of wonders, elephants and dragons, satyrs and anthropophagi,—ay, and the phoenix itself. Tired and melancholy, his mind returned inward to prey on itself, and the last words of Arsenius rose again and again to his thoughts. 'Was his call of the spirit or of the flesh?' How should he test that problem? He wished to seethe world that might be carnal. True; but, he wished to convert the world.... was not that spiritual? Was he not going on a noble errand?.... thirsting for toil, for saintship, for martyrdom itself, if it would but come and cut the Gordian knot of all temptations, and save him-for he dimly felt that it would save him—a whole sea of trouble in getting safe and triumphant out of that world into which he had not yet entered .... and his heart shrank back from the untried homeless wilderness before him. But no! the die was cast, and he must down and onward, whether in obedience to the spirit or the flesh. Oh, for one hour of the quiet of that dear Laura and the old familiar faces!

At last, a sudden turn of the bank brought him in sight of a gaudily-painted barge, oil board of which armed men, in uncouth and foreign dresses, were chasing with barbaric shouts some large object in the water. In the bows stood a man of gigantic stature, brandishing a harpoon in his right hand, and in his left holding the line of a second, the head of which was fixed in the huge purple sides of a hippopotamus, who foamed and wallowed a few yards down the stream. An old grizzled warrior at the stern, with a rudder in either hand, kept the boat's head continually towards the monster, in spite of its sudden and frantic wheelings; and when it dashed madly across the stream, some twenty oars flashed through the water in pursuit. All was activity and excitement; and it was no wonder if Philammon's curiosity had tempted him to drift down almost abreast of the barge ere he descried, peeping from under a decorated awning in the afterpart, some dozen pairs of languishing black eyes, turned alternately to the game and to himself. The serpents!—chattering and smiling, with pretty little shrieks and shaking of glossy curls and gold necklaces, and fluttering of muslin dresses, within a dozen yards of him! Blushing scarlet, he knew not why, he seized his paddle, and tried to back out of the snare.... but somehow, his very efforts to escape those sparkling eyes diverted his attention from everything else: the hippopotamus had caught sight of him, and furious with pain, rushed straight at the unoffending canoe; the harpoon line became entangled round his body, and in a moment he and his frail bark were overturned, and the monster, with his huge white tusks gaping wide, close on him as he struggled in the stream.

Luckily Philammon, contrary to the wont of monks, was a bather, and swam like a water-fowl: fear he had never known: death from childhood had been to him, as to the other inmates of the Laura, a contemplation too perpetual to have any paralysing terror in it, even then, when life seemed just about to open on him anew. But the monk was a man, and a young one, and had no intention of dying tamely or unavenged. In an instant he had freed himself from the line; drawn the short knife which was his only weapon; and diving suddenly, avoided the monster's rush, and attacked him from behind with stabs, which, though not deep, still dyed the waters with gore at every stroke. The barbarians shouted with delight. The hippopotamus turned furiously against his new assailant, crushing, alas! the empty canoe to fragments with a single snap of his enormous jaws; but the turn was fatal to him; the barge was close upon him, and as he presented his broad side to the blow, the sinewy arm of the giant drove a harpoon through his heart, and with one convulsive shudder the huge blue mass turned over on its side and floated dead.

Poor Philammon! He alone was silent, amid the yells of triumph; sorrowfully he swam round and round his little paper wreck.... it would not have floated a mouse. Wistfully be eyed the distant banks, half minded to strike out for them and escape,.... and thought of the crocodiles,.... and paddled round again,.... and thought of the basilisk eyes;.... he might escape the crocodiles, but who could escape women?.... and he struck out valiantly for shore.... when he was brought to a sudden stop by finding the stem of the barge close on him, a noose thrown over him by some friendly barbarian, and himself hauled on board, amid the laughter, praise, astonishment, and grumbling of the good-natured crew, who had expected him, as a matter of course, to avail himself at once of their help, and could not conceive the cause of his reluctance.

Philammon gazed with wonder on his strange hosts, their pale complexions, globular heads and faces, high cheek-bones, tall and sturdy figures; their red beards, and yellow hair knotted fantastically above the head; their awkward dresses, half Roman or Egyptian, and half of foreign fur, soiled and stained in many a storm and fight, but tastelessly bedizened with classic jewels, brooches, and Roman coins, strung like necklaces. Only the steersman, who had come forward to wonder at the hippopotamus, and to help in dragging the unwieldy brute on board, seemed to keep genuine and unornamented the costume of his race, the white linen leggings, strapped with thongs of deerskin, the quilted leather cuirass, the bears'-fur cloak, the only ornaments of which were the fangs and claws of the beast itself, and a fringe of grizzled tufts, which looked but too like human hair. The language which they spoke was utterly unintelligible to Philammon, though it need not be so to us.

'A well-grown lad and a brave one, Wulf the son of Ovida,' said the giant to the old hero of the bearskin cloak; 'and understands wearing skins, in this furnace-mouth of a climate, rather better than you do.'

'I keep to the dress of my forefathers, Amalric the Amal. What did to sack Rome in, may do to find Asgard in.'

The giant, who was decked out with helmet, cuirass, and senatorial boots, in a sort of mongrel mixture of the Roman military and civil dress, his neck wreathed with a dozen gold chains, and every finger sparkling with jewels, turned away with an impatient sneer.

'Asgard—Asgard! If you are in such a hurry to get to Asgard up this ditch in the sand, you had better ask the fellow how far it is thither.'

Wulf took him quietly at his word, and addressed a question to the young monk, which he could only answer by a shake of the head.

'Ask him in Greek, man.'

'Greek is a slave's tongue. Make a slave talk to him in it, not me.'

'Here—some of you girls! Pelagia! you understand this fellow's talk. Ask him how far it is to Asgard.'

'You must ask me more civilly, my rough hero,' replied a soft voice from underneath the awning. 'Beauty must be sued, and not commanded.'

'Come, then, my olive-tree, my gazelle, my lotus-flower, my—what was the last nonsense you taught me?—and ask this wild man of the sands how far it is from these accursed endless rabbit-burrows to Asgard.'

The awning was raised, and lying luxuriously on a soft mattress, fanned with peacock's feathers, and glittering with rubies and topazes, appeared such a vision as Philammon had never seen before.

A woman of some two-and-twenty summers, formed in the most voluptuous mould of Grecian beauty, whose complexion showed every violet vein through its veil of luscious brown. Her little bare feet, as they dimpled the cushions, were more perfect than Aphrodite's, softer than a swan's bosom. Every swell of her bust and arms showed through the thin gauze robe, while her lower limbs were wrapped in a shawl of orange silk, embroidered with wreaths of shells and roses. Her dark hair lay carefully spread out upon the pillow, in a thousand ringlets entwined with gold and jewels; her languishing eyes blazed like diamonds from a cavern, under eyelids darkened and deepened with black antimony; her lips pouted of themselves, by habit or by nature, into a perpetual kiss; slowly she raised one little lazy hand; slowly the ripe lips opened; and in most pure and melodious Attic, she lisped her huge lover's question to the monk, and repeated it before the boy could shake off the spell, and answer....

'Asgard? What is Asgard?'

The beauty looked at the giant for further instructions.

'The City of the immortal Gods,' interposed the old warrior, hastily and sternly, to the lady.

'The city of God is in heaven,' said Philammon to the interpreter, turning his head away from those gleaming, luscious, searching glances.

His answer was received with a general laugh by all except the leader, who shrugged his shoulders.

'It may as well be up in the skies as up the Nile. We shall be just as likely, I believe, to reach it by flying, as by rowing up this big ditch. Ask him where the river comes from, Pelagia.'

Pelagia obeyed.... and thereon followed a confusion worse confounded, composed of all the impossible wonders of that mythic fairyland with which Philammon had gorged himself from boyhood in his walks with the old monks, and of the equally trustworthy traditions which the Goths had picked up at Alexandria. There was nothing which that river did not do. It rose in the Caucasus. Where was the Caucasus? He did not know. In Paradise—in Indian Aethiopia—in Aethiopian India. Where were they? He did not know. Nobody knew. It ran for a hundred and fifty days' journey through deserts where nothing but flying serpents and satyrs lived, and the very lions' manes were burnt off by the heat....

'Good sporting there, at all events, among these dragons,' quoth Smid the son of Troll, armourer to the party.

'As good as Thor's when he caught Snake Midgard with the bullock's head,' said Wulf.

It turned to the east for a hundred days' journey more, all round Arabia and India, among forests full of elephants and dog-headed women.

'Better and better, Smid!' growled Wulf, approvingly.

'Fresh beef cheap there, Prince Wulf, eh?' quoth Smid; 'I must look over the arrow-heads.'

–To the mountains of the Hyperboreans, where there was eternal night, and the air was full of feathers.... That is, one-third of it came from thence, and another third came from the Southern ocean, over the Moon mountains, where no one had ever been, and the remaining third from the country where the phoenix lived, and nobody knew where that was. And then there were the cataracts, and the inundations-and-and-and above the cataracts, nothing but sand-hills and ruins, as full of devils as they could hold.... and as for Asgard, no one had ever heard of it.... till every face grew longer and longer, as Pelagia went on interpreting and misinterpreting; and at last the giant smote his hand upon his knee, and swore a great oath that Asgard might rot till the twilight of the gods before he went a step farther up the Nile.

'Curse the monk!' growled Wulf. 'How should such a poor beast know anything about the matter?'

'Why should not he know as well as that ape of a Roman governor?' asked Smid.

'Oh, the monks know everything,' said Pelagia. 'They go hundreds and thousands of miles up the river, and cross the deserts among fiends and monsters, where any one else would be eaten up, or go mad at once.'

'Ah, the dear holy men! It's all by the sign of the blessed cross!' exclaimed all the girls together, devoutly crossing themselves, while two or three of the most enthusiastic were half-minded to go forward and kneel to Philammon for his blessing; but hesitated, their Gothic lovers being heathenishly stupid and prudish on such points.

'Why should he not know as well as the prefect? Well said, Smid! I believe that prefect's quill-driver was humbugging us when he said Asgard was only ten days' sail up.'

'Why?' asked Wulf.

'I never give any reasons. What's the use of being an Amal, and a son of Odin, if one has always to be giving reasons like a rascally Roman lawyer? I say the governor looked like a liar; and I say this monk looks like an honest fellow; and I choose to believe him, and there is an end of it.'

'Don't look so cross at me, Prince Wulf; I'm sure it's not my fault; I could only say what the monk told me,' whispered poor Pelagia.

'Who looks cross at you, my queen?' roared the Amal. 'Let me have him out here, and by Thor's hammer, I'll—'

'Who spoke to you, you stupid darling?' answered Pelagia, who lived in hourly fear of thunderstorms. 'Who is going to be cross with any one, except I with you, for mishearing and misunderstanding, and meddling, as you are always doing? I shall do as I threatened, and run away with Prince Wulf, if you are not good. Don't you see that the whole crew are expecting you to make them an oration?'

Whereupon the Amal rose.

'See you here, Wulf the son of Ovida, and warriors all! If we want wealth, we shan't find it among the sand-hills. If we want women, we shall find nothing prettier than these among dragons and devils. Don't look angry, Wulf. You have no mind to marry one of those dog-headed girls the monk talked of, have you? Well, then, we have money and women; and if we want sport, it's better sport killing men than killing beasts; so we had better go where we shall find most of that game, which we certainly shall not up this road. As for fame and all that, though I've had enough, there's plenty to be got anywhere along the shores of that Mediterranean. Let's burn and plunder Alexandria: forty of us Goths might kill down all these donkey-riders in two days, and hang up that lying prefect who sent us hereon this fool's errand. Don't answer, Wulf. I knew he was humbugging us all along, but you were so open-mouthed to all he said, that I was bound to let my elders choose for me. Let's go back; send over for any of the tribes; send to Spain for those Vandals—they have had enough of Adolf by now, curse him!—I'll warrant them; get together an army, and take Constantinople. I'll be Augustus, and Pelagia, Augusta; you and Smid here, the two Caesars; and we'll make the monk the chief of the eunuchs, eh?—anything you like for a quiet life; but up this accursed kennel of hot water I go no farther. Ask your girls, my heroes, and I'll ask mine. Women are all prophetesses, every one of them.'

'When they are not harlots,' growled Wulf to himself.

'I will go to the world's end with you, my king!' sighed Pelagia; 'but Alexandria is certainly pleasanter than this.'

Old Wulf sprang up fiercely enough.

'Hear me, Amalric the Amal, son of Odin, and heroes all! When my fathers swore to be Odin's men, and gave up the kingdom to the holy Annals, the sons of the Aesir, what was the bond between your fathers and mine? Was it not that we should move and move, southward and southward ever, till we came back to Asgard, the city where Odin dwells for ever, and gave into his hands the kingdom

of all the earth? And did we not keep our oath? Have we not held to the Amals? Did we not leave Adolf, because we would not follow a Balth, while there was an Amal to lead us? Have we not been true men to you, son of the Aesir?'

'No man ever saw Wulf, the son of Ovida, fail friend or foe.'

'Then why does his friend fail him? Why does his friend fail himself? If the bison-bull lie down and wallow, what will the herd do for a leader? If the king-wolf lose the scent, how will the pack hold it? If the Yngling forgets the song of Asgard, who will sing it to the heroes?'

'Sing it yourself, if you choose. Pelagia sings quite well enough for me.'

In an instant the cunning beauty caught at the hint, and poured forth a soft, low, sleepy song:—

'Loose the sail, rest the oar, float away down, Fleeting and gliding by tower and town; Life is so short at best! snatch, while thou canst, thy rest, Sleeping by me!'

'Can you answer that, Wulf?' shouted a dozen voices.

'Hear the song of Asgard, warriors of the Goths! Did not Alaric the king love it well? Did I not sing it before him in the palace of the Caesars, till he swore, for all the Christian that he was, to go southward in search of the holy city? And when he went to Valhalla, and the ships were wrecked off Sicily, and Adolf the Balth turned back like a lazy hound, and married the daughter of the Romans, whom Odin hates, and went northward again to Gaul, did not I sing you all the song of Asgard in Messina there, till you swore to follow the Amal through fire and water until we found the hall of Odin, and received the mead-cup from his own hand? Hear it again, warriors of the Goths!'

'Not that song!' roared the Amal, stopping his ears with both his hands. 'Will you drive us blood-mad again, just as we are settling down into our sober senses, and finding out what our lives were given us for?'

'Hear the song of Asgard! On to Asgard, wolves of the Goths!' shouted another; and a babel of voices arose.

'Haven't we been fighting and marching these seven years?'

'Haven't we drunk blood enough to satisfy Odin ten times over? If he wants us lot him come himself and lead us!'

'Let us get our winds again before we start afresh!'

'Wulf the Prince is like his name, and never tires; he has a winter-wolf's legs under him; that is no reason why we should have.'

'Haven't you heard what the monk says?-we can never get ever those cataracts.'

'We'll stop his old wives' tales for him, and then settle for ourselves,' said Smid; and springing from the thwart where he had been sitting, he caught up a bill with one hand, and seized Philammon's throat with the other.... in a moment more, it would have been all over with him....

For the first time in his life Philammon felt a hostile gripe upon him, and a new sensation rushed through every nerve, as he grappled with the warrior, clutched with his left hand the up-lifted wrist, and with his right the girdle, and commenced, without any definite aim, a fierce struggle, which, strange to say, as it went on, grew absolutely pleasant.

The women shrieked to their lovers to part the combatants, but in vain.

'Not for worlds! A very fair match and a very fair fight! Take your long legs back, Itho, or they will be over you! That's right, my Smid, don't use the knife! They will be overboard in a moment! By all the Valkyrs, they are down, and Smid undermost!'

There was no doubt of it; and in another moment Philammon would have wrenched the bill out of his opponent's hand, when, to the utter astonishment of the onlookers, he suddenly loosed his hold, shook himself free by one powerful wrench, and quietly retreated to his seat, conscience-stricken at the fearful thirst for blood which had suddenly boiled up within him as he felt his enemy under him.

The onlookers were struck dumb with astonishment; they had taken for granted that he would, as a matter of course, have used his right of splitting his vanquished opponent's skull—an event which they would of course have deeply deplored, but with which, as men of honour, they could not on

any account interfere, but merely console themselves for the loss of their comrade by flaying his conqueror alive, 'carving him into the blood-eagle,' or any other delicate ceremony which might serve as a vent for their sorrow and a comfort to the soul of the deceased.

Smid rose, with a bill in his hand, and looked round him-perhaps to see what was expected of him. He half lifted his weapon to strike .... Philammon, seated, looked him calmly in the face.... The old warrior's eye caught the bank, which was now receding rapidly past them; and when he saw that they were really floating downwards again, without an effort to stem the stream, he put away his bill, and sat himself down deliberately in his place, astonishing the onlookers quite as much as Philammon had done.

'Five minutes' good fighting, and no one killed! This is a shame!' quoth another. 'Blood we must see, and it had better be yours, master monk, than your betters','—and therewith he rushed on poor Philammon.

He spoke the heart of the crew; the sleeping wolf in them had been awakened by the struggle, and blood they would have; and not frantically, like Celts or Egyptians, but with the cool humorous cruelty of the Teuton, they rose altogether, and turning Philammon over on his back, deliberated by what death he should die.

Philammon quietly submitted—if submission have anything to do with that state of mind in which sheer astonishment and novelty have broken up all the custom of man's nature, till the strangest deeds and sufferings are taken as matters of course. His sudden escape from the Laura, the new world of thought and action into which he had been plunged, the new companions with whom he had fallen in, had driven him utterly from his moorings, and now anything and everything might happen to him. He who had promised never to look upon woman found himself, by circumstances over which he had no control, amid a boatful of the most objectionable species of that most objectionable genus—and the utterly worst having happened, everything else which happened must be better than the worst. For the rest, he had gone forth to see the world—and this was one of the ways of it. So he made up his mind to see it, and be filled with the fruit of his own devices.

And he would have been certainly filled with the same in five minutes more, in some shape too ugly to be mentioned: but, as even sinful women have hearts in them, Pelagia shrieked out—

'Amalric! Amalric! do not let them! I cannot bear it!'

'The warriors are free men, my darling, and know what is proper. And what can the life of such a brute be to you?'

Before he could stop her, Pelagia had sprung from her cushions, and thrown herself into the midst of the laughing ring of wild beasts.

'Spare him! spare him for my sake!' shrieked she.

'Oh, my pretty lady! you mustn't interrupt warriors' sport!'

In an instant she had torn off her shawl, and thrown it over Philammon; and as she stood, with all the outlines of her beautiful limbs revealed through the thin robe of spangled gauze—

'Let the man who dares, touch him beneath that shawl!—though it be a saffron one!'

The Goths drew back. For Pelagia herself they had as little respect as the rest of the world had. But for a moment she was not the Messalina of Alexandria, but a woman; and true to the old woman-worshipping instinct, they looked one and all at her flashing eyes, full of noble pity and indignation, as well as of mere woman's terror—and drew back, and whispered together.

Whether the good spirit or the evil one would conquer, seemed for a moment doubtful, when Pelagia felt a heavy hand on her shoulder, and turning, saw Wulf the son of Ovida.

'Go back, pretty woman! Men, I claim the boy. Smid, give him to me. He is your man. You could have killed him if you had chosen, and did not; and no one else shall.'

'Give him us, Prince Wulf! We have not seen blood for many a day!'

‘You might have seen rivers of it, if you had had the hearts to go onward. The boy is mine, and a brave boy. He has upset a warrior fairly this day, and spared him; and we will make a warrior of him in return.’

And he lifted up the prostrate monk.

‘You are my man now. Do you like fighting?’

Philammon, not understanding the language in which he was addressed, could only shake his head—though if he had known what its import was, he could hardly in honesty have said, No.

‘He shakes his head! He does not like it! He is craven! Let us have him!’

‘I had killed kings when you were shooting frogs,’ cried Smid. ‘Listen to me, my sons! A coward grips sharply at first, and loosens his hand after a while, because his blood is soon hot and soon cold. A brave man’s grip grows the firmer the longer he holds, because the spirit of Odin comes upon him. I watched the boy’s hands on my threat; and he will make a man; and I will make him one. However, we may as well make him useful at once; so give him an oar.’

‘Well,’ answered his new protector, ‘he can as well row us as he rowed by us; and if we are to go back to a cow’s death and the pool of Hela, the quicker we go the better.’

And as the men settled themselves again to their oars, one was put into Philammon’s hand, which he managed with such strength and skill that his late tormentors, who, in spite of an occasional inclination to robbery and murder, were thoroughly good-natured, honest fellows, clapped him on the back, and praised him as heartily as they had just now heartily intended to torture him to death, and then went forward, as many of them as were not rowing, to examine the strange beast which they had just slaughtered, pawing him over from tusks to tail, putting their heads into his mouth, trying their knives on his hide, comparing him to all beasts, like and unlike, which they had ever seen, and laughing and shoving each other about with the fun and childish wonder of a party of schoolboys; till Smid, who was the wit of the party, settled the comparative anatomy of the subject for them —‘Valhalla! I’ve found out what he’s most like!—One of those big blue plums, which gave us all the stomach-ache when we were encamped in the orchards above Ravenna!’

CHAPTER IV: MIRIAM

One morning in the same week, Hypatia's favourite maid entered her chamber with a somewhat terrified face.

'The old Jewess, madam—the hag who has been watching so often lately under the wall opposite. She frightened us all out of our senses last evening by peeping in. We all said she had the evil eye, if any one ever had—'

'Well, what of her?'

'She is below, madam, and will speak with you. Not that I care for her; I have my amulet on. I hope you have?'

'Silly girl! Those who have been initiated as I have in the mysteries of the gods, can defy spirits and command them. Do you suppose that the favourite of Pallas Athene will condescend to charms and magic? Send her up.'

The girl retreated, with a look half of awe, half of doubt, at the lofty pretensions of her mistress, and returned with old Miriam, keeping, however, prudently behind her, in order to test as little as possible the power of her own amulet by avoiding the basilisk eye which had terrified her.

Miriam came in, and advancing to the proud beauty, who remained seated, made an obeisance down to the very floor, without, however, taking her eyes for an instant off Hypatia's face.

Her countenance was haggard and bony, with broad sharp-cut lips, stamped with a strangely mingled expression of strength and sensuality. Put the feature about her which instantly fixed Hypatia's attention, and from which she could not in spite of herself withdraw it, was the dry, glittering, coal-black eye which glared out from underneath the gray fringe of her swarthy brows, between black locks covered with gold coins. Hypatia could look at nothing but those eyes; and she reddened, and grew all but unphilosophically angry, as she saw that the old woman intended her to look at them, and feel the strange power which she evidently wished them to exercise.

After a moment's silence, Miriam drew a letter from her bosom, and with a second low obeisance presented it.

'From whom is this?'

'Perhaps the letter itself will tell the beautiful lady, the fortunate lady, the discerning lady,' answered she, in a fawning, wheedling tone. 'How should a poor old Jewess know great folks' secrets?'

'Great folks?—'

Hypatia looked at the seal which fixed a silk cord round the letter. It was Orestes'; and so was the handwriting.... Strange that he should have chosen such a messenger! What message could it be which required such secrecy?

She clapped her hands for the maid. 'Let this woman wait in the ante-room.' Miriam glided out backwards, bowing as she went. As Hypatia looked up over the letter to see whether she was alone, she caught a last glance of that eye still fixed upon her, and an expression in Miriam's face which made her, she knew not why, shudder and turn chill.

'Foolish that I am! What can that witch be to me? But now for the letter.'

'To the most noble and most beautiful, the mistress of philosophy, beloved of Athene, her pupil and slave sends greeting.'....

'My slave! and no name mentioned!'

'There are those who consider that the favourite hen of Honorius, which bears the name of the Imperial City, would thrive better under a new feeder; and the Count of Africa has been despatched by himself and by the immortal gods to superintend for the present the poultry-yard of the Caesars—at least during the absence of Adolf and Placidia. There are those also who consider that in his absence the Numidian lion might be prevailed on to become the yoke-fellow of the Egyptian crocodile; and a farm which, ploughed by such a pair, should extend from the upper cataract to the Pillars of Hercules,

might have charms even for a philosopher. But while the ploughman is without a nymph, Arcadia is imperfect. What were Dionusos without his Ariadne, Ares without Aphrodite, Zeus without Hera? Even Artemis has her Endymion; Athens alone remains unwedded; but only because Hephaestus was too rough a wooer. Such is not he who now offers to the representative of Athene the opportunity of sharing that which may be with the help of her wisdom, which without her is impossible. [Greek expression omitted] Shall Eros, invincible for ages, be balked at last of the noblest game against which he ever drew his bow?'....

If Hypatia's colour had faded a moment before under the withering glance of the old Jewess, it rose again swiftly enough, as she read line after line of this strange epistle; till at last, crushing it together in her hand, she rose and hurried into the adjoining library, where Theon sat over his books.

'Father, do you know anything of this? Look what Orestes has dared to send me by the hands of some base Jewish witch!'—And she spread the letter before him, and stood impatient, her whole figure dilated with pride and anger, as the old man read it slowly and carefully, and then looked up, apparently not ill pleased with the contents.

'What, father?' asked she, half reproachfully. 'Do not you, too, feel the insult which has been put upon your daughter?'

'My dear child,' with a puzzled look, 'do you not see that he offers you—'

'I know what he offers me, father. The Empire of Africa.... I am to descend from the mountain heights of science, from the contemplation of the unchangeable and ineffable glories, into the foul fields and farmyards of earthly practical life, and become a drudge among political chicanery, and the petty ambitions, and sins, and falsehoods of the earthly herd.... And the price which he offers me—me, the stainless—me, the virgin—me, the un-tamed,—is-his hand! Pallas Athene! dost thou not blush with thy child?'

'But, my child—my child,—an empire—'

'Would the empire of the world restore my lost self-respect-my just pride? Would it save my cheek from blushes every time I recollected that I bore the hateful and degrading name of wife? —The property, the puppet of a man—submitting to his pleasure—bearing his children—wearing myself out with all the nauseous cares of wifehood—no longer able to glory in myself, pure and self-sustained, but forced by day and night to recollect that my very beauty is no longer the sacrament of Athene's love for me, but the plaything of a man;—and such a man as that! Luxurious, frivolous, heartless—courting my society, as he has done for years, only to pick up and turn to his own base earthly uses the scraps which fall from the festal table of the gods! I have encouraged him too much —vain fool that I have been! No, I wrong myself! It was only—I thought—I thought that by his being seen at our doors, the cause of the immortal gods would gain honour and strength in the eyes of the multitude.... I have tried to feed the altars of heaven with earthly fuel.... And this is my just reward! I will write to him this moment,—return by the fitting messenger which he has sent, insult for insult!'

'In the name of Heaven, my daughter!—for your father's sake!—for my sake! Hypatia!—my pride, my joy, my only hope!—have pity on my gray hairs!'

And the poor old man flung himself at her feet, and clasped her knees imploringly.

Tenderly she lifted him up, and wound her long arms round him, and laid his head on her white shoulder, and her tears fell fast upon his gray hair; but her lip was firm and determined.

'Think of my pride—my glory in your glory; think of me.... Not for myself! You know I never cared for myself!' sobbed out the old man. 'But to die seeing you empress!'

'Unless I died first in childbed, father, as many a woman dies who is weak enough to become a slave, and submit to tortures only fit for slaves.'

'But—but—said the old man, racking his bewildered brains for some argument far enough removed from nature and common sense to have an effect on the beautiful fanatic—'but the cause of the gods! What you might do for it!.... Remember Julian!'

Hypatia's arms dropped suddenly. Yes; it was true! The thought flashed across her mind with mingled delight and terror.... Visions of her childhood rose swift and thick—temples—sacrifices —priesthoods— colleges—museums! What might she not do? What might she not make Africa? Give her ten years of power, and the hated name of Christian might be forgotten, and Athene Polias, colossal in ivory and gold, watching in calm triumph over the harbours of a heathen Alexandria.... But the price!

And she hid her face in her hands, and bursting into bitter tears, walked slowly away into her own chamber, her whole body convulsed with the internal struggle.

The old man looked after her, anxiously and perplexed, and then followed, hesitating. She was sitting at the table, her face buried in her hands. He did not dare to disturb her. In addition to all the affection, the wisdom, the glorious beauty, on which his whole heart fed day by day, he believed her to be the possessor of those supernatural powers and favours to which she so boldly laid claim. And he stood watching her in the doorway, praying in his heart to all gods and demons, principalities and powers, from Athene down to his daughter's guardian spirit, to move a determination which he was too weak to gainsay, and yet too rational to approve.

At last the struggle was over, and she looked up, clear, calm, and glorious again.

'It shall be. For the sake of the immortal gods—for the sake of art, and science, and learning, and philosophy.... It shall be. If the gods demand a victim, here am I. If a second time in the history of the ages the Grecian fleet cannot sail forth, conquering and civilising, without the sacrifice of a virgin, I give my throat to the knife. Father, call me no more Hypatia: call me Iphigenia!'

'And me Agamemnon?' asked the old man, attempting a faint jest through his tears of joy. 'I daresay you think me a very cruel father; but—'

'Spare me, father—I have spared you.'

And she began to write her answer.

'I have accepted his offer—conditionally, that is. And on whether he have courage or not to fulfil that condition depends—Do not ask me what it is. While Cyril is leader of the Christian mob, it may be safer for you, my father, that you should be able to deny all knowledge of my answer. Be content. I have said this—that if he will do as I would have him do, I will do as you would have me do.'

'Have you not been too rash? Have you not demanded of him something which, for the sake of public opinion, he dare not grant openly, and yet which he may allow you to do for yourself when once—'

'I have. If I am to be a victim, the sacrificing priest shall at least be a man, and not a coward and a time-server. If he believes this Christian faith, let him defend it against me; for either it or I shall perish. If he does not—as he does not—let him give up living in a lie, and taking on his lips blasphemies against the immortals, from which his heart and reason revolt!'

And she clapped her hands again for the maid-servant, gave her the letter silently, shut the doors of her chamber, and tried to resume her Commentary on Plotinus. Alas! what were all the wire-drawn dreams of metaphysics to her in that real and human struggle of the heart? What availed it to define the process by which individual souls emanated from the universal one, while her own soul had, singly and on its own responsibility, to decide so terrible an act of will? or to write fine words with pen and ink about the immutability of the supreme Reason, while her own reason was left there to struggle for its life amid a roaring shoreless waste of doubts and darkness? Oh, how grand, and clear, and logical it had all looked half an hour ago! And how irrefragably she had been deducing from it all, syllogism after syllogism, the non-existence of evil!—how it was but a lower form of good, one of the countless products of the one great all-pervading mind which could not err or change, only so strange and recondite in its form as to excite antipathy in all minds but that of the philosopher, who learnt to see the stem which connected the apparently bitter fruit with the perfect root from whence it sprang. Could she see the stem there?—the connection between the pure and

supreme Reason, and the hideous caresses of the debauched and cowardly Orestes? was not that evil pure, unadulterate with any vein of good, past, present, or future?…

True;—she might keep her spirit pure amid it all; she might sacrifice the base body, and ennoble the soul by the self-sacrifice .... And yet, would not that increase the horror, the agony, the evil of it-to her, at least, most real evil, not to be explained away-and yet the gods required it? Were they just, merciful in that? Was it like them, to torture her, their last unshaken votary? Did they require it? Was it not required of them by some higher power, of whom they were only the emanations, the tools, the puppets?—and required of that higher power by some still higher one—some nameless, absolute destiny of which Orestes and she, and all heaven and earth, were but the victims, dragged along in an inevitable vortex, helpless, hopeless, toward that for which each was meant?—And she was meant for this! The thought was unbearable; it turned her giddy. No! she would not! She would rebel! Like Prometheus, she would dare destiny, and brave its worst! And she sprang up to recall the letter.... Miriam was gone; and she threw herself on the floor, and wept bitterly.

And her peace of mind would certainly not have been improved, could she have seen old Miriam hurry home with her letter to a dingy house in the Jews' quarter, where it was un-sealed, read, and sealed up again with such marvellous skill, that no eye could have detected the change; and finally, still less would she have been comforted could she have heard the conversation which was going on in a summer-room of Orestes' palace, between that illustrious statesman and Raphael Aben-Ezra, who were lying on two divans opposite each other, whiling away, by a throw or two of dice, the anxious moments which delayed her answer.

'Trays again! The devil is in you, Raphael!'

'I always thought he was,' answered Raphael, sweeping up the gold pieces....

'When will that old witch be back?'

'When she has read through your letter and Hypatia's answer.'

'Read them?'

'Of course. You don't fancy she is going to be fool enough to carry a message without knowing what it is? Don't be angry; she won't tell. She would give one of those two grave-lights there, which she calls her eyes, to see the thing prosper.'

'Why?'

'Your excellency will know when the letter comes. Here she is; I hear steps in the cloister. Now, one bet before they enter. I give you two to one she asks you to turn pagan.'

'What in? Negro-boys?'

'Anything you like.'

'Taken. Come in, slaves?'

And Hypocorisma entered, pouting.

'That Jewish fury is outside with a letter, and has the impudence to say she won't let me bring it in!'

'Bring her in then. Quick!'

'I wonder what I am here for, if people have secrets that I am not to know,' grumbled the spoilt youth.

'Do you want a blue ribbon round those white sides of yours, you monkey?' answered Orestes. 'Because, if you do, the hippopotamus hide hangs ready outside.'

'Let us make him kneel down here for a couple of hours, and use him as a dice-board,' said Raphael, 'as you used to do to the girls in Armenia.'

'Ah, you recollect that?—and how the barbarian papas used to grumble, till I had to crucify one or two, eh? That was something like life! I love those out-of-the-way stations, where nobody asks questions: but here one might as well live among the monks in Nitria. Here comes Canidia! Ah, the answer? Hand it here, my queen of go-betweens!'

Orestes read it—and his countenance fell.

'I have won?'

'Out of the room, slaves! and no listening!'

'I have won then?'

Orestes tossed the letter across to him, and Raphael read—

'The immortal gods accept no divided worship; and he who would command the counsels of their prophetess must remember that they will vouchsafe to her no illumination till their lost honours be restored. If he who aspires to be the lord of Africa dare trample on the hateful cross, and restore the Caesareum to those for whose worship it was built—if he dare proclaim aloud with his lips, and in his deeds, that contempt for novel and barbarous superstitions, which his taste and reason have already taught him, then he would prove himself one with whom it were a glory to labour, to dare, to die in a great cause. But till then—'

And so the letter ended.

'What am I to do?'

'Take her at her word.'

'Good heavens! I shall be excommunicated! And—and—what is to become of my soul?'

'What will become of it in any case, my most excellent lord?' answered Raphael blandly.

'You mean—I know what you cursed Jews think will happen to every one but yourselves. But what would the world say? I an apostate! And in the face of Cyril and the populace! I daren't, I tell you!'

'No one asked your excellency to apostatise.'

'Why, what? What did you say just now?'

'I asked you to promise. It will not be the first time that promises before marriage have not exactly coincided with performance afterwards.'

'I daren't—that is, I won't promise. I believe, now, this is some trap of your Jewish intrigue, just to make me commit myself against those Christians, whom you hate.'

'I assure you, I despise all mankind far too profoundly to hate them. How disinterested my advice was when I proposed this match to you, you never will know; indeed, it would be boastful in me to tell you. But really you must make a little sacrifice to win this foolish girl. With all the depth and daring of her intellect to help you, you might be a match for Romans, Byzantines, and Goths at once. And as for beauty—why, there is one dimple inside that wrist, just at the setting on of the sweet little hand, worth all the other flesh and blood in Alexandria.'

'By Jove! you admire her so much, I suspect you must be in love with her yourself. Why don't you marry her? I'll make you my prime minister, and then we shall have the use of her wits without the trouble of her fancies. By the twelve Gods! If you marry her and help me, I'll make you what you like!'

Raphael rose and bowed to the earth.

'Your serene high-mightiness overwhelms me. But I assure you, that never having as yet cared for any one's interest but my own, I could not be expected, at my time of life, to devote myself to that of another, even though it were to yours.'

'Candid!'

'Exactly so; and moreover, whosoever I may marry, will be practically, as well as theoretically, my private and peculiar property.... You comprehend.'

'Candid again.'

'Exactly so; and waiving the third argument, that she probably might not choose to marry me, I beg to remark that it would not be proper to allow the world to say, that I, the subject, had a wiser and fairer wife than you, the ruler; especially a wife who bad already refused that ruler's complimentary offer.'

'By Jove! and she has refused me in good earnest! I'll make her repent it! I was a fool to ask her at all! What's the use of having guards, if one can't compel what one wants? If fair means can't do it, foul shall! I'll send for her this moment!'

'Most illustrious majesty—it will not succeed. You do not know that woman's determination. Scourges and red-hot pincers will not shake her, alive; and dead, she will be of no use whatsoever to you, while she will be of great use to Cyril.'

'How?'

'He will be most happy to make the whole story a handle against you, give out that she died a virgin-martyr, in defence of the most holy catholic and apostolic faith, get miracles worked at her tomb, and pull your palace about your ears on the strength thereof.'

'Cyril will hear of it anyhow: that's another dilemma into which you have brought me, you intriguing rascal! Why, this girl will be boasting all over Alexandria that I have offered her marriage, and that she has done herself the honour to refuse me!'

'She will be much too wise to do anything of the kind; she has sense enough to know that if she did so, you would inform a Christian populace what conditions she offered you, and, with all her contempt for the burden of the flesh, she has no mind to be lightened of that pretty load by being torn in pieces by Christian monks; a very probable ending for her in any case, as she herself, in her melancholy moods, confesses!'

'What will you have me do then?'

'Simply nothing. Let the prophetic spirit go out of her, as it will, in a day or two, and then—I know nothing of human nature, if she does not bate a little of her own price. Depend on it, for all her ineffabilities, and impassibilities, and all the rest of the seventh-heaven moonshine at which we play here in Alexandria, a throne is far too pretty a bait for even Hypatia the pythoness to refuse. Leave well alone is a good rule, but leave ill alone is a better. So now another bet before we part, and this time three to one. Do nothing either way, and she sends to you of her own accord before a month is out. In Caucasian mules? Done? Be it so.'

'Well, you are the most charming counsellor for a poor perplexed devil of a prefect! If I had but a private fortune like you, I could just take the money, and let the work do itself.'

'Which is the true method of successful government. Your slave bids you farewell. Do not forget our bet. You dine with me to-morrow?'

And Raphael bowed himself out.

As he left the prefect's door, he saw Miriam on the opposite side of the street, evidently watching for him. As soon as she saw him, she held on her own side, without appearing to notice him, till he turned a corner, and then crossing, caught him eagerly by the arm.

'Does the fool dare!'

'Who dare what?'

'You know what I mean. Do you suppose old Miriam carries letters without taking care to know what is inside them? Will he apostatise? Tell me. I am secret as the grave!'

'The fool has found an old worm-eaten rag of conscience somewhere in the corner of his heart, and dare not.'

'Curse the coward! And such a plot as I had laid! I would have swept every Christian dog out of Africa within the year. What is the man afraid of?'

'Hell-fire.'

'Why, he will go there in any case, the accursed Gentile!'

'So I hinted to him, as delicately as I could; but, like the rest of the world, he had a sort of partiality for getting thither by his own road.'

'Coward! And whom shall I get now? Oh, if that Pelagia had as much cunning in her whole body as Hypatia has in her little finger, I'd seat her and her Goth upon the throne of the Caesars. But—'

'But she has five senses, and just enough wit to use them, eh?'

'Don't laugh at her for that, the darling! I do delight in her, after all. It warms even my old blood to see how thoroughly she knows her business, and how she enjoys it, like a true daughter of Eve.'

'She has been your most successful pupil, certainly, mother. You may well be proud of her.'

The old hag chuckled to herself a while; and then suddenly turning to Raphael—'See here! I have a present for you;' and she pulled out a magnificent ring.

'Why, mother, you are always giving me presents. It was but a month ago you sent me this poisoned dagger.'

'Why not, eh?—why not? Why should not Jew give to Jew? Take the old woman's ring!'

'What a glorious opal!'

'Ah, that is an opal, indeed! And the unspeakable name upon it; just like Solomon's own. Take it, I say! Whosoever wears that never need fear fire, steel, poison, or woman's eye.'

'Your own included, eh?'

'Take it, I say!' and Miriam caught his hand, and forced the ring on his finger. 'There! Now you're safe. And now call me mother again. I like it. I don't know why, but I like it. And—Raphael Aben-Ezra—don't laugh at me, and call me witch and hag, as you often do. I don't care about it from any one else; I'm accustomed to it. But when you do it, I always long to stab you. That's why I gave you the dagger. I used to wear it; and I was afraid I might be tempted to use it some day, when the thought came across me how handsome you'd look, and how quiet, when you were dead, and your soul up there so happy in Abraham's bosom, watching all the Gentiles frying and roasting for ever down below. Don't laugh at me, I say; and don't thwart me! I may make you the emperor's prime minister some day. I can if I choose.'

'Heaven forbid!' said Raphael, laughing.

'Don't laugh. I cast your nativity last night, and I know you have no cause to laugh. A great danger hangs over you, and a deep temptation. And if you weather this storm, you may be chamberlain, prime minister, emperor, if you will. And you shall be—by the four archangels, you shall!'

And the old woman vanished down a by-lane, leaving Raphael utterly bewildered.

'Moses and the prophets! Does the old lady intend to marry me? What can there be in this very lazy and selfish personage who bears my name, to excite so romantic an affection? Well, Raphael Aben-Ezra, thou hast one more friend in the world beside Bran the mastiff; and therefore one more trouble—seeing that friends always expect a due return of affection and good offices and what not. I wonder whether the old lady has been getting into a scrape kidnapping, and wants my patronage to help her out of it.... Three-quarters of a mile of roasting sun between me and home!.... I must hire a gig, or a litter, or some-thing, off the next stand .... with a driver who has been eating onions.... and of course there is not a stand for the next half-mile. Oh, divine aether! as Prometheus has it, and ye swift-winged breezes (I wish there were any here), when will it all be over? Three-and-thirty years have I endured already of this Babel of knaves and fools; and with this abominable good health of mine, which won't even help me with gout or indigestion, I am likely to have three-and-thirty years more of it....I know nothing, and I care for nothing, and I expect nothing; and I actually can't take the trouble to prick a hole in myself, and let the very small amount of wits out, to see something really worth seeing, and try its strength at something really worth doing—if, after all, the other side the grave does not turn out to be just as stupid as this one.... When will it be all over, and I in Abraham's bosom—or any one else's, provided it be not a woman's?'

CHAPTER V: A DAY IN ALEXANDRIA

In the meanwhile, Philammon, with his hosts, the Goths, had been slipping down the stream. Passing, one after another, world-old cities now dwindled to decaying towns, and numberless canal-mouths, now fast falling into ruin with the fields to which they ensured fertility, under the pressure of Roman extortion and misrule, they had entered one evening the mouth of the great canal of Alexandria, slid easily all night across the star-bespangled shadows of Lake Mareotis, and found themselves, when the next morning dawned, among the countless masts and noisy quays of the greatest seaport in the world. The motley crowd of foreigners, the hubbub of all dialects from the Crimea to Cadiz, the vast piles of merchandise, and heaps of wheat, lying unsheltered in that rainless air, the huge bulk of the corn-ships lading for Rome, whose tall sides rose story over story, like floating palaces, above the buildings of some inner dock—these sights, and a hundred more, made the young monk think that the world did not look at first sight a thing to be despised. In front of heaps of fruit, fresh from the market-boats, black groups of glossy negro slaves were basking and laughing on the quay, looking anxiously and coquettishly round in hopes of a purchaser; they evidently did not think the change from desert toil to city luxuries a change for the worse. Philammon turned away his eyes from beholding vanity; but only to meet fresh vanity wheresoever they fell. He felt crushed by the multitude of new objects, stunned by the din around; and scarcely recollected himself enough to seize the first opportunity of escaping from his dangerous companions.

'Holloa!' roared Smid the armourer, as he scrambled on to the steps of the slip; 'you are not going to run away without bidding us good-bye?'

'Stop with me, boy!' said old Wulf. 'I saved you; and you are my man.'

Philammon turned and hesitated.

'I am a monk, and God's man.'

'You can be that anywhere. I will make you a warrior.'

'The weapons of my warfare are not of flesh and blood, but prayer and fasting,' answered poor Philammon, who felt already that he should have ten times more need of the said weapons in Alexandria than ever he had had in the desert.... 'Let me go! I am not made for your life! I thank you, bless you! I will pray for you, sir! but let me go!'

'Curse the craven hound!' roared half a dozen voices. 'Why did you not let us have our will with him, Prince Wulf? You might have expected such gratitude from a monk.'

'He owes me my share of the sport,' quoth Smid. 'And here it is!' And a hatchet, thrown with practised aim, whistled right for Philammon's head—he had just time to swerve, and the weapon struck and snapped against the granite wall behind.

'Well saved!' said Wulf coolly, while the sailors and market-women above yelled murder, and the custom-house officers, and other constables and catchpolls of the harbour, rushed to the place—and retired again quietly at the thunder of the Amal from the boat's stern—

'Never mind, my good follows! we're only Goths; and on a visit to the prefect, too.'

'Only Goths, my donkey-riding friends!' echoed Smid, and at that ominous name the whole posse comitatus tried to look unconcerned, and found suddenly that their presence was absolutely required in an opposite direction.

'Let him go,' said Wulf, as he stalked up the steps. 'Let the boy go. I never set my heart on any man yet,' he growled to himself in an under voice, 'but what he disappointed me—and I must not expect more from this fellow. Come, men, ashore, and get drunk!'

Philammon, of course, now that he had leave to go, longed to stay—at all events, he must go back and thank his hosts. He turned unwillingly to do so, as hastily as he could, and found Pelagia and her gigantic lover just entering a palanquin. With downcast eyes he approached the beautiful basilisk, and stammered out some commonplace; and she, full of smiles, turned to him at once.

'Tell us more about yourself before we part. You speak such beautiful Greek—true Athenian. It is quite delightful to hear one's own accent again. Were you ever at Athens?'

'When I was a child; I recollect—that is, I think—'

'What?' asked Pelagia eagerly.

'A great house in Athens—and a great battle there—and coming to Egypt in a ship.'

'Heavens!' said Pelagia, and paused.... 'How strange! Girls, who said he was like me?'

'I'm sure we meant no harm, if we did say it in a joke,' pouted one of the attendants.

'Like me!—you must come and see us. I have something to say to you .... You must!'

Philammon misinterpreted the intense interest of her tone, and if he did not shrink back, gave some involuntary gesture of reluctance. Pelagia laughed aloud.

'Don't be vain enough to suspect, foolish boy, but come! Do you think that I have nothing to talk about but nonsense? Come and see me. It may be better for you. I live in—' and she named a fashionable street, which Philammon, though he inwardly vowed not to accept the invitation, somehow could not help remembering.

'Do leave the wild man, and come,' growled the Amal from within the palanquin. 'You are not going to turn nun, I hope?'

'Not while the first man I ever met in the world stays in it,' answered Pelagia, as she skipped into the palanquin, taking care to show the most lovely white heel and ankle, and, like the Parthian, send a random arrow as she retreated. But the dart was lost on Philammon, who had been already hustled away by the bevy of laughing attendants, amid baskets, dressing-cases, and bird-cages, and was fain to make his escape into the Babel round, and inquire his way to the patriarch's house.

'Patriarch's house?' answered the man whom he first addressed, a little lean, swarthy fellow, with merry black eyes, who, with a basket of fruit at his feet, was sunning himself on a baulk of timber, meditatively chewing the papyrus-cane, and examining the strangers with a look of absurd sagacity. 'I know it; without a doubt I know it; all Alexandria has good reason to know it. Are you a monk?'

'Yes.'

'Then ask your way of the monks; you won't go far without finding one.'

'But I do not even know the right direction; what is your grudge against monks, my good man?'

'Look here, my youth; you seem too ingenuous for a monk. Don't flatter yourself that it will last. If you can wear the sheepskin, and haunt the churches here for a month, without learning to lie, and slander, and clap, and hoot, and perhaps play your part in a sedition—and—murder satyric drama—why, you are a better man than I take you for. I, sir, am a Greek and a philosopher; though the whirlpool of matter may have, and indeed has, involved my ethereal spark in the body of a porter. Therefore, youth,' continued the little man, starting up upon his baulk like an excited monkey, and stretching out one oratorio paw, 'I bear a treble hatred to the monkish tribe. First, as a man and a husband;.... for as for the smiles of beauty, or otherwise,—such as I have, I have; and the monks, if they had their wicked will, would leave neither men nor women in the world. Sir, they would exterminate the human race in a single generation, by a voluntary suicide! Secondly, as a porter; for if all men turned monks, nobody would be idle, and the profession of portering would be annihilated. Thirdly, sir, as a philosopher; for as the false coin is odious to the true, so is the irrational and animal asceticism of the monk, to the logical and methodic self-restraint of one who, like your humblest of philosophers, aspires to a life according to the pure reason.'

'And pray,' asked Philammon, half laughing, 'who has been your tutor in philosophy?'

'The fountain of classic wisdom, Hypatia herself. As the ancient sage—the name is unimportant to a monk—pumped water nightly that he might study by day, so I, the guardian of cloaks and parasols, at the sacred doors of her lecture-room, imbibe celestial knowledge. From my youth I felt in me a soul above the matter-entangled herd. She revealed to me the glorious fact, that I am a spark of Divinity itself. A fallen star, I am, sir!' continued he, pensively, stroking his lean stomach—'a fallen star!—fallen, if the dignity of philosophy will allow of the simile, among the hogs of the lower world

—indeed, even into the hog-bucket itself. Well, after all, I will show you the way to the Archbishop's. There is a philosophic pleasure in opening one's treasures to the modest young. Perhaps you will assist me by carrying this basket of fruit?' And the little man jumped up, put his basket on Philammon's head, and trotted off up a neighbouring street.

Philammon followed, half contemptuous, half wondering at what this philosophy might be, which could feed the self-conceit of anything so abject as his ragged little apish guide; but the novel roar and whirl of the street, the perpetual stream of busy faces, the line of curricles, palanquins, laden asses, camels, elephants, which met and passed him, and squeezed him up steps and into doorways, as they threaded their way through the great Moon-gate into the ample street beyond, drove everything from his mind but wondering curiosity, and a vague, helpless dread of that great living wilderness, more terrible than any dead wilderness of sand which he had left behind. Already he longed for the repose, the silence of the Laura—for faces which knew him and smiled upon him; but it was too late to turn back ow. His guide held on for more than a mile up the great main street, crossed in the centre of the city, at right angles, by one equally magnificent, at each end of which, miles away, appeared, dim and distant over the heads of the living stream of passengers, the yellow sand-hills of the desert; while at the end of the vista in front of them gleamed the blue harbour, through a network of countless masts.

At last they reached the quay at the opposite end of the street; and there burst on Philammon's astonished eyes a vast semicircle of blue sea, ringed with palaces and towers....He stopped involuntarily; and his little guide stopped also, and looked askance at the young monk, to watch the effect which that grand panorama should produce on him.

'There!—Behold our works! Us Greeks!—us benighted heathens! Look at it and feel yourself what you are, a very small, conceited, ignorant young person, who fancies that your new religion gives you a right to despise every one else. Did Christians make all this? Did Christians build that Pharos there on the left horn—wonder of the world? Did Christians raise that mile-long mole which runs towards the land, with its two drawbridges, connecting the two ports? Did Christians build this esplanade, or this gate of the Sun above our heads? Or that Caesareum on our right here? Look at those obelisks before it!' And he pointed upwards to those two world-famous ones, one of which still lies on its ancient site, as Cleopatra's Needle. 'Look up! look up, I say, and feel small—very small indeed! Did Christians raise them, or engrave them from base to point with the wisdom of the ancients? Did Christians build that Museum next to it, or design its statues and its frescoes—now, alas! re-echoing no more to the hummings of the Attic bee? Did they pile up out of the waves that palace beyond it, or that Exchange? or fill that Temple of Neptune with breathing brass and blushing marble? Did they build that Timonium on the point, where Antony, worsted at Actium, forgot his shame in Cleopatra's arms? Did they quarry out that island of Antirrhodus into a nest of docks, or cover those waters with the sails of every nation under heaven? Speak! Thou son of bats and moles —thou six feet of sand—thou mummy out of the cliff caverns! Can monks do works like these?'

'Other men have laboured, and we have entered into their labours,' answered Philammon, trying to seem as unconcerned as he could. He was, indeed, too utterly astonished to be angry at anything. The overwhelming vastness, multiplicity, and magnificence of the whole scene; the range of buildings, such as mother earth never, perhaps, carried on her lap before or since, the extraordinary variety of form-the pure Doric and Ionic of the earlier Ptolemies, the barbaric and confused gorgeousness of the later Roman, and here and there an imitation of the grand elephantine style of old Egypt, its gaudy colours relieving, while they deepened, the effect of its massive and simple outlines; the eternal repose of that great belt of stone contrasting with the restless ripple of the glittering harbour, and the busy sails which crowded out into the sea beyond, like white doves taking their flight into boundless space?—all dazzled, overpowered, saddened him.... This was the world.... Was it not beautiful?.... Must not the men who made all this have been—if not great.... yet.... he knew not what? Surely they had great souls and noble thoughts in them! Surely there was something godlike in being able to create

such things! Not for themselves alone, too; but for a nation—for generations yet unborn.... And there was the sea.... and beyond it, nations of men innumerable .... His imagination was dizzy with thinking of them. Were they all doomed—lost?.... Had God no love for them?

At last, recovering himself, he recollected his errand, and again asked his way to the archbishop's house.

'This way, O youthful nonentity!' answered the little man, leading the way round the great front of the Caesareum, at the foot of the obelisks.

Philammon's eye fell on some new masonry in the pediment, ornamented with Christian symbols.

'How? Is this a church?'

'It is the Caesareum. It has become temporarily a church. The immortal gods have, for the time being, condescended to waive their rights; but it is the Caesareum, nevertheless. This way; down this street to the right. There,' said he, pointing to a doorway in the side of the Museum, 'is the last haunt of the Muses—the lecture-room of Hypatia, the school of my unworthiness. And here,' stopping at the door of a splendid house on the opposite side of the street, 'is the residence of that blest favourite of Athene—Neith, as the barbarians of Egypt would denominate the goddess—we men of Macedonia retain the time-honoured Grecian nomenclature.... You may put down your basket.' And he knocked at the door, and delivering the fruit to a black porter, made a polite obeisance to Philammon, and seemed on the point of taking his departure.

'But where is the archbishop's house?'

'Close to the Serapeium. You cannot miss the place: four hundred columns of marble, now ruined by Christian persecutors, stand on an eminence—'

'But how far off?'

'About three miles; near the gate of the Moon.'

'Why, was not that the gate by which we entered the city on the other side?'

'Exactly so; you will know your way back, having already traversed it.'

Philammon checked a decidedly carnal inclination to seize the little fellow by the throat, and knock his head against the wall, and contented himself by saying—

'Then do you actually mean to say, you heathen villain, that you have taken me six or seven miles out of my road?'

'Good words young man. If you do me harm, I call for help; we are close to the Jews' quarter, and there are some thousands there who will swarm out like wasps on the chance of beating a monk to death. Yet that which I have done, I have done with a good purpose. First, politically, or according to practical wisdom—in order that you, not I, might carry the basket. Next, philosophically, or according to the intuitions of the pure reason—in order that you might, by beholding the magnificence of that great civilisation which your fellows wish to destroy, learn that you are an ass, and a tortoise, and a nonentity, and so beholding yourself to be nothing, may be moved to become something.'

And he moved off.

Philammon seized him by the collar of his ragged tunic, and held him in a gripe from which the little man, though he twisted like an eel could not escape.

'Peaceably, if you will; if not, by main force. You shall go back with me, and show me every step of the way. It is a just penalty.'

'The philosopher conquers circumstances by submitting to them. I go peaceably. Indeed, the base necessities of the hog-bucket side of existence compel me of themselves back to the Moon-gate, for another early fruit job.'

So they went back together.

Now why Philammon's thoughts should have been running on the next new specimen of womankind to whom he had been introduced, though only in name, let psychologists tell, but certainly,

after he had walked some half-mile in silence, he suddenly woke up, as out of many meditations, and asked—

'But who is this Hypatia, of whom you talk so much?'

'Who is Hypatia, rustic? The queen of Alexandria! In wit, Athene; Hera in majesty; in beauty, Aphrodite!'

'And who are they?' asked Philammon.

The porter stopped, surveyed him slowly from foot to head with an expression of boundless pity and contempt, and was in the act of walking off in the ecstasy of his disdain, when he was brought to suddenly by Philammon's strong arm.

'Ah!—I recollect. There is a compact.... Who is Athene? The goddess, giver of wisdom. Hera, spouse of Zeus, queen of the Celestials. Aphrodite, mother of love.... You are not expected to understand.'

Philammon did understand, however, so much as this, that Hypatia was a very unique and wonderful person in the mind of his little guide; and therefore asked the only further question by which he could as yet test any Alexandrian phenomenon—

'And is she a friend of the patriarch?'

The porter opened his eyes very wide, put his middle finger in a careful and complicated fashion between his fore and third fingers, and extending it playfully towards Philammon, performed therewith certain mysterious signals, the effect whereof being totally lost on him, the little man stopped, took another look at Philammon's stately figure, and answered—

'Of the human race in general, my young friend. The philosopher must rise above the individual, to the contemplation of the universal.... Aha!-Here is something worth seeing, and the gates are open.' And he stopped at the portal of a vast building.

'Is this the patriarch's house?'

'The patriarch's tastes are more plebeian. He lives, they say, in two dirty little rooms—knowing what is fit for him. The patriarch's house? Its antipodes, my young friend—that is, if such beings have a cosmic existence, on which point Hypatia has her doubts. This is the temple of art and beauty; the Delphic tripod of poetic inspiration; the solace of the earthworn drudge; in a word, the theatre; which your patriarch, if he could, would convert to-morrow into a—but the philosopher must not revile. Ah! I see the prefect's apparitors at the gate. He is making the polity, as we call it here; the dispositions; settling, in short, the bill of fare for the day, in compliance with the public palate. A facetious pantomime dances here on this day every week—admired by some, the Jews especially. To the more classic taste, many of his movements—his recoil, especially—are wanting in the true antique severity—might be called, perhaps, on the whole, indecent. Still the weary pilgrim must be amused. Let us step in and hear.'

But before Philammon could refuse, an uproar arose within, a rush outward of the mob, and inward of the prefect's apparitors.

'It is false!' shouted many voices. 'A Jewish calumny! The man is innocent!'

'There is no more sedition in him than there is in me,' roared a fat butcher, who looked as ready to fell a man as an ox. 'He was always the first and the last to clap the holy patriarch at sermon.'

'Dear tender soul,' whimpered a woman; 'and I said to him only this morning, why don't you flog my boys, Master Hierax? how can you expect them to learn if they are not flogged? And he said, he never could abide the sight of a rod, it made his back tingle so.'

'Which was plainly a prophecy!'

'And proves him innocent; for how could he prophesy if he was not one of the holy ones?'

'Monks, to the rescue! Hierax, a Christian, is taken and tortured in the theatre!' thundered a wild hermit, his beard and hair streaming about his chest and shoulders.

'Nitria! Nitria! For God and the mother of God, monks of Nitria! Down with the Jewish slanderers! Down with heathen tyrants!'—And the mob, reinforced as if by magic by hundreds from without, swept down the huge vaulted passage, carrying Philammon and the porter with them.

'My friends,' quoth the little man, trying to look philosophically calm, though he was fairly off his legs, and hanging between heaven and earth on the elbows of the bystanders, 'whence this tumult?'

'The Jews got up a cry that Hierax wanted to raise a riot. Curse them and their sabbath, they are always rioting on Saturdays about this dancer of theirs, instead of working like honest Christians!'

'And rioting on Sunday instead. Ahem! sectarian differences, which the philosopher—

The rest of the sentence disappeared with the speaker, as a sudden opening of the mob let him drop, and buried him under innumerable legs.

Philammon, furious at the notion of persecution, maddened by the cries around him, found himself bursting fiercely through the crowd, till he reached the front ranks, where tall gates of open ironwork barred all farther progress, but left a full view of the tragedy which was enacting within, where the poor innocent wretch, suspended from a gibbet, writhed and shrieked at every stroke of the hide whips of his tormentors.

In vain Philammon and the monks around him knocked and beat at the gates; they were only answered by laughter and taunts from the apparitors within, curses on the turbulent mob of Alexandria, with its patriarch, clergy, saints, and churches, and promises to each and all outside, that their turn would come next; while the piteous screams grew fainter and more faint, and at last, with a convulsive shudder, motion and suffering ceased for ever in the poor mangled body.

'They have killed him! Martyred him! Back to the archbishop! To the patriarch's house: he will avenge us!' And as the horrible news, and the watchword which followed it, passed outwards through the crowd, they wheeled round as one man, and poured through street after street towards Cyril's house; while Philammon, beside himself with horror, rage, and pity, hurried onward with them.

A tumultuous hour, or more, was passed in the street before he could gain entrance; and then he was swept, along with the mob in which he had been fast wedged, through a dark low passage, and landed breathless in a quadrangle of mean and new buildings, overhung by the four hundred stately columns of the ruined Serapeium. The grass was already growing on the ruined capitals and architraves.... Little did even its destroyers dream then, that the day would come when one only of that four hundred would be left, as 'Pompey's Pillar,' to show what the men of old could think and do.

Philammon at last escaped from the crowd, and putting the letter which he had carried in his bosom into the hands of one of the priests who was mixing with the mob, was beckoned by him into a corridor, and up a flight of stairs, and into a large, low, mean room, and there, by virtue of the world-wide freemasonry which Christianity had, for the first time on earth, established, found himself in five minutes awaiting the summons of the most powerful man south of the Mediterranean.

A curtain hung across the door of the inner chamber, through which Philammon could hear plainly the steps of some one walking up and down hurriedly and fiercely.

'They will drive me to it!' at last burst out a deep sonorous voice. 'They will drive me to it.... Their blood be on their own head! It is not enough for them to blaspheme God and His church, to have the monopoly of all the cheating, fortune-telling, usury, sorcery, and coining of the city, but they must deliver my clergy into the hands of the tyrant?'

'It was so even in the apostles' time,' suggested a softer but far more unpleasant voice.

'Then it shall be so no longer! God has given me the power to stop them; and God do so to me, and more also, if I do not use that power. To-morrow I sweep out this Augean stable of villainy, and leave not a Jew to blaspheme and cheat in Alexandria.'

'I am afraid such a judgment, however righteous, might offend his excellency.'

'His excellency! His tyranny! Why does Orestes truckle to these circumcised, but because they lend money to him and to his creatures? He would keep up a den of fiends in Alexandria if they would do as much for him! And then to play them off against me and mine, to bring religion into

contempt by setting the mob together by the ears, and to end with outrages like this! Seditious! Have they not cause enough? The sooner I remove one of their temptations the better: let the other tempter beware, lest his judgment be at hand!'

'The prefect, your holiness?' asked the other voice slily.

'Who spoke of the prefect? Whosoever is a tyrant, and a murderer, and an oppressor of the poor, and a favourer of the philosophy which despises and enslaves the poor, should not he perish, though he be seven times a prefect?'

At this juncture Philammon, thinking perhaps that he had already heard too much, notified his presence by some slight noise, at which the secretary, as he seemed to be, hastily lifted the curtain, and somewhat sharply demanded his business. The names of Pambo and Arsenius, however, seemed to pacify him at once; and the trembling youth was ushered into the presence of him who in reality, though not in name, sat on the throne of the Pharaohs.

Not, indeed, in their outward pomp; the furniture of the chamber was but a grade above that of the artisan's; the dress of the great man was coarse and simple; if personal vanity peeped out anywhere, it was in the careful arrangement of the bushy beard, and of the few curling locks which the tonsure had spared. But the height and majesty of his figure, the stern and massive beauty of his features, the flashing eye, curling lip, and projecting brow—all marked him as one born to command. As the youth entered, Cyril stopped short in his walk, and looking him through and through, with a glance which burnt upon his cheeks like fire, and made him all but wish the kindly earth would open and hide him, took the letters, read them, and then began—

'Philammon. A Greek. You are said to have learned to obey. If so you have also learned to rule. Your father-abbot has transferred you to my tutelage. You are now to obey me.'

'And I will.'

'Well said. Go to that window, then, and leap into the court.'

Philammon walked to it, and opened it. The pavement was fully twenty feet below; but his business was to obey, and not take measurements. There was a flower in the vase upon the sill. He quietly removed it, and in an instant more would have leapt for life or death, when Cyril's voice thundered 'Stop!'

'The lad will pass, my Peter. I shall not be afraid now for the secrets which he may have overheard.'

Peter smiled assent, looking all the while as if he thought it a great pity that the young man had not been allowed to put talebearing out of his own power by breaking his neck.

'You wish to see the world. Perhaps you have seen something of it to-day.'

'I saw the murder—'

'Then you saw what you came hither to see; what the world is, and what justice and mercy it can deal out. You would not dislike to see God's reprisals to man's tyranny?.... Or to be a fellow-worker with God therein, if I judge rightly by your looks?'

'I would avenge that man.'

'Ah! my poor simple schoolmaster! And his fate is the portent of portents to you now! Stay awhile, till you have gone with Ezekiel into the inner chambers of the devil's temple, and you will see worse things than these—women weeping for Thammuz; bemoaning the decay of an idolatry which they themselves disbelieve—That, too, is on the list of Hercules' labour, Peter mine.'

At this moment a deacon entered.... 'Your holiness, the rabbis of the accursed nation are below, at your summons. We brought them in through the back gate, for fear of—'

'Right, right. An accident to them might have ruined us. I shall not forget you. Bring them up. Peter, take this youth, introduce him to the parabolani.... Who will be the best man for him to work under?'

'The brother Theopompus is especially sober and gentle.'

Cyril shook his head laughingly.... 'Go into the next room, my son .... No, Peter, put him under some fiery saint, some true Boanerges, who will talk him down, and work him to death, and show him the best and worst of everything. Cleitophon will be the man. Now then, let me see my engagements; five minutes for these Jews—Orestes did not choose to frighten them: let us see whether Cyril cannot; then an hour to look over the hospital accounts; an hour for the schools; a half-hour for the reserved cases of distress; and another half-hour for myself; and then divine service. See that the boy is there. Do bring in every one in their turn, Peter mine. So much time goes in hunting for this man and that man.... and life is too short for all that. Where are these Jews?' and Cyril plunged into the latter half of his day's work with that untiring energy, self-sacrifice, and method, which commanded for him, in spite of all suspicions of his violence, ambition, and intrigue, the loving awe and implicit obedience of several hundred thousand human beings.

So Philammon went out with the parabolani, a sort of organised guild of district visitors.... And in their company he saw that afternoon the dark side of that world, whereof the harbour-panorama had been the bright one. In squalid misery, filth, profligacy, ignorance, ferocity, discontent, neglected in body, house, and soul, by the civil authorities, proving their existence only in aimless and sanguinary riots, there they starved and rotted, heap on heap, the masses of the old Greek population, close to the great food-exporting harbour of the world. Among these, fiercely perhaps, and fanatically, but still among them and for them, laboured those district visitors night and day. And so Philammon toiled away with them, carrying food and clothing, helping sick to the hospital, and dead to the burial; cleaning out the infected houses—for the fever was all but perennial in those quarters—and comforting the dying with the good news of forgiveness from above; till the larger number had to return to evening service. He, however, was kept by his superior, watching at a sick-bedside, and it was late at night before he got home, and was reported to Peter the Reader as having acquitted himself like 'a man of God,' as, indeed, without the least thought of doing anything noble or self-sacrificing, he had truly done, being a monk. And so he threw himself on a truckle-bed, in one of the many cells which opened off a long corridor, and fell fast asleep in a minute.

He was just weltering about in a dreary dream-jumble of Goths dancing with district visitors, Pelagia as an angel, with peacock's wings; Hypatia with horns and cloven feet, riding three hippopotami at once round the theatre; Cyril standing at an open window, cursing frightfully, and pelting him with flower-pots; and a similar self-sown after-crop of his day's impressions; when he was awakened by the tramp of hurried feet in the street outside, and shouts, which gradually, as he became conscious, shaped themselves into cries of 'Alexander's Church is on fire! Help, good Christians! Fire! Help!'

Whereat he sat up in his truckle-bed, tried to recollect where he was, and having with some trouble succeeded, threw on his sheepskin, and jumped up to ask the news from the deacons and monks who were hurrying along the corridor outside.... 'Yes, Alexander's church was on fire;' and down the stairs they poured, across the courtyard, and out into the street, Peter's tall figure serving as a standard and a rallying point.

As they rushed out through the gateway, Philammon, dazzled by the sudden transition from the darkness within to the blaze of moon and starlight which flooded the street, and walls, and shining roofs, hung back a moment. That hesitation probably saved his life; for in an instant he saw a dark figure spring out of the shadow, a long knife flashed across his eyes, and a priest next to him sank upon the pavement with a groan, while the assassin dashed off down the street, hotly pursued by monks and parabolani.

Philammon, who ran like a desert ostrich, had soon outstripped all but Peter, when several more dark figures sprang out of doorways and corners and joined, or seem to join, the pursuit. Suddenly, however, after running a hundred yards, they drew up opposite the mouth of a side street; the assassin stopped also. Peter, suspecting something wrong, slackened his pace, and caught Philammon's arm.

'Do you see those fellows in the shadow?'

But, before Philammon could answer, some thirty or forty men, their daggers gleaming in the moonlight, moved out into the middle of the street, and received the fugitives into their ranks. What was the meaning of it? Here was a pleasant taste of the ways of the most Christian and civilised city of the Empire!

'Well,' thought Philammon, 'I have come out to see the world, and I seem, at this rate, to be likely to see enough of it.'

Peter turned at once, and fled as quickly as he had pursued; while Philammon, considering discretion the better part of valour, followed, and they rejoined their party breathless.

'There is an armed mob at the end of the street.'

'Assassins!' 'Jews!' 'A conspiracy!' Up rose a Babel of doubtful voices. The foe appeared in sight, advancing stealthily, and the whole party took to flight, led once more by Peter, who seemed determined to make free use, in behalf of his own safety, of the long legs which nature had given him.

Philammon followed, sulkily and unwillingly, at a foot's pace; but he had not gone a dozen yards when a pitiable voice at his feet called to him—

'Help! mercy! Do not leave me here to be murdered! I am a Christian; indeed I am a Christian!'

Philammon stooped, and lifted from the ground a comely negro-woman, weeping, and shivering in a few tattered remnants of clothing.

'I ran out when they said the church was on fire,' sobbed the poor creature, 'and the Jews beat and wounded me. They tore my shawl and tunic off me before I could get away from them; and then our own people ran over me and trod me down. And now my husband will beat me, if I ever get home. Quick! up this side street, or we shall be murdered!'

The armed men, whosoever they were, were close on them. There was no time to be lost; and Philammon, assuring her that he would not desert her, hurried her up the side street which she pointed out. But the pursuers had caught sight of them, and while the mass held on up the main sight, three or four turned aside and gave chase. The poor negress could only limp along, and Philammon, unarmed, looked back, and saw the bright steel points gleaming in the moonlight, and made up his mind to die as a monk should. Nevertheless, youth is hopeful. One chance for life. He thrust the negress into a dark doorway, where her colour hid her well enough, and had just time to ensconce himself behind a pillar, when the foremost pursuer reached him. He held his breath in fearful suspense. Should he be seen? He would not die without a struggle at least. No! the fellow ran on, panting. But in a minute more, another came up, saw him suddenly, and sprang aside startled. That start saved Philammon. Quick as a cat, he leapt upon him, felled him to the earth with a single blow, tore the dagger from his hand, and sprang to his feet again just in time to strike his new weapon full into the third pursuer's face. The man put his hand to his head, and recoiled against a fellow-ruffian, who was close on his heels. Philammon, flushed with victory, took advantage of the confusion, and before the worthy pair could recover, dealt them half a dozen blows which, luckily for them, came from an unpractised hand, or the young monk might have had more than one life to answer for. As it was, they turned and limped off, cursing in an unknown tongue; and Philammon found himself triumphant and alone, with the trembling negress and the prostrate ruffian, who, stunned by the blow and the fall, lay groaning on the pavement.

It was all over in a minute.... The negress was kneeling under the gateway, pouring out her simple thanks to Heaven for this unexpected deliverance; and Philammon was about to kneel too, when a thought struck him; and coolly despoiling the Jew of his shawl and sash, he handed them over to the poor negress, considering them fairly enough as his own by right of conquest; but, lo and behold! as she was overwhelming him with thanks, a fresh mob poured into the street from the upper end, and were close on them before they were aware .... A flush of terror and despair,.... and then a burst of joy, as, by mingled moonlight and torchlight, Philammon descried priestly robes, and in the forefront of the battle—there being no apparent danger—Peter the Reader, who seemed to be anxious to prevent inquiry, by beginning to talk as fast as possible.

‘Ah, boy! Safe? The saints be praised! We gave you up for dead! Whom have you here? A prisoner? And we have another. He ran right into our arms up the street, and the Lord delivered him into our hand. He must have passed you.’

‘So he did,’ said Philammon, dragging up his captive, ‘and here is his fellow-scoundrel.’ Whereon the two worthies were speedily tied together by the elbows; and the party marched on once more in search of Alexander’s church, and the supposed conflagration.

Philammon looked round for the negress, but she had vanished. He was far too much ashamed of being known to have been alone with a woman to say anything about her. Yet he longed to see her again; an interest—even something like an affection—had already sprung up in his heart toward the poor simple creature whom he had delivered from death. Instead of thinking her ungrateful for not staying to tell what he had done for her, he was thankful to her for having saved his blushes, by disappearing so opportunely.... And he longed to tell her so—to know if she was hurt—to—Oh, Philammon! only four days from the Laura, and a whole regiment of women acquaintances already! True, Providence having sent into the world about as many women as men, it maybe difficult to keep out of their way altogether. Perhaps, too, Providence may have intended them to be of some use to that other sex, with whom it has so mixed them up. Don’t argue, poor Philammon; Alexander’s church is on fire!-forward!

And so they hurried on, a confused mass of monks and populace, with their hapless prisoners in the centre, who, hauled, cuffed, questioned, and cursed by twenty self-elected inquisitors at once, thought fit, either from Jewish obstinacy or sheer bewilderment, to give no account whatsoever of themselves.

As they turned the corner of a street, the folding-doors of a large gateway rolled open; a long line of glittering figures poured across the road, dropped their spear-butts on the pavement with a single rattle, and remained motionless. The front rank of the mob recoiled; and an awe-struck whisper ran through them.... ‘The Stationaries!’

‘Who are they?’ asked Philammon in a whisper.

‘The soldiers—the Roman soldiers,’ answered a whisperer to him.

Philammon, who was among the leaders, had recoiled too—he hardly knew why—at that stern apparition. His next instinct was to press forward as close as he dared.... And these were Roman soldiers!—the conquerors of the world!—the men whose name had thrilled him from his childhood with vague awe and admiration, dimly heard of up there in the lonely Laura.... Roman soldiers! And here he was face to face with them at last!

His curiosity received a sudden check, however, as he found his arm seized by an officer, as he took him to be, from the gold ornaments on his helmet and cuirass, who lifted his vine-stock threateningly over the young monk’s head, and demanded—

‘What’s all this about? Why are you not quietly in your beds, you Alexandrian rascals?’

‘Alexander’s church is on fire,’ answered Philammon, thinking the shortest answer the wisest.

‘So much the better.’

‘And the Jews are murdering the Christians.’

‘Fight it out, then. Turn in, men, it’s only a riot.’

And the steel-clad apparition suddenly flashed round, and vanished, trampling and jingling, into the dark jaws of the guardhouse-gate, while the stream, its temporary barrier removed, rushed on wilder than ever.

Philammon hurried on too with them, not without a strange feeling of disappointment. ‘Only a riot!’ Peter was chuckling to his brothers over their cleverness in ‘having kept the prisoners in the middle, and stopped the rascals’ mouths till they were past the guard-house.’ ‘A fine thing to boast of,’ thought Philammon, ‘in the face of the men who make and unmake kings and Caesars!’ ‘Only a riot!’ He, and the corps of district visitors—whom he fancied the most august body on earth—and Alexander’s church, Christians murdered by Jews, persecution of the Catholic faith, and all the rest of

it, was simply, then, not worth the notice of those forty men, alone and secure in the sense of power and discipline, among tens of thousands .... He hated them, those soldiers. Was it because they were indifferent to the cause of which he was inclined to think himself a not unimportant member, on the strength of his late Samsonic defeat of Jewish persecutors? At least, he obeyed the little porter's advice, and 'felt very small indeed.'

And he felt smaller still, being young and alive to ridicule, when, at some sudden ebb or flow, wave or wavelet of the Babel sea, which weltered up and down every street, a shrill female voice informed them from an upper window, that Alexander's church was not on fire at all; that she had gone to the top of the house, as they might have gone, if they had not been fools, etc. etc.; and that it 'looked as safe and as ugly as ever'; wherewith a brickbat or two having been sent up in answer, she shut the blinds, leaving them to halt, inquire, discover gradually and piecemeal, after the method of mobs, they had been following the nature of mobs; that no one had seen the church on fire, or seen any one else who had seen the same, or even seen any light in the sky in any quarter, or knew who raised the cry; or—or—in short, Alexander's church was two miles off; if it was on fire, it was either burnt down or saved by this time; if not, the night-air was, to say the least, chilly: and, whether it was or not, there were ambuscades of Jews—Satan only knew how strong—in every street between them and it.... Might it not be better to secure their two prisoners, and then ask for further orders from the archbishop? Wherewith, after the manner of mobs, they melted off the way they came, by twos and threes, till those of a contrary opinion began to find themselves left alone, and having a strong dislike to Jewish daggers, were fain to follow the stream.

With a panic or two, a cry of 'The Jews are on us!' and a general rush in every direction (in which one or two, seeking shelter from the awful nothing in neighbouring houses, were handed over to the watch as burglars, and sent to the quarries accordingly), they reached the Serapeium, and there found, of course, a counter-mob collected to inform them that they had been taken in—that Alexander's church had never been on fire at all—that the Jews had murdered a thousand Christians at least, though three dead bodies, including the poor priest who lay in the house within, were all of the thousand who had yet been seen—and that the whole Jews' quarter was marching upon them. At which news it was considered advisable to retreat into the archbishop's house as quickly as possible, barricade the doors, and prepare for a siege—a work at which Philammon performed prodigies, tearing woodwork from the rooms, and stones from the parapets, before it struck some of the more sober-minded that it was as well to wait for some more decided demonstration of attack, before incurring so heavy a carpenter's bill of repairs.

At last the heavy tramp of footsteps was heard coming down the street, and every window was crowded in an instant with eager heads; while Peter rushed downstairs to heat the large coppers, having some experience in the defensive virtues of boiling water. The bright moon glittered on a long line of helmets and cuirasses. Thank Heaven! it was the soldiery.

'Are the Jews coming?' 'Is the city quiet?' 'Why did not you prevent this villainy?' 'A thousand citizens murdered while you have been snoring!'—and a volley of similar ejaculations, greeted the soldiers as they passed, and were answered by a cool—'To your perches, and sleep, you noisy chickens, or we'll set the coop on fire about your ears.'

A yell of defiance answered this polite speech, and the soldiery, who knew perfectly well that the unarmed ecclesiastics within were not to be trifled with, and had no ambition to die by coping-stones and hot water, went quietly on their way.

All danger was now past; and the cackling rose jubilant, louder than ever, and might have continued till daylight, had not a window in the courtyard been suddenly thrown open, and the awful voice of Cyril commanded silence.

'Every man sleep where he can. I shall want you at daybreak. The superiors of the parabolani are to come up to me with the two prisoners, and the men who took them.'

In a few minutes Philammon found himself, with some twenty others, in the great man's presence: he was sitting at his desk, writing, quietly, small notes on slips of paper.

'Here is the youth who helped me to pursue the murderer, and having outrun me, was attacked by the prisoners,' said Peter. 'My hands are clean from blood, I thank the Lord!'

'Three set on me with daggers,' said Philammon, apologetically, 'and I was forced to take this one's dagger away, and beat off the two others with it.'

Cyril smiled, and shook his head.

'Thou art a brave boy; but hast thou not read, "If a man smite thee on one cheek, turn to him the other"?'

'I could not run away, as Master Peter and the rest did.'

'So you ran away, eh? my worthy friend?'

'Is it not written,' asked Peter, in his blandest tone, "If they persecute you in one city, flee unto another"?'

Cyril smiled again. 'And why could not you run away, boy?'

Philammon blushed scarlet, but he dared not lie. 'There was a—a poor black woman, wounded and trodden down, and I dare not leave her, for she told me she was a Christian.'

'Right, my son, right. I shall remember this. What was her name?'

'I did not hear it.—Stay, I think she said Judith.'

'Ah! the wife of the porter who stands at the lecture-room door, which God confound! A devout woman, full of good works, and sorely ill-treated by her heathen husband. Peter, thou shalt go to her to-morrow with the physician, and see if she is in need of anything. Boy, thou hast done well. Cyril never forgets. Now bring up those Jews. Their Rabbis were with me two hours ago promising peace: and this is the way they have kept their promise. So be it. The wicked is snared in his own wickedness.'

The Jews were brought in, but kept a stubborn silence.

'Your holiness perceives,' said some one, 'that they have each of them rings of green palm-bark on their right hand.'

'A very dangerous sign! An evident conspiracy!' commented Peter.

'Ah! What does that mean, you rascals? Answer me, as you value your lives.'

'You have no business with us: we are Jews, and none of your people,' said one sulkily. 'None of my people? You have murdered my people! None of my people? Every soul in Alexandria is mine, if the kingdom of God means anything; and you shall find it out. I shall not argue with you, my good friends, anymore than I did with your Rabbis. Take these fellows away, Peter, and lock them up in the fuel-cellar, and see that they are guarded. If any man lets them go, his life shall be for the life of them.'

And the two worthies were led out.

'Now, my brothers, here are your orders. You will divide these notes among yourselves, and distribute them to trusty and godly Catholics in your districts. Wait one hour, till the city be quiet; and then start, and raise the church. I must have thirty thousand men by sunrise.'

'What for, your holiness?' asked a dozen voices.

'Read your notes. Whosoever will fight to-morrow under the banner of the Lord, shall have free plunder of the Jews' quarter, outrage and murder only forbidden. As I have said it, God do so to me, and more also, if there be a Jew left in Alexandria by to-morrow at noon. Go.'

And the staff of orderlies filed out, thanking Heaven that they had a leader so prompt and valiant, and spent the next hour over the hall fire, eating millet cakes, drinking bad beer, likening Cyril to Barak, Gideon, Samson, Jephtha, Judas Maccabeus, and all the worthies of the Old Testament, and then started on their pacific errand.

Philammon was about to follow them, when Cyril stopped him.

'Stay, my son; you are young and rash, and do not know the city. Lie down here and sleep in the anteroom. Three hours hence the sun rises, and we go forth against the enemies of the Lord.'

Philammon threw himself on the floor in a corner, and slumbered like a child, till he was awakened in the gray dawn by one of the parabolani.

'Up, boy! and see what we can do. Cyril goes down greater than Barak the son of Abinoam, not with ten, but with thirty thousand men at his feet!'

'Ay, my brothers!' said Cyril, as he passed proudly out in full pontificals, with a gorgeous retinue of priests and deacons—'the Catholic Church has her organisation, her unity, her common cause, her watchwords, such as the tyrants of the earth, in their weakness and their divisions, may envy and tremble at, but cannot imitate. Could Orestes raise, in three hours, thirty thousand men, who would die for him?'

'As we will for you!' shouted many voices.

'Say for the kingdom of God.' And he passed out.

And so ended Philammon's first day in Alexandria.

CHAPTER VI: THE NEW DIOGENES

About five o'clock the next morning, Raphael Aben-Ezra was lying in bed, alternately yawning over a manuscript of Philo Judaeus, pulling the ears of his huge British mastiff, watching the sparkle of the fountain in the court outside, wondering when that lazy boy would come to tell him that the bath was warmed, and meditating, half aloud....

'Alas! poor me! Here I am, back again—just at the point from which I started!.... How am I to get free from that heathen Siren? Plagues on her! I shall end by falling in love with her.... I don't know that I have not got a barb of the blind boy in me already. I felt absurdly glad the other day when that fool told me he dare not accept her modest offer. Ha! ha! A delicious joke it would have been to have seen Orestes bowing down to stocks and stones, and Hypatia installed in the ruins of the Serapeium, as High Priestess of the Abomination of Desolation!. And now.... Well I call all heaven and earth to witness, that I have fought valiantly. I have faced naughty little Eros like a man, rod in hand. What could a poor human being do more than try to marry her to some one else, in hopes of sickening himself of the whole matter? Well, every moth has its candle, and every man his destiny. But the daring of the little fool! What huge imaginations she has! She might be another Zenobia, now, with Orestes as Odenatus, and Raphael Aben-Ezra to play the part of Longinus, and receive Longinus's salary of axe or poison. She don't care for me; she would sacrifice me, or a thousand of me, the cold-blooded fanatical archangel that she is, to water with our blood the foundation of some new temple of cast rags and broken dolls.... Oh, Raphael Aben-Ezra, what a fool you are!.... You know you are going off as usual to her lecture, this very morning!'

At this crisis of his confessions the page entered, and announced, not the bath, but Miriam.

The old woman, who, in virtue of her profession, had the private entry of all fashionable chambers in Alexandria, came in hurriedly; and instead of seating herself as usual, for a gossip, remained standing, and motioned the boy out of the room.

'Well my sweet mother? Sit: Ah? I see! You rascal, you have brought in no wine for the lady. Don't you know her little ways yet?'

'Eos has got it at the door, of course,' answered the boy, with a saucy air of offended virtue.

'Out with you, imp of Satan!' cried Miriam. 'This is no time for winebibbing. Raphael Aben-Ezra, why are you lying here? Did you not receive a note last night?'

'A note? So I did, but I was too sleepy to read it. There it lies. Boy, bring it here....What's this? A scrap out of Jeremiah? "Arise, and flee for thy life, for evil is determined against the whole house of Israel!"—Does this come from the chief rabbi; I always took the venerable father for a sober man.... Eh, Miriam?'

'Fool! instead of laughing at the sacred words of the prophets, get up and obey them. I sent you the note.'

'Why can't I obey them in bed? Here I am, reading hard at the Cabbala, or Philo—who is stupider still—and what more would you have?'

The old woman, unable to restrain her impatience, literally ran at him, gnashing her teeth, and, before he was aware, dragged him out of bed upon the floor, where he stood meekly wondering what would come next.

'Many thanks, mother, for having saved me the one daily torture of life—getting out of bed by one's own exertion.'

'Raphael Aben-Ezra! are you so besotted with your philosophy and your heathenry, and your laziness, and your contempt for God and man, that you will see your nation given up for a prey, and your wealth plundered by heathen dogs? I tell you, Cyril has sworn that God shall do so to him, and more also, if there be a Jew left in Alexandria by to-morrow about this time.'

'So much the better for the Jews, then, if they are half as tired of this noisy Pandemonium as I am. But how can I help it? Am I Queen Esther, to go to Ahasuerus there in the prefect's palace, and get him to hold out the golden sceptre to me?'

'Fool! if you had read that note last night, you might have gone and saved us, and your name would have been handed down for ever from generation to generation as a second Mordecai.'

'My dear mother, Ahasuerus would have been either fast asleep, or far too drunk to listen to me. Why did you not go yourself?'

'Do you suppose that I would not have gone if I could? Do you fancy me a sluggard like yourself? At the risk of my life I have got hither in time, if there be time to save you.'

'Well: shall I dress? What can be done now?'

'Nothing! The streets are blockaded by Cyril's mob—There! do you hear the shouts and screams? They are attacking the farther part of the quarter already.'

'What! are they murdering them?' asked Raphael, throwing on his pelisse. 'Because, if it has really come to a practical joke of that kind, I shall have the greatest pleasure in employing a counter-irritant. Here, boy! My sword and dagger! Quick!'

'No, the hypocrites! No blood is to be shed, they say, if we make no resistance, and let them pillage. Cyril and his monks are there, to prevent outrage, and so forth.... The Angel of the Lord scatter them!'

The conversation was interrupted by the rushing in of the whole household, in an agony of terror; and Raphael, at last thoroughly roused, went to a window which looked into the street. The thoroughfare was full of scolding women and screaming children; while men, old and young, looked on at the plunder of their property with true Jewish doggedness, too prudent to resist, but too manful to complain—while furniture came flying out of every window, and from door after door poured a stream of rascality, carrying off money, jewels, silks, and all the treasures which Jewish usury had accumulated during many a generation. But unmoved amid the roaring sea of plunderers and plundered, stood, scattered up and down, Cyril's spiritual police, enforcing, by a word, an obedience which the Roman soldiers could only have compelled by hard blows of the spear-butt. There was to be no outrage, and no outrage there was: and more than once some man in priestly robes hurried through the crowd, leading by the hand, tenderly enough, a lost child in search of its parents.

Raphael stood watching silently, while Miriam, who had followed him upstairs, paced the room in an ecstasy of rage, calling vainly to him to speak or act.

'Let me alone, mother,' he said, at last. 'It will be full ten minutes more before they pay me a visit, and in the meantime what can one do better than watch the progress of this, the little Exodus?'

'Not like that first one! Then we went forth with cymbals and songs to the Red Sea triumph! Then we borrowed, every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment.'

'And now we pay them back again;.. it is but fair, after all. We ought to have listened to Jeremiah a thousand years ago, and never gone back again, like fools, into a country to which we were so deeply in debt.'

'Accursed land!' cried Miriam. 'In an evil hour our forefathers disobeyed the prophet; and now we reap the harvest of our sins!—Our sons have forgotten the faith of their forefathers for the philosophy of the Gentiles, and fill their chambers' (with a contemptuous look round) 'with heathen imagery; and our daughters are—Look there!'

As she spoke, a beautiful girl rushed shrieking out of an adjoining house, followed by some half-drunk ruffian, who was clutching at the gold chains and trinkets with which she was profusely bedecked, after the fashion of Jewish women. The rascal had just seized with one hand her streaming black tresses, and with the other a heavy collar of gold, which was wound round her throat, when a priest, stepping up, laid a quiet hand upon his shoulder. The fellow, too maddened to obey, turned, and struck back the restraining arm…and in an instant was felled to the earth by a young monk..

'Touchest thou the Lord's anointed, sacrilegious wretch?' cried the man of the desert, as the fellow dropped on the pavement, with his booty in his hand.

The monk tore the gold necklace from his grasp, looked at it for a moment with childish wonder, as a savage might at some incomprehensible product of civilised industry, and then, spitting on it in contempt, dashed it on the ground, and trampled it into the mud.

'Follow the golden wedge of Achan, and the silver of Iscariot, thou root of all evil!' And he rushed on, yelling, 'Down with the circumcision! Down with the blasphemers!'—while the poor girl vanished among the crowd.

Raphael watched him with a quaint thoughtful smile, while Miriam shrieked aloud at the destruction of the precious trumpery.

'The monk is right, mother. If those Christians go on upon that method, they must beat us. It has been our ruin from the first, our fancy for loading ourselves with the thick clay.'

'What will you do?' cried Miriam, clutching him by the arm.

'What will you do?'

'I am safe. I have a boat waiting for me on the canal at the garden gate, and in Alexandria I stay; no Christian hound shall make old Miriam move afoot against her will. My jewels are all buried —my girls are sold; save what you can, and come with me!'

'My sweet mother, why so peculiarly solicitous about my welfare, above that of all the sons of Judah?'

'Because—because—No, I'll tell you that another time. But I loved your mother, and she loved me. Come!'

Raphael relapsed into silence for a few minutes, and watched the tumult below.

'How those Christian priests keep their men in order! There is no use resisting destiny. They are the strong men of the time, after all, and the little Exodus must needs have its course. Miriam, daughter of Jonathan—'

'I am no man's daughter! I have neither father nor mother, husband nor—Call me mother again!'

'Whatsoever I am to call you, there are jewels enough in that closet to buy half Alexandria. Take them. I am going.'

'With me!'

'Out into the wide world, my dear lady. I am bored with riches. That young savage of a monk understood them better than we Jews do. I shall just make a virtue of necessity, and turn beggar.'

'Beggar?'

'Why not? Don't argue. These scoundrels will make me one, whether I like or not; so forth I go. There will be few leavetakings. This brute of a dog is the only friend I have on earth; and I love her, because she has the true old, dogged, spiteful, cunning, obstinate Maccabee spirit in her—of which if we had a spark left in us just now, there would be no little Exodus; eh, Bran, my beauty?'

'You can escape with me to the prefect's, and save the mass of your wealth.'

'Exactly what I don't want to do. I hate that prefect as I hate a dead camel, or the vulture who eats him. And to tell the truth, I am growing a great deal too fond of that heathen woman there—'

'What?' shrieked the old woman—'Hypatia?'

'If you choose. At all events, the easiest way to cut the knot is to expatriate. I shall beg my passage on board the first ship to Cyrene, and go and study life in Italy with Heraclian's expedition. Quick—take the jewels, and breed fresh troubles for yourself with them. I am going. My liberators are battering the outer door already.'

Miriam greedily tore out of the closet diamonds and pearls, rubies and emeralds, and concealed them among her ample robes—'Go! go! Escape from her! I will hide your jewels!'

'Ay, hide them, as mother earth does all things, in that all-embracing bosom. You will have doubled them before we meet again, no doubt. Farewell, mother!'

'But not for ever, Raphael! not for ever! Promise me, in the name of the four archangels, that if you are in trouble or danger, you will write to me, at the house of Eudaimon.'

'The little porter philosopher, who hangs about Hypatia's lecture-room?'

'The same, the same. He will give me your letter, and I swear to you, I will cross the mountains of Kaf, to deliver you!—I will pay you all back. By Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob I swear! May my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not account to you for the last penny!'

'Don't commit yourself to rash promises, my dear lady. If I am bored with poverty, I can but borrow a few gold pieces of a rabbi, and turn pedler. I really do not trust you to pay me back, so I shall not be disappointed if you do not. Why should I?'

'Because—because—O God! No—never mind! You shall have all back. Spirit of Elias! where is the black agate? Why is it not among these?—The broken half of the black agate talisman!'

Raphael turned pale. 'How did you know that I have a black agate?'

'How did I? How did I not?' cried she, clutching him by the arm. 'Where is it? All depends on that! Fool!' she went on, throwing him off from her at arm's length, as a sudden suspicion stung her —'you have not given it to the heathen woman?'

'By the soul of my fathers, then, you mysterious old witch, who seem to know everything, that is exactly what I have done.'

Miriam clapped her hands together wildly. 'Lost! lost! lost! Not I will have it, if I tear it out of her heart! I will be avenged of her—the strange woman who flatters with her words, to whom the simple go in, and know not that the dead are there, and that her guests are in the depths of hell! God do so to me, and more also, if she and her sorceries be on earth a twelvemonth hence!'

'Silence, Jezebel! Heathen or none, she is as pure as the sunlight! I only gave it her because she fancied the talisman upon it.'

'To enchant you with it, to your ruin!'

'Brute of a slave-dealer! you fancy every one as base as the poor wretches whom you buy and sell to shame, that you may make them as much the children of hell, if that be possible, as yourself!'

Miriam looked at him, her large black eyes widening and kindling. For an instant she felt for her poniard—and then burst into an agony of tears, hid her face in her withered hands, and rushed from the room, as a crash and shout below announced the bursting of the door.

'There she goes with my jewels. And here come my guests, with the young monk at their head. —One rising when the other sets. A worthy pair of Dioscuri! Come, Bran!…Boys! Slaves! Where are you? Steal every one what he can lay his hands on, and run for your lives through the back gate.'

The slaves had obeyed him already. He walked smiling downstairs through utter solitude, and in the front passage met face to face the mob of monks, costermongers and dock-workers, fishwives and beggars, who were thronging up the narrow entry, and bursting into the doors right and left; and at their head, alas! the young monk who had just trampled the necklace into the mud…no other, in fact, than Philammon.

'Welcome, my worthy guests! Enter, I beseech you, and fulfil, in your own peculiar way, the precepts which bid you not be over anxious for the good things of this life..For eating and drinking, my kitchen and cellar are at your service. For clothing, if any illustrious personage will do me the honour to change his holy rags with me, here are an Indian shawl-pelisse and a pair of silk trousers at his service. Perhaps you will accommodate me, my handsome young captain, choragus of this new school of the prophets?'

Philammon, who was the person addressed, tried to push by him contemptuously.

'Allow me, sir. I lead the way. This dagger is poisoned,-a scratch and you are dead. This dog is of the true British breed; if she seizes you, red-hot iron will not loose her, till she hears the bone crack. If any one will change clothes with me, all I have is at your service. If not, the first that stirs is a dead man.'

There was no mistaking the quiet, high-bred determination of the speaker. Had he raged and blustered, Philammon could have met him on his own ground: but there was an easy self-possessed disdain about him, which utterly abashed the young monk, and abashed, too, the whole crowd of rascals at his heels.

'I'll change clothes with you, you Jewish dog!' roared a dirty fellow out of the mob.

'I am your eternal debtor. Let us step into this side room. Walk upstairs, my friends. Take care there, sir!—That porcelain, whole, is worth three thousand gold pieces: broken, it is not worth three pence. I leave it to your good sense to treat it accordingly. Now then, my friend!' And in the midst of the raging vortex of plunderers, who were snatching up everything which they could carry away, and breaking everything which they could not, lie quietly divested himself of his finery, and put on the ragged cotton tunic, and battered straw hat, which the fellow handed over to him.

Philammon, who had had from the first no mind to plunder, stood watching Raphael with dumb wonder; and a shudder of regret, he knew not why, passed through him, as he Saw the mob tearing down pictures, and dashing statues to the ground. Heathen they were, doubtless; but still, the Nymphs and Venuses looked too lovely to be so brutally destroyed… There was something almost humanly pitiful in their poor broken arms and legs, as they lay about upon the pavement.... He laughed at himself for the notion; but he could not laugh it away.

Raphael seemed to think that he ought not to laugh it away; for he pointed to the fragments, and with a quaint look at the young monk—

'Our nurses used to tell us, "'If you can't make it, You ought not to break it.'"

'I had no nurse,' said Philammon.

'Ah!—that accounts—for this and other things. Well,' he went on, with the most provoking good-nature, 'you are in a fair road, my handsome youth; I wish you joy of your fellow-workmen, and of your apprenticeship in the noble art of monkery. Riot and pillage, shrieking women and houseless children in your twentieth summer, are the sure path to a Saint-ship, such as Paul of Tarsus, who, with all his eccentricities, was a gentleman, certainly never contemplated. I have heard of Phoebus Apollo under many disguises, but this is the first time I ever saw him in the wolf's hide.'

'Or in the lion's,' said Philammon, trying in his shame to make a fine speech.

'Like the Ass in the Fable. Farewell! Stand out of the way, friends! 'Ware teeth and poison!'

And he disappeared among the crowd, who made way respectfully enough for his dagger and his brindled companion.

CHAPTER VII: THOSE BY WHOM OFFENCES COME

Philammon's heart smote him all that day, whenever he thought of his morning's work. Till then all Christians, monks above all, had been infallible in his eyes: all Jews and heathens insane and accursed. Moreover, meekness under insult, fortitude in calamity, the contempt of worldly comfort, the worship of poverty as a noble estate, were virtues which the Church Catholic boasted as her peculiar heritage: on which side had the balance of those qualities inclined that morning? The figure of Raphael, stalking out ragged and penniless into the wide world, haunted him, with its quiet self-assured smile. And there haunted him, too, another peculiarity in the man, which he had never before remarked in any one but Arsenius—that ease and grace, that courtesy and self-restraint, which made Raphael's rebukes rankle all the more keenly, because he felt that the rebuker was in some mysterious way superior to him, and saw through him, and could have won him Over, Or crushed him in argument, or in intrigue—or in anything, perhaps, except mere brute force. Strange—that Raphael, of all men, should in those few moments have reminded him so much of Arsenius; and that the very same qualities which gave a peculiar charm to the latter should give a peculiar unloveliness to the former, and yet be, without a doubt, the same. What was it? Was it rank which gave it Arsenius had been a great man, he knew—the companion of kings. And Raphael seemed rich. He had heard the mob crying out against the prefect for favouring him. Was it then familiarity with the great ones of the world which produced this manner and tone? It was a real strength, whether in Arsenius or in Raphael. He felt humbled before it—envied it. If it made Arsenius a more complete and more captivating person, why should it not do the same for him? Why should not he, too, have his share of it?

Bringing with it such thoughts as these, the time ran on till noon, and the mid-day meal, and the afternoon's work, to which Philammon looked forward joyfully, as a refuge from his own thoughts.

He was sitting on his sheepskin upon a step, basking, like a true son of the desert, in a blaze of fiery sunshine, which made the black stone-work too hot to touch with the bare hand, watching the swallows, as they threaded the columns of the Serapeium, and thinking how often he had delighted in their air-dance, as they turned and hawked up and down the dear old glen at Scetis. A crowd of citizens with causes, appeals, and petitions, were passing in and out from the patriarch's audience-room. Peter and the archdeacon were waiting in the shade close by for the gathering of the parabolani, and talking over the morning's work in an earnest whisper, in which the names of Hypatia and Orestes were now and then audible.

An old priest came up, and bowing reverently enough to the archdeacon, requested the help of one of the parabolani. He had a sailor's family, all fever-stricken, who must be removed to the hospital at once.

The archdeacon looked at him, answered an off-hand 'Very well,' and went on with his talk.

The priest, bowing lower than before, re-presented the immediate necessity for help.

'It is very odd,' said Peter to the swallows in the Serapeium, 'that some people cannot obtain influence enough in their own parishes to get the simplest good works performed without tormenting his holiness the patriarch.'

The old priest mumbled some sort of excuse, and the archdeacon, without deigning a second look at him, said—'Find him a man, brother Peter. Anybody will do. What is that boy—Philammon—doing there? Let him go with Master Hieracas.'

Peter seemed not to receive the proposition favourably, and whispered something to the archdeacon....

'No. I can spare none of the rest. Importunate persons must take their chance of being well served. Come—here are our brethren; we will all go together.'

'The farther together the better for the boy's sake,' grumbled Peter, loud enough for Philammon—perhaps for the old priest—to overhear him.

So Philammon went out with them, and as he went questioned his companions meekly enough as to who Raphael was.

'A friend of Hypatia!'—that name, too, haunted him; and he began, as stealthily and indirectly as he could, to obtain information about her. There was no need for his caution; for the very mention of her name roused the whole party into a fury of execration.

'May God confound her, siren, enchantress, dealer in spells and sorceress! She is the strange woman of whom Solomon prophesied.'

'It is my opinion,' said another, 'that she is the forerunner of Antichrist.'

'Perhaps the virgin of whom it is prophesied that he will be born,' suggested another.

'Not that, I'll warrant her,' said Peter, with a savage sneer.

'And is Raphael Aben-Ezra her pupil in philosophy?' asked Philammon.

'Her pupil in whatsoever she can find where-with to delude men's souls,' said the old priest.

'The reality of philosophy has died long ago, but the great ones find it still worth their while to worship its shadow.'

'Some of them worship more than a shadow, when they haunt her house,' said Peter. 'Do you think Orestes goes thither only for philosophy?'

'We must not judge harsh judgments,' said the old priest; 'Synesius of Cyrene is a holy man, and yet he loves Hypatia well.'

'He a holy man?—and keeps a wife! One who had the insolence to tell the blessed Theophilus himself that he would not be made bishop unless he were allowed to remain with her; and despised the gift of the Holy Ghost in comparison of the carnal joys of wedlock, not knowing the Scriptures, which saith that those who are in the flesh cannot please God! Well said Siricius of Rome of such men—"Can the Holy Spirit of God dwell in other than holy bodies?" No wonder that such a one as Synesius grovels at the feet of Orestes' mistress!'

'Then she is profligate?' asked Philammon.

'She must be. Has a heathen faith and grace? And without faith and grace, are not all our righteousnesses as filthy rags? What says St. Paul?—That God has given them over to a reprobate mind, full of all injustice, uncleanness, covetousness, maliciousness, you know the catalogue—why do you ask me?'

'Alas! and is she this?'

'Alas! And why alas? How would the Gospel be glorified if heathens were holier than Christians? It ought to be so, therefore it is so. If she seems to have virtues, they, being done without the grace of Christ, are only bedizened vices, cunning shams, the devil transformed into an angel of light. And as for chastity, the flower and crown of all virtues—whosoever says that she, being yet a heathen, has that, blasphemes the Holy Spirit, whose peculiar and highest gift it is, and is anathema maranatha for ever! Amen!' And Peter, devoutly crossing himself, turned angrily and contemptuously away from his young companion.

Philammon was quite shrewd enough to see that assertion was not identical with proof. But Peter's argument of 'it ought to be, therefore it is,' is one which saves a great deal of trouble…and no doubt he had very good sources of information. So Philammon walked on, sad, he knew not why, at the new notion which he had formed of Hypatia, as a sort of awful sorceress—Messalina, whose den was foul with magic rites and ruined souls of men. And yet if that was all she had to teach, whence had her pupil Raphael learned that fortitude of his? If philosophy had, as they said, utterly died out, then what was Raphael?

Just then, Peter and the rest turned up a side street, and Philammon and Hieracas were left to go on their joint errand together. They paced on for some way in silence, up one street and down another, till Philammon, for want of anything better to say, asked where they were going.

'Where I choose, at all events. No, young man! If I, a priest, am to be insulted by archdeacons and readers, I won't be insulted by you.'

'I assure you I meant no harm.'

'Of course not; you all learn the same trick, and the young ones catch it of the old ones fast enough. Words smoother than butter, yet very swords.'

'You do not mean to complain of the archdeacon and his companions?' said Philammon, who of course was boiling over with pugnacious respect for the body to which he belonged.

No answer.

'Why, sir, are they not among the most holy and devoted of men?'

'Ah—yes,' said his companion, in a tone which sounded very like 'Ah—no.'

'You do not think so?' asked Philammon bluntly.

'You are young, you are young. Wait a while till you have seen as much as I have. A degenerate age this, my son; not like the good old times, when men dare suffer and die for the faith. We are too prosperous nowadays; and fine ladies walk about with Magdalens embroidered on their silks, and gospels hanging round their necks. When I was young they died for that with which they now bedizen themselves.'

'But I was speaking of the parabolani.'

'Ah, there are a great many among them who have not much business where they are. Don't say I said so. But many a rich man puts his name on the list of the guild just to get his exemption from taxes, and leaves the work to poor men like you. Rotten, rotten! my son, and you will find it out. The preachers, now—people used to say—I know Abbot Isidore did—that I had as good a gift for expounding as any man in Pelusium; but since I came here, eleven years since, if you will believe it, I have never been asked to preach in my own parish church.'

'You surely jest!'

'True, as I am a christened man. I know why—I know why: they are afraid of Isidore's men here.... Perhaps they may have caught the holy man's trick of plain speaking—and ears are dainty in Alexandria. And there are some in these parts, too, that have never forgiven him the part he took about those three villains, Marc, Zosimus, and Martinian, and a certain letter that came of it; or another letter either, which we know of, about taking alms for the church from the gains of robbers and usurers. "Cyril never forgets." So he says to every one who does him a good turn.... And so he does to every one who he fancies has done him a bad one. So here am I slaving away, a subordinate priest, while such fellows as Peter the Reader look down on me as their slave. But it's always so. There never was a bishop yet, except the blessed Augustine—would to Heaven I had taken my abbot's advice, and gone to him at Hippo!—who had not his flatterers and his tale-bearers, and generally the archdeacon at the head of them, ready to step into the bishop's place when he dies, over the heads of hard-working parish priests. But that is the way of the world. The sleekest and the oiliest, and the noisiest; the man who can bring in most money to the charities, never mind whence or how; the man who will take most of the bishop's work off his hands, and agree with him in everything he wants, and save him, by spying and eavesdropping, the trouble of using his own eyes; that is the man to succeed in Alexandria, or Constantinople, or Rome itself. Look now; there are but seven deacons to this great city, and all its priests; and they and the archdeacon are the masters of it and us. They and that Peter manage Cyril's work for him, and when Cyril makes the archdeacon a bishop, he will make Peter archdeacon....They have their reward, they have their reward; and so has Cyril, for that matter.'

'How?'

'Why, don't say I said it. But what do I care? I have nothing to lose, I'm sure. But they do say that there are two ways of promotion in Alexandria: one by deserving it, the other by paying for it. That's all.'

'Impossible!'

'Oh, of course, quite impossible. But all I know is just this, that when that fellow Martinian got back again into Pelusium, after being turned out by the late bishop for a rogue and hypocrite as he was, and got the ear of this present bishop, and was appointed his steward, and ordained priest

—I'd as soon have ordained that street-dog—and plundered him and brought him to disgrace—for I don't believe this bishop is a bad man, but those who use rogues must expect to be called rogues—and ground the poor to the earth, and tyrannised over the whole city so that no man's property, or reputation, scarcely their lives, were safe; and after all, had the impudence, when he was called on for his accounts, to bring the church in as owing him money; I just know this, that he added to all his other shamelessness this, that he offered the patriarch a large sum of money to buy a bishopric of him.... And what do you think the patriarch answered?'

'Excommunicated the sacrilegious wretch, of course!'

'Sent him a letter to say that if he dared to do such a thing again he should really be forced to expose him! So the fellow, taking courage, brought his money himself the next time; and all the world says that Cyril would have made him a bishop after all, if Abbot Isidore had not written to remonstrate.'

'He could not have known the man's character,' said poor Philammon, hunting for an excuse.

'The whole Delta was ringing with it. Isidore had written to him again and again.'

'Surely then his wish was to prevent scandal, and preserve the unity of the church in the eyes of the heathen.'

The old man laughed bitterly.

'Ah, the old story—of preventing scandals by retaining them, and fancying that sin is a less evil than a little noise; as if the worst of all scandals was not the being discovered in hushing up a scandal. And as for unity, if you want that, you must go back to the good old times of Dioclesian and Decius.'

'The persecutors?'

'Ay, boy—to the times of persecution, when Christians died like brothers, because they lived like brothers. You will see very little of that now, except in some little remote county bishopric, which no one ever hears of from year's end to year's end. But in the cities it is all one great fight for place and power. Every one is jealous of his neighbour. The priests are jealous of the deacons, and good cause they have. The county bishops are jealous of the metropolitan, and he is jealous of the North African bishops, and quite right he is. What business have they to set up for themselves, as if they were infallible? It's a schism, I say—a complete schism. They are just as bad as their own Donatists. Did not the Council of Nice settle that the Metropolitan of Alexandria should have authority over Libya and Pentapolis, according to the ancient custom?'

'Of course he ought,' said Philammon, jealous for the honour of his own patriarchate.

'And the patriarchs of Rome and Constantinople are jealous of our patriarch.'

'Of Cyril?'

'Of course, because he won't be at their beck and nod, and let them be lords and masters of Africa.'

'But surely these things can be settled by councils?'

'Councils? Wait till you have been at one. The blessed Abbot Isidore used to say, that if he ever was a bishop—which he never will be—he is far too honest for that—he would never go near one of them; for he never had seen one which did not call out every evil passion in men's hearts, and leave the question more confounded with words than they found it, even if the whole matter was not settled beforehand by some chamberlain, or eunuch, or cook sent from court, as if he were an anointed vessel of the Spirit, to settle the dogmas of the Holy Catholic Church.'

'Cook?'

'Why, Valens sent his chief cook to stop Basil of Caesarea from opposing the Court doctrine.... I tell you, the great battle in these cases is to get votes from courts, or to get to court yourself. When I was young, the Council of Antioch had to make a law to keep bishops from running off to Constantinople to intrigue, under pretence of pleading the cause of the orphan and widow. But what's the use of that, when every noisy and ambitious man shifts and shifts, from one see to another, till

he settles himself close to Rome or Byzantium, and gets the emperor's ear, and plays into the hands of his courtiers?'

'Is it not written, "Speak not evil of dignities"? 'said Philammon, in his most sanctimonious tone.

'Well, what of that? I don't speak evil of dignities, when I complain of the men who fill them badly, do I?'

'I never heard that interpretation of the text before.'

'Very likely not. That's no reason why it should not be true and orthodox. You will soon hear a good many more things, which are true enough—though whether they are orthodox or not, the court cooks must settle. Of course, I am a disappointed, irreverent old grumbler. Of course, and of course, too, young men must needs buy their own experience, instead of taking old folks' at a gift. There—use your own eyes, and judge for yourself. There you may see what sort of saints are bred by this plan of managing the Catholic Church. There comes one of them. Now! I say no more!'

As he spoke, two tall negroes came up to them, and set down before the steps of a large church which they were passing an object new to Philammon—a sedan-chair, the poles of which were inlaid with ivory and silver, and the upper part enclosed in rose-coloured silk curtains.

'What is inside that cage?' asked he of the old priest, as the negroes stood wiping the perspiration from their foreheads, and a smart slave-girl stepped forward, with a parasol and slippers in her hand, and reverently lifted the lower edge of the curtain.

'A saint, I tell you!'

An embroidered shoe, with a large gold cross on the instep, was put forth delicately from beneath the curtain, and the kneeling maid put on the slipper over it.

'There!' whispered the old grumbler. 'Not enough, you see, to use Christian men as beasts of burden—Abbot Isidore used to say—ay, and told Iron, the pleader, to his face, that he could not conceive how a man who loved Christ, and knew the grace which has made all men free, could keep a slave.'

'Nor can I,' said Philammon.

'But we think otherwise, you see, in Alexandria here. We can't even walk up the steps of God's temple without an additional protection to our delicate feet.'

'I had thought it was written, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place where thou standest is holy ground."'

'Ah! there are a good many more things written which we do not find it convenient to recollect. —Look! There is one of the pillars of the church-the richest and most pious lady in Alexandria.'

And forth stepped a figure, at which Philammon's eyes opened wider than they had done even at the sight of Pelagia. Whatever thoughts the rich and careless grace of her attire might have raised in his mind, it had certainly not given his innate Greek good taste the inclination to laugh and weep at once, which he felt at this specimen of the tasteless fashion of an artificial and decaying civilisation. Her gown was stuffed out behind in a fashion which provoked from the dirty boys who lay about the steps, gambling for pistachios on their fingers, the same comments with which St. Clement had upbraided from the pulpit the Alexandrian ladies of his day. The said gown of white silk was bedizened, from waist to ankle, with certain mysterious red and green figures at least a foot long, which Philammon gradually discovered to be a representation, in the very lowest and ugliest style of fallen art, of Dives and Lazarus; while down her back hung, upon a bright blue shawl, edged with embroidered crosses, Job sitting, potsherd in hand, surrounded by his three friends—a memorial, the old priest whispered, of a pilgrimage which she had taken a year or two before, to Arabia, to see and kiss the identical dunghill on which the patriarch had sat.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.