GEORG EBERS

A THORNY PATH. COMPLETE

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A Thorny Path – Complete:

Содержание

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CHAPTER I

The green screen slowly rose, covering the lower portion of the broad studio window where Heron, the gem-cutter, was at work. It was Melissa, the artist's daughter, who had pulled it up, with bended knees and outstretched arms, panting for breath.

"That is enough!" cried her father's impatient voice. He glanced up at the flood of light which the blinding sun of Alexandria was pouring into the room, as it did every autumn afternoon; but as soon as the shadow fell on his work-table the old man's busy fingers were at work again, and he heeded his daughter no more.

An hour later Melissa again, and without any bidding, pulled up the screen as before, but it was so much too heavy for her that the effort brought the blood into her calm, fair face, as the deep, rough "That is enough" was again heard from the work-table.

Then silence reigned once more. Only the artist's low whistling as he worked, or the patter and pipe of the birds in their cages by the window, broke the stillness of the spacious room, till the voice and step of a man were presently heard in the anteroom.

Heron laid by his graver and Melissa her gold embroidery,

and the eyes of father and daughter met for the first time for some hours. The very birds seemed excited, and a starling, which had sat moping since the screen had shut the sun out, now cried out, "Olympias!" Melissa rose, and after a swift glance round the room she went to the door, come who might.

Ay, even if the brother she was expecting should bring a companion, or a patron of art who desired her father's work, the room need not fear a critical eye; and she was so well assured of the faultless neatness of her own person, that she only passed a hand over her brown hair, and with an involuntary movement pulled her simple white robe more tightly through her girdle.

Heron's studio was as clean and as simple as his daughter's attire, though it seemed larger than enough for the purpose it served, for only a very small part of it was occupied by the artist, who sat as if in exile behind the work-table on which his belongings were laid out: a set of small instruments in a case, a tray filled with shells and bits of onyx and other agates, a yellow ball of Cyrenian modeling-wax, pumice-stone, bottles, boxes, and bowls.

Melissa had no sooner crossed the threshold, than the sculptor drew up his broad shoulders and brawny person, and raised his hand to fling away the slender stylus he had been using; however, he thought better of it, and laid it carefully aside with the other tools. But this act of self-control must have cost the hot-headed, powerful man a great effort; for he shot a fierce look at the instrument which had had so narrow an escape, and gave it a push

of vexation with the back of his hand.

Then he turned towards the door, his sunburnt face looking surly enough, in its frame of tangled gray hair and beard; and, as he waited for the visitor whom Melissa was greeting outside, he tossed back his big head, and threw out his broad, deep chest, as though preparing to wrestle.

Melissa presently returned, and the youth whose hand she still held was, as might be seen in every feature, none other than the sculptor's son. Both were dark-eyed, with noble and splendid heads, and in stature perfectly equal; but while the son's countenance beamed with hearty enjoyment, and seemed by its peculiar attractiveness to be made—and to be accustomed—to charm men and women alike, his father's face was expressive of disgust and misanthropy. It seemed, indeed, as though the newcomer had roused his ire, for Heron answered his son's cheerful greeting with no word but a reproachful "At last!" and paid no heed to the hand the youth held out to him.

Alexander was no doubt inured to such a reception; he did not disturb himself about the old man's ill-humor, but slapped him on the shoulder with rough geniality, went up to the work-table with easy composure, took up the vice which held the nearly finished gem, and, after holding it to the light and examining it carefully, exclaimed: "Well done, father! You have done nothing better than that for a long time."

"Poor stuff!" said his father. But his son laughed.

"If you will have it so. But I will give one of my eyes to see

the man in Alexandria who can do the like!"

At this the old man broke out, and shaking his fist he cried: "Because the man who can find anything worth doing, takes good care not to waste his time here, making divine art a mere mockery by such trifling with toys! By Sirius! I should like to fling all those pebbles into the fire, the onyx and shells and jasper and what not, and smash all those wretched tools with these fists, which were certainly made for other work than this."

The youth laid an arm round his father's stalwart neck, and gayly interrupted his wrath. "Oh yes, Father Heron, Philip and I have felt often enough that they know how to hit hard."

"Not nearly often enough," growled the artist, and the young man went on:

"That I grant, though every blow from you was equal to a dozen from the hand of any other father in Alexandria. But that those mighty fists on human arms should have evoked the bewitching smile on the sweet lips of this Psyche, if it is not a miracle of art, is—"

"The degradation of art," the old man put in; but Alexander hastily added:

"The victory of the exquisite over the coarse."

"A victory!" exclaimed Heron, with a scornful flourish of his hand. "I know, boy, why you are trying to garland the oppressive yoke with flowers of flattery. So long as your surly old father sits over the vice, he only whistles a song and spares you his complaints. And then, there is the money his work brings in!"

He laughed bitterly, and as Melissa looked anxiously up at him, her brother exclaimed:

"If I did not know you well, master, and if it would not be too great a pity, I would throw that lovely Psyche to the ostrich in Scopas's court-yard; for, by Herakles! he would swallow your gem more easily than we can swallow such cruel taunts. We do indeed bless the Muses that work brings you some surcease of gloomy thoughts. But for the rest—I hate to speak the word gold. We want it no more than you, who, when the coffer is full, bury it or hide it with the rest. Apollodorus forced a whole talent of the yellow curse upon me for painting his men's room. The sailor's cap, into which I tossed it with the rest, will burst when Seleukus pays me for the portrait of his daughter; and if a thief robs you, and me too, we need not fret over it. My brush and your stylus will earn us more in no time. And what are our needs? We do not bet on quail-fights; we do not run races; I always had a loathing for purchased love; we do not want to wear a heap of garments bought merely because they take our fancy—indeed, I am too hot as it is under this scorching sun. The house is your own. The rent paid by Glaukias, for the work-room and garden you inherited from your father, pays for half at least of what we and the birds and the slaves eat. As for Philip, he lives on air and philosophy; and, besides, he is fed out of the great breadbasket of the Museum."

At this point the starling interrupted the youth's vehement speech with the appropriate cry, "My strength! my strength!"

The brother and sister looked at each other, and Alexander went on with genuine enthusiasm:

"But it is not in you to believe us capable of such meanness. Dedicate your next finished work to Isis or Serapis. Let your masterpiece grace the goddess's head-gear, or the god's robe. We shall be quite content, and perhaps the immortals may restore your joy in life as a reward."

The bird repeated its lamentable cry, "My strength!" and the youth proceeded with increased vehemence:

"It would really be better that you should throw your vice and your graver and your burnisher, and all that heap of dainty tools, into the sea, and carve an Atlas such as we have heard you talk about ever since we could first speak Greek. Come, set to work on a colossus! You have but to speak the word, and the finest clay shall be ready on your modeling-table by to-morrow, either here or in Glaukias's work-room, which is indeed your own. I know where the best is to be found, and can bring it to you in any quantity. Scopas will lend me his wagon. I can see it now, and you valiantly struggling with it till your mighty arms ache. You will not whistle and hum over that, but sing out with all your might, as you used when my mother was alive, when you and your apprentices joined Dionysus's drunken rout. Then your brow will grow smooth again; and if the model is a success, and you want to buy marble, or pay the founder, then out with your gold, out of the coffer and its hiding-place! Then you can make use of all your strength, and your dream of producing an Atlas such as the world

has not seen—your beautiful dream-will become a reality!"

Heron had listened eagerly to his son's rhapsody, but he now cast a timid glance at the table where the wax and tools lay, pushed the rough hair from his brow, and broke in with a bitter laugh: "My dream, do you say—my dream? As if I did not know too well that I am no longer the man to create an Atlas! As if I did not feel, without your words, that my strength for it is a thing of the past!"

"Nay, father," exclaimed the painter. "Is it right to cast away the sword before the battle? And even if you did not succeed—"

"You would be all the better pleased," the sculptor put in. "What surer way could there be to teach the old simpleton, once for all, that the time when he could do great work is over and gone?"

"That is unjust, father; that is unworthy of you," the young man interrupted in great excitement; but his father went on, raising his voice; "Silence, boy! One thing at any rate is left to me, as you know—my keen eyes; and they did not fail me when you two looked at each other as the starling cried, 'My strength!' Ay, the bird is in the right when he bewails what was once so great and is now a mere laughing-stock. But you—you ought to reverence the man to whom you owe your existence and all you know; you allow yourself to shrug your shoulders over your own father's humbler art, since your first pictures were fairly successful.—How puffed up he is, since, by my devoted care, he has been a painter! How he looks down on the poor wretch who, by the

pinch of necessity, has come down from being a sculptor of the highest promise to being a mere gem-cutter! In the depths of your soul—and I know it—you regard my laborious art as half a handicraft. Well, perhaps it deserves no better name; but that you—both of you—should make common cause with a bird, and mock the sacred fire which still burns in an old man, and moves him to serve true and noble art and to mold something great—an Atlas such as the world has never seen on a heroic scale; that—"

He covered his face with his hands and sobbed aloud. And the strong man's passionate grief cut his children to the heart, though, since their mother's death, their father's rage and discontent had many a time ere now broken down into childish lamentation.

To-day no doubt the old man was in worse spirits than usual, for it was the day of the Nekysia—the feast of the dead kept every autumn; and he had that morning visited his wife's grave, accompanied by his daughter, and had anointed the tombstone and decked it with flowers. The young people tried to comfort him; and when at last he was more composed and had dried his tears, he said, in so melancholy and subdued a tone that the angry blusterer was scarcely recognizable: "There—leave me alone; it will soon be over. I will finish this gem to-morrow, and then I must do the Serapis I promised Theophilus, the high-priest. Nothing can come of the Atlas. Perhaps you meant it in all sincerity, Alexander; but since your mother left me, children, since then—my arms are no weaker than they were; but in here—what it was that shriveled, broke, leaked away—I can not find

words for it. If you care for me—and I know you do—you must not be vexed with me if my gall rises now and then; there is too much bitterness in my soul. I can not reach the goal I strive after and was meant to win; I have lost what I loved best, and where am I to find comfort or compensation?"

His children tenderly assured him of their affection, and he allowed Melissa to kiss him, and stroked Alexander's hair.

Then he inquired for Philip, his eldest son and his favorite; and on learning that he, the only person who, as he believed, could understand him, would not come to see him this day above all others, he again broke out in wrath, abusing the degeneracy of the age and the ingratitude of the young.

"Is it a visit which detains him again?" he inquired, and when Alexander thought not, he exclaimed contemptuously: "Then it is some war of words at the Museum. And for such poor stuff as that a son can forget his duty to his father and mother!"

"But you, too, used to enjoy these conflicts of intellect," his daughter humbly remarked; but the old man broke in:

"Only because they help a miserable world to forget the torments of existence, and the hideous certainty of having been born only to die some horrible death. But what can you know of this?"

"By my mother's death-bed," replied the girl, "we, too, had a glimpse into the terrible mystery." And Alexander gravely added, "And since we last met, father, I may certainly account myself as one of the initiated."

“You have painted a dead body?” asked his father.

“Yes, father,” replied the lad with a deep breath. “I warned you,” said Heron, in a tone of superior experience.

And then, as Melissa rearranged the folds of his blue robe, he said he should go for a walk. He sighed as he spoke, and his children knew whither he would go. It was to the grave to which Melissa had accompanied him that morning; and he would visit it alone, to meditate undisturbed on the wife he had lost.

CHAPTER II

The brother and sister were left together. Melissa sighed deeply; but her brother went up to her, laid his arm round her shoulder, and said: “Poor child! you have indeed a hard time of it. Eighteen years old, and as pretty as you are, to be kept locked up as if in prison! No one would envy you, even if your fellow-captive and keeper were younger and less gloomy than your father is! But we know what it all means. His grief eats into his soul, and it does him as much good to storm and scold, as it does us to laugh.”

“If only the world could know how kind his heart really is!” said the girl.

“He is not the same to his friends as to us,” said Alexander; but Melissa shook her head, and said sadly: “He broke out yesterday against Apion, the dealer, and it was dreadful. For the fiftieth time he had waited supper for you two in vain, and in the twilight, when he had done work, his grief overcame him, and to see him weep is quite heartbreaking! The Syrian dealer came in and found him all tearful, and being so bold as to jest about it in his flippant way—”

“The old man would give him his answer, I know!” cried her brother with a hearty laugh. “He will not again be in a hurry to stir up a wounded lion.”

“That is the very word,” said Melissa, and her large eyes

sparkled. “At the fight in the Circus, I could not help thinking of my father, when the huge king of the desert lay with a broken spear in his loins, whining loudly, and burying his maned head between his great paws. The gods are pitiless!”

“Indeed they are,” replied the youth, with deep conviction; but his sister looked up at him in surprise.

“Do you say so, Alexander? Yes, indeed—you looked just now as I never saw you before. Has misfortune overtaken you too?”

“Misfortune?” he repeated, and he gently stroked her hair. “No, not exactly; and you know my woes sit lightly enough on me. The immortals have indeed shown me very plainly that it is their will sometimes to spoil the feast of life with a right bitter draught. But, like the moon itself, all it shines on is doomed to change—happily! Many things here below seem strangely ordered. Like ears and eyes, hands and feet, many things are by nature double, and misfortunes, as they say, commonly come in couples yoked like oxen.”

“Then you have had some twofold blow?” asked Melissa, clasping her hands over her anxiously throbbing bosom.

“I, child! No, indeed. Nothing has befallen your father’s younger son; and if I were a philosopher, like Philip, I should be moved to wonder why a man can only be wet when the rain falls on him, and yet can be so wretched when disaster falls on another. But do not look at me with such terror in your great eyes. I swear to you that, as a man and an artist, I never felt better,

and so I ought properly to be in my usual frame of mind. But the skeleton at life's festival has been shown to me. What sort of thing is that? It is an image—the image of a dead man which was carried round by the Egyptians, and is to this day by the Romans, to remind the feasters that they should fill every hour with enjoyment, since enjoyment is all too soon at an end. Such an image, child—"

"You are thinking of the dead girl—Seleukus's daughter—whose portrait you are painting?" asked Melissa.

Alexander nodded, sat down on the bench by his sister, and, taking up her needlework, exclaimed "Give us some light, child. I want to see your pretty face. I want to be sure that Diodorus did not perjure himself when, at the 'Crane,' the other day, he swore that it had not its match in Alexandria. Besides, I hate the darkness."

When Melissa returned with the lighted lamp, she found her brother, who was not wont to keep still, sitting in the place where she had left him. But he sprang up as she entered, and prevented her further greeting by exclaiming:

"Patience! patience! You shall be told all. Only I did not want to worry you on the day of the festival of the dead. And besides, to-morrow perhaps he will be in a better frame of mind, and next day—"

Melissa became urgent. "If Philip is ill—" she put in.

"Not exactly ill," said he. "He has no fever, no ague-fit, no aches and pains. He is not in bed, and has no bitter draughts to

swallow. Yet is he not well, any more than I, though but just now, in the dining-hall at the Elephant, I ate like a starving wolf, and could at this moment jump over this table. Shall I prove it?"

"No, no," said his sister, in growing distress. "But, if you love me, tell me at once and plainly—"

"At once and plainly," sighed the painter. "That, in any case, will not be easy. But I will do my best. You knew Korinna?"

"Seleukus's daughter?"

"She herself—the maiden from whose corpse I am painting her portrait."

"No. But you wanted—"

"I wanted to be brief, but I care even more to be understood; and if you have never seen with your own eyes, if you do not yourself know what a miracle of beauty the gods wrought when they molded that maiden, you are indeed justified in regarding me as a fool and Philip as a madman—which, thank the gods, he certainly is not yet."

"Then he too has seen the dead maiden?"

"No, no. And yet—perhaps. That at present remains a mystery. I hardly know what happened even to myself. I succeeded in controlling myself in my father's presence; but now, when it all rises up before me, before my very eyes, so distinct, so real, so tangible, now—by Sirius! Melissa, if you interrupt me again—"

"Begin again. I will be silent," she cried. "I can easily picture your Korinna as a divinely beautiful creature."

Alexander raised his hands to heaven, exclaiming with passionate vehemence: "Oh, how would I praise and glorify the gods, who formed that marvel of their art, and my mouth should be full of their grace and mercy, if they had but allowed the world to sun itself in the charm of that glorious creature, and to worship their everlasting beauty in her who was their image! But they have wantonly destroyed their own masterpiece, have crushed the scarce-opened bud, have darkened the star ere it has risen! If a man had done it, Melissa, a man what would his doom have been! If he—"

Here the youth hid his face in his hands in passionate emotion; but, feeling his sister's arm round his shoulder, he recovered himself, and went on more calmly: "Well, you heard that she was dead. She was of just your age; she is dead at eighteen, and her father commissioned me to paint her in death.—Pour me out some water; then I will proceed as coldly as a man crying the description of a runaway slave." He drank a deep draught, and wandered restlessly up and down in front of his sister, while he told her all that had happened to him during the last few days.

The day before yesterday, at noon, he had left the inn where he had been carousing with friends, gay and careless, and had obeyed the call of Seleukus. Just before raising the knocker he had been singing cheerfully to himself. Never had he felt more fully content—the gayest of the gay. One of the first men in the town, and a connoisseur, had honored him with a fine commission, and the prospect of painting something dead had

pleased him. His old master had often admired the exquisite delicacy of the flesh-tones of a recently deceased body. As his glance fell on the implements that his slave carried after him, he had drawn himself up with the proud feeling of having before him a noble task, to which he felt equal. Then the porter, a gray-bearded Gaul, had opened the door to him, and as he looked into his care-worn face and received from him a silent permission to step in, he had already become more serious.

He had heard marvels of the magnificence of the house that he now entered; and the lofty vestibule into which he was admitted, the mosaic floor that he trod; the marble statues and high reliefs round the upper hart of the walls, were well worth careful observation; yet he, whose eyes usually carried away so vivid an impression of what he had once seen that he could draw it from memory, gave no attention to any particular thing among the various objects worthy of admiration. For already in the anteroom a peculiar sensation had come over him. The large halls, which were filled with odors of ambergris and incense, were as still as the grave. And it seemed to him that even the sun, which had been shining brilliantly a few minutes before in a cloudless sky, had disappeared behind clouds, for a strange twilight, unlike anything he had ever seen, surrounded him. Then he perceived that it came in through the black velarium with which they had closed the open roof of the room through which he was passing.

In the anteroom a young freedman had hurried silently past

him—had vanished like a shadow through the dusky rooms. His duty must have been to announce the artist's arrival to the mother of the dead girl; for, before Alexander had found time to feast his gaze on the luxurious mass of flowering plants that surrounded the fountain in the middle of the impluvium, a tall matron, in flowing mourning garments, came towards him—Korinna's mother.

Without lifting the black veil which enveloped her from head to foot, she speechlessly signed him to follow her. Till this moment not even a whisper had met his ear from any human lips in this house of death and mourning; and the stillness was so oppressive to the light-hearted young painter, that, merely to hear the sound of his own voice, he ex-plained to the lady who he was and wherefore he had come. But the only answer was a dumb assenting bow of the head.

He had not far to go with his stately guide; their walk ended in a spacious room. It had been made a perfect flower-garden with hundreds of magnificent plants; piles of garlands strewed the floor, and in the midst stood the couch on which lay the dead girl. In this hall, too, reigned the same gloomy twilight which had startled him in the vestibule.

The dim, shrouded form lying motionless on the couch before him, with a heavy wreath of lotus-flowers and white roses encircling it from head to foot, was the subject for his brush. He was to paint here, where he could scarcely distinguish one plant from another, or make out the form of the vases which stood

round the bed of death. The white blossoms alone gleamed like pale lights in the gloom, and with a sister radiance something smooth and round which lay on the couch—the bare arm of the dead maiden.

His heart began to throb; the artist's love of his art had awaked within him; he had collected his wits, and explained to the matron that to paint in the darkness was impossible.

Again she bowed in reply, but at a signal two waiting women, who were squatting on the floor behind the couch, started up in the twilight, as if they had sprung from the earth, and approached their mistress.

A fresh shock chilled the painter's blood, for at the same moment the lady's voice was suddenly audible close to his ear, almost as deep as a man's but not unmelodious, ordering the girls to draw back the curtain as far as the painter should desire.

Now, he felt, the spell was broken; curiosity and eagerness took the place of reverence for death. He quietly gave his orders for the necessary arrangements, lent the women the help of his stronger arm, took out his painting implements, and then requested the matron to unveil the dead girl, that he might see from which side it would be best to take the portrait. But then again he was near losing his composure, for the lady raised her veil, and measured him with a glance as though he had asked something strange and audacious indeed.

Never had he met so piercing a glance from any woman's eyes; and yet they were red with weeping and full of tears. Bitter grief

spoke in every line of her still youthful features, and their stern, majestic beauty was in keeping with the deep tones of her speech. Oh that he had been so happy as to see this woman in the bloom of youthful loveliness! She did not heed his admiring surprise; before acceding to his demand, her regal form trembled from head to foot, and she sighed as she lifted the shroud from her daughter's face. Then, with a groan, she dropped on her knees by the couch and laid her cheek against that of the dead maiden. At last she rose, and murmured to the painter that if he were successful in his task her gratitude would be beyond expression.

"What more she said," Alexander went on, "I could but half understand, for she wept all the time, and I could not collect my thoughts. It was not till afterward that I learned from her waiting-woman—a Christian—that she meant to tell me that the relations and wailing women were to come to-morrow morning. I could paint on till nightfall, but no longer. I had been chosen for the task because Seleukus had heard from my old teacher, Bion, that I should get a faithful likeness of the original more quickly than any one else. She may have said more, but I heard nothing; I only saw. For when the veil no longer hid that face from my gaze, I felt as though the gods had revealed a mystery to me which till now only the immortals had been permitted to know. Never was my soul so steeped in devotion, never had my heart beat in such solemn uplifting as at that moment. What I was gazing at and had to represent was a thing neither human nor divine; it was beauty itself—that beauty of which I have often dreamed in

blissful rapture.

"And yet—do not misapprehend me—I never thought of bewailing the maiden, or grieving over her early death. She was but sleeping—I could fancy: I watched one I loved in her slumbers. My heart beat high! Ay, child, and the work I did was pure joy, such joy as only the gods on Olympus know at their golden board. Every feature, every line was of such perfection as only the artist's soul can conceive of, nay, even dream of. The ecstasy remained, but my unrest gave way to an indescribable and wordless bliss. I drew with the red chalk, and mixed the colors with the grinder, and all the while I could not feel the painful sense of painting a corpse. If she were slumbering, she had fallen asleep with bright images in her memory. I even fancied again and again that her lips moved her exquisitely chiseled mouth, and that a faint breath played with her abundant, waving, shining brown hair, as it does with yours.

"The Muse sped my hand and the portrait—Bion and the rest will praise it, I think, though it is no more like the unapproachable original than that lamp is like the evening star yonder."

"And shall we be allowed to see it?" asked Melissa, who had been listening breathlessly to her brother's narrative.

The words seemed to have snatched the artist from a dream. He had to pause and consider where he was and to whom he was speaking. He hastily pushed the curling hair off his damp brow, and said:

"I do not understand. What is it you ask?"

"I only asked whether we should be allowed to see the portrait," she answered timidly. "I was wrong to interrupt you. But how hot your head is! Drink again before you go on. Had you really finished by sundown?"

Alexander shook his head, drank, and then went on more calmly: "No, no! It is a pity you spoke. In fancy I was painting her still. There is the moon rising already. I must make haste. I have told you all this for Philip's sake, not for my own."

"I will not interrupt you again, I assure you," said Melissa. "Well, well," said her brother. "There is not much that is pleasant left to tell. Where was I?"

"Painting, so long as it was light—"

"To be sure—I remember. It began to grow dark. Then lamps were brought in, large ones, and as many as I wished for. Just before sunset Seleukus, Korinna's father, came in to look upon his daughter once more. He bore his grief with dignified composure; yet by his child's bier he found it hard to be calm. But you can imagine all that. He invited me to eat, and the food they brought might have tempted a full man to excess, but I could only swallow a few mouthfuls. Berenike—the mother—did not even moisten her lips, but Seleukus did duty for us both, and this I could see displeased his wife. During supper the merchant made many inquiries about me and my father; for he had heard Philip's praises from his brother Theophilus, the high-priest. I learned from him that Korinna had caught her sickness from a slave girl she had nursed, and had died of the fever in three days.

But while I sat listening to him, as he talked and ate, I could not keep my eyes off his wife who reclined opposite to me silent and motionless, for the gods had created Korinna in her very image. The lady Berenike's eyes indeed sparkle with a lurid, I might almost say an alarming, fire, but they are shaped like Korinna's. I said so, and asked whether they were of the same color; I wanted to know for my portrait. On this Seleukus referred me to a picture painted by old Sosibius, who has lately gone to Rome to work in Caesar's new baths. He last year painted the wall of a room in the mer chant's country house at Kanopus. In the center of the picture stands Galatea, and I know it now to be a good and true likeness.

"The picture I finished that evening is to be placed at the head of the young girl's sarcophagus; but I am to keep it two days longer, to reproduce a second likeness more at my leisure, with the help of the Galatea, which is to remain in Seleukus's town house.

"Then he left me alone with his wife.

"What a delightful commission! I set to work with renewed pleasure, and more composure than at first. I had no need to hurry, for the first picture is to be hidden in the tomb, and I could give all my care to the second. Besides, Korinna's features were indelibly impressed on my eye.

"I generally can not paint at all by lamp-light; but this time I found no difficulty, and I soon recovered that blissful, solemn mood which I had felt in the presence of the dead. Only now and

then it was clouded by a sigh, or a faint moan from Berenike: 'Gone, gone! There is no comfort—none, none!'

"And what could I answer? When did Death ever give back what he has snatched away?

"' I can not even picture her as she was,' she murmured sadly to herself—but this I might remedy by the help of my art, so I painted on with increasing zeal; and at last her lamentations ceased to trouble me, for she fell asleep, and her handsome head sank on her breast. The watchers, too, had dropped asleep, and only their deep breathing broke the stillness.

"Suddenly it flashed upon me that I was alone with Korinna, and the feeling grew stronger and stronger; I fancied her lovely lips had moved, that a smile gently parted them, inviting me to kiss them. As often as I looked at them—and they bewitched me —I saw and felt the same, and at last every impulse within me drove me toward her, and I could no longer resist: my lips pressed hers in a kiss!"

Melissa softly sighed, but the artist did not hear; he went on: "And in that kiss I became hers; she took the heart and soul of me. I can no longer escape from her; awake or asleep, her image is before my eyes, and my spirit is in her power."

Again he drank, emptying the cup at one deep gulp. Then he went on: "So be it! Who sees a god, they say, must die. And it is well, for he has known something more glorious than other men. Our brother Philip, too, lives with his heart in bonds to that one alone, unless a demon has cheated his senses. I am troubled

about him, and you must help me."

He sprang up, pacing the room again with long strides, but his sister clung to his arm and besought him to shake off the bewitching vision. How earnest was her prayer, what eager tenderness rang in her every word, as she entreated him to tell her when and where her elder brother, too, had met the daughter of Seleukus!

The artist's soft heart was easily moved. Stroking the hair of the loving creature at his side—so helpful as a rule, but now bewildered—he tried to calm her by affecting a lighter mood than he really felt, assuring her that he should soon recover his usual good spirits. She knew full well, he said, that his living loves changed in frequent succession, and it would be strange indeed if a dead one could bind him any longer. And his adventure, so far as it concerned the house of Seleukus, ended with that kiss; for the lady Berenike had presently waked, and urged him to finish the portrait at his own house.

Next morning he had completed it with the help of the Galatea in the villa at Kanopus, and he had heard a great deal about the dead maiden. A young woman who was left in charge of the villa had supplied him with whatever he needed. Her pretty face was swollen with weeping, and it was in a voice choked with tears that she had told him that her husband, who was a centurion in Caesar's pretorian guard, would arrive to-morrow or next day at Alexandria, with his imperial master. She had not seen him for a long time, and had an infant to show him which he had not

yet seen; and yet she could not be glad, for her young mistress's death had extinguished all her joy.

"The affection which breathed in every word of the centurion's wife," Alexander said, "helped me in my work. I could be satisfied with the result.

"The picture is so successful that I finished that for Seleukus in all confidence, and for the sarcophagus I will copy it as well or as ill as time will allow. It will hardly be seen in the half-dark tomb, and how few will ever go to see it! None but a Seleukus can afford to employ so costly a brush as your brother's is—thank the Muses! But the second portrait is quite another thing, for that may chance to be hung next a picture by Apelles; and it must restore to the parents so much of their lost child as it lies in my power to give them. So, on my way, I made up my mind to begin the copy at once by lamp-light, for it must be ready by to-morrow night at latest.

"I hurried to my work-room, and my slave placed the picture on an easel, while I welcomed my brother Philip who had come to see me, and who had lighted a lamp, and of course had brought a book. He was so absorbed in it that he did not observe that I had come in till I addressed him. Then I told him whence I came and what had happened, and he thought it all very strange and interesting.

"He was as usual rather hurried and hesitating, not quite clear, but understanding it all. Then he began telling me something about a philosopher who has just come to the front, a porter by

trade, from whom he had heard sundry wonders, and it was not till Syrus brought me in a supper of oysters—for I could still eat nothing more solid—that he asked to see the portrait.

"I pointed to the easel, and watched him; for the harder he is to please, the more I value his opinion. This time I felt confident of praise, or even of some admiration, if only for the beauty of the model.

"He threw off the veil from the picture with a hasty movement, but, instead of gazing at it calmly, as he is wont, and snapping out his sharp criticisms, he staggered backward, as though the noonday sun had dazzled his sight. Then, bending forward, he stared at the painting, panting as he might after racing for a wager. He stood in perfect silence, for I know not how long, as though it were Medusa he was gazing on, and when at last he clasped his hand to his brow, I called him by name. He made no reply, but an impatient 'Leave me alone!' and then he still gazed at the face as though to devour it with his eyes, and without a sound.

"I did not disturb him; for, thought I, he too is bewitched by the exquisite beauty of those virgin features. So we were both silent, till he asked, in a choked voice: 'And did you paint that? Is that, do you say, the daughter that Seleukus has just lost?'

"Of course I said 'Yes'; but then he turned on me in a rage, and reproached me bitterly for deceiving and cheating him, and jesting with things that to him were sacred, though I might think them a subject for sport.

"I assured him that my answer was as earnest as it was accurate, and that every word of my story was true.

"This only made him more furious. I, too, began to get angry, and as he, evidently deeply agitated, still persisted in saying that my picture could not have been painted from the dead Korinna, I swore to him solemnly, with the most sacred oath I could think of, that it was really so.

"On this he declared to me in words so tender and touching as I never before heard from his lips, that if I were deceiving him his peace of mind would be forever destroyed-nay, that he feared for his reason; and when I had repeatedly assured him, by the memory of our departed mother, that I had never dreamed of playing a trick upon him, he shook his head, grasped his brow, and turned to leave the room without another word."

"And you let him go?" cried Melissa, in anxious alarm.

"Certainly not," replied the painter. "On the contrary, I stood in his way, and asked him whether he had known Korinna, and what all this might mean. But he would make no reply, and tried to pass me and get away. It must have been a strange scene, for we two big men struggled as if we were at a wrestling-match. I got him down with one hand behind his knees, and so he had to remain; and when I had promised to let him go, he confessed that he had seen Korinna at the house of her uncle, the high-priest, without knowing who she was or even speaking a word to her. And he, who usually flees from every creature wearing a woman's robe, had never forgotten that maiden and her noble

beauty; and, though he did not say so, it was obvious, from every word, that he was madly in love. Her eyes had followed him wherever he went, and this he deemed a great misfortune, for it had disturbed his power of thought. A month since he went across Lake Mareotis to Polybius to visit Andreas, and while, on his return, he was standing on the shore, he saw her again, with an old man in white robes. But the last time he saw her was on the morning of the very day when all this happened; and if he is to be believed, he not only saw her but touched her hand. That, again, was by the lake; she was just stepping out of the ferry-boat. The obolus she had ready to pay the oarsman dropped on the ground, and Philip picked it up and returned it to her. Then his fingers touched hers. He could feel it still, he declared, and yet she had then ceased to walk among the living.

"Then it was my turn to doubt his word; but he maintained that his story was true in every detail; he would hear nothing said about some one resembling her, or anything of the kind, and spoke of daimons showing him false visions, to cheat him and hinder him from working out his investigations of the real nature of things to a successful issue. But this is in direct antagonism to his views of daimons; and when at last he rushed out of the house, he looked like one possessed of evil spirits.

"I hurried after him, but he disappeared down a dark alley. Then I had enough to do to finish my copy, and yesterday I carried it home to Seleukus.

"Then I had time to look for Philip, but I could hear nothing of

him, either in his own lodgings or at the Museum. To-day I have been hunting for him since early in the morning. I even forgot to lay any flowers on my mother's grave, as usual on the day of the Nekysia, because I was thinking only of him. But he no doubt is gone to the city of the dead; for, on my way hither, as I was ordering a garland in the flower-market, pretty little Doxion showed me two beauties which she had woven for him, and which he is presently to fetch. So he must now be in the Nekropolis; and I know for whom he intends the second; for the door-keeper at Seleukus's house told me that a man, who said he was my brother, had twice called, and had eagerly inquired whether my picture had yet been attached to Korinna's sarcophagus. The old man told him it had not, because, of course, the embalming could not be complete as yet. But the picture was to be displayed to-day, as being the feast of the dead, in the hall of the embalmers. That was the plan, I know. So, now, child, set your wise little woman's head to work, and devise something by which he may be brought to his senses, and released from these crazy imaginings."

"The first thing to be done," Melissa exclaimed, "is to follow him and talk to him.-Wait a moment; I must speak a word to the slaves. My father's night-draught can be mixed in a minute. He might perhaps return home before us, and I must leave his couch —I will be with you in a minute."

CHAPTER III

The brother and sister had walked some distance. The roads were full of people, and the nearer they came to the Nekropolis the denser was the throng.

As they skirted the town walls they took counsel together.

Being perfectly agreed that the girl who had touched Philip's hand could certainly be no daimon who had assumed Korinna's form, they were inclined to accept the view that a strong resemblance had deceived their brother. They finally decided that Alexander should try to discover the maiden who so strangely resembled the dead; and the artist was ready for the task, for he could only work when his heart was light, and had never felt such a weight on it before. The hope of meeting with a living creature who resembled that fair dead maiden, combined with his wish to rescue his brother from the disorder of mind which threatened him; and Melissa perceived with glad surprise how quickly this new object in life restored the youth's happy temper.

It was she who spoke most, and Alexander, whom nothing escaped that had any form of beauty, feasted his ear on the pearly ring of her voice.

"And her face is to match," thought he as they went on in the darkness; "and may the Charites who have endowed her with every charm, forgive my father for burying her as he does his

gold."

It was not in his nature to keep anything that stirred him deeply to himself, when he was in the society of another, so he murmured to his sister: "It is just as well that the Macedonian youths of this city should not be able to see what a jewel our old man's house contains.—Look how brightly Selene shines on us, and how gloriously the stars burn! Nowhere do the heavens blaze more brilliantly than here. As soon as we come out of the shadow that the great walls cast on the road we shall be in broad light. There is the Serapeum rising out of the darkness. They are rehearsing the great illumination which is to dazzle the eyes of Caesar when he comes. But they must show too, that to-night, at least, the gods of the nether world and death are all awake. You can never have been in the Nekropolis at so late an hour before."

"How should I?" replied the girl. And he expressed the pleasure that it gave him to be able to show her for the first time the wonderful night scene of such a festival. And when he heard the deep-drawn "Ah!" with which she hailed the sight of the greatest temple of all, blazing in the midst of the darkness with tar-pans, torches, and lamps innumerable, he replied with as much pride and satisfaction as though she owed the display to him, "Ay, what do you think of that?"

Above the huge stone edifice which was thus lighted up, the dome of the Serapeum rose high into the air, its summit appearing to touch the sky. Never had the gigantic structure seemed so beautiful to the girl, who had only seen it by daylight;

for under the illumination, arranged by a master-hand, every line stood out more clearly than in the sunlight; and in the presence of this wonderful sight Melissa's impressionable young soul forgot the trouble that had weighed on it, and her heart beat higher.

Her lonely life with her father had hitherto fully satisfied her, and she had, never yet dreamed of anything better in the future than a quiet and modest existence, caring for him and her brothers; but now she thankfully experienced the pleasure of seeing for once something really grand and fine, and rejoiced at having escaped for a while from the monotony of each day and hour.

Once, too, she had been with her brothers and Diodoros, Alexander's greatest friend, to see a wild-beast fight, followed by a combat of gladiators; but she had come home frightened and sorrowful, for what she had seen had horrified more than it had interested her. Some of the killed and tortured beings haunted her mind; and, besides, sitting in the lowest and best seats belonging to Diodoros's wealthy father, she had been stared at so boldly and defiantly whenever she raised her eyes, by a young gallant opposite, that she had felt vexed and insulted; nay, had wished above all things to get home as soon as possible. And yet she had loved Diodoros from her childhood, and she would have enjoyed sitting quietly by his side more than looking on at the show.

But on this occasion her curiosity was gratified, and the hope of being able to help one who was dear to her filled her with

quiet gladness. It was a comfort to her, too, to find herself once more by her mother's grave with Alexander, who was her especial friend. She could never come here often enough, and the blessing which emanated from it—of that she was convinced—must surely fall on her brother also, and avert from him all that grieved his heart.

As they walked on between the Serapeum on one hand, towering high above all else, and the Stadium on the other, the throng was dense; on the bridge over the canal it was difficult to make any progress. Now, as the full moon rose, the sacrifices and games in honor of the gods of the under world were beginning, and now the workshops and factories had emptied themselves into the streets already astir for the festival of the dead, so every moment the road became more crowded.

Such a tumult was generally odious to her retiring nature; but to-night she felt herself merely one drop in the great, flowing river, of which every other drop felt the same impulse which was carrying her forward to her destination. The desire to show the dead that they were not forgotten, that their favor was courted and hoped for, animated men and women, old and young alike.

There were few indeed who had not a wreath or a posy in their hands, or carried behind them by a slave. In front of the brother and sister was a large family of children. A black nurse carried the youngest on her shoulder, and an ass bore a basket in which were flowers for the tomb, with a wineflask and eatables. A memorial banquet was to be held at the grave of their ancestors;

and the little one, whose golden head rose above the black, woolly poll of the negress, nodded gayly in response to Melissa's smiles. The children were enchanted at the prospect of a meal at such an unusual hour, and their parents rejoiced in them and in the solemn pleasure they anticipated.

Many a one in this night of remembrance only cared to recall the happy hours spent in the society of the beloved dead; others hoped to leave their grief and pain behind them, and find fresh courage and contentment in the City of the Dead; for tonight the gates of the nether world stood open, and now, if ever, the gods that reigned there would accept the offerings and hear the prayers of the devout.

Those lean Egyptians, who pushed past in silence and haranging their heads, were no doubt bent on carrying offerings to Osiris and Anubis—for the festival of the gods of death and resurrection coincided with the Nekysia—and on winning their favors by magical formulas and spells.

Everything was plainly visible, for the desert tract of the Nekropolis, where at this hour utter darkness and silence usually reigned, was brightly lighted up. Still, the blaze failed to banish entirely the thrill of fear which pervaded the spot at night; for the unwonted glare dazzled and bewildered the bats and night-birds, and they fluttered about over the heads of the intruders in dark, ghostly flight. Many a one believed them to be the unresting souls of condemned sinners, and looked up at them with awe.

Melissa drew her veil closer and clung more tightly to her

brother, for a sound of singing and wild cries, which she had heard behind her for some time, was now coming closer. They were no longer treading the paved street, but the hard-beaten soil of the desert. The crush was over, for here the crowd could spread abroad; but the uproarious troop, which she did not even dare to look at, came rushing past quite close to them. They were Greeks, of all ages and of both sexes. The men flourished torches, and were shouting a song with unbridled vehemence; the women, wearing garlands, kept up with them. What they carried in the baskets on their heads could not be seen, nor did Alexander know; for so many religious brotherhoods and mystic societies existed here that it was impossible to guess to which this noisy troop might belong.

The pair had presently overtaken a little train of white-robed men moving forward at a solemn pace, whom the painter recognized as the philosophical and religious fraternity of the Neo-Pythagoreans, when a small knot of men and women in the greatest excitement came rushing past as if they were mad. The men wore the loose red caps of their Phrygian land; the women carried bowls full of fruits. Some beat small drums, others clanged cymbals, and each hauled his neighbor along with deafening cries, faster and faster, till the dust hid them from sight and a new din drowned the last, for the votaries of Dionysus were already close upon them, and vied with the Phrygians in uproariousness. But this wild troop remained behind; for one of the light-colored oxen, covered with decorations, which was

being driven in the procession by a party of men and boys, to be presently sacrificed, had broken away, maddened by the lights and the shouting, and had to be caught and led again.

At last they reached the graveyard. But even now they could not make their way to the long row of houses where the embalmers dwelt, for an impenetrable mass of human beings stood pent up in front of them, and Melissa begged her brother to give her a moment's breathing space.

All she had seen and heard on the way had excited her greatly; but she had scarcely for a moment forgotten what it was that had brought her out so late, who it was that she sought, or that it would need her utmost endeavor to free him from the delusion that had fooled him. In this dense throng and deafening tumult it was scarcely possible to recover that collected calm which she had found in the morning at her mother's tomb. In that, doubt had had no part, and the delightful feeling of freedom which had shone on her soul, now shrank deep into the shade before a growing curiosity and the longing for her usual repose.

If her father were to find her here! When she saw a tall figure resembling his cross the torchlight, all clouded as it was by the dust, she drew her brother away behind the stall of a seller of drinks and other refreshments. The father, at any rate, must be spared the distress she felt about Philip, who was his favorite. Besides, she knew full well that, if he met her here, he would at once take her home.

The question now was where Philip might be found.

They were standing close to the booths where itinerant dealers sold food and liquors of every description, flowers and wreaths, amulets and papyrus-leaves, with strange charms written on them to secure health for the living and salvation for the souls of the dead. An astrologer, who foretold the course of a man's life from the position of the planets, had erected a high platform with large tables displayed to view, and the instrument wherewith he aimed at the stars as it were with a bow; and his Syrian slave, accompanying himself on a gayly-painted drum, proclaimed his master's powers. There were closed tents in which magical remedies were to be obtained, though their open sale was forbidden by the authorities, from love-philters to the wondrous fluid which, if rightly applied, would turn lead, copper, or silver to gold. Here, old women invited the passer-by to try Thracian and other spells; there, magicians stalked to and fro in painted caps and flowing, gaudy robes, most of them calling themselves priests of some god of the abyss. Men of every race and tongue that dwelt in the north of Africa, or on the shores of the Mediterranean, were packed in a noisy throng.

The greatest press was behind the houses of the men who buried the dead. Here sacrifices were offered on the altars of Serapis, Isis, and Anubis; here the sacred sistrum of Isis might be kissed; here hundreds of priests performed solemn ceremonies, and half of those who came hither for the festival of the dead collected about them. The mysteries were also performed here, beginning before midnight; and a dramatic representation

might be seen of the woes of Isis, and the resurrection of her husband Osiris. But neither here, nor at the stalls, nor among the graves, where many families were feasting by torchlight and pouring libations in the sand for the souls of the dead, did Alexander expect to find his brother. Nor would Philip be attending the mysterious solemnities of any of the fraternities. He had witnessed them often enough with his friend Diodoros, who never missed the procession to Eleusis, because, as he declared, the mysteries of Demeter alone could assure a man of the immortality of the soul. The wild ceremonies of the Syrians, who maimed themselves in their mad ecstasy, repelled him as being coarse and barbarous.

As she made her way through this medley of cults, this worship of gods so different that they were in some cases hostile, but more often merged into each other, Melissa wondered to which she ought to turn in her present need. Her mother had best loved to sacrifice to Serapis and Isis. But since, in her last sickness, Melissa had offered everything she possessed to these divinities of healing, and all in vain, and since she had heard things in the Serapeum itself which even now brought a blush to her cheek, she had turned away from the great god of the Alexandrians. Though he who had offended her by such base proposals was but a priest of the lower grade—and indeed, though she knew it not, was since dead—she feared meeting him again, and had avoided the sanctuary where he officiated.

She was a thorough Alexandrian, and had been accustomed

from childhood to listen to the philosophical disputations of the men about her. So she perfectly understood her brother Philip, the skeptic, when he said that he by no means denied the existence of the immortals, but that, on the other hand, he could not believe in it; that thought brought him no conviction; that man, in short, could be sure of nothing, and so could know nothing whatever of the divinity. He had even denied, on logical grounds, the goodness and omnipotence of the gods, the wisdom and fitness of the ordering of the universe, and Melissa was proud of her brother's acumen; but what appeals to the brain only, and not to the heart, can not move a woman to anything great—least of all to a decisive change of life or feeling. So the girl had remained constant to her mother's faith in some mighty powers outside herself, which guided the life of Nature and of human beings. Only she did not feel that she had found the true god, either in Serapis or Isis, and so she had sought others. Thus she had formulated a worship of ancestors, which, as she had learned from the slave-woman of her friend Ino, was not unfamiliar to the Egyptians.

In Alexandria there were altars to every god, and worship in every form. Hers, however, was not among them, for the genius of her creed was the enfranchised soul of her mother, who had cast off the burden of this perishable body. Nothing had ever come from her that was not good and lovely; and she knew that if her mother were permitted, even in some other than human form, she would never cease to watch over her with tender care.

And those initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries, as Diodoros had told her, desired the immortality of the soul, to the end that they might continue to participate in the life of those whom they had left behind. What was it that brought such multitudes at this time out to the Nekropolis, with their hands full of offerings, but the consciousness of their nearness to the dead, and of being cared for by them so long as they were not forgotten? And even if the glorified spirit of her mother were not permitted to hear her prayers, she need not therefore cease to turn to her; for it comforted her unspeakably to be with her in spirit, and to confide to her all that moved her soul. And so her mother's tomb had become her favorite place of rest. Here, if anywhere, she now hoped once more to find comfort, some happy suggestion, and perhaps some definite assistance.

She begged Alexander to take her thither, and he consented, though he was of opinion that Philip would be found in the mortuary chamber, in the presence of Korinna's portrait.

It was not easy to force their way through the thousands who had come out to the great show this night; however, most of the visitors were attracted by the mysteries far away from the Macedonian burial-ground, and there was little to disturb the silence near the fine marble monument which Alexander, to gratify his father, had erected with his first large earnings. It was hung with various garlands, and Melissa, before she prayed and anointed the stone, examined them with eye and hand.

Those which she and her father had placed there she

recognized at once. That humble garland of reeds with two lotus-flowers was the gift of their old slave Argutis and his wife Dido. This beautiful wreath of choice flowers had come from the garden of a neighbor who had loved her mother well; and that splendid basketful of lovely roses, which had not been there this morning, had been placed here by Andreas, steward to the father of her young friend Diodoros, although he was of the Christian sect. And these were all. Philip had not been here then, though it was now past midnight.

For the first time in his life he had let this day pass by without a thought for their dead. How bitterly this grieved Melissa, and even added to her anxiety for him!

It was with a heavy heart that she and Alexander anointed the tombstone; and while Melissa uplifted her hands in prayer, the painter stood in silence, his eyes fixed on the ground. But no sooner had she let them fall, than he exclaimed:

"He is here, I am sure, and in the house of the embalmers. That he ordered two wreaths is perfectly certain; and if he meant one for Korinna's picture, he surely intended the other for our mother. If he has offered both to the young girl—"

"No, no!" Melissa put in. "He will bring his gift. Let us wait here a little while, and do you, too, pray to the manes of our mother. Do it to please me."

But her brother interrupted her eagerly: "I think of her wherever I may be; for those we truly love always live for us. Not a day passes, nor if I come in sober, not a night, when I do not see

her dear face, either waking or dreaming. Of all things sacred, the thought of her is the highest; and if she had been raised to divine honors like the dead Caesars who have brought so many curses on the world—"

"Hush—don't speak so loud!" said Melissa, seriously, for men were moving to and fro among the tombs, and Roman guards kept watch over the populace.

But the rash youth went on in the same tone:

"I would worship her gladly, though I have forgotten how to pray. For who can tell here—unless he follows the herd and worships Serapis—who can tell to which god of them all he shall turn when he happens to be at his wits' end? While my mother lived, I, like you, could gladly worship and sacrifice to the immortals; but Philip has spoiled me for all that. As to the divine Caesars, every one thinks as I do. My mother would sooner have entered a pesthouse than the banqueting-hall where they feast, on Olympus. Caracalla among the gods! Why, Father Zeus cast his son Hephaistos on earth from the height of Olympus, and only broke his leg; but our Caesar accomplished a more powerful throw, for he cast his brother through the earth into the nether world—an imperial thrust—and not merely lamed him but killed him."

"Well done!" said a deep voice, interrupting the young artist. "Is that you, Alexander? Hear what new titles to fame Heron's son can find for the imperial guest who is to arrive to-morrow."

"Pray hush!" Melissa besought him, looking up at the bearded

man who had laid his arm on Alexander's shoulder. It was Glaukias the sculptor, her father's tenant; for his work-room stood on the plot of ground by the garden of Hermes, which the gem-cutter had inherited from his father-in-law.

The man's bold, manly features were flushed with wine and revelry; his twinkling eyes sparkled, and the ivy-leaves still clinging to his curly hair showed that he had been one in the Dionysiac revellers; but the Greek blood which ran in his veins preserved his grace even in drunkenness. He bowed gayly to the young girl, and exclaimed to his companions:

"The youngest pearl in Alexandria's crown of beauties!" while Bion, Alexander's now gray-haired master, clapped the youth on the arm, and added: "Yes, indeed, see what the little thing has grown! Do you remember, pretty one, how you once—how many years ago, I wonder?—spotted your little white garments all over with red dots! I can see you now, your tiny finger plunged into the pot of paint, and then carefully printing off the round pattern all over the white linen. Why, the little painter has become a Hebe, a Charis, or, better still, a sweetly dreaming Psyche."

"Ay, ay!" said Glaukias again. "My worthy landlord has a charming model. He has not far to seek for a head for his best gems. His son, a Helios, or the great Macedonian whose name he bears; his daughter—you are right, Bion—the maid beloved of Eros. Now, if you can make verses, my young friend of the Muses, give us an epigram in a line or two which we may bear in mind as a compliment to our imperial visitor."

"But not here—not in the burial-ground," Melissa urged once more.

Among Glaukias's companions was Argeios, a vain and handsome young poet, with scented locks betraying him from afar, who was fain to display the promptness of his poetical powers; and, even while the elder artist was speaking, he had run Alexander's satirical remarks into the mold of rhythm. Not to save his life could he have suppressed the hastily conceived distich, or have let slip such a justifiable claim to applause. So, without heeding Melissa's remonstrance, he flung his sky-blue mantle about him in fresh folds, and declaimed with comical emphasis:

> "Down to earth did the god cast his son: but with mightier hand
> Through it, to Hades, Caesar flung his brother the dwarf."

The versifier was rewarded by a shout of laughter, and, spurred by the approval of his friends, he declared he had hit on the mode to which to sing his lines, as he did in a fine, full voice.

But there was another poet, Mentor, also of the party, and as he could not be happy under his rival's triumph, he exclaimed: "The great dyer—for you know he uses blood instead of the Tyrian shell—has nothing of Father Zeus about him that I can see, but far more of the great Alexander, whose mausoleum he is to visit to-morrow. And if you would like to know wherein the son of Severus resembles the giant of Macedon, you shall hear."

He thrummed his thyrsus as though he struck the strings of a lyre, and, having ended the dumb prelude, he sang:

> "Wherein hath the knave Caracalla outdone Alexander?
> He killed a brother, the hero a friend, in his rage."

These lines, however, met with no applause; for they were not so lightly improvised as the former distich, and it was clumsy and tasteless, as well as dangerous thus to name, in connection with such a jest, the potentate at whom it was aimed. And the fears of the jovial party were only too well founded, for a tall, lean Egyptian suddenly stood among the Greeks as if he had sprung from the earth. They were sobered at once, and, like a swarm of pigeons on which a hawk swoops down, they dispersed in all directions.

Melissa beckoned to her brother to follow her; but the Egyptian intruder snatched the mantle, quick as lightning, from Alexander's shoulders, and ran off with it to the nearest pine-torch. The young man hurried after the thief, as he supposed him to be, but there the spy flung the cloak back to him, saying, in a tone of command, though not loud, for there were still many persons among the graves:

"Hands off, son of Heron, unless you want me to call the watch! I have seen your face by the light, and that is enough for this time. Now we know each other, and we shall meet again in another place!"

With these words he vanished in the darkness, and Melissa asked, in great alarm:

"In the name of all the gods, who was that?"

"Some rascally carpenter, or scribe, probably, who is in the service of the night-watch as a spy. At least those sort of folks are often built askew, as that scoundrel was," replied Alexander, lightly. But he knew the man only too well. It was Zminis, the chief of the spies to the night patrol; a man who was particularly inimical to Heron, and whose hatred included the son, by whom he had been befooled and misled in more than one wild ploy with his boon companions. This spy, whose cruelty and cunning were universally feared, might do him a serious mischief, and he therefore did not tell his sister, to whom the name of Zminis was well known, who the listener was.

He cut short all further questioning by desiring her to come at once to the mortuary hall.

"And if we do not find him there," she said, "let us go home at once; I am so frightened."

"Yes, yes," said her brother, vaguely. "If only we could meet some one you could join."

"No, we will keep together," replied Melissa, decisively; and simply assenting, with a brief "All right," the painter drew her arm through his, and they made their way through the now thinning crowd.

CHAPTER IV

The houses of the embalmers, which earlier in the evening had shone brightly out of the darkness, now made a less splendid display. The dust kicked up by the crowd dimmed the few lamps and torches which had not by this time burned out or been extinguished, and an oppressive atmosphere of balsamic resin and spices met the brother and sister on the very threshold. The vast hall which they now entered was one of a long row of buildings of unburned bricks; but the Greeks insisted on some ornamentation of the simplest structure, if it served a public purpose, and the embalming-houses had a colonnade along their front, and their walls were covered with stucco, painted in gaudy colors, here in the Egyptian and there in the Greek taste. There were scenes from the Egyptian realm of the dead, and others from the Hellenic myths; for the painters had been enjoined to satisfy the requirements and views of visitors of every race. The chief attraction, however, this night was within; for the men whose duties were exercised on the dead had displayed the finest and best of what they had to offer to their customers.

The ancient Greek practice of burning the dead had died out under the Antonines. Of old, the objects used to deck the pyre had also been on show here; now there was nothing to be seen but what related to interment or entombment.

Side by side with the marble sarcophagus, or those of coarser

stone, were wooden coffins and mummy-cases, with a place at the head for the portrait of the deceased. Vases and jars of every kind, amulets of various forms, spices and balsams in vials and boxes, little images in burned clay of the gods and of men, of which none but the Egyptians knew the allegorical meaning, stood in long rows on low wooden shelves. On the higher shelves were mummy bands and shrouds, some coarse, others of the very finest texture, wigs for the bald heads of shaven corpses, or woolen fillets, and simply or elaborately embroidered ribbons for the Greek dead.

Nothing was lacking of the various things in use for decking the corpse of an Alexandrian, whatever his race or faith.

Some mummy-cases, too, were there, ready to be packed off to other towns. The most costly were covered with fine red linen, wound about with strings of beads and gold ornaments, and with the name of the dead painted on the upper side. In a long, narrow room apart hung the portraits, waiting to be attached to the upper end of the mummy-cases of those lately deceased, and still in the hands of embalmers. Here, too, most of the lamps were out, and the upper end of the room was already dark. Only in the middle, where the best pictures were on show, the lights had been renewed.

The portraits were painted on thin panels of sycamore or of cypress, and in most of them the execution betrayed that their destiny was to be hidden in the gloom of a tomb.

Alexander's portrait of Korinna was in the middle of the

gallery, in a good light, and stood out from the paintings on each side of it as a genuine emerald amid green glass. It was constantly surrounded by a crowd of the curious and connoisseurs. They pointed out the beautiful work to each other; but, though most of them acknowledged the skill of the master who had painted it, many ascribed its superiority to the magical charm of the model. One could see in those wonderfully harmonious features that Aristotle was right when he discerned beauty in order and proportion; while another declared that he found there the evidence of Plato's doctrine of the identity of the good and the beautiful—for this face was so lovely because it was the mirror of a soul which had been disembodied in the plenitude of maiden purity and virtue, unjarred by any discord; and this gave rise to a vehement discussion as to the essential nature of beauty and of virtue.

Others longed to know more about the early-dead original of this enchanting portrait. Korinna's wealthy father and his brothers were among the best-known men of the city. The elder, Timotheus, was high-priest of the Temple of Serapis; and Zeno, the younger, had set the whole world talking when he, who in his youth had been notoriously dissipated, had retired from any concern in the corn-trade carried on by his family, the greatest business of the kind in the world, perhaps, and—for this was an open secret—had been baptized.

The body of the maiden, when embalmed and graced with her portrait, was to be transported to the family tomb in the

district of Arsinoe, where they had large possessions, and the gossip of the embalmer was eagerly swallowed as he expatiated on the splendor with which her liberal father proposed to escort her thither.

Alexander and Melissa had entered the portrait-gallery before the beginning of this narrative, and listened to it, standing behind several rows of gazers who were between them and the portrait.

As the speaker ceased, the little crowd broke up, and when Melissa could at last see her brother's work at her ease, she stood speechless for some time; and then she turned to the artist, and exclaimed, from the depths of her heart, "Beauty is perhaps the noblest thing in the world!"

"It is," replied Alexander, with perfect assurance. And he, bewitched once more by the spell which had held him by Korinna's couch, gazed into the dark eyes in his own picture, whose living glance his had never met, and which he nevertheless had faithfully reproduced, giving them a look of the longing of a pure soul for all that is lovely and worthy.

Melissa, an artist's daughter, as she looked at this portrait, understood what it was that had so deeply stirred her brother while he painted it; but this was not the place to tell him so. She soon tore herself away, to look about for Philip once more and then to be taken home.

Alexander, too, was seeking Philip; but, sharp as the artist's eyes were, Melissa's seemed to be keener, for, just as they were giving it up and turning to go, she pointed to a dark corner and

said softly, “There he is.”

And there, in fact, her brother was, sitting with two men, one very tall and the other a little man, his brow resting on his hand in the deep shadow of a sarcophagus, between the wall and a mummy-case set on end, which till now had hidden him from Alexander and Melissa.

Who could the man be who had kept the young philosopher, somewhat inaccessible in his pride of learning, so long in talk in that half-dark corner? He was not one of the learned society at the Museum; Alexander knew them all. Besides, he was not dressed like them, in the Greek fashion, but in the flowing robe of a Magian. And the stranger was a man of consequence, for he wore his splendid garment with a superior air, and as Alexander approached him he remembered having somewhere seen this tall, bearded figure, with the powerful head garnished with flowing and carefully oiled black curls. Such handsome and well-chiseled features, such fine eyes, and such a lordly, waving beard were not easily forgotten; his memory suddenly awoke and threw a light on the man as he sat in the gloom, and on the surroundings in which he had met him for the first time.

It was at the feast of Dionysus. Among a drunken crowd, which was rushing wildly along the streets, and which Alexander had joined, himself one of the wildest, this man had marched, sober and dignified as he was at this moment, in the same flowing raiment. This had provoked the feasters, who, being full of wine and of the god, would have nothing that could remind them of

the serious side of life. Such sullen reserve on a day of rejoicing was an insult to the jolly giver of the fruits of the earth, and to wine itself, the care-killer; and the mad troop of artists, disguised as Silenus, satyrs, and fauns, had crowded round the stranger to compel him to join their rout and empty the wine-jar which a burly Silenus was carrying before him on his ass.

At first the man had paid no heed to the youths' light mockery; but as they grew bolder, he suddenly stood still, seized the tall faun, who was trying to force the wine-jar on him, by both arms, and, holding him firmly, fixed his grave, dark eyes on those of the youth. Alexander had not forgotten the half-comical, half-threatening incident, but what he remembered most clearly was the strange scene that followed: for, after the Magian had released his enemy, he bade him take the jar back to Silenus, and proceed on his way, like the ass, on all-fours. And the tall faun, a headstrong, irascible Lesbian, had actually obeyed the stately despot, and crept along on his hands and feet by the side of the donkey. No threats nor mockery of his companions could persuade him to rise. The high spirits of the boisterous crew were quite broken, and before they could turn on the magician he had vanished.

Alexander had afterward learned that he was Serapion, the star-gazer and thaumaturgist, whom all the spirits of heaven and earth obeyed.

When, at the time, the painter had told the story to Philip, the philosopher had laughed at him, though Alexander had reminded

him that Plato even had spoken of the daimons as being the guardian spirits of men; that in Alexandria, great and small alike believed in them as a fact to be reckoned with; and that he—Philip himself—had told him that they played a prominent part in the newest systems of philosophy.

But to the skeptic nothing was sure: and if he would deny the existence of the Divinity, he naturally must disbelieve that of any beings in a sphere between the supersensual immortals and sentient human creatures. That a man, the weaker nature, could have any power over daimons, who, as having a nearer affinity to the gods, must, if they existed, be the stronger, he could refute with convincing arguments; and when he saw others nibbling whitethorn-leaves, or daubing their thresholds with pitch to preserve themselves and the house from evil spirits, he shrugged his shoulders contemptuously, though his father often did such things.

Here was Philip, deep in conversation with the man he had mocked at, and Alexander was flattered by seeing that wise and famous Serapion, in whose powers he himself believed, was talking almost humbly to his brother, as though to a superior. The magician was standing, while the philosopher, as though it were his right, remained seated.

Of what could they be conversing?

Alexander himself was anxious to be going, and only his desire to hear at any rate a few sentences of the talk of two such men detained him longer.

As he expected, it bore on Serapion's magical powers; but the bearded man spoke in a very low tone, and if the painter ventured any nearer he would be seen. He could only catch a few incoherent words, till Philip exclaimed in a louder voice: "All that is well-reasoned. But you will be able to write an enduring inscription on the shifting wave sooner than you will shake my conviction that for our spirit, such as Nature has made it, there is nothing infallible or certain."

The painter was familiar with this postulate, and was curious to hear the Magian's reply; but he could not follow his argument till he ended by saying, rather more emphatically: "You, even, do not deny the physical connection of things; but I know the power that causes it. It is the magical sympathy which displays itself more powerfully in the universe, and among human beings, than any other force."

"That is just what remains to be proved," was the reply. But as the other declared in all confidence, "And I can prove it," and was proceeding to do so, Serapion's companion, a stunted, sharp-featured little Syrian, caught sight of Alexander. The discourse was interrupted, and Alexander, pointing to Melissa, begged his brother to grant them a few minutes' speech with him. Philip, however, scarcely spared a moment for greeting his brother and sister; and when, in answer to his request that they be brief in what they had to say, they replied that a few words would not suffice, Philip was for putting them off till the morrow, as he did not choose to be disturbed just now.

At this Melissa took courage; she turned to Serapion and modestly addressed him:

"You, sir, look like a grave, kind man, and seem to have a regard for my brother. You, then, will help us, no doubt, to cure him of an illusion which troubles us. A dead girl, he says, met him, and he touched her hand."

"And do you, sweet child, think that impossible?" the Magian asked with gentle gravity. "Have the thousands who bring not merely fruit and wine and money for their dead, but who even burn a black sheep for them—you, perhaps, have done the same—have they, I ask, done this so long in vain? I can not believe it. Nay, I know from the ghosts themselves that this gives them pleasure; so they must have the organs of sense."

"That we may rejoice departed souls by food and drink," said Melissa, eagerly, "and that daimons at times mingle with the living, every one of course, believes; but who ever heard that warm blood stirred in them? And how can it be possible that they should remunerate a service with money, which certainly was not coined in their airy realm, but in the mint here?"

"Not too fast, fair maid," replied the Magian, raising a warning hand. "There is no form which these intermediate beings can not assume. They have the control of all and everything which mortals may use, so the soul of Korinna revisiting these scenes may quite well have paid the ferryman with an obolus."

"Then you know of it?" asked Melissa in surprise; but the Magian broke in, saying:

"Few such things remain hidden from him who knows, not even the smallest, if he strives after such knowledge."

As he spoke he gave the girl such a look as made her eyelids fall, and he went on with greater warmth: "There would be fewer tears shed by death-beds, my child, if we could but show the world the means by which the initiated hold converse with the souls of the dead."

Melissa shook her pretty head sadly, and the Magian kindly stroked her waving hair; then, looking her straight in the eyes, he said: "The dead live. What once has been can never cease to be, any more than out of nothing can anything come. It is so simple; and so, too, are the workings of magic, which amaze you so much. What you call magic, when I practice it, Eros, the great god of love, has wrought a thousand times in your breast. When your heart leaps at your brother's caress, when the god's arrow pierces you, and the glance of a lover fills you with gladness, when the sweet harmonies of fine music wrap your soul above this earth, or the wail of a child moves you to compassion, you have felt the magic power stirring in your own soul. You feel it when some mysterious power, without any will of your own, prompts you to some act, be it what it may. And, besides all this, if a leaf flutters off the table without being touched by any visible hand, you do not doubt that a draught of air, which you can neither hear nor see, has swept through the room. If at noon the world is suddenly darkened, you know, without looking up at the sky, that it is overcast by a cloud. In the very same way you

can feel the nearness of a soul that was dear to you without being able to see it. All that is necessary is to strengthen the faculty which knows its presence, and give it the proper training, and then you will see and hear them. The Magians have the key which unlocks the door of the world of spirits to the human senses. Your noble brother, in whom the claims of the spirit have long since triumphed over those of sense, has found this key without seeking it, since he has been permitted to see Korinna's soul. And if he follows a competent guide he will see her again."

"But why? What good will it do him?" asked Melissa, with a reproachful and anxious look at the man whose influence, as she divined would be pernicious to her brother, in spite of his knowledge. The Magian gave a compassionate shrug, and in the look he cast at the philosopher, the question was legible, "What have such as these to do with the highest things?"

Philip nodded in impatient assent, and, without paying any further heed to his brother and sister, besought his friend to give him the proofs of the theory that the physical causation of things is weaker than the sympathy which connects them. Melissa knew full well that any attempt now to separate Philip from Serapion would be futile; however, she would not leave the last chance untried, and asked him gravely whether he had forgotten his mother's tomb.

He hastily assured her that he fully intended to visit it presently. Fruit and fragrant oil could be had here at any hour of the night.

"And your two wreaths?" she said, in mild reproach, for she had observed them both below the portrait of Korinna.

"I had another use for them," he said, evasively; and then he added, apologetically: "You have brought flowers enough, I know. If I can find time, I will go to-morrow to see my father." He nodded to them both, turned to the Magian, and went on eagerly:

"Then that magical sympathy—"

They did not wait to hear the discussion; Alexander signed to his sister to follow him.

He, too, knew that his brother's ear was deaf now to anything he could say. What Serapion had said had riveted even his attention, and the question whether it might indeed be vouchsafed to living mortals to see the souls of the departed, and hear their voices, exercised his mind so greatly that he could not forbear asking his sister's opinion on such matters.

But Melissa's good sense had felt that there was something not quite sound in the Magian's argument—nor did she conceal her conviction that Philip, who was always hard to convince, had accepted Serapion's views, not because he yielded to the weight of his reasons, but because he—and Alexander, too, for that matter—hoped by his mediation to see the beautiful Korinna again.

This the artist admitted; but when he jested of the danger of a jealous quarrel between him and his brother, for the sake of a dead girl, there was something hard in his tone, and very unlike

him, which Melissa did not like.

They breathed more freely as they got out into the open air, and her efforts to change the subject of their conversation were happily seconded; for at the door they met the family of their neighbor Skopas, the owner of a stone-quarry, whose grave-plot adjoined theirs, and Melissa was happy again as she heard her brother laughing as gayly as ever with Skopas's pretty daughter. The mania had not taken such deep hold of the light-hearted young painter as of Philip, the poring and gloomy philosopher; and she was glad as she heard her friend Ino call Alexander a faithless butterfly, while her sister Helena declared that he was a godless scoffer.

CHAPTER V

The crowds on the road were now homeward bound, and they were all in such wild, high spirits that, from what was to be seen and heard, it could never have been supposed that they had come from so mournful a scene. They took the road by the sea leading from the Nekropolis to Eleusis, wandering on in the glowing moonlight.

A great procession of Greeks had been to Eleusis, to celebrate the mysteries after the manner of the Greek Eleusis, on which that of Alexandria was modeled. The newly initiated, and the elder adepts, whose duty it was to superintend their reception, had remained in the temple; but the other mystics now swelled the train of those who were coming from the city of the dead.

Here, indeed, Serapis took the place of Pluto, and much that was Greek had assumed strange and Egyptian forms: even the order of the ceremonies had been entirely changed; still, on the African, as on the Attic shore, the Greek cry went up, "To the sea, O mystics!" and the bidding to Iakchos: "Be with us, O Iakchos!"

It could be heard from afar, but the voices of the shouters were already weary, and most of the torches had burned low. The wreaths of ivy and myrtle in their hair were limp; the singers of the hymn no longer kept their ranks; and even Iambe, whose jests had cheered the mourning Demeter, and whose lips at Eleusis had overflowed with witticisms, was exhausted and

silent. She still held in her hand the jar from which she had given the bereaved goddess a reviving draught, but it was empty and she longed for a drink. She was indeed a he: for it was a youth in woman's dress who played the rollicking part of Iambe, and it was Alexander's friend and comrade Diodoros who had represented the daughter of Pan and Echo, who, the legend said, had acted as slave in the house of Metaneira, the Eleusinian queen, when Demeter took refuge there. His sturdy legs had good reason to be as weary as his tongue, which had known no rest for five hours.

But he caught sight of the large vehicle drawn by four horses, in which the vast corn-measure, the kalathos, which Serapis wore as his distinguishing head-gear, had been conveyed to Eleusis. It was empty now, for the contents had been offered to the god, and the four black horses had an easy task with the great wagon. No one had as yet thought of using it as a conveyance back to the town; but Diodoros, who was both ingenious and tired, ran after it and leaped up. Several now wanted to follow his example, but he pushed them off, even thrusting at them with a newly lighted torch, for he could not be quiet in spite of his fatigue. In the midst of the skirmishing he perceived his friend and Melissa.

His heart had been given to the gentle girl ever since they had been playmates in his father's garden, and when he saw her, walking along downcast, while her brother sported with his neighbor's daughters, he beckoned to her, and, as she refused to accompany him in the wagon, he nimbly sprang off, lifted her up

in his arms, made strong by exercise in the Palaestra, and gently deposited her, in spite of her struggles, on the flat floor of the car, by the side of the empty kalathos.

"The rape of Persephone!" he cried. "The second performance in one. night!"

Then the old reckless spirit seized Alexander too.

With as much gay audacity—as though he were free of every care and grief, and had signed a compact with Fortune, he picked up pretty Ino, lifted her into the wagon, as Diodoros had done with his sister, and exclaiming, "The third performance!" seated himself by her side.

His bold example found immediate imitators. "A fourth!" "A fifth!" cried one and another, shouting and laughing, with loud calls on Iakchos.

The horses found it hard work, for all along the edge of the car, and round the kalathos of the great Serapis, sat the merry young couples in close array. Alexander and Melissa soon were wreathed with myrtle and ivy. In the vehicle and among the crowd there were none but radiant and frolicsome faces, and no sound but triumphant revelry.

Fatigue was forgotten; it might have been supposed that the sinister sisters, Care and Sorrow, had been banished from earth.

There was a smile even on Melissa's sweet, calm face. At first her old friend's audacious jest had offended her maidenly coyness; but if Diodoros had always loved her, so had she always loved him; and as other well-conducted girls had been content to

have the like done to them, and her companion so confidently and roguishly sued for pardon, she gave him a smile which filled his heart with rapture, and said more than words.

It was a comfort, too, to sit still and rest.

She spoke but little, but even she forgot what troubled her when she felt her friend's hand on hers, and he whispered to her that this was the most delightful night he had ever known, and that, of all the sweets the gods had created, she was to him the sweetest?

The blue sea spread before them, the full moon mirrored on its scarcely heaving surface like a tremulous column of pure and shining silver. The murmur of the ripples came up from the strand as soothing and inviting as the song of the Nereids; and if a white crest of foam rose on a wave, she could fancy it was the arm of Thetis or Galatea. There, where the blue was deepest, the sea-god Glaukos must dwell, and his heart be gladdened by the merry doings on shore.

Nature is so great; and as the thought came to her that her heart was not too small to take its greatness in, even to the farthest horizon, it filled her with glad surprise.

And Nature was bountiful too. Melissa could see the happy and gracious face of a divinity in everything she looked upon. The immortals who had afflicted her, and whom she had often bitterly accused, could be kind and merciful too. The sea, on whose shining surface the blue vault of heaven with the moon and stars rocked and twinkled, the soft breeze which fanned her

brow, the new delicious longing which filled her heart-all she felt and was conscious of, was a divinity or an emanation of the divine. Mighty Poseidon and majestic Zeus, gentle Selene, and the sportive children of the god of winds, seemed to be strangely near her as she rode along. And it was the omnipotent son of Kypris, no doubt, who stirred her heart to beat higher than it had ever done before.

Her visit to her mother's grave, too, her prayer and her offerings there, had perhaps moved the spirit of the beloved dead to hover near her now as a guardian genius.

Still, now and again the memory of something terrible passed over her soul like a sweeping shadow; but what it was which threatened her and those dear to her she did not see, and would not now inquire. What the morrow might bring should not cloud the enchantment of this hour. For oh, how fair the world was, and how blessed might mortals be!

"Iakchos! Iakchos!" the voices about her shouted, and it sounded as gleeful as though the breasts of the revelers were overflowing with gladness; and as the scented curls of Diodoros bent over her head, as his hand closed on hers, and his whispered words of love were in her ear, she murmured: "Alexander is right; the world is a banqueting-hall, and life is fair."

"So fair!" echoed the youth, pensively. Then he shouted aloud to his companions: "The world is a banqueting-hall! Bring roses, bring wine, that we may sacrifice to Eros, and pour libations to Dionysus. Light the flaming torches! Iakchos! come, Iakchos,

and sanctify our glad festival!"

"Come, Iakchos, come!" cried one and another, and soon the enthusiastic youth's cry was taken up on all sides. But wine-skin and jar were long since emptied.

Hard by, below the cliff, and close to the sea, was a tavern, at the sign of the Cock. Here cool drink was to be had; here the horses might rest-for the drivers had been grumbling bitterly at the heavy load added to the car over the deep sand—and here there was a level plot, under the shade of a spreading sycamore, which had often before now served as a floor for the choric dance.

The vehicle soon drew up in front of the whitewashed inn, surrounded on three sides by a trellised arbor, overgrown with figs and vine. The young couples sprang to the ground; and, while the host and his slave dragged up a huge wine-jar with two ears, full of the red juice of the grape, fresh torches were lighted and stuck on poles or fastened to the branches of the sycamore, the youths took their places eager for the dance, and suddenly the festal song went up from their clear throats unbidden, and as though inspired by some mysterious power:

Iakchos, come! oh, come, Iakchos!
Hither come, to the scene of our revel,
  The gladsome band of the faithful.
Shake the fragrant, berried garland,
Myrtle-twined, that crowns thy love-locks,
  Shedding its odors!

Tread the measure, with fearless stamp,
Of this our reckless, rapturous dance,
In holy rejoicing!
Hand in hand, thrice beatified,
Lo we thread the rhythmic, fanciful,
Mystical mazes!

And the dance begins. Youths and maidens advance to meet each other with graceful movements. Every step must be a thing of beauty, every bend and rising, while the double flutes play faster and faster, and the measured rhythm becomes a wild whirl. They all know the dance, and the music is a guide to the feeling to be expressed; the dancing must be suited to it. Every gesture is a stroke of color which may beautify or mar the picture. Body and spirit are in perfect harmony, combining to represent the feelings that stir the soul. It is a work of art, the art of the arms and feet. Even when passion is at the highest the guiding law is observed. Nay, when the dancers fly wildly apart, they, not merely come together again with unerring certainty, but form in new combination another delightful and perfectly harmonious picture.

"Seek and find" this dance might be called, for the first idea is to represent the wandering of Demeter in search of her daughter Persephone, whom Pluto has carried off to the nether world, till she finds her and clasps her in her motherly arms once more. Thus does the earth bewail the reaped fruit of the field, which is buried in the ground in the winter sowing, to rise again in the

spring; thus does a faithful heart pine during absence till it is reunited to the beloved one; thus do we mourn our dead till our soul is assured of their resurrection: and this belief is the end and clew to the mystery.

All this grief and search, this longing and crying for the absent, this final restoration and the bliss of new possession, is set forth by the youths and damsels-now in slow and now in vehement action, but always with infinite grace.

Melissa threw her whole soul into the dance while Demeter was seeking the lost Persephone, her thoughts were with her brothers; and she laughed as heartily as any one at the jests with which Iambe cheered the stricken mother. And when the joy of meeting was to find expression, she need not think of anything but the fact that the youth who held out his hand to her loved her and cared for her. In this, for the moment, lay the end of all her longing and seeking, the fulfillment of every wish; and as the chorus shouted, "Iakchos!" again and again, her soul seemed to have taken wings.

The reserve of her calm and maidenly nature broke down; in her ecstasy she snatched from her shoulder the wreath of ivy with which Diodoros had decked her, and waved it aloft. Her long hair had fallen loose in the dance and flowed wildly about her, and her shout of "Iakchos!" rang clear in the night air.

The youth she loved gazed at her with ravished eyes, as at some miracle; she, heedless of the others, threw her arms round his neck, and, as he kissed her, she said once more, but loud

enough now to be heard from afar, "The world is a banqueting-hall!" and again she joined in the shout of "Iakchos!" her eyes bright with excitement. Cups filled high with wine now circulated among the mad-cap mystics; even Melissa refreshed herself, handing the beaker to her lover, and Diodoros raised to his mouth that place on the rim which her lips had touched.

"O life! fount of joys!" cried Diodoros, kissing her and pressing her closer to him. "Come, Iakchos! Behold with envy how thankfully two mortals can bless the gift of life. But where is Alexander? To none but to our Andreas have I ever confided the secret I have borne in my heart since that day when we went to the circus. But now! Oh, it is so much happiness for two hearts! My friend, too, must have part in it!"

At this Melissa clasped her hand to her brow, as though waking from a dream. How hot she was from dancing, and the unusual strength of the wine and water she had drunk!

The danger impending over both her brothers came back to her mind. She had always been accustomed to think of others rather than herself, and her festal mood dropped from her suddenly, like a mantle of which the brooch breaks. She vehemently shook herself free of her lover's embrace, and her eyes glanced from one to another in rapid search.

There stood pretty Ino, who had danced the mazy measure with Alexander. Panting for breath, she stood leaning her weary head and tangled hair against the trunk of the tree, a wine-cup upside down in her right hand. It must be empty; but where was

he who had emptied it?

Her neighbor's daughter would surely know. Had the reckless youth quarreled with the girl? No, no!

One of the tavern-keeper's slaves, Ino told her, had whispered something to Alexander, whereupon he had instantly followed the man into the house. Melissa knew that it could be no trivial matter which detained him there, and hurried after him into the tavern.

The host, a Greek, and his buxom wife, affected not to know for whom she was inquiring; but, perceiving the anxiety which spoke in every line of the girl's face, when she explained that she was Alexander's sister, they at first looked at each other doubtingly, and then the woman, who had children of her own, who fondly loved each other, felt her heart swell within her, and she whispered, with her finger on her lips: "Do not be uneasy, pretty maid; my husband will see him well through."

And then Melissa heard that the Egyptian, who had alarmed her in the Nekropolis, was the spy Zminis, who, as her old slave Dido had once told her, had been a rejected suitor of her mother's before she had married Heron, and who was therefore always glad to bring trouble on all who belonged to her father's house. How often had she heard of the annoyances in which this man had involved her father and Alexander, who were apt to be very short with the man!

This tale-bearer, who held the highest position as guardian of the peace under the captain of the night-watch, was of all

men in the city the most hated and feared; and he had heard her brother speaking of Caesar in a tone of mockery which was enough to bring him to prison, to the quarries, nay, to death. Glaukias, the sculptor, had previously seen the Egyptian on the bridge, where he had detained those who were returning home from the city of the dead. He and his followers had already stopped the poet Argeios on his way, but the thyrsus staves of the Dionysiac revelers had somewhat spoiled the game for him and his satellites. He was probably still standing on the bridge. Glaukias had immediately run back, at any risk, to warn Alexander. He and the painter were now in hiding, and would remain in safety, come what might, in the cellar at the Cock, till the coast was clear again. The tavern-keeper strongly advised no one to go meddling with his wine-skins and jars.

"Much less that Egyptian dog!" cried his wife, doubling her fist as though the hated mischief-maker stood before her already.

"Poor, helpless lamb!" she murmured to herself, as she looked compassionately at the fragile, town-bred girl, who stood gazing at the ground as if she had been struck by lightning. She remembered, too, how hard life had seemed to her in her own young days, and glanced with pride at her brawny arms, which were able indeed to work and manage.

But what now?

The drooping flower suddenly raised her head, as if moved by a spring, exclaiming: "Thank you heartily, thank you! But that will never do. If Zminis searches your premises he will certainly

go into the cellar; for what can he not do in Caesar's name? I will not part from my brother."

"Then you, too, are a welcome guest at the Cock," interrupted the woman, and her husband bowed low, assuring her that the Cock was as much her house as it was his.

But the helpless town-bred damsel declined this friendly invitation; for her shrewd little head had devised another plan for saving her brother, though the tavern-keepers, to whom she confided it in a whisper, laughed and shook their heads over it. Diodoros was waiting outside in anxious impatience; he loved her, and he was her brother's best friend. All that he could do to save Alexander he would gladly do, she knew. On the estate which would some day be his, there was room and to spare to hide the fugitives, for one of the largest gardens in the town was owned by his father. His extensive grounds had been familiar to her from her childhood, for her own mother and her lover's had been friends; and Andreas, the freedman, the overseer of Polybius's gardens and plantations, was dearer to her and her brothers than any one else in Alexandria.

Nor had she deceived herself, for Diodoros made Alexander's cause his own, in his eager, vehement way; and the plan for his deliverance seemed doubly admirable as proceeding from Melissa. In a few minutes Alexander and the sculptor were released from their hiding-place, and all further care for them was left to Diodoros.

They were both very, craftily disguised. No one would have

recognized the artists in two sailors, whose Phrygian caps completely hid their hair, while a heavy fisherman's apron was girt about their loins; still less would any one have suspected from their laughing faces that imprisonment, if nothing worse, hung over them. Their change of garb had given rise to so much fun; and now, on hearing how they were to be smuggled into the town, their merriment grew higher, and proved catching to those who were taken into the secret. Only Melissa was oppressed with anxious care, in spite of her lover's eager consolation.

Glaukias, a man of scarcely middle height, was sure of not being recognized, and he and his comrades looked forward to whatever might happen as merely an amusing jest. At the same time they had to balk the hated chief of the city guards and his menials of their immediate prey; but they had played them a trick or two ere now. It might turn out really badly for Alexander; still, it was only needful to keep him concealed till Caesar should arrive; then he would be safe, for the Emperor would certainly absorb all the thoughts and time of the captain of the night-watch and his chief officers. In Alexandria, anything once past was so soon forgotten! When once Caracalla was gone—and it was to be hoped that he would not stay long—no one would ever think again of any biting speech made before his arrival.

The morning must bring what it might, so long as the present moment was gay!

So, refreshed and cheered by rest and wine, the party of mystics prepared to set out again; and, as the procession started,

no one who did not know it had observed that the two artists, disguised as sailors, were, by Melissa's advice, hidden inside the kalathos of Serapis, which would easily have held six, and was breast-high even for Alexander, who was a tall man. They squatted on the floor of the huge vessel, with a jar of wine between them, and peeped over now and then with a laugh at the girls, who had again seated themselves on the edge of the car.

When they were fairly on their way once more, Alexander and his companions were so daring that, whenever they could do it unobserved, they pelted the damsels with the remains of the corn, or sprinkled them with wine-drops. Glaukias had the art of imitating the pattering of rain and the humming of a fly to perfection with his lips; and when the girls complained of the tiresome insect buzzing in their faces, or declared, when a drop fell on them, that in spite of the blue and cloudless sky it was certainly beginning to rain, the two men had to cover their mouths with their hands, that their laughter might not betray them.

Melissa, who had comforted Ino with the assurance that Alexander had been called away quite unexpectedly, was now sitting by her side, and perceived, of course, what tricks the men in the kalathos were playing; but, instead of amusing her, they only made her anxious.

Every one about her was laughing and joking, but for her all mirth was at an end. Fear, indeed, weighed on her like an incubus, when the car reached the bridge and rattled across it. It was lined

with soldiers and lictors, who looked closely at each one, even at Melissa herself. But no one spoke to her, and when the water lay behind them she breathed more freely. But only for a moment; for she suddenly remembered that they would presently have to pass through the gate leading past Hadrian's western wall into the town. If Zminis were waiting there instead of on the bridge, and were to search the vehicle, then all would be lost, for he had looked her, too, in the face with those strange, fixed eyes of his; and that where he saw the sister he would also seek the brother, seemed to her quite certain. Thus her presence was a source of peril to Alexander, and she must at any cost avert that.

She immediately put out her hand to Diodoros, who was walking at her side, and with his help slipped down from her seat. Then she whispered her fears to him, and begged him to quit the party and conduct her home.

This was a surprising and delightful task for her lover. With a jesting word he leaped on to the car, and even succeeded in murmuring to Alexander, unobserved, that Melissa had placed herself under his protection. When they got home, they could tell Heron and Andreas that the youths were safe in hiding. Melissa could explain, to-morrow morning, how everything had happened. Then he drew Melissa's arm through his, loudly shouted, "Iakchos!" and with a swift dance-step soon outstripped the wagon.

Not fifty paces beyond, large pine torches sent bright flames up skyward, and by their light the girl could see the dreaded

gateway, with the statues of Hadrian and Sabina, and in front of them, in the middle of the road, a horseman, who, as they approached, came trotting forward to meet them on his tall steed. His head towered above every one else in the road; and as she looked up at him her heart almost ceased beating, for her eyes met those of the dreaded Egyptian; their white balls showed plainly in his brown, lean face, and their cruel, evil sparkle had stamped them clearly on her memory.

On her right a street turned off from the road, and saying in a low tone, "This way," she led Diodoros, to his surprise, into the shadow. His heart beat high. Did she, whose coy and maidenly austerity before and after the intoxication of the dance had vouchsafed him hardly a kind look or a clasp of the hand-did she even yearn for some tender embrace alone and in darkness? Did the quiet, modest girl, who, since she had ceased to be a child, had but rarely given him a few poor words, long to tell him that which hitherto only her bright eyes and the kiss of her pure young lips had betrayed?

He drew her more closely to him in blissful expectation; but she shyly shrank from his touch, and before he could murmur a single word of love she exclaimed in terror, as though the hand of the persecutor were already laid on her: "Fly, fly! That house will give us shelter."

And she dragged him after her into the open doorway of a large building. Scarcely had they entered the dark vestibule when the sound of hoofs was heard, and the glare of torches dispelled

the darkness outside.

"Zminis! It is he—he is following us!" she whispered, scarcely able to speak; and her alarm was well founded, for the Egyptian had recognized her, and supposed her companion to be Alexander. He had ridden down the street with his torchbearers, but where she had hidden herself his keen eyes could not detect, for the departing sound of hoofs betrayed to the breathless listeners that the pursuer had left their hiding-place far behind him. Presently the pavement in front of the house which sheltered them rang again with the tramp of the horse, till it died away at last in the direction of Hadrian's gate. Not till then did Melissa lift her hand from her painfully throbbing heart.

But the Egyptian would, no doubt, have left his spies in the street, and Diodoros went out to see if the road was clear. Melissa remained alone in the dark entrance, and began to be anxious as to how she could explain her presence there if the inhabitants should happen to discover it; for in this vast building, in spite of the lateness of the hour, there still was some one astir. She had for some minutes heard a murmuring sound which reached her from an inner chamber; but it was only by degrees that she collected herself so far as to listen more closely, to ascertain whence it came and what it could mean.

A large number of persons must be assembled there, for she could distinguish several male voices, and now and then a woman's. A door was opened. She shrank closer to the wall, but the seconds became minutes, and no one appeared.

At last she fancied she heard the moving of benches or seats, and many voices together shouting she knew not what. Then again a door creaked on its hinges, and after that all was so still that she could have heard a needle drop on the floor; and this alarming silence continued till presently a deep, resonant man's voice was audible.

The singular manner in which this voice gave every word its full and equal value suggested to her fancy that something was being read aloud. She could distinctly hear the sentence with which the speech or reading began. After a short pause it was repeated somewhat more quickly, as though the speaker had this time uttered it from his own heart.

It consisted of these six simple words, "The fullness of the time was come"; and Melissa listened no more to the discourse which followed, spoken as it was in a low voice, for this sentence rang in her ears as if it were repeated by an echo.

She did not, to be sure, understand its meaning, but she felt as though it must have some deep significance. It came back to her again and again, like a melody which haunts the inward ear against our will; and her meditative fancy was trying to solve its meaning, when Diodoros returned to tell her that the street was quite empty. He knew now where they were, and, if she liked, he could lead her by a way which would not take them through the gate. Only Christians, Egyptians, and other common folks dwelt in this quarter; however, since his duty as her protector had this day begun, he would fulfill it to the best of his ability.

She went with him out into the street, and when they had gone a little way he clasped her to him and kissed her hair.

His heart was full. He knew now that she, whom he had loved when she walked in his father's garden in her little child's tunic, holding her mother's hand, returned his passion. Now the time was come for asking whether she would permit him to beg her father's leave to woo her.

He stopped in the shadow of a house near, and, while he poured out to her all that stirred his breast, carried away by tender passion, and describing in his vehement way how great and deep his love was, in spite of the utter fatigue which weighed on her body and soul after so many agitations, she felt with deep thankfulness the immense happiness of being more precious than aught else on earth to a dear, good man. Love, which had so long lain dormant in her as a bud, and then opened so quickly only to close again under her alarms, unfolded once more and blossomed for him again—not as it had done just now in passionate ecstasy, but, as beseemed her calm, transparent nature, with moderated joy, which, however, did not lack due warmth and winning tenderness.

Happiness beyond words possessed them both. She suffered him to seal his vows with kisses, herself offering him her lips, as her heart swelled with fervent thanksgiving for so much joy and such a full measure of love.

She was indeed a precious jewel, and the passion of his stormy heart was tempered by such genuine reverence that he gladly kept

within the bounds which her maidenly modesty prescribed. And how much they had to say to each other in this first opening of their hearts, how many hopes for the future found utterance in words! The minutes flew on and became hours, till at last Melissa begged him to quit the marble seat on which they had so long been resting, if indeed her feet could still carry her home.

Little as it pleased him, he did her bidding. But as they went on he felt that she hung heavy on his arm and could only lift her little feet with the greatest difficulty. The street was too dark for him to see how pale she was; and yet he never took his eyes off her dear but scarcely distinguishable features. Suddenly he heard a faint whisper as in a dream, "I can go no farther," and at once led her back to the marble seat.

He first carefully spread his mantle over the stone and then wrapped her in it as tenderly as a mother might cover her shivering child, for a cooler breeze gave warning of the coming dawn. He himself crept close under the wall by her side, so as not to be seen, for a long train of people, with servants carrying lanterns before them, now came out of the house they had just left and down the street. Who these could be who walked at so late an hour in such solemn silence neither of them knew. They certainly sent up no joyful shout of "Iakchos!" no wild lament; no cheerful laughter nor sounds of mourning were to be heard from the long procession which passed along the street, two and two, at a slow pace. As soon as they had passed the last houses, men and women alike began to sing; no leader started them, nor

lyre accompanied them, and yet their song went up as though with one voice.

Diodoros and Melissa knew every note sung by the Greeks or Egyptians of Alexandria, at this or any other festival, but this melody was strange to them; and when the young man whispered to the girl, "What is it that they are singing?" she replied, as though startled from sleep, "They are no mere mortals!"

Diodoros shuddered; he fancied that the procession was floating above the earth; that, if they had been indeed men of flesh and blood, their steps would have been more distinctly audible on the pavement. Some of them appeared to him to be taller than common mortals, and their chant was certainly that of another world than this where he dwelt. Perhaps these were daimons, the souls of departed Egyptians, who, after a midnight visit to those they had left behind them, were returning to the rock tombs, of which there were many in the stony hills to which this street led. They were walking toward these tombs, and not toward the gate; and Diodoros whispered his suspicion to his companion, clasping his hand on an amulet in the semblance of an eye, which his Egyptian nurse had fastened round his neck long ago with an Anubic thread, to protect him against the evil-eye and magic spells.

But Melissa was listening with such devout attention to the chant that she did not hear him. The fatigue which had reached such a painful climax had, during this peaceful rest, given way to a blissful unconsciousness of self. It was a kind of happiness

to feel no longer the burden of exhaustion, and the song of the wanderers was like a cradle-song, lulling her to sweet dreams. It filled her with gladness, and yet it was not glad, not even cheerful. It went to her heart, and yet it was not mournful-not in the least like the passionate lament of Isis for Osiris, or that of Demeter bewailing her daughter. The emotion it aroused in her was a sweetly sorrowful compassion, which included herself, her brothers, her father, her lover, all who were doomed to suffering and death, even the utter stranger, for whom she had hitherto felt no sympathy.

And the compassion bore within it a sense of comfort which she could not explain, or perhaps would not inquire into. It struck her, too, now and then, that the strain had a ring as of thanksgiving. It was, no doubt, addressed to the gods, and for that reason it appealed to her, and she would gladly have joined in it, for she, too, was grateful to the immortals, and above all to Eros, for the love which had been born in her heart and had found such an ardent return. She sighed as she listened to every note of the chant, and it worked upon her like a healing draught.

The struggle of her will against bodily fatigue, and finally against the mental exhaustion of so much bliss, the conviction that her heavy, weary feet would perhaps fail to carry her home, and that she must seek shelter somewhere for the night, had disturbed her greatly. Now she was quite calm, and as much at ease as she was at home sitting with her father, her stitching in her hand, while she dreamed of her mother and her childhood in

the past. The singing had fallen on her agitated soul like the oil poured by the mariner on the sea to still the foaming breakers. She felt it so.

She could not help thinking of the time when she could fall asleep on her mother's bosom in the certainty that tender love was watching over her. The happiness of childhood, when she loved everything she knew-her family, the slaves, her father's birds, the flowers in the little garden, the altar of the goddess to whom she made offering, the very stars in the sky-seemed to come over her, and there she sat in dreamy lassitude, her head on her lover's shoulder, till the last stragglers of the procession, who, were women, many of them carrying little lamps in their hands, had almost all gone past.

Then she suddenly felt an eager jerk in the shoulder on which her head was resting.

"Look—look there!" he whispered; and as her eyes followed the direction of his finger, she too started, and exclaimed, "Korinna!—Did you know her?"

"She had often come to my father's garden," he replied, "and I saw her portrait in Alexander's room. These are souls from Hades that we have seen. We must offer sacrifice, for those to whom they show themselves they draw after them." At this Melissa, too, shuddered, and exclaimed in horror: "O Diodoros, not to death! We will ask the priests to-morrow morning what sacrifice may redeem us. Anything rather than the grave and the darkness of Hades!—Come, I am strong again now. Let us get away from

hence and go home."

"But we must go through the gate now," replied the youth. "It is not well to follow in the footsteps of the dead."

Melissa, however, insisted on going on through the street. Terrified as she was of the nether world and the disembodied souls, she would on no account risk falling into the hands of the horrible Egyptian, who might compel her to betray her brother's hiding-place; and Diodoros, who was ashamed to show her the fears which still possessed him, did as she desired.

But it was a comfort to him in this horror of death, which had come over him now for the first time in his life, to kiss the maid once more, and hold her warm hand in his as they walked on; while the strange chant of the nocturnal procession still rang in her ears, and now and then the words recurred to her mind which she had heard in the house where the departed souls had gathered together:

"The fullness of the time was come."

Did this refer to the hour when the dead came to the end of their life on earth; or was there some great event impending on the city and its inhabitants, for which the time had now come? Had the words anything to do with Caesar's visit? Had the dead come back to life to witness the scenes which they saw approaching with eyes clearer than those of mortals?

And then she remembered Korinna, whose fair, pale face had been strangely lighted up by the lamp she carried; and, again, the Magian's assurance that the souls of the departed were endowed

with every faculty possessed by the living, and that "those who knew" could see them and converse with them.

Then Serapion had been right in saying this; and her hand trembled in her lover's as she thought to herself that the danger which now threatened Philip was estrangement from the living through intercourse with the dead. Her own dead mother, perhaps, had floated past among these wandering souls, and she grieved to think that she had neglected to look for her and give her a loving greeting. Even Diodoros, who was not generally given to silent meditation, had his own thoughts to pursue; and so they walked on in silence till suddenly they heard a dull murmur of voices. This startled them, and looking up they saw before them the rocky cliffs in which the Egyptians long since, and now in later times the Christians, had hewn caves and tombs. From the door of one of these, only a few paces beyond where they stood, light streamed out; and as they were about to pass it a large dog barked. Immediately on this a man came out, and in a rough, deep voice asked them the pass-word. Diodoros, seized with sudden terror of the dark figure, which he believed to be a risen ghost, took to his heels, dragging Melissa with him. The dog flew after them, barking loudly; and when the youth stooped to pick up a stone to scare him off, the angry brute sprang on him and dragged him down.

Melissa screamed for help, but the gruff voice angrily bade her be silent. Far from obeying him, the girl shouted louder than ever; and now, out of the entrance to the cave, close behind the

scene of the disaster, came a number of men with lamps and tapers. They were the same daimons whose song she had heard in the street; she could not be mistaken. On her knees, by the side of her lover as he lay on the ground, she stared up at the apparitions. A stone flew at the dog to scare him off, and a second, larger than the first, whisked past her and hit Diodoros on the head; she heard the dull blow. At this a cold hand seemed to clutch her heart; everything about her melted into one whirling, colorless cloud. Pale as death, she threw up her arms to protect herself, and then, overcome with terror and fatigue, with a faint cry of anguish she lost consciousness.

When she opened her eyes again her head was resting in the lap of a kind, motherly woman, while some men were just bearing away the senseless form of Diodoros on a bier.

CHAPTER VI

The sun had risen an hour since. Heron had betaken himself to his workshop, whistling as he went, and in the kitchen his old slave Argutis was standing over the hearth preparing his master's morning meal. He dropped a pinch of dill into the barley-porridge, and shook his gray head solemnly.

His companion Dido, a Syrian, whose wavy white hair contrasted strangely with her dark skin, presently came in, and, starting up, he hastily inquired, "Not in yet?"

"No," said the other woman, whose eyes were full of tears. "And you know what my dream was. Some evil has come to her, I am certain; and when the master hears of it—" Here she sobbed aloud; but the slave reproved her for useless weeping.

"You never carried her in your arms," whimpered the woman.

"But often enough on my shoulder," retorted the Gaul, for Argutis was a native of Augusta Trevirorum, on the Moselle. "Assoon as the porridge is ready you must take it in and prepare the master."

"That his first fury may fall on me!" said the old woman, peevishly. "I little thought when I was young!"

"That is a very old story," said Argutis, "and we both know what the master's temper is. I should have been off long ago if only you could make his porridge to his mind. As soon as I have dished it I will go to seek Alexander—there is nothing to prevent

me—for it was with him that she left the house."

At this the old woman dried her tears, and cried "Yes, only go, and make haste. I will do everything else. Great gods, if she should be brought home dead! I know how it is; she could bear the old man's temper and this moping life no longer, and has thrown herself into the water.

"My dream, my dream! Here—here is the dish, and now go and find the boy. Still, Philip is the elder."

"He!" exclaimed the slave in a scornful tone. "Yes, if you want to know what the flies are talking about! Alexander for me. He has his head screwed on the right way, and he will find her if any man in Egypt can, and bring her back, alive or dead."

"Dead!" echoed Dido, with a fresh burst of sobs, and her tears fell in the porridge, which Argutis, indeed, in his distress of mind had forgotten to salt.

While this conversation was going on the gemcutter was feeding his birds. Can this man, who stands there like any girl, tempting his favorites to feed, with fond words and whistling, and the offer of attractive dainties, be the stormy blusterer of last night? There is not a coaxing name that he does not lavish on them, while he fills their cups with fresh seed and water; and how carefully he moves his big hand as he strews the little cages with clean sand! He would not for worlds scare the poor little prisoners who cheer his lonely hours, and who have long since ceased to fear him. A turtle-dove takes peas, and a hedge-sparrow picks ants' eggs from his lips; a white-throat perches on

his left hand to snatch a caterpillar from his right. The huge man was in his garden soon after sunrise gathering the dewy leaves for his feathered pets. But he talks and plays longest with the starling which his lost wife gave him. She had bought it in secret from the Bedouin who for many years had brought shells for sale from the Red Sea, to surprise her husband with the gift. The clever bird had first learned to call her name, Olympias; and then, without any teaching, had picked up his master's favorite lament, "My strength, my strength!"

Heron regarded this bird as a friend who understood him, and, like him, remembered the never-to-be-forsaken dead. For three years had the gem cutter been a widower, and he still thought more constantly and fondly of his lost wife than of the children she had left him. Heron scratched the bird's knowing little head, saying in a tone which betrayed his pity both for himself and his pet "Yes, old fellow, you would rather have a soft white finger to stroke you down. I can hear her now, when she would call you 'sweet little pet,' or 'dear little creature.' We shall neither of us ever hear such gentle, loving words again. Do you remember how she would look up with her dear sweet face—and was it not a lovely face?—when you called her by her name 'Olympias'? How many a time have her rosy lips blown up your feathers, and cried, 'Well done, little fellow! '—Ay, and she would say 'Well done' to me too, when I had finished a piece of work well. Ah, and what an eye she had, particularly for art! But now well, the children give me a good word too, now that her lips are silent!"

"Olympias!" cried the bird loudly and articulately, and the clouds that shadowed the gem-cutter's brow lifted a little, as with an affectionate smile he went on:

"Yes, yes; you would be glad, too, to have her back again. You call her now, as I did yesterday, standing by her grave—and she sends you her love.

"Do you hear, little one? Peck away at the old man's finger; he knows you mean it kindly, and it does not hurt. I was all alone out there, and Selene looked down on us in silence. There was rioting and shouting all round, but I could hear the voice of our dead. She was very near me, and her sad soul showed me that she still cared for me. I had taken a jar of our best wine of Byblos under my cloak; as soon as I had poured oil on her gravestone and shed some of the noble liquor, the earth drank it up as though it were thirsty. Not a drop was left. Yes, little fellow, she accepted the gift; and when I fell on my knees to meditate on her, she vouchsafed replies to many of my questions.

"We talked together as we used—you know. And we remembered you, too; I gave you her love.

"You understand me, little fellow, don't you? And, I tell you, better times are coming now."

He turned from the bird with a sharp movement of annoyance, for the slave-woman came in with the bowl of barley-porridge.

"You!" exclaimed Heron, in surprise. "Where is Melissa?"

"She will come presently," said the old woman, in a low and doubtful tone.

"Oh, thanks for the oracle!" said the artist, ironically.

"How you mock at a body!" said the old woman. "I meant —But eat first—eat. Anger and grief are ill food for an empty stomach."

Heron sat down to the table and began to eat his porridge, but he presently tossed away the spoon, exclaiming:

"I do not fancy it, eating by myself."

Then, with a puzzled glance at Dido, he asked in a tone of vexation:

"Well, why are you waiting here? And what is the meaning of all that nipping and tugging at your dress? Have you broken another dish? No? Then have done with that cursed head-shaking, and speak out at once!"

"Eat, eat," repeated Dido, retreating to the door, but Heron called her back with vehement abuse; but when she began again her usual complaint, "I never thought, when I was young—" Heron recovered the good temper he had been rejoicing in so lately, and retorted: "Oh! yes, I know, I have the daughter of a great potentate to wait on me. And if it had only occurred to Caesar, when he was in Syria, to marry your sister, I should have had his sister-in-law in my service. But at any rate I forbid howling. You might have learned in the course of thirty years, that I do not eat my fellow-creatures. So, now, confess at once what is wrong in the kitchen, and then go and fetch Melissa." The woman was, perhaps, wise to defer the evil moment as long as possible. Matters might soon change for the better, and good

or evil could come only from without. So Dido clung to the literal sense of her master's question, and something note-worthy had actually happened in the kitchen. She drew a deep breath, and told him that a subordinate of the night-watch had come in and asked whether Alexander were in the house, and where his painting-room was.

"And you gave him an exact description?" asked Heron.

But the slave shook her head; she again began to fidget with her dress, and said, timidly:

"Argutis was there, and he says no good can come of the night-watch. He told the man what he thought fit, and sent him about his business."

At this Heron interrupted the old woman with such a mighty blow of his fist on the table that the porridge jumped in the bowl, and he exclaimed in a fury:

"That is what comes of treating slaves as our equals! They begin to think for themselves. A stupid blunder can spoil the best day! The captain of the night-watch, I would have you to know, is a very great man, and very likely a friend of Seleukus's, whose daughter Alexander has just painted. The picture is attracting some attention.—Attention? What am I saying? Every one who has been allowed to see it is quite crazy about it. Everything else that was on show in the embalmers' hall was mere trash by comparison. Often enough have I grumbled at the boy, who would rather be anywhere than here; but, this time, I had some ground for being proud to be his father! And now the captain

of the watch sends his secretary, or something of the kind, no doubt, in order to have his portrait, or his wife's or daughter's —if he has one—painted by the artist who did Korinna's; and his own father's slave—it drives me mad to think of it—makes a face at the messenger and sends him all astray. I will give Argutis a lesson! But by this time, perhaps—Just go and fetch him in." With these words Heron again dropped his spoon, wiped his beard, and then, seeing that Dido was still standing before him as though spellbound, twitching her slave's gray gown, he repeated his order in such angry tones—though before he had spoken to her as gently as if she were one of his own children—that the old woman started violently and made for the door, crouching low and whimpering bitterly.

The soft-hearted tyrant was really sorry for the faithful old servant he had bought a generation since for the home to which he had brought his fair young wife, and he began to speak kindly to her, as he had previously done to the birds.

This comforted the old woman so much that again she could not help crying; but, notwithstanding the sincerity of her tears, being accustomed of old to take advantage of her master's moods, she felt that now was the time to tell her melancholy story. First of all she would at any rate see whether Melissa had not meanwhile returned; so she humbly kissed the hem of his robe and hurried away.

"Send Argutis to me!" Heron roared after her, and he returned to his breakfast with renewed energy.

He thought, as he ate, of his son's beautiful work, and the foolish self-importance of Argutis, so faithful, and usually, it must be owned, so shrewd. Then his eyes fell on Melissa's vacant place opposite to him, and he suddenly pushed away his bowl and rose to seek his daughter.

At this moment the starling called, in a clear, inviting tone, "Olympias!" and this cheered him, reminding him of the happy hour he had passed at his wife's grave and the good augury he had had there. The belief in a better time at hand, of which he had spoken to the bird, again took possession of his sanguine soul; and, fully persuaded that Melissa was detained in her own room or elsewhere by some trifling matter, he went to the window and shouted her name; for hers, too, opened on to the garden.

And it seemed as though the dear, obedient girl had come at his bidding, for, as he turned back into the room again, Melissa was standing in the open door.

After the pretty Greek greeting, "Joy be with you," which she faintly answered, he asked her, as fractiously as though he had spent hours of anxiety, where she had been so long. But he was suddenly silent, for he was astonished to see that she had not come from her room, but, as her dress betrayed, from some long expedition. Her appearance, too, had none of the exquisite neatness which it usually displayed; and then—what a state she was in! Whence had she come so early in the day?

The girl took off the kerchief that covered her head, and with a faint groan pushed her tangled hair off her temples, and her

bosom heaved as she panted out in a weary voice: “Here I am! But O, father, what a night I have spent!”

Heron could not for a minute or two find words to answer her.

What had happened to the girl? What could it be which made her seem so strange and unlike her self? He gazed at her, speechless, and alarmed by a hundred fearful suspicions. He felt as a mother might who has kissed her child’s fresh, healthy lips at night, and in the morning finds them burning with fever.

Melissa had never been ill from the day of her birth; since she had donned the dress of a full-grown maiden she had never altered; day after day and at all hours she had been the same in her quiet, useful, patient way, always thinking of her brothers, and caring for him rather than for herself.

It had never entered into his head to suppose that she could alter; and now, instead of the gentle, contented face with faintly rosy cheeks, he saw a pallid countenance and quivering lips. What mysterious fire had this night kindled in those calm eyes, which Alexander was fond of comparing to those of a gazelle? They were sunk, and the dark shadows that encircled them were a shock to his artistic eye. These were the eyes of a girl who had raved like a maenad the night through. Had she not slept in her quiet little room; had she been rushing with Alexander in the wild Bacchic rout; or had something dreadful happened to his son?

Nothing could have been so great a relief to him as to rave and rage as was his wont, and he felt strongly prompted to do so; but there was something in her which moved him to pity or shyness,

he knew not which, and kept him quiet. He silently followed her with his eyes while she folded her mantle and kerchief in her orderly way, and hastily gathered together the stray, curly locks of her hair, smoothed them, and bound them round her head.

Some one, however, must break the silence, and he gave a sigh of relief when the girl came up to him and asked him, in a voice so husky as to give him a fresh shock:

"Is it true that a Scythian, one of the nightwatch, has been here already?"

Then he broke out, and it really did him good to give vent to his repressed feelings in an angry speech:

"There again—the wisdom of slaves! The so-called Scythian brought a message from his master.

"The captain of the night-watch—you will see—wishes to honor Alexander with a commission."

"No, no," interrupted the girl. "They are hunting my brother down. I thank the gods that the Scythian should have come; it shows that Alexander is still free."

The gem-cutter clasped his bushy hair in both hands, for it seemed to him that the room was whirling round. But his old habits still got the better of him; he roared out with all the power of his mighty lungs: "What is that? What do you say? What has Alexander done? Where have you—both of you-been?" With two long strides the angry man came close up to the terrified girl; the birds fluttered in their cages, and the starling repeated his cries in melancholy tones. Heron stood still, pushing his fingers

through his thick gray hair, and with a sharp laugh exclaimed: "I came away from her grave full of fresh hopes for better days, and this is how they are fulfilled! I looked for fame, and I find disgrace! And you, hussy! where have you spent this night—where have you come from? I ask you once more!"

He raised his fist and shook it close in front of Melissa's eyes.

She stood before him as pale as death, and with wide-open eyes, from which the heavy tears dropped slowly, one by one, trickling down her cheeks as if they were tired. Heron saw them, and his rage melted. He staggered to a seat like a drunken man, and, hiding his face in his hands, moaned aloud, "Wretch, wretch that I am!" But his child's soft hand was laid on his head; warm, girlish lips kissed his brow; and Melissa whispered beseechingly: "Peace, father, peace. All may yet be well. I have something to tell you that will make you glad too; yes, I am sure it will make you glad."

Her father shrugged his shoulders incredulously, but wanted to know immediately what the miracle was that could smooth his brow. Melissa, however, would not tell him till it came in its place in her story. So he had to submit; he drew his seat up to the table, and took up a lump of modeling-wax to keep his restless fingers employed while he listened. She, too, sat down; she could scarcely stand.

At first he listened calmly to her narrative; and when she told him of Alexander's jest at Caesar's expense his face brightened. His Alexandrian blood and his relish for a biting speech got

the upper hand; he gave a sounding slap on his mighty leg, and exclaimed: "A cursed good thought! But the boy forgot that when Zeus only lamed his son it was because he is immortal; while Caesar's brother was as feeble a mortal as Caracalla himself is said to be at this day."

He laughed noisily; but it was for the last time that morning; for hardly had he heard the name of Zminis, and learned that it was he who had over heard Alexander, than he threw down the wax and started to his feet in horror, crying:

"That dog, who dared to cast his eyes on your mother, and persecuted her long after she had shown him the door! That sly mischief-maker! Many a time has he set snares in our path. If he succeeds in tightening the noose into which the boy has so heedlessly thrust his head—But first tell me, has he caught him already, or is Alexander still at liberty?"

But no one, not even Argutis, who was still out on the search, could tell him this; and he was now so greatly disturbed that, during the rest of Melissa's narrative, he perpetually paced the room, interrupting her now and then with questions or with outbursts of indignation. And then it occurred to him that he ought himself to seek his son, and he occupied himself with getting ready to go out.

Even when she spoke of the Magian, and his conviction that those who know are able to hold intercourse with the souls of the dead, he shrugged his shoulders incredulously, and went on lacing his sandals. But when Melissa assured him that not she

alone, but Diodoros with her, had seen the wandering soul of the departed Korinna in the train of ghosts, he dropped the straps he had bound round his ankle, and asked her who this Magian was, and where he might be found. However, she knew no more than that his name was Serapion, and she briefly described his dignified presence.

Heron had already seen the man, and he seemed still to be thinking of him, when Melissa, with a blush and downcast eyes, confessed that, as soon as he was well again, Diodoros was coming to her father to ask her of him in marriage.

It was a long story before she came at last to her own concerns, but it was always her way not to think of herself till every one else had had his due.

But what about her father? Had she spoken inaudibly, or was he really unable to-day to be glad? or what ailed him, that he paid no heed to the news which, even for him, was not without its importance, but, without a word of consent or disapproval, merely bade her go on with her story?

Melissa called him by name, as if to wake a man from sleep, and asked whether it were indeed possible that he really felt no pleasure in the happy prospect that lay before her, and that she had confessed to him. And now Heron lent an ear, and gave her to understand the satisfaction of his fatherly heart by kissing her. This news, in fact, made up for much that was evil, for Diodoros was a son-in-law after his own heart, and not merely because he was rich, or because his mother had been so great a friend of

Olympias's. No, the young man's father was, like himself, one of the old Macedonian stock; he had seen his daughter's lover grow to manhood, and there was not in the city a youth he could more heartily welcome. This he freely admitted; he only regretted that when she should set up house with her husband on the other side of the lake, he (Heron) would be left as lonely as a statue on its pedestal. His sons had already begun to avoid him like a leper!

Then, when he heard of what had befallen Diodoros, and Melissa went on to say that the people who had thrown the stone at the dog were Christians, and that they had carried the wounded youth into a large, clean dwelling, where he was being carefully attended when she had left him, Heron broke out into violent abuse. They were unpatriotic worshipers of a crucified Jew, who multiplied like vermin, and only wanted to turn the good old order of things upside down. But this time they should see—the hypocrites, who pretended to so much humanity, and then set ferocious dogs on peaceful folk!—they should learn that they could not fall on a Macedonian citizen without paying for it.

He indignantly refused to hear Melissa's assurance that none of the Christians had set the dog on her lover; she, however, maintained stoutly that it was merely by an unfortunate accident that the stone had hit Diodoros and cut his head so badly. She would not have quitted her lover but that she feared lest her prolonged absence should have alarmed her father.

Heron at last stood still for a minute or two, lost in thought, and then brought out of his chest a casket, from which he took a

few engraved gems. He held them carefully up to the light, and asked his daughter: "If I learn from Polybius, to whom I am now going, that they have already caught Alexander, should I venture now, do you think, to offer a couple of choice gems to Titianus, the prefect, to set him free again? He knows what is good, and the captain of the watch is his subordinate."

But Melissa besought him to give up the idea of seeking out Alexander in his hiding-place; for Heron, the gem-cutter, was known to every one, and if a man-at-arms should see him he would certainly follow him. As regarded the prefect, he would not apprehend any one this day, for, as her father knew, Caesar was to arrive at Alexandria at noon, and Titianus must be on the spot to meet him with all his train.

"But if you want to be out of doors and doing," she added, "go to see Philip. Bring him to reason, and discuss with him what is to be done."

She spoke with firm decision, and Heron looked with amazement at the giver of this counsel. Melissa had hitherto cared for his comfort in silence, without expressing any opinions of her own, and submitting to be the lightning-conductor for all his evil tempers. He did not rate her girlish beauty very high, for there were no ugly faces in his family nor in that of his deceased Olympias. And all the other consolations she offered him he took as a matter of course—nay, he sometimes made them a ground of complaint; for he would occasionally fancy that she wanted to assume the place of his beloved lost wife, and he regarded it as

a duty to her to show his daughter, and often very harshly and unkindly, how far she was from filling her mother's place.

Thus she had accustomed herself to do her duty as a daughter, with quiet and wordless exactitude, looking for no thanks; while he thought he was doing her a kindness merely by suffering her constant presence. That he should ever exchange ideas with his daughter, or ask her opinion, would have seemed to Heron absolutely impossible; yet it had come to this, and for the second time this morning he looked in her face with utter amazement.

He could not but approve her warning not to betray Alexander's hiding-place, and her suggestion that he should go to see his eldest son coincided with an unspoken desire which had been lurking in his mind ever since she had told him of her having seen a disembodied soul. The possibility of seeing her once more, whose memory was dearer to him than all else on earth, had such a charm, that it moved him more deeply than the danger of his son, who was, nevertheless, very dear to his strangely tempered heart.

So he answered Melissa coolly, as if he were telling her of a decision already formed:

"Of course! I meant to see Philip too; only"—and he paused, for anxiety about Alexander again came to the front—"I can not bear to remain in such uncertainty about the boy."

At this instant the door opened. The new-comer was Andreas, the man to whom Diodoros had advised Alexander to apply for protection and counsel; and Melissa greeted him with filial

affection.

He was a freedman in her lover's family, and was the steward and manager of his master's extensive gardens and lands, which were under his absolute control. No one could have imagined that this man had ever been a slave; his face was swarthy, but his fine black eyes lighted it up with a glance of firm self reliance and fiery energy. It was the look of a man who might be the moving spirit of one of those rebellions which were frequent in Alexandria; there was an imperious ring in his voice, and decision in the swift gestures of his hardened but shapely hands.

For twenty years, indeed, he had ruled over the numerous slaves of Polybius, who was an easy-going master, and an invalid from gout in his feet. He was at this time a victim to a fresh attack, and had therefore sent his confidential steward into the town to tell Heron that he approved of his son's choice, and that he would protect Alexander from pursuit.

All this Andreas communicated in few and business-like words; but he then turned to Melissa, and said, in a tone of kindly and affectionate familiarity: "Polybius also wishes to know how your lover is being cared for by the Christians, and from hence I am going on to see our sick boy."

"Then ask your friends," the gem-cutter broke in, "to keep less ferocious dogs for the future."

"That," replied the freedman, "will be unnecessary, for it is not likely that the fierce brute belongs to the community whose friendship I am proud to claim; and, if it does, they will be as

much grieved over the matter as we can be."

"A Christian would never do another an ill turn!" said Heron, with a shrug.

"Never, so far as justice permits," replied Andreas, decisively. Then he inquired whether Heron had any message or news to send to his son; and when the gem-cutter replied that he had not, the freedman was about to go. Melissa, however, detained him, saying:

"I will go with you if you will allow me."

"And I?" said Heron, irritably. "It seems to me that children are learning to care less and less what their fathers' views and requirements may be. I have to go to Philip. Who knows what may happen in my absence? Besides—no offense to you, Andreas—what concern has my daughter among the Christians?"

"To visit her lover," replied Andreas, sharply. And he added, more quietly: "It will be a pleasure to me to escort her; and your Argutis is a faithful fellow, and in case of need would be of more use here than an inexperienced girl. I see no reasonable ground for detaining her, Heron. I should like afterwards to take her home with me, across the lake; it would be a comfort to Polybius and soothe his pain to have his favorite with him, his future daughter.—Get ready, my child."

The artist had listened with growing anger, and a swift surge of rage made him long to give the freedman a sharp lesson. But when his glaring eye met the Christian's steady, grave gaze, he

controlled himself, and only said, with a shrug which sufficiently expressed his feeling that he was surrendering his veto against his better judgment, addressing himself to Melissa and ignoring Andreas:

"You are betrothed, and of age. Go, for aught I care, in obedience to him whose wishes evidently outweigh mine. Polybius's son is your master henceforth."

He folded his mantle, and when the girl hastened to help him he allowed her to do it; but he went on, to the freedman: "And for aught I care, you may take her across the lake, too. It is natural that Polybius should wish to see his future daughter. But one thing I may ask for myself: You have slaves and to spare; if anything happens to Alexander, let me hear of it at once."

He kissed Melissa on the head, nodded patronizingly to Andreas, and left the house.

His soft-hearted devotion to a vision had weakened his combativeness; still, he would have yielded less readily to a man who had once been a slave, but that the invitation to Melissa released him of her presence for a while.

He was not, indeed, afraid of his daughter; but she need not know that he wanted Philip to make him acquainted with Serapion, and that through his mediation he hoped at least to see the spirit of the wife he mourned. When he was fairly out of the house he smiled with satisfaction like a school-boy who had escaped his master.

CHAPTER VII

Melissa, too, had a sense of freedom when she found herself walking by the side of Andreas.

In the garden of Hermes, where her father's house stood, there were few signs of the excitement with which the citizens awaited Caesar's arrival. Most of those who were out and about were going in the opposite direction; they meant to await the grand reception of Caracalla at the eastern end of the city, on his way from the Kanopic Gate to the Gate of the Sun. Still, a good many—men, women and children—were, like themselves, walking westward, for it was known that Caesar would alight at the Serapeum.

They had scarcely left the house when Andreas asked the girl whether she had a kerchief or a veil in the basket the slave was carrying behind her; and on her replying in the affirmative, he expressed his satisfaction; for Caracalla's soldiery, in consequence of the sovereign's weakened discipline and reckless liberality, were little better than an unbridled rabble.

"Then let us keep out of their way," urged Melissa.

"Certainly, as much as possible," said her companion. "At any rate, let us hurry, so as to get back to the lake before the crowd stops the way.

"You have passed an eventful and anxious night, my child, and are tired, no doubt."

"Oh, no!" said she, calmly; "I had some wine to refresh me, and some food with the Christians."

"Then they received you kindly?"

"The only woman there nursed Diodoros like a mother; and the men were considerate and careful. My father does not know them; and yet—Well, you know how much he dislikes them."

"He follows the multitude," returned Andreas, "the common herd, who hate everything exceptional, everything that disturbs their round of life, or startles them out of the quietude of their dull dreams. Woe to those who call by its true name what those blind souls call pleasure and enjoyment as serving to hasten the flight of time—not too long at the most; woe to those who dare raise even a finger against it!"

The man's deep, subdued tones were strongly expressive of the wrath within him; and the girl, who kept close to his side, asked with eager anxiety, "Then my father was right when he said that you are a member of the Christian body?"

"Yes," he replied, emphatically; and when Melissa curiously inquired whether it were true that the followers of the crucified God had renounced their love for home and country, which yet ought to be dear to every true man, Andreas answered with a superior smile, that even the founder of the Stoa had required not only of his fellow-Greeks but of all human beings, that they should regulate their existence by the same laws, since they were brethren in reason and sense.

"He was right," added Andreas, more earnestly, "and I tell

you, child, the time is not far off when men shall no longer speak of Roman and Greek, of Egyptian and Syrian, of free men and slaves; when there shall be but one native land, but one class of life for all. Yea, the day is beginning to dawn even now. The fullness of the time is come!"

Melissa looked up at him in amazement, exclaiming: "How strange! I have heard those words once to-day already, and can not get them out of my head. Nay, when you confirmed my father's report, I made up my mind to ask you to explain them."

"What words?" asked Andreas, in surprise. "The fullness of the time is come."

"And where did you hear them?"

"In the house where Diodoros and I took refuge from Zminis."

"A Christian meeting-house," replied Andreas, and his expressive face darkened. "But those who assemble there are aliens to me; they follow evil heresies. But never mind—they also call themselves Christians, and the words which led you to ponder, stand to me at the very gate of the doctrine of our divine master, like the obelisks before the door of an Egyptian temple. Paul, the great preacher of the faith, wrote them to the Galatians. They are easy to understand; nay, any one who looks about him with his eyes open, or searches his own soul, can scarcely fail to see their meaning, if only the desire is roused in him for something better than what these cursed times can give us who live in them."

"Then it means that we are on the eve of great changes?"

"Yes!" cried Andreas, "only the word you use is too feeble. The old dull sun must set, to rise again with greater glory."

Ill at ease, and by no means convinced, Melissa looked her excited companion in the face as she replied:

"Of course I know, Andreas, that you speak figuratively, for the sun which lights the day seems to me bright enough; and is not everything flourishing in this gay, busy city? Are not its citizens under the protection of the law? Were the gods ever more zealously worshiped? Is my father wrong when he says that it is a proud thing to belong to the mightiest realm on earth, before whose power barbarians tremble; a great thing to feel and call yourself a Roman citizen?"

So far Andreas had listened to her with composure, but he here interrupted, in a tone of scorn "Oh, yes! Caesar has made your father, and your neighbor Skopas, and every free man in the country a Roman citizen; but it is a pity that, while he gave each man his patent of citizenship, he should have filched the money out of his purse."

"Apion, the dealer, was saying something to that effect the other day, and I dare say it is true. But I can not be persuaded against the evidence of my own eyes, and they light on many good and pleasant things. If only you had been with us to the Nekropolis yesterday! Every man was honoring the gods after his own manner. Some, indeed, were grave enough; still, cheerfulness won the day among the people. Most of them were full of the god. I myself, who generally live so quietly, was

infected as the mystics came back from Eleusis, and we joined their ranks."

"'Till the spy Zminis spoiled your happiness and imperiled your brother's life for a careless speech."

"Very true!"

"And what your brother heedlessly proclaimed," Andreas went on, with flashing eyes, "the very sparrows twitter on the house-tops. It is the truth. The sovereign of the Roman Empire is a thousand times a murderer. Some he sent to precede his own brother, and they were followed by all—twenty thousand, it is said—who were attached to the hapless Geta, or who even spoke his name. This is the lord and master to whom we owe obedience whom God has set over us for our sins. And when this wretch in the purple shall close his eyes, he, like the rest of the criminals who have preceded him on the throne, will be proclaimed a god! A noble company! When your beloved mother died I heard you, even you, revile the gods for their cruelty; others call them kind. It is only a question of how they accept the blood of the sacrificed beasts, their own creatures, which you shed in their honor. If Serapis does not grant some fool the thing he asks, then he turns to the altar of Isis, of Anubis, of Zeus, of Demeter. At last he cries to Sabazios, or one of the new deities of Olympus, who owe their existence to the decisions of the Roman Senate, and who are for the most part scoundrels and villains. There certainly never were more gods than there are now; and among those of whom the myths tell us things strange enough to bring those who

worship them into contempt, or to the gallows, is the countless swarm of good and evil daimons. Away with your Olympians! They ought to reward virtue and punish vice; and they are no better than corruptible judges; for you know beforehand just what and how much will avail to purchase their favors."

"You paint with dark colors," the girl broke in. "I have learned from Philip that the Pythagoreans teach that not the sacrifice, but the spirit of the offering, is what really matters."

"Quite right. He was thinking, no doubt, of the miracle-monger of Tyana, Apollonius, who certainly had heard of the doctrine of the Redeemer. But among the thousand nine hundred and ninety, who here bring beasts to the altar, who ever remembers this? Quite lately I heard one of our garden laborers ask how much a day he ought to sacrifice to the sun, his god. I told him a keration—for that is what the poor creature earns for a whole day's work. He thought that too much, for he must live; so the god must be content with a tithe, for the taxes to the State on his earnings were hardly more."

"The divinity ought no doubt to be above all else to us," Melissa observed. "But when your laborer worships the sun, and looks for its benefits, what is the difference between him and you, or me, or any of us, though we call the sun Helios or Serapis, or what not?"

"Yes, yes," replied Andreas. "The sun is adored here under many different names and forms, and your Serapis has swallowed up not only Zeus and Pluto, but Phoebus Apollo and the Egyptian

Osiris and Ammon, and Ra, to swell his own importance. But to be serious, child, our fathers made to themselves many gods indeed, of the sublime phenomena and powers of Nature, and worshiped them admiringly; but to us only the names remain, and those who offer to Apollo never think of the sun. With my laborer, who is an Arab, it is different. He believes the light-giving globe itself to be a god; and you, I perceive, do not think him wholly wrong. But when you see a youth throw the discus with splendid strength, do you praise the discus, or the thrower?"

"The thrower," replied Melissa. "But Phoebus Apollo himself guides his chariot with his divine hands."

"And astronomers," the Christian went on, "can calculate for years to come exactly where his steeds will be at each minute of the time. So no one can be more completely a slave than he to whom so many mortals pray that he will, of his own free-will, guide circumstances to suit them. I, therefore, regard the sun as a star, like any other star; and worship should be given, not to those rolling spheres moving across the sky in prescribed paths, but to Him who created them and guides them by fixed laws. I really pity your Apollo and the whole host of the Olympian gods, since the world has become possessed by the mad idea that the gods and daimons may be moved, or even compelled, by forms of prayer and sacrifices and magic arts, to grant to each worshiper the particular thing on which he may have set his covetous and changeable fancy."

"And yet," exclaimed Melissa, "you yourself told me that you

prayed for my mother when the leech saw no further hope. Every one hopes for a miracle from the immortals when his own power has come to an end! Thousands think so. And in our city the people have never been more religious than they are now. The singer of the Ialemos at the feast of Adonis particularly praised us for it."

"Because they have never been more fervently addicted to pleasure, and therefore have never more deeply dreaded the terrors of hades. The great and splendid Zeus of the Greeks has been transformed into Serapis here, on the banks of the Nile, and has become a god of the nether world. Most of the ceremonies and mysteries to which the people crowd are connected with death. They hope that the folly over which they waste so many hours will smooth their way to the fields of the blest, and yet they themselves close the road by the pleasures they indulge in. But the fullness of time is now come; the straight road lies open to all mankind, called as they are to a higher life in a new world, and he who follows it may await death as gladly as the bride awaits the bridegroom on her marriage day. Yes, I prayed to my God for your dying mother, the sweetest and best of women. But what I asked for her was not that her life might be preserved, or that she might be permitted to linger longer among us, but that the next world might be opened to her in all its glory."

At this point the speaker was interrupted by an armed troop which thrust the crowd aside to make way for the steers which were to be slaughtered in the Temple of Serapis at the approach

of Caesar. There were several hundred of them, each with a garland about its neck, and the handsomest which led the train had its horns gilded.

When the road was clear again, Andreas pointed to the beasts, and whispered to his companion "Their blood will be shed in honor of the future god Caracalla. He once killed a hundred bears in the arena with his own hand. But I tell you, child, when the fullness of time is come, innocent blood shall no more be shed. You were speaking with enthusiasm of the splendor of the Roman Empire. But, like certain fruit-trees in our garden which we manure with blood, it has grown great on blood, on the life-juice of its victims. The mightiest realm on earth owes its power to murder and rapine; but now sudden destruction is coming on the insatiate city, and visitation for her sins."

"And if you are right—if the barbarians should indeed destroy the armies of Caesar," asked Melissa, looking up in some alarm at the enthusiast, "what then?"

"Then we may thank those who help to demolish the crumbling house!" cried Andreas, with flashing eyes.

"And if it should be so," said the girl, with tremulous anxiety, "what universal ruin! What is there on earth that could fill its place? If the empire falls into the power of the barbarians, Rome will be made desolate, and all the provinces laid waste which thrive under her protection."

"Then," said Andreas, "will the kingdom of the Spirit arise, in which peace and love shall reign instead of hatred and murder

and wars. There shall be one fold and one Shepherd, and the least shall be equal with the greatest."

"Then there will be no more slaves?" asked Melissa, in growing amazement.

"Not one," replied her companion, and a gleam of inspiration seemed to light up his stern features. "All shall be free, and all united in love by the grace of Him who hath redeemed us."

But Melissa shook her head, and Andreas, understanding what was passing in her mind, tried to catch her eye as he went on:

"You think that these are the impossible wishes of one who has himself been a slave, or that it is the remembrance of past suffering and unutterable wrong which speaks in me? For what right-minded man would not desire to preserve others from the misery which once crushed him to earth with its bitter burden?—But you are mistaken. Thousands of free-born men and women think as I do, for to them, too, a higher Power has revealed that the fullness of time is now come. He, the Greatest and Best, who made all the woes of the world His own, has chosen the poor rather than the rich, the suffering rather than the happy, the babes rather than the wise and prudent; and in his kingdom the last shall be first—yea, the least of the last, the poorest of the poor; and they, child, are the slaves."

He ended his diatribe with a deep sigh, but Melissa pressed the hand which held hers as they walked along the raised pathway, and said: "Poor Andreas! How much you must have gone through before Polybius set you free!"

He only nodded, and they both remained silent till they found themselves in a quiet side street. Then the girl looked up at him inquiringly, and began again:

"And now you hope for a second Spartacus? Or will you yourself lead a rebellion of the slaves? You are the man for it, and I can be secret."

"If it has to be, why not?" he replied, and his eyes sparkled with a strange fire. But seeing that she shrank from him, a smile passed over his countenance, and he added in a soothing tone: "Do not be alarmed, my child; what must come will come, without another Spartacus, or bloodshed, or turmoil. And you, with your clear eyes and your kind heart, would you find it difficult to distinguish right from wrong, and to feel for the sorrows of others—? Yes, perhaps! For what will not custom excuse and sanctify? You can pity the bird which is shut into a cage too small for it, or the mule which breaks down under too heavy a load, and the cruelty which hurts them rouses your indignation. But for the man whom a terrible fate has robbed of his freedom, often through the fault of another, whose soul endures even greater torments than his despised body, you have no better comfort than the advice which might indeed serve a philosopher, but which to him is bitter mockery: to bear his woes with patience. He is only a slave, bought, or perhaps inherited. Which of you ever thinks of asking who gave you, who are free, the right to enslave half of all the inhabitants of the Roman Empire, and to rob them of the highest prerogative of humanity?

I know that many philosophers have spoken of slavery as an injustice done by the strong to the weak: but they shrugged their shoulders over it nevertheless, and excused it as an inevitable evil; for, thought they, who will serve me if my slave is regarded as my equal? You only smile at this confusion of the meditative recluses, but you forget"—and a sinister fire glowed in his eyes —"that the slave, too, has a soul, in which the same feelings stir as in your own. You never think how a proud man may feel whose arm you brand, and whose very breath of life is indignity; or what a slave thinks who is spurned by his master's foot, though noble blood may run in his veins. All living things, even the plants in the garden, have a right to happiness, and only develop fully in freedom, and under loving care; and yet one half of mankind robs the other half of this right. The sum total of suffering and sorrow to which Fate had doomed the race is recklessly multiplied and increased by the guilt of men themselves. But the cry of the poor and wretched has gone up to heaven, and now that the fullness of time is come, 'Thus far, and no farther,' is the word. No wild revolutionary has been endowed with a giant's strength to burst the bonds of the victims asunder. No, the Creator and Preserver of the world sent his Son to redeem the poor in spirit, and, above all, the brethren and the sisters who are weary and heavy laden. The magical word which shall break the bars of the prisons where the chains of the slaves are heard is Love.... But you, Melissa, can but half comprehend all this," he added, interrupting the ardent flow of his enthusiastic speech. "You can not understand it all.

For you, too, child, the fullness of time is coming; for you, too, freeborn though you are, are, I know, one of the heavy laden who patiently suffer the burden laid upon you. You too—But keep close to me; we shall find it difficult to get through this throng."

It was, in fact, no easy matter to get across the crowd which was pouring noisily down the street of Hermes, into which this narrow way led. How ever, they achieved it, and when Melissa had recovered her breath in a quiet lane in Rhakotis, she turned to her companion again with the question, "And when do you suppose that your predictions will be fulfilled?"

"As soon as the breeze blows which shall shake the overripe fruit from the tree. It may be tomorrow, or not yet, according to the long-suffering of the Most High. But the entire collapse of the world in which we have been living is as certain to come as that you are walking here with me!"

Melissa walked on with a quaking heart, as she heard her friend's tone of conviction; he, however, was aware that the inmost meaning of his words was sealed to her. To his inquiry, whether she could not rejoice in the coming of the glorious time in store for redeemed humanity, she answered, tremulously:

"All you hope for is glorious, no doubt, but what shall lead to it must be a terror to all. Were you told of the kingdom of which you speak by an oracle, or is it only a picture drawn by your imagination, a vision, and the offspring of your soul's desire?"

"Neither," said Andreas, decidedly; and he went on in a louder voice: "I know it by revelation. Believe me, child, it is as certainly

true as that the sun will set this night. The gates of the heavenly Jerusalem stand open, and if you, too, would fain be blessed—But more of this later. Here we are at our journey's end."

They entered the Christian home, where they found Diodoros, on a comfortable couch, in a spacious, shady room, and in the care of a friendly matron.

But he was in an evil case. The surgeon thought his wound a serious one; for the heavy stone which had hit him had injured the skull, and the unhappy youth was trembling with fever. His head was burning, and it was with difficulty that he spoke a few coherent words. But his eyes betrayed that he recognized Melissa, and that it was a joy to him to see her again; and when he was told that Alexander had so far escaped, a bright look lighted up his countenance. It was evidently a comfort to him to gaze on Melissa's pretty face; her hand lay in his, and he understood her when she greeted him from her father, and spoke to him of various matters; but the lids ere long closed over his aching eyes.

Melissa felt that she must leave him to rest. She gently released his hand from her grasp and laid it across his breast, and moved no more, excepting to wipe the drops from his brow. Solemn stillness had reigned for some time in the large, clean house, faintly smelling of lavender; but, on a sudden, doors opened and shut; steps were heard in the anteroom, seats were moved, and a loud confusion of men's voices became audible, among them that of Andreas.

Melissa listened anxiously to the heated discussion which had

already become a vehement quarrel. She longed to implore the excited wranglers to moderate their tones, for she could see by her lover's quivering lips that the noise hurt him; but she could not leave him.

The dispute meanwhile grew louder and louder. The names of Montanus and Tertullian, Clemens and Origen, fell on her ear, and at last she heard Andreas exclaim in high wrath: "You are like the guests at a richly furnished banquet who ask, after they have well eaten, when the meat will be brought in. Paraclete is come, and yet you look for another."

He was not allowed to proceed; fierce and scornful contradiction checked his speech, till a voice of thunder was heard above the rest:

"The heavenly Jerusalem is at hand. He who denies and doubts the calling of Montanus is worse than the heathen, and I, for one, cast him off as neither a brother nor a Christian!"

This furious denunciation was drowned in uproar; the anxious girl heard seats overturned, and the yells and shouts of furious combatants; the suffering youth meanwhile moaned with anguish, and an expression of acute pain was stamped on his handsome features. Melissa could bear it no longer; she had risen to go and entreat the men to make less noise, when suddenly all was still.

Diodoros immediately became calmer, and looked up at the girl as gratefully as though the soothing silence were owing to her. She could now hear the deep tones of the head of the Church

of Alexandria, and understood that the matter in hand was the readmission into this congregation of a man who had been turned out by some other sect. Some would have him rejected, and commended him to the mercy of God; others, less rigid, were willing to receive him, since he was ready to submit to any penance.

Then the quarrel began again. High above every other voice rose the shrill tones of a man who had just arrived from Carthage, and who boasted of personal friendship with the venerable Tertullian. The listening girl could no longer follow the connection of the discussion, but the same names again met her ear; and, though she understood nothing of the matter, it annoyed her, because the turmoil disturbed her lover's rest.

It was not till the sick-nurse came back that the tumult was appeased; for, as soon as she learned how seriously the loud disputes of her fellow-believers were disturbing the sick man's rest, she interfered so effectually, that the house was as silent as before.

The deaconess Katharine was the name by which she was known, and in a few minutes she returned to her patient's bedside.

Andreas followed her, with the leech, a man of middle height, whose shrewd and well-formed head, bald but for a little hair at the sides, was set on a somewhat ungainly body. His sharp eyes looked hither and thither, and there was something jerky in his quick movements; still, their grave decisiveness made up for the lack of grace. He paid no heed to the bystanders, but threw

himself forward rather than bent over the patient, felt him, and with a light hand renewed his bandages; and then he looked round the room, examining it as curiously as though he proposed to take up his abode there, ending by fixing his prominent, round eyes on Melissa. There was something so ruthlessly inquisitive in that look that it might, under other circumstances, have angered her. However, as it was, she submitted to it, for she saw that it was shrewd, and she would have called the wisest physician on earth to her lover's bedside if she had had the power.

When Ptolemaeus—for so he was called—had, in reply to the question, "who is that?" learned who she was, he hastily murmured: "Then she can do nothing but harm here. A man in a fever wants but one thing, and that is perfect quiet."

And he beckoned Andreas to the window, and asked him shortly, "Has the girl any sense?"

"Plenty," replied the freedman, decisively.

"As much, at any rate, as she can have at her age," the other retorted. "Then it is to be hoped that she will go without any leave-taking or tears. That fine lad is in a bad way. I have known all along what might do him good, but I dare not attempt it alone, and there is no one in Alexandria.... But Galen has come to join Caesar. If he, old as he is—But it is not for the likes of us to intrude into Caesar's quarters—Still—"

He paused, laying his hand on his brow, and rubbing it thoughtfully with his short middle finger. Then he suddenly exclaimed: "The old man would never come here. But the

Serapeum, where the sick lie awaiting divine or diabolical counsel in dreams—Galen will go there. If only we could carry the boy thither."

"His nurse here would hardly allow that," said Andreas, doubtfully.

"He is a heathen." replied the leech, hotly. "Besides, what has faith to do with the injury to the body? How many Caesars have employed Egyptian and Jewish physicians? The lad would get the treatment he needs, and, Christian as I am, I would, if necessary, convey him to the Serapeum, though it is of all heathen temples the most heathen. I will find out by hook or by crook at what time Galen is to visit the cubicles. To-morrow, or next day at latest; and to-night, or, better still, to-morrow morning before sunrise, I will have the youth carried there. If the deaconess refuses—"

"And she will," Andreas put in.

"Very well.—Come here, maiden," he beckoned to Melissa, and went on loud enough for the deaconess to hear: "If we can get your betrothed to the Serapeum early to-morrow, he may probably be cured; otherwise I refuse to be responsible. Tell your friends and his that I will be here before sunrise to-morrow, and that they must provide a covered litter and good bearers."

He then turned to the deaconess, who had followed him in silence, with her hands clasped like a deserter, laid his broad, square hand on her shoulder, and added:

"So it must be, Widow Katharine, Love endures and suffers all things, and to save a neighbor's life, it is well to suffer in

silence even things that displease us. I will explain it all to you afterwards. Quiet, only perfect quiet—No melancholy leave-taking, child! The sooner you are out of the house the better."

He went back again to the bed, laid his hand for a moment on the sick man's forehead, and then left the room.

Diodoros lay still and indifferent on the couch. Melissa kissed him on the brow, and withdrew without his observing it, her eyes full of tears.

CHAPTER VIII

The sun had passed the meridian when Melissa and Andreas left the house. They walked on in silence through the deserted streets, the girl with her eyes sadly fixed on the ground; for an inward voice warned her that her lover's life was in danger. She did not sob, but more than once she wiped away a large tear.

Andreas, too, was lost in his own thoughts. To win a soul to the Saviour was surely a good work. He knew Melissa's sober, thoughtful nature, and the retired, joyless life she led with her surly old father. So his knowledge of human nature led him to think that she, if any one, might easily be won over to the faith in which he found his chief happiness. Baptism had given such sanctification to his life that he longed to lead the daughter of the only woman for whom his heart had ever beat a shade faster, to the baptismal font. In the heat of summer Olympias had often been the guest for weeks together of Polybius's wife, now likewise dead. Then she had taken a little house of her own for herself and her children, and when his master's wife died, the lonely widower had known no greater pleasure than that of receiving her on his estate for as long as Heron would allow her to remain; he himself never left his work for long. Thus Andreas had become the great ally of the gem-cutter's children, and, as they could learn nothing from him that was not good and worth knowing, Olympias had gladly allowed them to remain in his

society, and herself found a teacher and friend in the worthy steward. She knew that Andreas had joined the Christians; she had made him tell her much about his faith; still, as the daughter and wife of artists, she was firmly attached to the old gods, and could only regard the Christian doctrine as a new system of philosophy in which many things attracted her, but many, on the other hand, repelled her. At that time his passion for Melissa's mother had possessed him so wholly that his life was a constant struggle against the temptation to covet his neighbor's wife. And he had conquered, doing severe penance for every glance which might for an instant betray to her the weakness of his soul. She had loved flowers, and he knew the plant-world so well, and was so absolutely master over everything which grew and bloomed in the gardens of which he had charge, that he could often intrust his speechless favorites to tell her things which lips and eyes might not reveal. Now she was no more, and the culture of plants had lost half its charm since her eyes could no longer watch their thriving. He now left the gardens for the most part to his men, while he devoted himself to other cares with double diligence, and to the strictest exercises of his faith.

But, as many a man adores the children of the woman he might not marry, Alexander and Melissa daily grew dearer to Andreas. He took a father's interest in their welfare, and, needing little himself, he carefully hoarded his ample income to promote the cause of Christianity and encourage good works; but he had paid Alexander's debts when his time of apprenticeship was over, for

they were so considerable that the reckless youth had not dared confess the sum to his stern father.

Very soon after this, Alexander had become one of the most popular painters of the town; and when he proposed to repay his friend the money he had lent him, Andreas accepted it; but he added it to a capital of which the purpose was his secret, but which, if his prayers were heard, might return once more to benefit Alexander. Diodoros, too, was as dear to the freedman as a son of his own could have been, though he was a heathen. In the gymnasium and the race-course, or in the practice of the mysteries, the good seed which he sowed in the lad's heart was trodden down. Polybius, too, was an utter heathen; indeed, he was one of the priests of Dionysus and Demeter, as his wealth and position in the senate required.

Then, Diodoros had confessed to him that he hoped to win Melissa for his wife, and this had been adverse to Andreas's hope and purpose of making a Christian of the girl; for he knew by experience how easily married happiness was wrecked when man and wife worship different gods. But when the freedman had again seen the gem-cutter's brutality and the girl's filial patience, an inward voice had called to him that this gentle, gifted creature was one of those elect from among whom the Lord chose the martyrs for the faith; and that it was his part to lead her into the fold of the Redeemer. He had begun the work of converting her with the zeal he put into everything. But fresh doubts had come upon him on the threshold of the sick-room,

after seeing the lad who was so dear to him, and whose eye had met his with such a trustful, suffering look. Could it be right to sow the seed of discord between him and his future wife? And supposing Diodoros, too, should be converted by Melissa, could he thus alienate from his father the son and heir of Polybius—his benefactor and master?

Then, he remembered, too, to what a position he had risen through that master's confidence in him. Polybius knew nothing of the concerns of his house but from the reports laid before him by Andreas; for the steward controlled not merely the estate but the fortune of the family, and for years had been at the head of the bank which he himself had founded to increase the already vast income of the man to whom he owed his freedom. Polybius paid him a considerable portion of each year's profits, and had said one day at a banquet, with the epigrammatic wit of an Alexandrian, that his freedman, Andreas, served his interests as only one other man could do—namely, himself—but with the industry of ten. The Christian greatly appreciated his confidence; and as he walked on by the side of Melissa, he told himself again and again that it would be dishonorable to betray it.

If only the sweet girl might find the way alone! If she were chosen to salvation, the Lord himself would lead and guide her. Had he indeed not beckoned her already by impressing on her heart those words, "The fullness of the time is now come?"

That he was justified in keeping this remembrance alive he had no doubt; and he was about to speak of it again, when she

prevented him by raising her large eyes beseechingly to his, and asking him:

"Is Diodoros in real danger? Tell me the truth. I would rather endure the worst than this dreadful anxiety."

So Andreas acknowledged that the youth was in a bad way, but that Ptolemaeus, himself well-skilled, hoped to cure him if his greater colleague Galenus would aid him.

"And it is to secure his assistance, then," Melissa went on, "that the leech would have him carried to the Serapeum?"

"Yes, my child. For he is in Caesar's train, and it would be vain to try to speak with him to-day or to-morrow."

"But the journey through the town will do the sufferer a mischief."

"He will be carried in a litter."

"But even that is not good for him. Perfect quiet, Ptolemaeus said, was the best medicine."

"But Galenus has even better remedies at hand," was the reply.

Melissa seemed satisfied with this assurance, for she walked on for some time in silence. But when the uproar of the crowd in the vicinity of the Serapeum became more audible as they advanced, she suddenly stood still, and said:

"Come what may, I will find my way to the great physician's presence and crave his help." "You?" cried the freedman; and when she firmly reiterated her purpose, the strong man turned pale.

"You know not what you say!" he exclaimed, in deep concern.

"The men who guard the approaches to Caracalla are ruthless profligates, devoid of courtesy or conscience. But, you may rely upon it, you will not even get into the antechamber."

"Perhaps. Nevertheless, it is my duty, and I will try."

How firmly and decisively she spoke! And what strength of will sparkled in the quiet, modest maiden's eyes! And the closely set lips, which usually were slightly parted, and hardly covered two of her pearly white teeth, gave her a look of such determination, that Andreas could see that no obstacle would check her.

Still, love and duty alike required him to use every means in his power to keep her from taking such a step. He lavished all his eloquence; but she adhered to her purpose with steadfast persistency, and none of the reasons he could adduce to prove the impossibility of the undertaking convinced her. The only point which staggered her was the information that the great leech was an old man, who walked with difficulty; and that Galen, as a heathen and a disciple of Aristotle, would never be induced to enter a Christian dwelling. Both these facts might be a serious hindrance to her scheme; yet she would not now stop to reflect. They had got back to the great street of Hermes, leading from the temple of that god to the Serapeum, and must cross it to reach the lake, their immediate destination. As in all the principal streets of Alexandria, a colonnade bordered the street in front of the houses on each side of the wide and handsome roadway. Under these arcades the foot-passengers were closely packed, awaiting

Caesar's passage. He must soon be coming, for the reception, first at the Kanopic Gate, and then at the Gate of the Sun, was long since over; and, even if he had carried out his purpose of halting at the tomb of Alexander the Great, he could not be detained much longer. The distance hither down the Kanopic Way was not great, and swift horses would quickly bring him down the Aspendia street to that of Hermes, leading straight to the Serapeum. His train was not to follow him to the Soma, the mausoleum of the founder of the city, but to turn off to the southward by the Paneum, and make a round into the street of Hermes.

The praetorians, the German body-guard, the imperial Macedonian phalanx, and some mounted standard-bearers had by this time reached the spot where Melissa was proceeding up the street holding Andreas's hand. Close by them came also a train of slaves, carrying baskets full of palm-leaves and fresh branches of ivy, myrtle, poplar, and pine, from the gardens of the Paneum, to be carried to the Serapeum. They were escorted by lictors, endeavoring with their axes and fasces to make a way for them through the living wall which barred their way.

By the help of the mounted troops, who kept the main road clear, space was made for them; and Andreas, who knew one of the overseers of the garden-slaves, begged him as a favor to allow Melissa and himself to walk among his people. This was willingly granted to so well-known a man; and the way was quite free for the moment, because the imperial cartage had not followed

immediately on the soldiers who had now all marched past. Thus, among the flower-bearers, they reached the middle of the street; and while the slaves proceeded on their way to the Serapeum, the freedman tried to cross the road, and reach the continuation of the street they had come by, and which led to the lake. But the attempt was frustrated, for some Roman lictors who had just come up stood in their way, and sent them to the southern side of the street of Hermes, to mingle with the gaping crowd under the arcade.

They were, of course, but ill received by these, since they naturally found themselves in front of the foremost rank; but the stalwart frame and determined face of Andreas, and the exceptional beauty of his young companion, over whose pretty head most of the gazers could easily see, protected her from rough treatment.

Andreas spoke a few words of apology to those standing nearest to them, and a young goldsmith at once courteously made way, so that Melissa, who had taken a place behind a column, might see better.

And in a few minutes—there was that to see which made every one forget the intruders. Vehicles and outriders, litters swung between mules, and a long train of imperial footmen, in red tunics embroidered with gold, huntsmen with leashes of noble dogs, baggage-wagons and loaded elephants, came trooping down toward the Serapeum; while suddenly, from the Aspendia into the Hermes Way, the Numidian horse rushed out,

followed by a troop of mounted lictors, who galloped up the street, shouting their orders in loud tones to the imperial train, in a mixture of Latin and Greek, of which Melissa understood only the words "Caesar!" and "Make way to the right!"

The command was instantly obeyed. Vehicles, foot-passengers, and riders alike crowded to the southern or left-hand side of the road, and the many-headed throng, of which Andreas and Melissa formed a part, drew as far back as possible under the colonnade; for on the edge of the footway there was the risk of being trampled on by a horse or crushed by a wheel. The back rows of the populace, who had collected under the arcades, were severely squeezed by this fresh pressure from without, and their outcries were loud of anger, alarm; or pain; while on the other side of the street arose shouts of delight and triumph, or, when anything singular came into view, loud laughter at the wit and irony of some jester. Added to these there were the clatter of hoofs and the roll of wheels, the whinnying of horses, the shouts of command, the rattle of drums, the blare of trumpets, and the shrill pipe of flutes, without a moment's pause. It was a wild and ear-splitting tumult; to Melissa, however, neither painful nor pleasing, for the one idea, that she must speak with the great physician, silenced every other. But suddenly there came up from the east, from the rising of the sun, whose course Caesar had followed, such a tremendous roar that she involuntarily clutched her companion's hand.

Every instant the storm of noise increased, rolling on with

irresistible vehemence, gathering force as it came on, receiving, as it were, fresh tributaries on its way, and rapidly swelling from the distance to the immediate vicinity, compelling every one, as with a magic power, to yield to the superior will of numbers and join in the cry. Even Melissa cheered. She, too, was as a drop in the tide, a leaf on the rippling face of the rushing torrent; her heart beat as wildly and her voice rang as clear as that of the rest of the throng, intoxicated with they knew not what, which crowded the colonnades by the roadway, and every window and roof-top, waving handkerchiefs, strewing flowers on the ground, and wiping the tears which this unwonted excitement had brought to their eyes.

And now the shout is so tremendous that it could not possibly be louder. It seems as though it were the union of voices innumerable rather than the seabreeze, which flutters the pennons and flags which wave from every house and arch, and sways the garlands hung across the street. Melissa can see none but flushed faces, eyes swimming in tears, parted lips, wildly waving arms and hands. Then suddenly a mysterious power hushes the loud tones close round her; she hears only here and there the cry of "Caesar!" "He is coming!" "Here he is!"—and the swift tramp of hoofs and the clatter of wheels sounding like the rattle of an iron building after a peal of thunder, above the shouts of ten thousand human beings. Closer it comes and closer, without a pause, and followed by fresh shouting, as a flock of daws follow an owl flying across the twilight, swelling

again to irrepressible triumph as the expected potentate rushes past Melissa and her neighbors. They only see Caesar as a form scarcely discerned by the eye during the space of a lightning-flash in a dark night.

Four tawny bay horses of medium size, dappled with black, harnessed abreast and wide apart, fly along the cleared road like hunted foxes, the light Gallic chariot at their heels. The wheels seem scarcely to touch the smooth flags of the Alexandrian pavement. The charioteer wears the red-bordered toga of the highest Roman officials. He is well known by repute, and the subject of many a sharp jest; for this is Pandion, formerly a stableboy, and now one of "Caesar's friends," a praetor, and one of the great men of the empire. But he knows his business; and what does Caracalla care for tradition or descent, for the murmurs and discontent of high or low?

Pandion holds the reins with elegant composure, and urges the horses to a frantic pace by a mere whistle, without ever using the whip. But why is it that he whirls the mighty monarch of half a world, before whose bloodthirsty power every one quakes, so swiftly past these eager spectators? Sunk in the cushions on one side, Bassianus Antoninus is reclining rather than sitting in the four-wheeled open chariot of Gallic make which sweeps past. He does not vouchsafe a glance at the jubilant crowd, but gazes down at the road, his well-shaped brow so deeply furrowed with gloom that he might be meditating some evil deed.

It is easy to discern that he is of middle height; that his upper

lip and cheeks are unshaven, and his chin smooth; that his hair is already thin, though he lacks two years of thirty; and that his complexion is pale and sallow; indeed, his aspect is familiar from statues and coins, many of which are of base metal.

Most of those who thus beheld the man who held in his hand the fate of each individual he passed, as of the empire at large, involuntarily asked themselves afterward what impression he had made on them; and Caracalla himself would have rejoiced in the answer, for he aimed not at being attractive or admired, but only at being feared. But, indeed, they had long since learned that there was nothing too horrible to be expected of him; and, now that they had seen him, they were of opinion that his appearance answered to his deeds. It would be hard to picture a more sinister and menacing looking man than this emperor, with his averted looks and his haughty contempt for the world and mankind; and yet there was something about him which made it difficult to take him seriously, especially to an Alexandrian. There was a touch of the grotesque in the Gallic robe with a red hood in which this ominous-looking contemner of humanity was wrapped. It was called a 'Caracalla', and it was from this garment that Bassianus Antoninus had gained his nickname.

The tyrant who wore this gaudy cloak was, no doubt, devoid alike of truth and conscience; but, as to his being a philosopher, who knew the worthlessness of earthly things and turned his back upon the world, those who could might believe it! He was no more than an actor, who played the part of Timon not amiss,

and who made use of his public to work upon their fears and enjoy the sight of their anguish. There was something lacking in him to make one of those thorough-going haters of their kind at whose mere aspect every knee must bend. The appearance, in short, of this false philosopher was not calculated to subdue the rash tongues of the Alexandrians.

To this many of them agreed; still, there was no time for such reflections till the dust had shrouded the chariot, which vanished as quickly as it had come, till the shouting was stilled, and the crowd had spread over the roadway again. Then they began to ask themselves why they had joined in the acclamations, and had been so wildly excited; how it was that they had so promptly surrendered their self-possession and dignity for the sake of this wicked little man. Perhaps it was his unlimited control over the weal and woe of the world, over the life and death of millions, which raised a mortal, not otherwise formed for greatness, so far above common humanity to a semblance of divinity. Perhaps it was the instinctive craving to take part in the grand impulsive expression of thousands of others that had carried away each individual. It was beyond a doubt a mysterious force which had compelled every one to do as his neighbors did as soon as Caesar had appeared.

Melissa had succumbed with the rest; she had shouted and waved her kerchief, and had not heeded Andreas when he held her hand and asked her to consider what a criminal this man was whom she so eagerly hailed. It was not till all was still again that

she recollected herself, and her determination to get the famous physician to visit her lover revived in renewed strength.

Fully resolved to dare all, she looked about with calm scrutiny, considering the ways and means of achieving her purpose without any aid from Andreas. She was in a fever of impatience, and longed to force her way at once into the Serapeum. But that was out of the question, for no one moved from his place. There was, however, plenty to be seen. A complete revulsion of feeling had come over the crowd. In the place of Expectancy, its graceless step-child, Disappointment, held sway. There were no more shouts of joy; men's lungs were no longer strained to the utmost, but their tongues were all the busier. Caesar was for the most part spoken of with contempt as Tarautas, and with the bitterness—the grandchild of Expectancy-which comes of disappointment. Tarautas had originally been the name of a stunted but particularly bloodthirsty gladiator, in whom ill-will had traced some resemblance to Caesar.

The more remarkable figures in the imperial train were curiously gazed at and discussed. A worker in mosaic, who stood near Melissa, had been employed in the decoration of the baths of Caracalla at Rome, and had much information to impart; he even knew the names of several of the senators and courtiers attached to Caesar. And, with all this, time was found to give vent to discontent.

The town had done its utmost to make itself fine enough to receive the emperor. Statues had been erected of himself, of his

father, his mother, and even of his favorite heroes, above all of Alexander the Great; triumphal arches without number had been constructed. The vast halls of the Serapeum, through which he was to pass, had been magnificently decorated; and in front of the new temple, outside the Kanopic Gate, dedicated to his father, who now ranked among the gods, the elders of the town had been received by Caesar, to do him homage and offer him the gifts of the city. All this had cost many talents, a whole heap of gold; but Alexandria was wealthy, and ready to make even greater sacrifices if only they had been accepted with thanks and condescension. But a young actor, who had been a spectator of the scene at the Kanopic Gate, and had then hurried hither, declared, with dramatic indignation, that Caesar had only replied in a few surly words to the address of the senate, and even while he accepted the gift had looked as if he were being ill-used. The delegates had retired as though they had been condemned to death. To none but Timotheus, the high-priest of Serapis, had he spoken graciously.

Others confirmed this report; and dissatisfaction found expression in muttered abuse or satirical remarks and bitter witticisms.

"Why did he drive past so quickly?" asked a tailor's wife; and some one replied:

"Because the Eumenides, who haunt him for murdering his brother, lash him on with their whips of snakes!"

A spice-merchant; who was not less indignant but more

cautious, hearing a neighbor inquire why Tarautas drove panther-spotted horses, replied that such beasts of prey had spotted skins, and that like to like was a common rule. A cynical philosopher, who proclaimed his sect by his ragged garment, unkempt hair, and rough mode of speech, declared that Caesar had a senator to guide his chariot because he had long since succeeded in turning the senate-house into a stable.

To all this, however, Melissa turned a deaf ear, for the thought of the great Roman leech possessed her mind entirely. She listened earnestly to the mosaic-worker, who had come close up to her, and officiously mentioned the names of the most important personages as they went past. Caesar's train seemed endless. It included not merely horse and foot soldiers, but numberless baggage-wagons, cars, elephants—which Caracalla especially affected, because Alexander the Great had been fond of these huge beasts—horses, mules, and asses, loaded with bales, cases, tents, and camp and kitchen furniture. Mingling with these came sutlers, attendants, pages, heralds, musicians, and slaves of the imperial household, in knots and parties, looking boldly about them at the bystanders. When they caught sight of a young and pretty woman on the edge of the path, they would wave a greeting; and many expressed their admiration of Melissa in a very insolent manner. Woolly-headed negroes and swarthy natives of north Africa mixed with the fairer dwellers on the Mediterranean and the yellow or red haired sons of northern Europe. Roman lictors, and Scythian, Thracian, or Keltic men-

at-arms kept every one out of the way who did not belong to the imperial train, with relentless determination. Only the Magians, wonder-workers, and street wenches were suffered to push their way in among the horses, asses, elephants, dogs, vehicles, and mounted troops.

Each time that one of the unwieldy traveling-carriages, drawn by several horses, came in sight, in which the wealthy Roman was wont to take his ease on a long journey, or whenever a particularly splendid litter was borne past, Melissa asked the mosaic-worker for information. In some few instances Andreas could satisfy her curiosity, for he had spent some months at Antioch on a matter of business, and had there come to know by sight some of Caesar's most illustrious companions.

So far the great Galenus was not of the number; for Caracalla, who was ailing, had but lately commanded his presence. The famous physician had sailed for Pelusium, in spite of his advanced age, and had only just joined the sovereign's suite. The old man's chariot had been pointed out to the mosaic-worker at the Kanopic Gate, and he was certain that he could not mistake it for any other; it was one of the largest and handsomest; the side doors of it were decorated with the AEsculapius staff and the cup of Hygeia in silver, and on the top were statuettes in wood of Minerva and of AEsculapius. On hearing all this, Melissa's face beamed with happy and hopeful anticipation. With one hand pressed to her throbbing bosom, she watched each vehicle as it drove past with such intense expectancy that she paid no heed

to Andreas's hint that they might now be able to make their way through the crowd.

Now—and the freedman had called her once more—here was another monstrous conveyance, belonging to Julius Paulinus, the former consul, whose keen face, with its bright, merry eyes, looked out between the silken curtains by the side of the grave, unsympathetic countenance of Dion Cassius the senator and historian.

The consul, her informant told her—and Andreas confirmed the statement—had displeased Severus, Caracalla's father, by some biting jest, but, on being threatened with death, disarmed his wrath by saying, "You can indeed have my head cut off, but neither you nor I can keep it steady."

Those of the populace who stood near enough to the speaker to hear this anecdote broke out in loud cheers, in which they were joined by others who had no idea of what had given rise to them.

The consul's chariot was followed by a crowd of clients, domestic officials, and slaves, in litters, on horses or mules, or on foot; and behind these again came another vehicle, for some time concealed from sight by dust. But when at last the ten fine horses which drew it had gone past Melissa, and the top of the vehicle became visible, the color mounted to her cheeks, for on the corners of the front she recognized the figures of AEsculapius and Minerva, which, if the mosaic-worker were right, distinguished the chariot of Galenus. She listened breathlessly to the roll of the wheels of this coach, and

she soon perceived the silver AEsculapius staff and bowl on the wide door of this house on wheels, which was painted blue. At an open window by the door a kindly old face was visible, framed in long, gray hair.

Melissa started at hearing the order to halt shouted from the Serapeum, far down the road, and again, close at hand, "Halt!" The procession came to a standstill, the riders drew rein, the blue wheels ceased to turn, the coach was immovable but a few steps in front of her, and her eyes met those of the old man. The thought flashed through her brain that Fate itself had brought about this pause just at this spot; and when she heard the mosaic-worker exclaim, "The great Roman physician!" horses, coach, and everything swam before her eyes; she snatched her hand away from that of Andreas, and stepped out on the roadway. In an instant she was standing face to face with the venerable leech.

She heard the warning voice of her companion, she saw the crowd staring at her, she had, no doubt, a brief struggle with her maidenly shyness, but she carried out her purpose. The thought that the gods themselves were helping her to appeal to the only man who could save her lover, encouraged her to defy every obstacle.

She was standing by the vehicle; and scarcely had she raised her sweet, innocent, blushing face with pathetic and touching entreaty to the white-haired Roman, her large, tear-filled eyes meeting his, when he beckoned her to him, and in pleasant, sympathetic tones desired to know what she wanted. Then she

made bold to ask whether he were the great Roman physician, and he replied with a flattered and kindly smile that he was sometimes so called. Her thankful glance to heaven revealed what a comfort his words were, and now her rosy lips moved freely, and she hurriedly, but with growing courage, gave him to understand that her betrothed, the son of a respected Roman citizen of Alexandria, was lying badly wounded in the head by a stone, and that the leech who was treating him had said that none but he, the great Galenus, could save the young man's life. She also explained that Ptolemaeus, though he had said that Diodoros needed quiet above all things, had proposed to carry him to the Serapeum, and to commend him there to the care of his greater colleague, but that she feared the worst results from the move. She glanced pleadingly into the Roman's eyes, and added that he looked so kind that she hoped that he would go instead to see the sufferer, who had, quite by chance, been taken into a Christian house not very far from the Serapeum, where he was being taken good care of, and—as a matter of course—cure her lover.

The old man had only interrupted her tale with a few sly questions as to her love-affair and her religion; for when she had told him that Diodoros was under the care of Christians, it had occurred to him that this simply but not poorly dressed girl, with her modest ways and sweet, calm face, might herself be a Christian. He was almost surprised when she denied it, and yet he seemed pleased, and promised to grant her request. It was not fitting that a girl so young should enter any house where Caesar

and his train took up their abode; he would wait for her, "there"—and he pointed to a small, round temple to Aphrodite, on the left-hand side of the street of Hermes, where the road was rather wider—for the coach had meanwhile slowly moved on.

Next day, at three hours after the rising of the fierce African sun—for he could not bear its meridian heat—he would go thither in his litter. "And be sure you are there in good time!" he added, shaking his finger at her.

"If you come an hour too soon, you will find me waiting!" she cried.

He laughed, and said, "What pretty maid, indeed, would dare to be late for an appointment under the very eyes of the goddess of Love!" He bade her a friendly farewell, and lay back in the chariot.

Melissa, radiant with happiness, looked about her for the place where she had left her companion. However, in spite of the lictors, Andreas had followed her; he drew her hand under his arm, and led her through the now-thinning crowd into a sidelane which led to the lake, opening out of the colonnaded street opposite the little temple.

Melissa's steps were winged. Her joy at having gained her end so quickly and so easily was uppermost in her mind, and as they threaded their way among the people she tried to tell Andreas what the great physician had promised. But the noise drowned her speech, for at this moment Caesar's tame lion, named the "Sword of Persia" was being led through the street by some

Numidian slaves.

Every one was looking at the splendid beast; and, as she too turned to gaze, her eye met the ardent glance of a tall, bearded man standing at the window of a house just behind the round temple to Aphrodite. She at once recognized Serapion, the Magian, and whispered his name to Andreas; he, however, without looking round, only drew her along more quickly, and did not breathe easily till they found themselves in the narrow, deserted alley.

The Magian had observed her while she stood by the Roman's chariot, and his conversation with a Syrian of middle age in his company had been of her. His companion's appearance was as insignificant as his own was stately and commanding. Nothing distinguished the Syrian from a thousand of his fellows but the cunning stamped on his sharply-cut features; still, the great Magian seemed to hold him in some esteem, for he readily replied to the little man's questions and remarks.

At this moment the Syrian waved his hand in the air with a gesture common to men of his race when displaying their own superior knowledge, as he said "What did I spend ten years in Rome for, if I do not know Serenus Samonicus? He is the greatest book-collector in the empire. And he regards himself as a second AEsculapius, and has written a book on medicine in verse, which Geta, Caesar's murdered brother, always had about him, for he regarded the physicians here as mere bunglers. He is as rich as the Alabarch, and riding in his coach is Galenus, for whom Caesar

sent. What can that girl want of him?"

"H'm!" muttered the other, stroking his beard with thoughtful dignity. "She is a modest maiden; it can only be something urgent and important which has prompted her to address the Roman."

"Your Castor will be able to find out," replied the Syrian Annianus. "That omniscient rascal can get through a key-hole, and by to-morrow will be the best friend of the Roman's people, if you care to know."

"We will see," said Serapion. "Her brother, perhaps, to-morrow evening, will tell me what is going on."

"The philosopher?" said the other, with a contemptuous flourish. "You are a great sage, Serapion, as the people hold; but you often sew with needles too fine for me. Why, just now, when Caesar is here, and gain and honor be in the streets for such a one as you only to stoop for—why, I say, you should waste precious time on that poring fellow from the Museum, I can not understand."

A superior smile parted the Magian's lips; he stepped back into the room, followed by Annianus, and replied:

"You know how many who call themselves Magians will crowd round Caesar, and the fame of Sosibius, Hananja, and Kaimis, is not much behind mine. Each plies his art by his own formulas, though he may call himself a Pythagorean or what not. None dare claim to belong to any recognized school, since the philosophers of the guild pride themselves on condemning the miracle-mongers. Now, in his youth, Caracalla went through

his courses of philosophy. He detests Aristotle, and has always attached himself to Plato and the Pythagoreans. You yourself told me that by his desire Philostratus is writing a life of Apollonius of Tyana; and, though he may turn up his nose at the hair-splitting and frittering of the sages of the Museum, it is in his blood to look for marvels from those privileged philosophers. His mother has made courtiers of them again; and he, who looks for everything from the magic arts, has never yet met a Magian who could have been one of them."

At this the Syrian clapped his hands, exclaiming: "And you propose to use Philip as your signbearer to talk to the emperor of a thaumaturgist who is hand in hand with all the learning of the Museum? A cursed good idea! But the gem-cutter's son does not look like a simpleton; and he is a skeptic into the bargain, and believes in nothing. If you catch him, I shall really and truly believe in your miraculous powers."

"There are harder things than catching him," said the Magian.

"You mean to break his will," said the Syrian, looking down at the ground, "by your eye and the laying on of hands, as you did mine and Triphis's two years ago?"

"That, no doubt, formed the first bond between us," said Serapion. "I now need only your ventriloquism. Philip himself will come half-way to meet me on the main point."

"And what is that?"

"You called him a skeptic, and he does, in fact, pride himself on going further than the old masters of the school. Diligent study

has brought him to the point of regarding nothing as certain, but, on the other hand, everything as possible. The last result he can arrive at is the probability—since certainty there is none—that it is impossible ever to know anything, be it what it may. He is always ready to listen with sympathetic attention to the arguments for the reappearance of the souls of the dead in the earthly form they have quitted, to visit and converse with the living. He considers it a fallacy to say that anything is impossible; and my arguments are substantial. Korinna will appear to him. Castor has discovered a girl who is her very image. Your arts will convince him that it is she who speaks to him, for he never heard her voice in life, and all this must rouse his desire to see her again and again. And thus the skeptic will be convinced, in spite of his own doctrine. In this, as in every other case, it is the passionate wish that gives rise to the belief."

"And when you have succeeded in getting him to this point?" asked the Syrian, anxiously.

"Then," replied the Magian, "he will help me, with his triumphant dialectics, to win Caesar over to the same conviction; and then we shall be able to satisfy the emperor's desire to hold intercourse with the dead; and for that I count on your power of making voices proceed from any person present."

He said no more. The little man looked up at him approvingly, and said, modestly: "You are indeed wise, Serapion, and I will do my best to help you. The next thing to be done is to seek representatives of the great Alexander, of Apollonius of Tyana,

and of Caesar's brother, father-in-law, and wife."

"Not forgetting Papinian, the noblest of his victims," added the Magian. "Back again already, Castor?"

These words were addressed to a tall and apparently elderly man in a long white robe, who had slipped in without a sound. His demeanor was so grave and dignified that he looked precisely like a Christian priest impressed with the sanctity of his office; but hardly had he got into the room, and greeted the Magian with much unction, than he pulled the white garment off over his head, rubbed from his cheeks the lines which gave him twenty added years, stretched his lithe limbs, and exclaimed with delight:

"I have got her! Old Dorothea will bring her to your theatre!"—and the young fellow's mobile face beamed with the happy radiance of success.

It almost seemed as though fermenting wine flowed in the man's veins instead of blood; for, when he had made his report to the Magian, and had been rewarded with a handful of gold-pieces, he tossed the coins in the air, caught them like flies in the hollow of his hand, and then pitched wheel fashion over head and heels from one end of the room to the other. Then, when he stood on his feet once more, he went on, without a sign of breathlessness:

"Forgive me, my lord! Nature asserts her rights. To play the pious for three whole hours! Eternal gods, that is a hard task, and a man must—"

"I know all about it," Serapion broke in with a smile and a

threatening finger. “Now go and stretch your limbs, and then share your lightly earned gains with some pretty flute-player. But I want you again this evening; so, if you feel weak, I shall lock you up.”

“Do,” said Castor, as earnestly as if he had been promised some pleasure. “What a merry, good-for-nothing set they are!-Dorothea will bring the girl at the appointed hour. Everything is arranged.”

Whereupon he danced out of the room, singing a tune.

“An invaluable creature!” said the Syrian, with an admiring glance.

“A better one spoiled,” said Serapion. “He has the very highest gifts, but is utterly devoid of conscience to set a limit to his excesses. How should he have one? His father was one of a troupe of Ephesian pantomimists, and his mother a golden-haired Cyprian dancer. But he knows every corner of Alexandria —and then, what a memory! What an actor he would have made! Without even a change of dress, merely by a grimace, he at once becomes an old man, an idiot, or a philosopher.”

“And what a genius for intrigue!” Annianus went on enthusiastically. “As soon as he saw the portrait of Korinna he knew that he had seen her double among the Christians on the other side of the lake. This morning he tracked her out, and now she is caught in the snare. And how sharp of him to make Dorothea bring her here!”

“I told him to do that, and use the name of Bishop Demetrius,”

observed the Magian. “She would not have come with a stranger, and Dorothea must be known to her in the meetings of their congregation.”

CHAPTER IX

While this conversation was taking place, Melissa and her companion had reached the shore of the lake, the large inland sea which washed the southern side of the city and afforded anchorage for the Nile-boats. The ferry-boat which would convey them to the gardens of Polybius started from the Agathodaemon Canal, an enlarged branch of the Nile, which connected the lake with the royal harbor and the Mediterranean; they had, therefore, to walk some distance along the shore.

The setting sun shot slanting rays on the glittering surface of the glassy waters in which the numberless masts of the Nile-boats were mirrored.

Vessels large and small, with white or gayly-painted lateen sails gleaming in the evening glow, large galleys, light skiffs, and restless, skimming pleasure-boats, were flitting to and fro; and among them, like loaded wagons among chariots and horsemen, the low corn-barges scarcely seemed to move, piled as they were with pyramids of straw and grain as high as a house.

The bustle on the quay was less conspicuous than usual, for all who were free to follow their curiosity had gone into the city. There were, however, many slaves, and Caesar's visit no more affected their day's toil than it did the course of the sun. To-day, as every other day, they had to pack and unload; and though few ships were sailing, numbers were arriving from the south, and

throwing out the landing-bridges which connected them with the shore.

The number of pleasure-boats, on the other hand, was greater than usual; for business was suspended, and many who hated the crowd found pleasure in rowing in their own boats. Others had come to see the imperial barge, which had been newly furnished up, and which was splendid enough to attract even the luxurious Alexandrians. Gold and ivory, purple sails, bronze and marble statues at the prow and stern, and in the little shrines on the after-deck, combined in a gorgeous display, made all the more brilliant by the low sun, which added vividness to every hue.

It was pleasant to linger on the strand at this hour. Spreading sycamores and plumed palms cast a pleasant shade; the heat of the day had abated, and a light air, which always blew in from the lake, fanned Melissa's brow. There was no crushing mob, and no dust came up from the well-watered roadway, and yet the girl had lost her cheerful looks, in spite of the success of her bold venture; and Andreas walked by her side, silent and ill-pleased.

She could not understand him; for, as long as she could remember, his grave looks had always brightened at anything that had brought gladness to her or to her mother. Besides, her success with the Roman would be to the advantage of Diodoros, and the freedman was devoted to him. Every now and then she perceived that his eye rested on her with a compassionate expression, and when she inquired whether he were anxious about the sufferer, he gave her some evasive answer, quite unlike his usual decisive

speech. This added to her alarm. At last his dissatisfied and unsatisfactory replies vexed the usually patient girl, and she told him so; for she could not suspect how painfully her triumph in her hasty deed jarred on her truth-loving friend. He knew that it was not to the great Galenus, but to the wealthy Serenus Samonicus, that she had spoken; for the physician's noble and thoughtful features were familiar to him from medals, statues, and busts. He had seen Samonicus, too, at Antioch, and held his medical lore, as expressed in verse, very cheap. How worthless would this man's help be! In spite of his promise, Diodoros would after all have to be conveyed to the Serapeum; and yet Andreas could not bear to crush his darling's hopes.

He had hitherto known her as a patient, dutiful child; to-day he had seen with what unhesitating determination she could carry out a purpose; and he feared that, if he told her the truth, she would at once make her way into Caesar's quarters, in defiance of every obstacle, to crave the assistance of the true Galen. He must leave her in error, and yet he could not bear to do so, for there was no art in which he was so inexpert as that of deceit. How hard it was to find the right answer, when she asked him whether he did not hope everything from the great physician's intervention, or when she inquired what were the works to which Galen owed his chief fame!

As they came near to the landing-stage whence the ferry started, she wanted to know how old he should suppose the Roman leech to be; and again he avoided answering, for Galen

was above eighty, and Serenus scarcely seventy.

She looked up at him with large, mournful eyes, saying, "Have I offended you, or is there something you are concealing from me?"

"What could you do to offend me?" he replied; "life is full of sorrows, my child. You must learn to have patience."

"Patience!" echoed Melissa, sadly. "That is the only knowledge I have ever mastered. When my father is more sullen than you are, for a week at a time, I scarcely heed it. But when you look like that, Andreas, it is not without cause, and that is why I am anxious."

"One we love is very sick, child," he said, soothingly; but she was not to be put off so, and exclaimed with conviction:

"No, no, it is not that. We have learned nothing fresh about Diodoro—and you were ready enough to answer me when we came away from the Christian's house. Nothing but good has happened to us since, and yet you look as if the locusts had come down on your garden."

They had reached a spot on the shore where a ship was being unloaded of its cargo of granite blocks from Syene. Black and brown slaves were dragging them to land. An old blind man was piping a dismal tune on a small reed flute to encourage them in their work, while two men of fairer hue, whose burden had been too heavy for them, had let the end of the column they were carrying sink on the ground, and were being mercilessly flogged by the overseer to make them once more attempt the impossible.

Andreas had watched the scene; a surge of fury had brought the blood to his face, and, stirred by great and genuine emotion, he broke out:

"There—there you see the locusts which destroy my garden—the hail which ruins my crops! It falls on all that bears the name of humanity—on me and you. Happy, girl? None of us can ever be happy till the Kingdom shall arise for which the fullness of the time is come."

"But they dropped the column; I saw them myself," urged Melissa.

"Did you, indeed?" said Andreas. "Well, well, the whip, no doubt, can revive exhausted powers. And that is how you look upon such deeds!—you, who would not crush a worm in the garden, think this is right and just!"

It suddenly struck Melissa that Andreas, too, had once been a slave, and the feeling that she had hurt him grieved her to the heart. She had often heard him speak sternly and gravely, but never in scorn as he did now, and that, too, distressed her; and as she could not think of the right thing to say in atonement for the wrong she had done, she could only look up with tearful entreaty and murmur, "Forgive me!"

"I have nothing to forgive," he replied in an altered tone. "You have grown up among the unjust who are now in power. How should you see more clearly than they, who all walk in darkness? But if the light should be shown to you by one to whom it hath been revealed, it would not be extinguished again.—Does it not

seem a beautiful thing to you to live among none but brethren and sisters, instead of among oppressors and their scourged victims; or is there no place in a woman's soul for the holy wrath that came upon Moses the Hebrew? But who would ever have spoken his great name to you?"

Melissa was about to interrupt his vehement speech, for, in a town where there were so many Jews, alike among the citizens and the slaves, even she had heard that Moses had been their lawgiver; but he prevented her, by adding hastily: "This only, child, I would have you remember—for here is the ferry—the worst ills that man ever inflicts on his fellow-man are the outcome of self-interest; and, of all the good he may do, the best is the result of his achieving self-forgetfulness to secure the happiness and welfare of others."

He said no more, for the ferry-boat was about to put off, and they had to take their places as quickly as possible.

The large flat barge was almost unoccupied; for the multitude still lingered in the town, and more than one seat was empty for the weary girl to rest on. Andreas paced to and fro, for he was restless; but when Melissa beckoned to him he came close to her, and, while he leaned against the little cabin, received her assurance that she now quite understood his desire to see all slaves made free. He, if any one, must know what the feelings of those unhappy creatures were.

"Do I not know!" he exclaimed, with a shake of the head. Then, glancing round at the few persons who were sitting at

the other end of the boat, he went on sadly: “To know that, a man must himself have been branded with the marks of his humiliation.” He showed her his arm, which was usually hidden by the long sleeve of his tunic, and Melissa exclaimed in sorrowful surprise: “But you were free-born! and none of our slaves bear such a brand. You must have fallen into the hands of Syrian pirates.”

He nodded, and added, “I and my father.”

“But he,” the girl eagerly put in, “was a great man.”

“Till Fate overtook him,” Andreas said.

Melissa’s tearful eyes showed the warm sympathy she felt, as she asked:

“But how could it have happened that you were not ransomed by your relations? Your father was, no doubt, a Roman citizen; and the law—”

“The law forbids that such a one should be sold into slavery,” Andreas broke in, “and yet the authorities of Rome left him in misery—left—”

At this, her large, gentle eyes flashed with indignation, and, stirred to the depths of her nature, she exclaimed:

“How was such horrible injustice possible? Oh, let me hear. You know how truly I love you, and no one can hear you.”

The wind had risen, the waves splashed noisily against the broad boat, and the song of the slaves, as they plied their oars, would have drowned a stronger voice than the freedman’s; so he sat down by her side to do her bidding.

And the tale he had to tell was sad indeed.

His father had been of knightly rank, and in the reign of Marcus Aurelius he had been in the service of Avidius Cassius, his fellow-countryman, the illustrious governor of Asia as 'procurator ab epistolis'. As holding this high post, he found himself involved in the conspiracy of Avidius against the emperor. After the assassination of his patron, who had already been proclaimed emperor by the troops, Andreas's father had been deprived of his offices, his citizenship, and his honors; his possessions were confiscated, and he was exiled to the island of Anaphe. It was to Caesar's clemency that he owed his life.

On their voyage into exile the father and son fell into the hands of Syrian pirates, and were sold in the slave-market of Alexandria to two separate masters. Andreas was bought by a tavern-keeper; the procurator, whose name as a slave was Smaragdus, by the father of Polybius; and this worthy man soon learned to value his servant so highly, that he purchased the son also, and restored him to his father. Thus they were once more united.

Every attempt of the man who had once held so proud a position to get his release, by an act of the senate, proved vain. It was with a broken heart and enfeebled health that he did his duty to his master and to his only child. He pined in torments of melancholy, till Christianity opened new happiness to him, and revived hope brought him back from the very brink of despair; and, even as a slave, he found the highest of all dignities—that, namely, which a Christian derives from his faith.

At this point Melissa interrupted her friend's narrative, exclaiming, as she pointed across the waters:

"There! there! look! In that boat—I am sure that is Alexander! And he is making for the town."

Andreas started up, and after convincing himself that she was indeed right, for the youth himself had recognized his sister, who waved her hand to him, he wrathfully exclaimed:

"Madman!" and by intelligible and commanding signs he ordered the reckless young artist to turn his little skiff, and follow in the wake of the ferry-boat, which was by this time nearing land.

But Alexander signaled a negative, and, after gayly blowing a kiss to Melissa, plied his oars again with as much speed and energy as though he were rowing for a wager. How swiftly and steadily the keel of his little boat cut through the crisply foaming waves on which it rose and fell! The daring youth did not lack strength, that was certain, and the couple who watched him with so much uneasiness soon understood that he was striving to overtake another and larger bark which was at some distance in front of him. It was being pulled by slaves, whose stalwart arms made the pace a good one, and under the linen awning which shaded the middle part of it two women were seated.

The rays of the sun, whose fiery globe was now sinking behind the palm-groves on the western shore, flooded the sky with ruby light, and tinged the white robes of these women, the light canopy over their heads, and the whole face of the lake, with a rosy

hue; but neither Andreas nor his companion heeded the glorious farewell of departing day.

Melissa pointed out to her friend the strangeness of her brother's attire, and the hood which, in the evening light, seemed to be bordered with gold. He had on, in fact, a Gallic mantle, such as that which had gained Caesar the nickname of Caracalla, and there was in this disguise something to reassure them; for, if Alexander pulled the hood low enough, it would hide the greater part of his face, and make it difficult to recognize him. Whence he had procured this garment was not hard to divine, for imperial servants had distributed them in numbers among the crowd. Caesar was anxious to bring them into fashion, and it might safely be expected that those Alexandrians who had held out their hands to accept them would appear in them on the morrow, as no order required that they should be worn. Alexander could not do better than wear one, if only by such means he could escape Zminis and his men.

But who were the women he was pursuing? Before Melissa could ask the question, Andreas pointed to the foremost boat, and said:

"Those are Christian women, and the bark they are in belongs to Zeno, the brother of Seleukus and of the high-priest of Serapis. That is his landing-creek. He lives with his family, and those of the faith to whom he affords refuge, in the long, white house you can just see there among the palm-trees. Those vineyards, too, are his. If I am not mistaken, one of the ladies in

that boat is his daughter, Agatha."

"But what can Alexander want of two Christian women?" asked Melissa.

Andreas fired up, and a vein started on his high forehead as he retorted angrily:

"What should he not want! He and those who are like him—the blind—think nothing so precious as what satisfies the eye.—There! the brightness has vanished which turned the lake and the shore to gold. Such is beauty!—a vain show, which only glitters to disappear, and is to fools, nevertheless, the supreme object of adoration!"

"Then, is Zeno's daughter fair?" asked the girl.

"She is said to be," replied the other; and after a moment's pause he added: "Yes, Agatha is a rarely accomplished woman; but I know better things of her than that. It stirs my gall to think that her sacred purity can arouse unholy thoughts. I love your brother dearly; for your mother's sake I can forgive him much; but if he tries to ensnare Agatha—"

"Have no fear," said Melissa, interrupting his wrathful speech. "Alexander is indeed a butterfly, fluttering from flower to flower, and apt to be frivolous over serious matters, but at this moment he is enslaved by a vision—that of a dead girl; and only last night, I believe, he pledged himself to Ino, the pretty daughter of our neighbor Skopas. Beauty is to him the highest thing in life; and how should it be otherwise, for he is an artist! For the sake of beauty he defies every danger. If you saw rightly, he is no doubt

in pursuit of Zeno's daughter, but most likely not to pay court to her, but for some other season."

"No praiseworthy reason, you may be sure," said Andreas. "Here we are. Now take your kerchief out of the basket. It is damp and cool after sundown, especially over there where I am draining the bog. The land we are reclaiming by this means will bring your future husband a fine income some day."

They disembarked, and ere long reached the little haven belonging to Polybius's estate. There were boats moored there, large and small, and Andreas hailed the man who kept them, and who sat eating his supper, to ask him whether he had unmoored the green skiff for Alexander.

At this the old fellow laughed, and said: "The jolly painter and his friend, the sculptor, met Zeno's daughter just as she was getting into her boat with Mariamne. Down they came, running as if they had gone mad. The girl must have turned their heads. My lord Alexander would have it that he had seen the spirit of one who was dead, and he would gladly give his life to see her once again."

It was now dark, or it would have alarmed Melissa to see the ominous gravity with which Andreas listened to this tale; but she herself was sufficiently startled, for she knew her brother well, and that no risk, however great, would stop him if his artistic fancy were fired. He, whom she had believed to be in safety, had gone straight into the hands of the pursuers; and with him caution and reflection were flown to the winds when passion held

sway. She had hoped that her friend Ino had at last captured the flutterer, and that he would begin to live a settled life with her, as master of a house of his own; and now, for a pretty face, he had thrown everything to the winds, even the duty of self-preservation. Andreas had good reason to be angry, and he spoke no more till they reached their destination, a country house of handsome and important aspect.

No father could have received his future daughter more heartily than did old Polybius. The fiend gout racked his big toes, stabbing, burning, and nipping them. The slightest movement was torture, and yet he held out his arms to her for a loving embrace, and, though it made him shut his eyes and groan, he drew her pretty head down, and kissed her cheeks and hair. He was now a heavy man, of almost shapeless stoutness, but in his youth he must have resembled his handsome son. Silvery locks flowed round his well-formed head, but a habit of drinking wine, which, in spite of the gout, he could not bring himself to give up, had flushed his naturally good features, and tinged them of a coppery red, which contrasted strangely with his snowy hair and beard. But a kind heart, benevolence, and a love of good living, beamed in every look.

His heavy limbs moved but slowly, and if ever full lips deserved to be called sensual, they were those of this man, who was a priest of two divinities.

How well his household understood the art of catering for his love of high living, was evident in the meal which was served

soon after Melissa's arrival, and to eat which the old man made her recline on the couch by his side.

Andreas also shared the supper; and not the attendant slaves only, but Dame Praxilla, the sister of their host, whose house she managed, paid him particular honor. She was a widow and childless, and, even during the lifetime of Diodoros's mother, she had given her heart, no longer young, to the freedman, without finding her love returned or even observed. For his sake she would have become a Christian, though she regarded herself as so indispensable to her brother that she had rarely left him to hold intercourse with other Christians. Nor did Andreas encourage her; he doubted her vocation. Whatever happened in the house, the excitable woman made it her own concern; and, although she had known Melissa from childhood, and was as fond of her as she could be of the child of "strangers," the news that Diodoros was to marry the gem-cutter's daughter was displeasing to her. A second woman in the house might interfere with her supremacy; and, as an excuse for her annoyance, she had represented to her brother that Diodoros might look higher for a wife. Agatha, the beautiful daughter of their rich Christian neighbor Zeno, was the right bride for the boy.

But Polybius had rated her sharply, declaring that he hoped for no sweeter daughter than Melissa, who was quite pretty enough, and in whose veins as pure Macedonian blood flowed as in his own. His son need look for no wealth, he added with a laugh, since he would some day inherit his aunt's.

In fact, Praxilla owned a fine fortune, increasing daily under the care of Andreas, and she replied:

"If the young couple behave so well that I do not rather choose to bestow my pittance on worthier heirs."

But the implied threat had not disturbed Polybius, for he knew his sister's ways. The shriveled, irritable old lady often spoke words hard to be forgiven, but she had not a bad heart; and when she learned that Diodoros was in danger, she felt only how much she loved him, and her proposal to go to the town next morning to nurse him was sincerely meant.

But when her brother retorted: "Go, by all means; I do not prevent you!" she started up, exclaiming:

"And you, and your aches and pains! How you get on when once my back is turned, we know by experience. My presence alone is medicine to you." "And a bitter dose it is very often," replied the old man, with a laugh; but Praxilla promptly retorted: "Like all effectual remedies. There is your ingratitude again!"

The last words were accompanied by a whimper, so Polybius, who could not bear to see any but cheerful faces, raised his cup and drank her health with kindly words. Then refilling the tankard, he poured a libation, and was about to empty it to Melissa's health, but Praxilla's lean frame was standing by his side as quickly as though a serpent had stung her. She was drawing a stick of asparagus between her teeth, but she hastily dropped it on her plate, and with both hands snatched the cup from her brother, exclaiming:

"It is the fourth; and if I allow you to empty it, you are a dead man!"

"Death is not so swift," replied Polybius, signing to a slave to bring him back the cup. But he drank only half of it, and, at his sister's pathetic entreaties, had more water mixed with the wine. And while Praxilla carefully prepared his crayfish—for gout had crippled even his fingers—he beckoned to his white-haired body-slave, and with a cunning smile made him add more wine to the washy fluid. He fixed his twinkling glance on Melissa, to invite her sympathy in his successful trick, but her appearance startled him. How pale the child was—how dejected and weary her sweet face, with the usually bright, expressive eyes!

It needed not the intuition of his kind heart to tell him that she was completely exhausted, and he desired his sister to take her away to bed. But Melissa was already sound asleep, and Praxilla would not wake her. She gently placed a pillow under her head, laid her feet easily on the couch, and covered them with a wrap. Polybius feasted his eyes on the fair sleeper; and, indeed, nothing purer and more tender can be imagined than the girl's face as she lay in dreamless slumber.

The conversation was now carried on in subdued tones, so as not to disturb her, and Andreas completed the history of the day by informing them that Melissa had, by mistake, engaged the assistance not of the great Galen but of another Roman practiced in the healing art, but of less illustrious proficiency. He must, therefore, still have Diodoros conveyed to the Serapeum, and this

could be done very easily in the morning, before the populace should again besiege the temple. He must forthwith go back to make the necessary arrangements. Praxilla whispered tenderly:

"Devoted man that you are, you do not even get your night's rest." But Andreas turned away to discuss some further matters with Polybius; and, in spite of pain, the old man could express his views clearly and intelligently.

At last he took his leave; and now Praxilla had to direct the slaves who were to carry her brother to bed. She carefully arranged the cushions on his couch, and gave him his medicine and night-draught. Then she returned to Melissa, and the sight of the sleeping girl touched her heart. She stood gazing at her for some time in silence, and then bent over her to wake her with a kiss. She had at last made up her mind to regard the gem-cutter's daughter as her niece, so, determined to treat her as a child of her own, she called Melissa by name.

This awoke the sleeper, and when she had realized that she was still in Polybius's eating-room, she asked for Andreas.

"He has gone back to the town, my child," replied Praxilla. "He was anxious about your betrothed."

"Is he worse, then?" asked Melissa, in alarm. "No, no," said the widow, soothingly. "It is only—I assure you we have heard nothing new—"

"But what then?" Melissa inquired. "The great Galen is to see him early to-morrow." Praxilla tried to divert her thoughts. But as the girl would take no answer to her declaration that Galen

himself had promised to see Diodoros, Praxilla, who was little used to self-command, and who was offended by her persistency, betrayed the fact that Melissa had spoken to the wrong man, and that Andreas was gone to remove Diodoros to the Serapeum.

At this, Melissa suddenly understood why Andreas had not rejoiced with her, and at the same time she said to herself that her lover must on no account be exposed to so great a danger without her presence. She must lend her aid in transporting him to the Serapeum; and when she firmly expressed her views to the widow, Praxilla was shocked, and sincerely repented of having lost her self-control. It was far too late, and when the housekeeper came into the room and gladly volunteered to accompany Melissa to the town, Praxilla threatened to rouse her brother, that he might insist on their remaining at home; but at last she relented, for the girl, she saw, would take her own way against any opposition.

The housekeeper had been nurse to Diodoros, and had been longing to help in tending him. When she left the house with Melissa, her eyes were moist with tears of joy and thankfulness.

CHAPTER X

The Nubian boat-keeper and his boy had soon ferried them across the lake. Melissa and her companion then turned off from the shore into a street which must surely lead into that where the Christians dwelt. Still, even as she went on, she began to be doubtful whether she had taken the right one; and when she came out by a small temple, which she certainly had not seen before, she knew not which way to go, for the streets here crossed each other in a perfect labyrinth, and she was soon obliged to confess to her companion that she had lost her road. In the morning she had trusted herself to Andreas's knowledge of the town, and while talking eagerly to him had paid no heed to anything else.

What was to be done? She stood meditating; and then she remembered the spot where she had seen Caesar drive past. This she thought she could certainly recognize, and from thence make her way to the street she sought.

It was quite easy to find the street of Hermes, for the noise of the revelers, who were to-night even more numerous than usual in this busy highway, could be heard at a considerable distance. They must follow its guidance till they should come to the little temple of Aphrodite; and that was a bold enterprise, for the crowd of men who haunted the spot at this hour might possibly hinder and annoy two unescorted women. However, the elder woman was sturdy and determined, and sixty years of age;

while Melissa feared nothing, and thought herself sufficiently protected when she had arranged her kerchief so as to hide her face from curious eyes.

As she made her way to the wide street with a throbbing heart, but quite resolved to find the house she sought at any cost, she heard men's voices on a side street; however, she paid no heed to them, for how, indeed, could she guess that what they were saying could nearly concern her?

The conversation was between a woman and a man in the white robe of a Christian priest. They were standing at the door of a large house; and close to the wall, in the shadow of the porch of a building opposite, stood a youth, his hair covered by the hood of a long caracalla, listening with breathless attention.

This was Alexander.

He had been standing here for some time already, waiting for the return of Agatha, the fair Christian whom he had followed across the lake, and who had vanished into that house under the guidance of a deaconess. The door had not long closed on them when several men had also been admitted, whom he could not distinguish in the darkness, for the street was narrow and the moon still low.

It was sheer folly—and yet he fancied that one of them was his father, for his deep, loud voice was precisely like that of Heron; and, what was even more strange, that of the man who answered him seemed to proceed from his brother Philip. But, at such an hour, he could more easily have supposed them to be on the top

of Mount Etna than in this quarter of the town.

The impatient painter was very tired of waiting, so, seating himself on a feeding-manger for asses which stood in front of the adjoining house, he presently fell asleep. He was tired from the sleepless night he had last spent, and when he opened his eyes once more and looked down the street into which the moon was now shining, he did not know how long he had been slumbering. Perhaps the damsel he wanted to see had already left the house, and he must see her again, cost him what it might; for she was so amazingly like the dead Korinna whom he had painted, that he could not shake off the notion that perhaps—for, after Serapion's discourse, it seemed quite likely—perhaps he had seen the spirit of the departed girl.

He had had some difficulty in persuading Glaukias, who had come across the lake with him, to allow him to follow up the fair vision unaccompanied; and his entreaties and prohibitions would probably alike have proved vain, but that Glaukias held taken it into his head to show his latest work, which a slave was carrying, to some friends over a jar of wine. It was a caricature of Caesar, whom he had seen at the Kanopic Gate, modeled while he was in the house of Polybius, with a few happy touches.

When Alexander woke, he crept into the shadow of the porch opposite to the house into which Korinna's double had disappeared, and he now had no lack of entertainment. A man came out of the tall white house and looked into the street, and the moonlight enabled the artist to see all that took place.

The tall youth who had come to the door wore the robe of a Christian priest. Still, it struck Alexander that he was too young for such a calling; and he soon detected that he was certainly not what he seemed, but that there was some treachery in the wind; for no sooner had a woman joined him, whom he evidently expected, than she blamed him for his want of caution. To this he laughingly replied that he was too hot in his disguise, and, pulling out a false beard, he showed it to the woman, who was dressed as a Christian deaconess, exclaiming, "That will do it!"

He went on to tell her, in a quick, low tone, much of which escaped the listener, that Serapion had dared much that day, and that the performance had ended badly, for that the Christian girl he had so cleverly persuaded to come from the other side of the lake had taken fright, and had insisted on knowing where she was.

At this the deaconess seemed somewhat dismayed, and poured out endless questions in a low voice. He, however, cast all the blame on the philosopher, whom his master had got hold of the day before. Then, as the woman desired more particular information, he briefly told her the story.

The fair Agatha, he said, after being invited by him, at noon, in the name of Bishop Demetrius, to a meeting that evening, had reached the ferryhouse at about sunset. She had been told that many things of immediate importance were to be announced to the maidens of the Christian congregation; more especially, a discussion was to be held as to the order issued by the prefect for their taking part in a procession in Caesar's honor when he

should quit Alexandria. Old Dorothea had met the girl at the ferry-house, and had brought her hither. The woman who had attended her across the lake was certainly none of the wisest, for Dorothea had easily persuaded her to remain in her house during the meeting.

"Once there," the sham priest went on, "the girl's waiting-woman must have had some dose in wine or sirup and water, for she is fast asleep at this moment in the ferry-house, or wherever Dorothea took her, as she could not be allowed to wake under Dorothea's roof.

"Thus every one was out of the way who could make any mischief; and when the Syrian, dressed as a Christian priest, had explained to Agatha what the patriarch required of his maidens, I led her on to the stage, on which the spectators were to see the ghosts through a small opening.

"The Syrian had desired her to put up so many and such prayers for the congregation in its peril from Caesar; and, by Aphrodite! she was as docile as a lamb. She fell on her knees, and with hands and eyes to heaven entreated her god. But hark!

"Did you hear anything? Something is stirring within. Well, I have nearly done.

"The philosopher was to see her thus, and when he had gazed at her as if bewitched for some little time through the small window, he suddenly cried out, 'Korinna! Korinna!' and all sorts of nonsense, although Serapion had strictly forbidden him to utter a sound. Of course, the curtain instantly dropped. But

Agatha had heard him call, and in a great fright she wanted to know where she was, and asked to go home.—Serapion was really grand. You should have heard how the fox soothed the dove, and at the same time whispered to me what you now are to do!"

"I?" said the woman, with some annoyance. "If he thinks that I will risk my good name in the congregation for the sake of his long beard—"

"Just be quiet," said Castor, in a pacifying tone. "The master's beard has nothing to do with the case, but something much more substantial. Ten solidi, full weight, shall be yours if you will take Agatha home with you, or safe across the lake again, and pretend to have saved her from mystics or magicians who have decoyed her to some evil end. She knows you as a Christian deaconess, and will go with you at once. If you restore her to her father, he is rich, and will not send you empty away. Tell him that you heard her voice out in the street, and with the help of a worthy old man —that am I—rescued her from any peril you may invent. If he asks you where the heroic deed was done, name any house you please, only not this. Your best plan is to lay it all on the shoulders of Hananja, the thaumaturgist; we have owed him a grudge this many a day. However, I was not to teach you any lesson, for your wits are at least a match for ours."

"Flattery will not win me," the woman broke in. "Where is the gold?"

Castor handed her the solidi wrapped in a papyrus leaf, and

then added:

"Stay one moment! I must remove this white robe. The girl must on no account recognize me. I am going to force my way into the house with you—you found me in the street, an old man, a total stranger, and appealed to me for help. No harm is done, nothing lost but Dorothea's credit among the Christians. We may have to get her safe out of the town. I must escort you and Agatha, for nothing unpleasant must happen to her on the way home. The master is imperative on that point, and so much beauty will certainly not get through the crowded streets without remark. And for my part, I, of course, am thinking of yours."

Here Castor laughed aloud, and rolled the white robe into a bundle. Alexander peeped out of his nook and shook his head in amazement, for the supple youth, who a moment before stood stalwart and upright, had assumed, with a bent attitude and a long, white beard hastily placed on his chin, the aspect of a weary, poor old man.

"I will give you a lesson!" muttered Alexander to himself, and he shook his fist at the intriguing rascal as he vanished into the house with the false deaconess.

So Serapion was a cheat! And the supposed ghost of Korinna was a Christian maiden who was being shamefully deluded. But he would keep watch over her, and bring that laughing villain to account. The first aim of his life was not to lose sight of Agatha. His whole happiness, he felt, depended on that. The gods had, as it were, raised her from the dead for him; in her, everything

that he most admired was united; she was the embodiment of everything he cared for and prized; every feeling sank into the shade beside the one desire to make her his. She was, at this moment, the universe to him; and all else—the pursuers at his heels, his father, his sister, pretty Ino, to whom he had vowed his love only the night before—had ceased to exist for him.

Possessed wholly by the thought of her, he never took his eyes off the door opposite; and when at last the maiden came out with the deaconess, whom she called Elizabeth, and with Castor, Alexander followed the ill-matched trio; and he had to be brisk, for at first they hurried through the streets as though they feared to be overtaken. He carefully kept close to the houses on the shady side, and when they presently stopped, so did he.

The deaconess inquired of Agatha whither she would be taken. But when the girl replied that she must go back to her own boat, waiting at the ferry, and return home, the deaconess represented that this was impossible by reason of the drunken seamen, who at this hour made the strand unsafe; she could only advise Agatha to come home with her and remain till daybreak. "This kind old man," and she pointed to Castor, "would no doubt go and tell the oarsmen that they were not to be uneasy at her absence."

The two women stood talking in the broad moonlight, and the pale beams fell on Agatha's beautiful unveiled features, giving them that unearthly, corpse-like whiteness which Alexander had tried to represent in his picture of Korinna. Again the thought that she was risen from the dead sent a chill through his blood

—that she would make him follow her, perhaps to the tomb she had quitted. He cared not! If his senses had cheated him—if,—in spite of what he had heard, that pale, unspeakably lovely image were indeed a lamia, a goblin shape from Hecate's dark abode, yet would he follow wherever she might lead, as to a festival, only to be with her.

Agatha thanked the deaconess, and as she spoke raised her eyes to the woman's face; and they were two large, dark orbs sparkling through tears, and as unlike as possible to the eyes which a ghost might snatch from their sockets to fling like balls or stones in the face of a pursuer. Oh, if only those eyes might look into his own as warmly and gratefully as they now gazed into the face of that treacherous woman!

He had a hard struggle with himself to subdue the impulse to put an end, now and here, to the fiendish tricks which guile was playing on the purest innocence; but the street was deserted, and if he had to struggle with the bent old man, whose powerful and supple limbs he had already seen, and if the villain should plant a knife in his ribs—for as a wrestler he felt himself his match—Agatha would be bereft of a protector and wholly in the deceiver's power.

This, at any rate, must not be, and he even controlled himself when he heard the music of her words, and saw her grasp the hand of the pretended graybeard, who, with an assumption of paternal kindness, dared to kiss her hair, and then helped her to draw her kerchief over her face. The street of Hermes, he

explained, where the deaconess dwelt, was full of people, and the divine gift of beauty, wherewith Heaven had blessed her, would attract the baser kind, as a flame attracts bats and moths. The hypocrite's voice was full of unction; the deaconess spoke with pious gravity. He could see that she was a woman of middle age, and he asked himself with rising fury whether the gods were not guilty who had lent mean wretches like these such winning graces as to enable them to lay traps for the guileless? For, in fact, the woman's face was well-favored, gentle, and attractive.

Alexander never took his gaze off Agatha, and his artist-eye reveled in her elastic step and her slender, shapely form. Above all, he was bewitched by the way her head was set, with a little forward bend; and as long as the way led through the silent lanes he was never weary of comparing her with lovely images-with a poppy, whose flower bows the stem; with a willow, whose head leans over the water; with the huntress Artemis, who, chasing in the moonlight, bends to mark the game.

Thus, unwearied and unseen, he had followed them as far as the street of Hermes; there his task became more difficult, for the road was swarming with people. The older men were walking in groups of five or six, going to or coming from some evening assembly, and talking as they walked; or priests and temple servants on their way home, tired from night services and ceremonies; but the greater number were young men and boys, some wearing wreaths, and all more or less intoxicated, with street-wenches on the lookout for a companion or surrounded

by suitors, and trying to attract a favorite or dismiss the less fortunate.

The flare of the torches which illuminated the street was mirrored in eager eyes glowing with wine and passion, and in the glittering weapons of the Roman soldiery. Most of these were attached to Caesar's train. As in the field, so in the peaceful town, they aimed at conquest, and many a Greek sulkily resigned his claims to some fickle beauty in favor of an irresistible tribune or centurion. Where the courteous Alexandrians made way, they pushed in or thrust aside whatever came in their path, securely confident of being Caesar's favorite protectors, and unassailable while he was near. Their coarse, barbaric tones shook the air, and reduced the Greeks to silence; for, even in his drunken and most reckless moods, the Greek never lost his subtle refinement. The warriors rarely met a friendly glance from the eye of a native; still, the gold of these lavish revelers was as welcome to the women as that of a fellow-countryman.

The blaze of light shone, too, on many a fray, such as flared up in an instant whenever Greek and Roman came into contact. The lictors and townwatch could generally succeed in parting the combatants, for the orders of the authorities were that they should in every case side with the Romans.

The shouts and squabbling of men, the laughing and singing of women, mingled with the word of command. Flutes and lyres, cymbals and drums, were heard from the trellised tavern arbors and cook-shops along the way; and from the little temple to

Aphrodite, where Melissa had promised to meet the Roman physician next morning, came the laughter and song of unbridled lovers. As a rule, the Kanopic Way was the busiest and gayest street in the town; but on this night the street of Hermes had been the most popular, for it led to the Serapeum, where Caesar was lodged; and from the temple poured a tide of pleasure-seekers, mingling with the flood of humanity which streamed on to catch a glimpse of imperial splendor, or to look at the troops encamped on the space in front of the Serapeum. The whole street was like a crowded fair; and Alexander had several times to follow Agatha and her escort out into the roadway, quitting the shelter of the arcade, to escape a party of rioters or the impertinent addresses of strangers.

The sham old man, however, was so clever at making way for the damsel, whose face and form were effectually screened by her kerchief from the passers-by, that Alexander had no opportunity for offering her his aid, or proving his devotion by some gallant act. That it was his duty to save her from the perils of spending a whole night under the protection of this venal deceiver and her worthless colleague, he had long since convinced himself; still, the fear of bringing her into a more painful position by attracting the attention of the crowd if he were to attack her escort, kept him back.

They had now stopped again under the colonnade, on the left-hand side of the road. Castor had taken the girl's hand, and, as he bade her good-night, promised, in emphatic tones, to be with her

again very early and escort her to the lake. Agatha thanked him warmly. At this a storm of rage blew Alexander's self-command to the four winds, and, before he knew what he was doing; he stood between the rascal and the Christian damsel, snatched their hands asunder, gripping Castor's wrist with his strong right hand, while he held Agatha's firmly in his left, and exclaimed:

"You are being foully tricked, fair maid; the woman, even, is deceiving you. This fellow is a base villain!"

And, releasing the arm which Castor was desperately but vainly trying to free from his clutch, he snatched off the false beard.

Agatha, who had also been endeavoring to escape from his grasp, gave a shriek of terror and indignation. The unmasked rogue, with a swift movement, snatched the hood of the caracalla off Alexander's head, flew at his throat with the fury and agility of a panther, and with much presence of mind called for help. And Castor was strong too while Alexander tried to keep him off with his right hand, holding on to Agatha with his left, the shouts of the deaconess and her accomplice soon collected a crowd. They were instantly surrounded by an inquisitive mob, laughing or scolding the combatants, and urging them to fight or beseeching them to separate. But just as the artist had succeeded in twisting his opponent's wrist so effectually as to bring him to his knees, a loud voice of malignant triumph, just behind him, exclaimed:

"Now we have snared our scoffer! The fox should not stop to

kill the hare when the hunters are at his heels!"

"Zminis!" gasped Alexander. He understood in a flash that life and liberty were at stake.

Like a stag hemmed in by dogs, he turned his head to this side and that, seeking a way of escape; and when he looked again where his antagonist had stood, the spot was clear; the nimble rascal had taken to his heels and vanished among the throng. But a pair of eyes met the painter's gaze, which at once restored him to self-possession, and reminded him that he must collect his wits and presence of mind. They were those of his sister Melissa, who, as she made her way onward with her companion, had recognized her brother's voice. In spite of the old woman's earnest advice not to mix in the crowd, she had pushed her way through, and, as the men-at-arms dispersed the mob, she came nearer to her favorite but too reckless brother.

Alexander still held Agatha's hand. The poor girl herself, trembling with terror, did not know what had befallen her. Her venerable escort was a young man—a liar. What was she to think of the deaconess, who was his confederate; what of this handsome youth who had unmasked the deceiver, and saved her perhaps from some fearful fate?

As in a thunder-storm flash follows flash, so, in this dreadful night, one horror had followed another, to bewilder the brain of a maiden who had always lived a quiet life among good and quiet men and women. And now the guardians of the peace had laid hands on the man who had so bravely taken her part, and whose

bright eyes had looked into her own with such truth and devotion. He was to be dragged to prison; so he, too, no doubt, was a criminal. At this thought she tried to release her hand, but he would not let it go; for the deaconess had come close to Agatha, and, in a tone of sanctimonious wrath, desired her to quit this scene.

What was she to do? Terrified and undecided, with deceit on one hand and on the other peril and perhaps disaster, she looked first at Elizabeth and then at Alexander, who, in spite of the threats of the man-at-arms, gazed in turns at her and at the spot where his sister had stood.

The lictors who were keeping off the mob had stopped Melissa too; but while Alexander had been gazing into Agatha's imploring eyes, feeling as though all his blood had rushed to his heart and face, Melissa had contrived to creep up close to him. And again the sight of her gave him the composure he so greatly needed. He knew, indeed, that the hand which still held Agatha's would in a moment be fettered, for Zminis had ordered his slaves to bring fresh ropes and chains, since they had already found use for those they had first brought out. It was to this circumstance alone that he owed it that he still was free. And, above all things, he must warn Agatha against the deaconess, who would fain persuade her to go with her.

It struck his alert wit that Agatha would trust his sister rather than himself, whom the Egyptian had several times abused as a criminal; and seeing the old woman of Polybius's household

making her way up to Melissa, out of breath, indeed, and with disordered hair, he felt light dawn on his soul, for this worthy woman was a fresh instrument to his hand. She must know Agatha well, if the girl were indeed the daughter of Zeno.

He lost not an instant. With swift decision, while Zminis and his men were disputing as to whither they should conduct the traitor as soon as the fetters were brought, he released the maiden's hand, placing it in Melissa's, and exclaiming:

"This is my sister, the betrothed of Diodoros, Polybius's son —your neighbor, if you are the daughter of Zeno. She will take care of you." Agatha had at once recognized the old nurse, and when she confirmed Alexander's statement, and the Christian looked in Melissa's face, she saw beyond the possibility of doubt an innocent woman, whose heart she might fully trust.

She threw her arm round Melissa, as if to lean on her, and the deaconess turned away with well-curbed wrath and vanished into an open door.

All this had occupied but a very few minutes; and when Alexander saw the two beings he most loved in each other's embrace, and Agatha rescued from the deceiver and in safe keeping, he drew a deep breath, saying to his sister, as if relieved from a heavy burden:

"Her name is Agatha, and to her, the image of the dead Korinna, my life henceforth is given. Tell her this, Melissa."

His impassioned glance sought that of the Christian; and when she returned it, blushing, but with grateful candor, his mirthful

features beamed with the old reckless jollity, and he glanced again at the crowd about him.

What did he see there? Melissa observed that his whole face was suddenly lighted up; and when Zminis signed to the man who was making his way to the spot holding up the rope, Alexander began to sing the first words of a familiar song. In an instant it was taken up by several voices, and then, as if from an echo, by the whole populace.

It was the chant by which the lads in the Gymnasium of Timagetes were wont to call on each other for help when they had a fray with those of the Gymnasium of the Dioscuri, with whom they had a chronic feud. Alexander had caught sight of his friends Jason and Pappus, of the sculptor Glaukias, and of several other fellow-artists; they understood the appeal, and, before the night-watch could use the rope on their captive, the troop of young men had forced their way through the circle of armed men under the leadership of Glaukias, had surrounded Alexander, and run off with him in their midst, singing and shouting.

"Follow him! Catch him! Stop him!—living or dead, bring him back! A price is on his head—a splendid price to any one who will take him!" cried the Egyptian, foaming with rage and setting the example. But the youth of the town, many of whom knew the artist, and who were at all times ready to spoil sport for the sycophants and spies, crowded up between the fugitive and his pursuers and barred the way.

The lictors and their underlings did indeed, at last, get through

the solid wall of shouting and scolding men and women; but by that time the troop of artists had disappeared down a side street.

CHAPTER XI

Melissa, too, would probably have found herself a prisoner, but that Zminis, seeing himself balked of a triumph, and beside himself with rage, rushed after the fugitive with the rest. She had no further occasion to seek the house where her lover was lying, for Agatha knew it well. Its owner, Proterius, was an illustrious member of the Christian community, and she had often been to see him with her father.

On their way the girls confided to each other what had brought them out into the streets at so unusual an hour; and when Melissa spoke of her companion's extraordinary resemblance to the dead daughter of Seleukus—which, no doubt, had been Alexander's inducement to follow her—Agatha told her that she had constantly been mistaken for her uncle's daughter, so early lost. She herself had not seen her cousin for some few years, for Seleukus had quarreled with his brother's family when they had embraced Christianity. The third brother, Timotheus, the high-priest of Serapis, had proved more placable, and his wife Euryale was of all women the one she loved best. And presently it appeared that Agatha, too, had lost her mother, and this drew the girls so closely together, that they clasped hands and walked on like sisters or old and dear friends.

They were not kept long waiting outside the house of Proterius, for Andreas was in the vestibule arranging the litter for

the conveyance of Diodoros, with the willing help of Ptolemaeus. The freedman was indeed amazed when he heard Melissa's voice, and blamed her for this fresh adventure. However, he was glad to see her, for, although it seemed almost beyond the bounds of possibility, he had already fancied more than once, as steps had approached and passed, that she must surely be coming to lend him a helping hand.

It was easy to hear in his tone of voice that her bold venture was at least as praiseworthy as it was blameworthy in his eyes, and the grave man was as cheerful as he commonly was only when among his flowers. Never before had Melissa heard a word of compliment from his lips, but as Agatha stood with one arm round Melissa's shoulders, he said to the physician, as he pointed to the pair, "Like two roses on one stem!"

He had good reason, indeed, to be content. Diodoros was no worse, and Galen was certainly expected to visit the sick in the Serapeum. He regarded it, too, as a dispensation from Heaven that Agatha and Melissa should have happened to meet, and Alexander's happy escape had taken a weight from his mind. He willingly acceded to Melissa's request that he would take her and Agatha to see the sick man; but he granted them only a short time to gaze at the sleeper, and then requested the deaconess to find a room for the two damsels, who needed rest.

The worthy woman rose at once; but Melissa urgently entreated to be allowed to remain by her lover's side, and glanced anxiously at the keys in the matron's hand.

At this Andreas whispered to her: "You are afraid lest I should prevent your coming with us? But it is not so; and, indeed, of what use would it be? You made your way past the guards to the senator's coach; you came across the lake, and through the darkness and the drunken rabble in the streets; if I were to lock you in, you would be brave enough to jump out of the window. No, no; I confess you have conquered my objections —indeed, if you should now refuse your assistance, I should be obliged to crave it. But Ptolemaeus wishes to leave Diodoros quite undisturbed till daybreak. He is now gone to the Serapeum to find a good place for him. You, too, need rest, and you shall be waked in good time. Go, now, with Dame Katharine.—As to your relations," he added, to Agatha, "do not be uneasy. A boy is already on his way to your father, to tell him where you are for the night."

The deaconess led the two girls to a room where there was a large double bed. Here the new friends stretched their weary limbs; but, tired as they were, neither of them seemed disposed to sleep; they were so happy to have found each other, and had so much to ask and tell each other! As soon as Katharine had lighted a three-branched lamp she left them to themselves, and then their talk began.

Agatha, clinging to her new friend, laid her head on Melissa's shoulder; and as Melissa looked on the beautiful face, and remembered the fond passion which her heedless brother had conceived for its twin image, or as now and again the Christian

girl's loving words appealed to her more especially, she stroked the long, flowing tresses of her brown hair.

It needed, indeed, no more than a common feeling, an experience gone through together, an hour of confidential solitude, to join the hearts of the two maidens; and as they awaited the day, shoulder to shoulder in uninterrupted chat, they felt as though they had shared every joy and sorrow from the cradle. Agatha's weaker nature found a support in the calm strength of will which was evident in many things Melissa said; and when the Christian opened her tender and pitying heart to Melissa with touching candor, it was like a view into a new but most inviting world.

Agatha's extreme beauty, too, struck the artist's daughter as something divine, and her eye often rested admiringly on her new friend's pure and regular features.

When Agatha inquired of her about her father, Melissa briefly replied, that since her mother's death he was often moody and rough, but that he had a good, kind heart. The Christian girl, on the contrary, spoke with enthusiasm of the warm, human loving-kindness of the man to whom she owed her being; and the picture she drew of her home life was so fair, that the little heathen could hardly believe in its truth. Her father, Agatha said, lived in constant warfare with the misery and suffering of his fellow-creatures, and he was, in fact, able to make those about him happy and prosperous. The poorest were dearest to his loving heart, and on his estate across the lake he had collected none but

the sick and wretched. The care of the children was left to her, and the little ones clung to her as if she were their mother. She had neither brother nor sister.—And so the conversation turned on Alexander, of whom Agatha could never hear enough.

And how proud was Melissa to speak of the bright young artist, who till now had been the sun of her joyless life! There was much that was good to be said about him: for the best masters rated his talent highly in spite of his youth; his comrades were faithful; and none knew so well as he how to cheer his father's dark moods. Then, there were many amiable and generous traits of which she had been told, or had herself known. With his very first savings, he had had the Genius with a reversed torch cast in bronze to grace his mother's grave, and give his father pleasure. Once he had been brought home half dead after saving a woman and child from drowning, and vainly endeavoring to rescue another child. He might be wild and reckless, but he had always been faithful to his art and to his love for his family.

Agatha's eyes opened widely when Melissa told her anything good about her brother, and she clung in terror to her new friend as she heard of her excited orgy with her lover.

Scared as though some imminent horror threatened herself, she clasped Melissa's hand as she listened to the tale of the dangers Alexander had so narrowly escaped.

Such things had never before reached the ears of the girl in her retired Christian home beyond the lake; they sounded to her as the tales of some bold seafarer to the peaceful husbandman on

whose shores the storm has wrecked him.

"And do you know," she exclaimed, "all this seems delightful to me, though my father, I am sure, would judge it hardly! When your brother risks his life, it is always for others, and that is right —that is the highest life. I think of him as an angel with a flaming sword. But you do not know our sacred scriptures."

Then Melissa would hear more of this book, of which Andreas had frequently spoken; but there was a knock at the door, and she sprang out of bed.

Agatha did the same; and when a slave-girl had brought in fresh, cold water, she insisted on handing her friend the towels, on plaiting her long hair, pinning her peplos in its place, and arranging its folds. She had so often longed for a sister, and she felt as though she had found one in Melissa! While she helped her to dress she kissed her preserver's sister on the eyes and lips, and entreated her with affectionate urgency to come to see her, as soon as she had done all she could for her lover. She must be made acquainted with her father, and Agatha longed to show her her poor children, her dogs, and her pigeons. And she would go to see Melissa, when she was staying with Polybius.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.