THE BOOK WAS DRENCHED

Blackie's
Abridged English Classics
Series

THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII

GLAUCUS AND NYDIA

Page 8

Abridged English Classics Series

THE LAST DAYS OF POMPEII

RETOLD BY

DOROTHY KING

FROM THE STORY BY LORD LYTTON

Illustrated

BLACKIE & SON (INDIA) LIMITED
103/5 FORT STREET, BOMBAY; CALCUTTA AND MADRAS

BLACKIE & SON LIMITED
16/18 *William IV Street, London W.C.2*
17 *Stanhope Street, Glasgow*
BLACKIE & SON (INDIA) LIMITED
103/5 *Fort Street, Bombay*
BLACKIE & SON (CANADA) LIMITED
Toronto

First printed 1948
Sixth Impression 1956

PRINTED BY V. M. PHILIP AT THE DIOCESAN PRESS, MADRAS AND PUBLISHED BY BOMAN MEHTA FOR BLACKIE & SON (INDIA), LIMITED FORT, BOMBAY—1956. C5438

PREFACE

Lord Lytton, who was born in 1803 and died in 1873, was a well-known English novelist. *The Last Days of Pompeii* is probably the best of his many novels and tells a good and exciting story which, at the same time, gives a clear picture of life in Italy eighteen hundred years ago. There actually was a town in Italy called Pompeii and it was completely destroyed by an eruption of the great volcano, Vesuvius, in the year 79. To-day the ruins have been uncovered and many people go to see them.

In this book Lord Lytton's famous story has been retold for pupils in Indian schools.

There are five carefully chosen illustrations.

The book is provided with sets of exercises.

CHAPTER I

TWO GENTLEMEN OF POMPEII

In a street of Pompeii, on a summer's day in the year 79, when the Romans ruled the city, a young man was strolling towards the public baths. The street was crowded with passengers and chariots, and presently he heard a pleasant voice calling to him:

"What, Clodius! You sup with me to-night, you know!"

The speaker, a handsome young Greek, stopped his chariot, which was drawn by two beautiful horses. He wore no toga,[1] but a richly coloured tunic with jewelled buckles and a girdle of gold.

"Who ever forgets the invitation of Glaucus?" replied Clodius, who knew how to flatter his wealthy friends.

"Which way do you go now?" went on Glaucus.

"Why, to the baths, although it is an hour yet before one bathes."

"Well, I will go with you," said the other; and leaving his chariot to the driver, and fondly stroking the horse nearest to him, he set off with Clodius.

[1] **Toga, a long, loose robe, worn by the ancient Romans.**

Their way lay through streets lined with gay open shops; streets where sparkling fountains threw up showers of spray in the sunshine, and where, at every corner, country girls sold baskets of fruit and flowers. The happy Glaucus was full of pleasure at all he saw: he had only lately returned for the summer to Pompeii, where he had a handsome villa. Presently the two friends stopped in an open space where a graceful temple stood, for here a crowd had gathered.

In the shade of the temple porch there stood a very young girl, hardly more than a child. She had a flower-basket on her arm, and in her left hand was a three-stringed instrument of music, to which she was singing in a low, sweet voice. Whenever she paused in her song, those who stood by showered coins into her basket, either because they liked the song or felt pity for the singer, for the girl was blind.

The two young men waited until the song was ended, and then Glaucus, stepping forward, dropped a handful of money into the basket, saying:

"I must have that bunch of violets, sweet Nydia. Your voice is more charming than ever."

The blind girl started as she heard him speak, and her pale face grew rosy with surprise and joy.

"So you have come back!" she said.

"Yes, child. I have not been at Pompeii more than a few days. My garden wants your care, as before. Come and visit it to-morrow; and mind,

no garlands at my house shall be woven by any hands but those of pretty Nydia."

Nydia smiled with pleasure, and Glaucus, putting the violets in his breast, turned away with his friend.

"So this child is a sort of client of yours?" said Clodius. (In the ancient days, a client was a Roman citizen who put himself under the protection of another.)

"Yes," replied Glaucus; "does she not sing prettily? She interests me, the poor slave! Besides, she is from my own land of Greece — she was born in Thessaly."

Presently the friends met a handsome young lady whom they both knew. She was Julia, the daughter of the wealthy merchant Diomed. Her face was veiled, and two slaves followed her.

"Fair Julia, we salute thee!" said Clodius; and the lady partly raised her veil and turned her bright dark eyes on the Greek.

"And Glaucus has returned! Has he forgotten his friends of last year?" she said almost in a whisper.

Glaucus answered her gaily and carelessly; and after a little more talk she left them, and the two passed down a street which led to the seashore. It was still early for the baths, so Glaucus proposed that they should go down to the bay.

They were soon on the beach, where they sat down upon a rock in the sunshine, and looked

upon the blue waters of the glittering Bay of Naples. Clodius had been speaking of Julia.

"She loves you," he said to his friend. "She would be a rich and handsome wife for you."

"Yes, she is handsome," replied Glaucus. "Yet she carries all her beauty in her face; her mind has no room for beauty — it is too full of pleasure."

Then he began to tell the other of a lovely maiden whom he had seen only once, months ago, one day in Naples, praying in the temple of the goddess Minerva. The maiden had told him that she was a Greek, although Naples was her birthplace. Before he had been able to learn her name, he had lost her in the crowd outside the temple.

"Never," said the young man earnestly, "have I seen a mortal face so lovely, or an air so noble and divine. I shall never forget her."

Before Clodius could reply, another man came towards them over the pebbles. He was older than either of them, tall, dark-skinned, and majestic, and dressed in dark, sweeping robes. Both, as they saluted him, made a slight and secret sign with their fingers. For this man Arbaces the Egyptian, was said to have the dreadful gift of the evil eye.

He stood for some moments to speak with the friends; but his voice and smile were cold and almost scornful; and when he had left them, Clodius said, "I breathe more freely. The dark,

gliding shadow of yonder strange Egyptian would be a fearful ghost at a merry feast. Yet they say that he is rich, and that he holds evil and terrible revels in his gloomy house."

1. What was the name of the handsome young Greek?
2. How did Nydia recognize Glaucus?
3. Why did Glaucus not like Julia?
4. When the two friends met Arbaces, they made a secret sign with their fingers. Why?

CHAPTER 2

GLAUCUS AND HIS FRIENDS

Glaucus the Greek had every blessing but one: he possessed good looks, health, a large fortune, a noble mind and heart; but he had not freedom. For, born in Athens, he belonged to a people whom Rome had conquered, and he was a subject of Rome.

Pompeii, the beautiful city by the sea, overlooked by the great Mount Vesuvius, was the home of many wealthy Romans and Greeks, who had built handsome houses there. The house of Glaucus was one of the smallest, but at the same time one of the most beautiful in the city, and it was here that he entertained some of his friends to supper on the evening of the day when our story begins.

Nearly all houses in Pompeii were built upon

the same plan. One entered by a vestibule, or entrance-passage; and in the house of Glaucus this was paved with mosaic, or inlaid work of stone, in the centre of which was the image of a dog, with the well-known Latin saying, *Cave canem* — "Beware of the dog". The vestibule opened into a hall, or *atrium*, as it was called, with rich paintings upon the walls, and, in the middle of the pavement, a kind of square, shallow pond, called the *impluvium*, which held rain-water, admitted by an opening in the roof. Other rooms opened from the *atrium*, the chief one being the *tablinum*, a sort of reception-room, hung with fine purple draperies. From the *tablinum* one came to the *peristyle*, a range of beautiful columns hung with garlands, in the centre of which was a small garden. To the right of the *peristyle*, or colonnade, was the *triclinium*, that is, the dining-room, opening on to the garden; and here the guests of Glaucus were gathered that day.

Around the table of polished wood and silver, they sat on couches of bronze covered with thick embroidered quilts. Clodius, of course, was there; so was a pleasant young man named Sallust, whose chief aim in life seemed to be eating and drinking; and another guest was Pansa, who was an *ædile*, or magistrate. All ate heartily, and praised their host's delicious food — the flesh of wild boar and tender kid, fresh herbs strewed with snow, figs, eggs, anchovies, cakes, fruits, nuts, honey, and rich wines.

"I had hoped," said Glaucus to his guests as the supper went merrily on, "to have got for you some oysters from Britain. But the winds that were so cruel to Cæsar have forbidden us the oysters."

"Are they so delicious?" asked one of the company.

"Why," answered Glaucus, smiling, "I dare say it is the distance that gives the flavour. But at Rome no supper is complete without them."

"The poor Britons! There is some good in them after all," said Sallust. "They give us an oyster."

"I wish they would give us a gladiator,"[1] said Pansa.

"When is our next wild-beast fight?" Clodius asked him.

"It is fixed for the ninth ide[2] of August," answered Pansa; "we have a most lovely young lion for the event."

"Who shall we get for him to eat?" said Clodius. "Alas! criminals are so scarce nowadays. You will really have to find some innocent or other to condemn to the lion, Pansa!"

"By Pallas!" cried Glaucus. "These wild spectacles, when beast fights beast, are all very well in their way; but when a man, with bones and blood like ours, is coldly put in the arena[3]

[1] Gladiator, a fighter at the public shows of the Romans.

[2] Ide, a date in the ancient Roman calendar.

[3] Arena, the centre of the amphitheatre, or large enclosed space where men and beasts fought one another at the Roman shows.

and torn limb from limb — oh, it is too horrible! I long to rush and defend him. The gods be thanked! there is little chance of that dreadful spectacle for our next show."

The magistrate shrugged his shoulders, and Sallust, who was thought the best-natured man in Pompeii, stared in surprise at the Greek's words. As Italians, they were used to such horrible sights as he had spoken of; but the Greeks were more merciful in their pleasures.

Presently the company began to talk of Arbaces the Egyptian.

"They say," said Sallust, "that he has taught the most solemn mysteries to the priests of Isis here. He boasts that he is descended from the race of Rameses the Great."

"He has the evil eye," said Clodius. "Whenever I meet that dreadful face without having a charm with me, I am sure to lose a favourite horse, or throw the *canes* [1] nine times running."

"What do you think of this new body of people, these Nazarenes, as they call them, these followers of the Hebrew God, Christus?" said another guest.

"Oh," replied Clodius, "they have not a single gentleman amongst them; they are poor unimportant, ignorant people, whose minds are full of visions."

"Who ought, however, to be crucified for their disbelief," said Pansa severely. "They deny

[1] *Canes*, the lowest throw at dice.

Venus and Jove![1] Nazarene is only another name for unbeliever. Let me catch them — that's all!"

The feast went on, with music and song; and presently Clodius, lifting his wine-cup, gave a toast. "Companions, the beautiful Ione," said he.

"Ione! — the name is Greek," said Glaucus softly. "But who is Ione?"

"Ah! you have only lately returned to Pompeii, or you would deserve to be shunned for your ignorance," replied another guest. "Not to know Ione is not to know the chief charm of our city."

The company then told their host that Ione was a beautiful, gifted, and wealthy maiden who had not long been living in Pompeii.

"She sings like Sappho,"[2] said Clodius; "her beauty is most dazzling. Her house is perfect; she is rich, and generous as she is rich. She has all Pompeii at her feet; yet she has no lovers: she will not even marry."

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

"I will take you to visit her this evening," replied his friend; and when the party broke up soon afterwards, the two set forth together.

At the lady's house, under the colonnade which surrounded the garden, they found Ione with many guests already around her.

"Did you say she was an Athenian?" whispered Glaucus, before he passed into the *peristyle.*

[1] Venus and Jove, the chief goddess and god of the Romans.

[2] Sappho, a famous Greek poetess.

"No, she is from Naples."

"Naples!" echoed Glaucus. And at that moment the group, dividing on either side of Ione, gave to his view the beautiful maiden he had seen months ago in the Temple of Minerva at Naples.

1. What blessing did Glaucus lack?
2. Name some of the foods provided by Glaucus for his guests.
3. What event was to happen in August?
4. Who were the Nazarenes? What are they called nowadays?
5. Where had Glaucus seen Ione before?

CHAPTER 3

IN THE TEMPLE OF ISIS

Arbaces the Egyptian, making his way through the busy forum, or public square, of Pompeii, came to a stand before the temple of Isis, the Egyptian goddess of the moon.

The folk of Pompeii at that time looked upon the goddess Isis with great awe; her temple was usually crowded with worshippers and her oracles, or divine messages to the questioning people, were firmly believed. Now a crowd had gathered before the many altars in the open temple court, in front of the marble steps which led to the inner chamber where the statue of Isis stood. In the centre of the steps was a veiled priest, robed in white from head to foot.

"Why are you gathered here?" whispered Arbaces to one of the crowd.

"We are merchants," answered the man — it was the wealthy trader Diomed — "who seek to know the fate of our vessels which sail for Alexandria to-morrow. We are about to offer up a sacrifice and seek an answer from the goddess."

The priest stood beside the altar of sacrifice, and the fire upon it began to burn clearly. A dead silence fell over the whispering crowd; the other priests gathered round; one of them rushed forward, and, dancing wildly, implored an answer from the goddess. As he ceased, a low murmur was heard within the statue's body. The head moved, the lips parted, and then a hollow voice spoke:

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

The crowd breathed more freely; the merchants looked at each other.

"Nothing can be plainer," murmured Diomed; "there is to be a storm at sea, as there very often is at this season, but our vessels are to be saved. O blessed and kindly Isis!"

"Praised for ever be the goddess!" said the merchants. "What can be plainer than her prophecy?"

Raising his hand for silence, a priest then

poured wine upon the altar, and after a short prayer the ceremony was over and the people moved away. But Arbaces still lingered; and when most of the crowd had gone, he was joined by an evil-looking priest.

"Calenus," said the Egyptian, "you have made the statue's voice sound much better by attending to the suggestions I made, and your verses are very good also. Always prophesy good fortune, unless it cannot possibly be fulfilled."

"Besides," added Calenus, "if a storm does come, and if their ships go down, have we not prophesied it? For are the barks not blest to be at rest? The mariner in the Ægean Sea prays for rest — so says the poet. Can he be more at rest in the sea than when he is at the bottom of it?"

"Right, my Calenus. I wish Apaecides would take a lesson from your wisdom. But I wish to speak to you of him."

The priest then led the way to a small chamber, where the two sat down to a meal. Whilst they ate, Arbaces talked of the young man whom he had called Apaecides, who was no other than the brother of Ione.

These two, the brother and sister, were the children of Athenians who had settled at Naples. The parents died early, and Arbaces, who knew them, became the young people's guardian. He took Apaecides, an eager youth, and taught him the faith of the goddess Isis, making him one of her priests. When Apaecides entered the temple,

Ione moved from Naples to Pompeii, in order to be near her brother.

Now Arbaces talked of the young man to Calenus, who said:

"It is true that you have placed him amongst us — that he is now one of the priests; but in teaching him this faith you have robbed him of wisdom. He has learnt our trickeries, the secrets of our speaking statues, and the frauds we practise on the simple people, and he is disgusted and horror-struck. He keeps apart from us: he will not share in our ceremonies. He has been known to seek the company of those men who deny all our gods — the Nazarenes."

"This is what I feared," said Arbaces; "for, the last time I saw him, he upbraided me, and lately he has shunned me. But I must find him, and continue my lessons. I will have him wholly in my power yet — I will ensnare him — yes, and his beautiful sister too! For, Calenus, I love the fair Ione. I will bend her lofty mind to my will, and she shall be my bride!"

1. Why had the merchants come to the temple of Isis?
2. How was the statue able to talk?
3. Who was Apaecides?
4. Give two reasons why Arbaces was interested in Ione.

CHAPTER 4

GLAUCUS, NYDIA, AND IONE

In the sunny room that opened on to his garden, Glaucus walked happily to and fro the next morning, thinking of Ione.

"I have seen her, then," he said to himself; "I have heard her — I have spoken to her again. I have listened to the music of her voice, and she sang of glory and of Greece. I have found at last the idol of my dreams!"

At that moment someone stood in the doorway, and a sweet voice said: "They tell me that Glaucus is here; may I come in?"

It was Nydia, the blind girl, dressed in a white tunic and carrying in one hand a basket of flowers and in the other a bronze water-vase.

"Ah, my little Nydia," said the Greek, "is that you? I knew you would not forget to come."

"Glaucus was right," replied Nydia, "for he has always been kind to the poor blind girl. And now you have come back again. You are well?"

"I am well. And you, Nydia — how you have grown!"

Nydia blushed, but only answered, "I have brought you some flowers. They are poor, but they are freshly gathered."

"They might come from Flora[1] herself," answered Glaucus kindly.

[1] Flora, the Roman goddess of flowers.

"And how do you find the flowers in your garden?" went on Nydia. "Are they thriving?"

"They are beautiful — the Lares [1] themselves must have tended them."

"I am glad," said the girl, "for I came, as often as I could steal the time, to water and care for them whilst you were away."

"How shall I thank thee, little one? Glaucus did not dream that he left one so watchful over his favourites at Pompeii."

Nydia found her way into the garden, and began to water and tend the flowers. Glaucus watched her pityingly. "Poor Nydia!" he thought; "thou canst not see the sun, nor earth, nor sea, nor stars. Thine is a hard doom!"

Presently the Greek set out for Ione's house, for he felt that he must see her again.

When her care for his flowers was finished for the day, Nydia left the garden, and, guiding herself by a long staff, made her way through the streets to the only home she knew — a sort of tavern in a poor quarter of the city.

Here the innkeeper, whose slave she was, roughly asked her how much money she had made by the sale of her flowers; but before she could reply his wife broke in:

"Never mind those little profits, my Burbo. The girl's voice will be wanted again soon at the rich Egyptian's revels; and thou knowest that he pays pretty highly for his nightingale's tongues."

[1] Lares, the ancient Roman gods of the household.

"Oh, I hope not — I trust not!" cried Nydia, shrinking away and trembling all over. "Oh, I will beg from sunrise to sunset, but do not send me there again!"

And putting down her flowers, she dropped her face on her hands and began to weep bitterly.

Meanwhile, Glaucus found Ione with her maidens, who were at work beside her. She greeted him gladly, and the two sat down together. Soon Glaucus began to speak of Greece, a subject upon which he could have talked, and to which Ione could have listened, for ever. His visit seemed all too short to both; and from that time they saw each other daily, and came to love each other dearly.

Often, in the cool evenings, they would sail out upon the calm waters of the bay; and one evening, as they were returning home in the twilight, Ione spoke of her brother. She told Glaucus how Apaecides had been persuaded by an Egyptian to become a priest of Isis.

"But I wish," she said, sighing, "that he had not been so hasty. Yet I am sure Arbaces thought only of my dear brother's happiness. We were left orphans, you see, and Arbaces took the place of our parents. You must know him: he loves noble and gifted men."

"Arbaces!" said Glaucus. "I know him already; at least, we speak when we meet. I scarcely wish to know more of him. I am ready to like most men, but that dark Egyptian, with his

gloomy looks and his cold smiles, seems to me to sadden the very sun."

"Yet he is kind and wise," replied Ione, "and perhaps his gloom and coldness may be due to what he has suffered in the past — who knows? Just as the mountain yonder," and she pointed to Vesuvius, "which we can see dark and quiet in the distance, once nursed the fires that now are quenched for ever."

They gazed on the mountain as Ione spoke. The rest of the sky was bathed in rosy colour, but over the grey Vesuvius, rising amidst the woods and vineyards that then climbed half-way up it, there hung a black and frowning cloud, the only one in all the landscape. A strange, sudden feeling of fear and sadness came over both of them as they watched it.

1. Who had been looking after the garden of Glaucus while he was away from home?
2. Why was Nydia likely to be wanted by Arbaces?
3. Name the mountain near Pompeii.

CHAPTER 5

THE CUNNING EGYPTIAN

Arbaces was one of those haughty and powerful men who are accustomed to master others; he hated to think that someone who had once owned his rule should ever slip away from his grasp.

Therefore he vowed to himself that Apaecides should not escape him.

One day he met the young man by chance, and had a long talk with him. Apaecides, a slight youth with hollow, burning eyes and quick, restless movements, was at first sullenly unwilling to listen to the Egyptian, whom he called his enemy. He had been entrapped and cheated, he said; the religion which he had been persuaded to accept, to which he had solemnly devoted his life, was a false and empty one. He could have no faith in it, and it held no comfort for him.

"And you are to blame," he told Arbaces passionately. "You knew how worthless is this worship of Isis, how deceitful and evil are her priests. Yet you caused me to become a priest along with them, and in doing this you have robbed me of the glory of youth, of the belief in goodness, and of the thirst for wisdom."

Still Arbaces would not be put off. Calling the youth his friend and pupil, he talked to him with such cunning, and so winningly, that at last Apaecides, excited and half bewildered by what he had heard, promised to visit the Egyptian's house that night, in order to hear more. He gave Arbaces his hand, and master and pupil parted.

Arbaces then made his way to Ione's house. He had not visited her for some weeks, and he was by no means pleased to find, when he entered the *peristyle*, that Glaucus was sitting in talk with

her. The two made a beautiful picture against a background of marble columns, graceful statues, and vases of flowers.

Arbaces joined them, and the three began to talk; but there was little friendliness between Glaucus and the Egyptian. Arbaces spoke almost sneeringly of the Greek's fondness for gay and idle companions, for banquets and garlands, for costly horses and the chances of the dice; as if he, Glaucus, cared for nothing else in the world. Glaucus, in his turn, replied with cold carelessness, at the same time hinting at some of the dark and secret arts which the Egyptian was believed to practise. Ione was distressed because her two friends showed so little liking for each other; and after a time Glaucus bade her farewell and left the house.

When he was gone, Arbaces drew his seat nearer to Ione's. "This young Glaucus," he began, fixing his piercing dark eyes on her. "How do you know him? Have you seen him often?"

Shrinking back, with a strange fear which she could not explain, Ione answered: "He was brought to my house as a guest, a countryman of my father's and so of mine. I have known him for only a few weeks. But why do you ask these questions?"

"Forgive me," said Arbaces. "I thought you might have known him longer. Rogue and liar that he is!"

"What do you mean? Why do you speak so?

What has Glaucus said, or rather, what do you *suppose* he has said?"

Still Arbaces seemed to hesitate, as if he feared to pain or vex her. But, as she urged him to tell her his meaning, the artful Egyptian at last replied:

"Well, since it must be so, you must know, my Ione, that only yesterday Glaucus was boasting among his idle friends — at the public baths — that you were in love with him. He said it amused him to play with your feelings; but he burst into scornful laughter when one of his companions asked him if he meant to take a wife."

"Impossible!" replied Ione, trembling, and white as one of the pillars against which she leaned. "Who told you this lying story?"

"Several people," Arbaces answered, half unwillingly, it seemed. "I did not believe it at first, but in the end I was forced to do so. But come — think no more of this. It cannot hurt you, for of course you do not care for this idle Athenian. You have never thought of loving him!"

He bade her farewell a short time after; and when she was left alone Ione burst into bitter and angry tears. The Egyptian's poisoned words had given a deadly wound to her pride. For indeed, she loved Glaucus with all her heart, and had been certain that Glaucus loved her.

That night her brother Apaecides, on his way to the Egyptian's house, was met by a thoughtful-looking man who touched him on the shoulder

and made the sign of the cross. He was a Christian named Olinthus, whom Apaecides knew, and to whose teachings he had listened more than once.

Olinthus noticed that the young man was unhappy and weary, and that he seemed full of doubt and distress. "Come with me," he said earnestly. "Let me take you to a few of my brethren, and you shall hear the words of the true God made clear. 'Come unto me,' He saith, 'all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'"

But Apaecides, making some excuse, broke away from the other and fled to the Egyptian's lonely and gloomy house. There he listened once more to the talk of Arbaces, and afterwards took part in one of his wicked feasts; and knew, when morning came, that the spell cast over him was stronger than ever.

1. Why was Apaecides angry with Arbaces?
2. What names did Arbaces call Glaucus?
3. The story tells of "poisoned words" spoken by Arbaces to Ione. Why are they called "poisoned"?

CHAPTER 6

GLAUCUS BUYS ANOTHER SLAVE

Calenus, the priest of Isis, was a cousin of Burbo the innkeeper, the master of Nydia the blind slave. It was through Calenus that the flower-girl had been forced to sing and play at the

feasts of the sorcerer [1] Arbaces — feasts which she dreaded and hated; but Burbo and his wife were well paid for permitting her to serve the Egyptian in this way.

One day, as Calenus was sitting with Burbo in a small back room of the inn, Nydia returned from the sorcerer's house. She dropped wearily upon a seat, and then, suddenly raising her face, said in a determined voice:

"Master, you may starve me if you will — you may beat me — you may threaten to kill me. But I will go no more to that unholy place!"

"How, rebellious one!" growled the rough master of the tavern, "you will not go, eh? Take care what you say!"

At this moment his wife entered the room. She was a tall, lean woman, with a hard face.

"What is this?" she asked, looking from one to the other.

Nydia started, and threw herself at the woman's feet.

"O my mistress!" she sobbed, "feel for me — save me! I will go to those horrible feasts no more!"

"Stuff and nonsense!" answered the woman, as she dragged the girl up roughly. "It is not for slaves to say what they will or will not do."

And, pushing the child by the shoulders, she tried to force her from the room. But Nydia drew herself aside.

[1] Sorcerer, an enchanter, a magician.

" Listen to me," she said. " I have served you faithfully — I, who was brought up so differently — oh, mother, mother!" — and the poor girl broke off, weeping — " didst thou dream, before I was stolen from thee, that I should come to this?" She dashed the tears away, and went on speaking to those in the room: " Command me to do anything else, and I will obey. But I tell you now that I will go to that house no more; or, if I am forced there, I will implore the mercy of the magistrate himself. I have said it. Hear me, ye gods, I swear!"

The woman's eyes glowed with angry fire. Seizing the young girl by the hair, she dragged her to the wall, caught at a rope that hung there, and began to lash her.

Now it chanced that just at this time Glaucus and his friends were in the tavern, having come there to see some of the gladiators who often visited it, and who were soon to fight in the arena. Suddenly, as they were talking together, a shriek of pain and terror rang through the house, and the young men heard a voice cry:

" Oh, spare me — spare me! I am only a child, and I am blind: is not *that* punishment enough?"

" O Pallas! I know that voice — it is my poor flower-girl!" exclaimed Glaucus, and darting towards the place whence the sound arose, he burst open the door. There was Nydia, helpless, in the grasp of the angry woman, who in her other hand held the bloodstained rope.

NYDIA IN THE GRASP OF THE ANGRY WOMAN

"Fury!" cried Glaucus, "how dare you use a girl so! Nydia, my poor child!"

"Oh, is that you — is that Glaucus?" gasped the blind girl, and clung to him as if at last she had found safety indeed.

"Give me my slave!" shrieked the woman. But Nydia only clung the closer to her rescuer, who wiped the blood from her shoulders and the tears from her cheeks, and whispered words of comfort to her, as one might do to a terrified child.

Meanwhile, Burbo the innkeeper had interfered, and quietened his wife, knowing that Glaucus and his friends were well-known and wealthy young men. As for the priest of Isis, he had slipped away as soon as he saw the strangers.

"My good man," said Glaucus to Burbo, "this is your slave. She sings well, she is used to the care of flowers. I wish to make a present of such a slave to a lady. Will you sell her to me?"

Burbo scratched his head. "The girl is worth her weight in gold to me," he said.

"Name your price: I am rich," said Glaucus.

"I paid six *sestertia* [1] for her; she is worth twelve now," muttered the woman.

"You shall have twenty. Come to the magistrates at once, and then to my house for your money," replied the Greek.

"Then — then I am to go with you?" murmured Nydia, when the matter was settled. "Oh, what happiness!"

[1] The *sestertius* was a Roman coin of small value.

"Pretty one, yes. And thy hardest task henceforth shall be to sing thy Grecian songs to the loveliest lady in Pompeii," whispered Glaucus.

The blind girl's radiant face clouded. "I thought I was to go to *your* house?" she said.

"And so thou shalt for the present. Come, we lose time."

1. Why was Nydia beaten?
2. Who saved Nydia from her cruel master and mistress? Why?

CHAPTER 7

NYDIA'S MESSAGE

After she had heard the Egyptian's story about Glaucus, Ione, in her grief and pride, shut herself up in her house and would receive no visitor but Arbaces. This pleased the sorcerer, who had made up his mind to win her for himself. Yet, though Ione looked upon him as a kind elder friend and guardian, she did not love him as she loved Glaucus. Indeed, she feared him. His company was not really welcome to her; the dark, stern man, with his lofty, chilling air, seemed to her like some gloomy mountain which casts a shadow over the sunlight. But she never thought of forbidding him to visit her.

Glaucus, however, was not allowed to see her. Hurt and angered by what the Egyptian had told her, a tale which she had no means of proving to

be untrue, Ione felt sometimes as if she must hate the young Greek for ever, and at other times as if she must always love him, whether he cared for her or not. Meanwhile, she was very unhappy.

One day, as Arbaces was sitting with her, as he now did some part of every day, he said:

"Ione, you have never seen the inside of my home; perhaps it will amuse you to do so. It has some rooms that may show you what you have often asked me to describe — the fashion of an Egyptian house. Come, then, and visit me, one of these bright summer evenings, and so let me boast that my gloomy house has been honoured by a visit from the fair Ione."

Ione agreed to go, and the next evening was fixed for the visit.

Meanwhile, Nydia had spent three happy days with her new master Glaucus. She was clothed and fed better than she had been before, and she was altogether contented to spend the hours caring for his garden and his flowers.

One morning he told her of his love for Ione, "And thou, Nydia, shalt tell her of my love," he said; "for I am going to send thee to her."

At this news Nydia burst into tears; but Glaucus comforted her by promising that she should return to him if she were not happy with her new mistress.

"Take the fairest flowers thou canst pluck," he said, "and take the lute I gave thee yesterday,

child — thy sweet voice can charm all who hear it. Also, thou shalt give Ione this letter, in which I have tried to tell her all that is in my heart. It is now some days since I have been allowed to see her, and I cannot understand why I am not permitted to enter her house. There is something strange in all this. But, little Nydia, be my friend in this matter — plead for me: and oh! how greatly thou wilt overpay the little I have done for thee!"

Nydia promised to do as he asked; and a short time afterwards she made her way to Ione's house. Here she was well received, for the beautiful Greek pitied the blind girl, and was very gentle with her. With a trembling hand Ione took the letter of Glaucus, and when she had read it her heart was filled with gladness. For now at last she learned, from what was written there, that Glaucus loved her truly, that he was no heartless idler, as Arbaces would have had her believe him to be, and that the Egyptian's story was a false one.

"I send this," wrote Glaucus, "by one whom thou wilt receive for her own sake, if not for mine. Like us, she is a stranger in the land, but she is less happy than we are, for she is blind, and a slave. Wilt thou let her serve thee, Ione? She is gentle, quick, and biddable, skilled in music and song, and in the care of flowers."

Ione made Nydia sit down whilst she wrote an answer to Glaucus. "Come to me, Glaucus,"

she wrote, "come to me to-morrow;" and when the letter was finished, Nydia started from her seat and asked:

"Will Glaucus thank the messenger who gives him thy letter? For, noble Ione, the lightest word of coldness from thee will sadden him — the lightest kindness will rejoice him. If it is the first, let a slave take back thine answer; if it is the last, let me. But oh! who could be unkind to Glaucus?"

"Thou speakest warmly of Glaucus, my child," said the lady.

"Glaucus has been that to me which neither fortune nor the gods have been — *a friend*!" replied Nydia earnestly.

At that Ione bent and kissed her. "Thou art grateful," she said, "and Glaucus is worthy of thy gratitude. My Nydia, thou shalt be to me a friend and a sister. Go, then — take this letter to him thyself, but come back again. If I am from home when thou returnest — as this evening, perhaps, I shall be — thy room shall be made ready for thee next to my own. Stay with me — trust me, thy service shall be light."

When Nydia left her, Ione sank into deep but happy thought. She was aroused at last by her maidens, who came to tell her that it was now the hour at which she had promised to visit Arbaces. She started — she had forgotten the promise. Her first thought was that she would not go after all; for in his letter Glaucus had warned her of

the sorcerer. But the next moment she laughed at herself for her fears of her oldest friend. She made herself ready, and was soon on her way to the Egyptian's house.

1. Why did Ione refuse to see Glaucus?
2. What did Arbaces invite Ione to do?
3. In what way did Nydia help to make Ione and Glaucus friendly again?

CHAPTER 8

IN THE HOUSE OF ARBACES

Nydia's mind was much disturbed when, that evening, she returned to Ione's house and found that her new mistress had gone to visit the sorcerer.

"She cannot dream of the dangers she will meet there," murmured the blind girl to herself. "Shall I save her? For Glaucus loves her and her only, and I love Glaucus — oh, how dearly! — and if he did not wed Ione, he might wed — ah, but I love Glaucus better than myself." And she went back at once to the Athenian's house.

There, however, she was told that Glaucus had gone out with a party of his friends, no one knew where, and that he was not likely to be home before midnight. In despair, Nydia asked the slave who was with her whether Ione had any relative or close friend in Pompeii. "She has a brother," was the answer, "who is a priest of

Isis." She then asked his name, and was told "Apaecides".

Quickly she remembered that she had heard someone addressed by this name at one of the Egyptian's horrible banquets at which she had been forced to sing.

"Apaecides!" she muttered to herself. "Brother and sister, then, are both to be the victims of that wicked man. But I will go to the brother." And she set out at once in great haste for the temple of Isis.

There she found Apaecides, and told him her story. "Come with me," she said; "maybe there is yet time to save your sister. I will lead you to the private door of the Egyptian's house. Take some weapon with you, for you may need it."

They set forth together, and on their way met Glaucus, who, learning their errand, left his friends and went with them.

In the meantime Arbaces had received his guest with great splendour, and was pouring all kinds of flattering speeches into her ear. Yet he could not altogether forget a warning he had had, when, in the early dawn of that same day, he had stood under the skies upon the lofty tower of his house, and had consulted the stars to learn his fate. As he read the stars, he was told by their signs to beware of a stone which in a short time would be hurled from some height upon him, and threaten his life. He could not tell when,

or whence, it would fall, or whether it would kill him or not. "But I may escape it," he said to himself; "and if I cannot do so — if my life is to be short — at least I am determined that Ione shall be my bride before I die!"

So, as the spider spins a shining web to catch the hapless fly, the sorcerer eagerly showed his fair young guest all the wonders of his house. He led her through splendid rooms, which seemed to her to contain all the treasures of the world, for there were priceless pictures and statues of perfect beauty, rare cabinets filled with gems, rich woods forming doors and thresholds, and precious stones and gold lavished all around. Sometimes host and guest passed between silent rows of slaves, who, kneeling, offered Ione bracelets and chains of jewels, which the Egyptian begged her to receive, but she would not.

"I have often heard," she said wonderingly, "that you were rich, but I never dreamed that your wealth was so great."

"I wish that I could coin it all," replied Arbaces, "into one crown, which I might place upon that snow-white brow of yours, O fair Ione!"

He spoke earnestly, gazing at her; but Ione tried to take his words lightly. "Alas!" she said, laughing, "the weight of such a crown would crush me, I fear!"

Still he sought to dazzle her by his treasures and his artful words, believing that she could not

help but wish to be the mistress of all the splendour she saw around her. Very soon Ione began to feel secretly uneasy at his flatteries, and did her best to laugh or talk away their meaning.

Suddenly, as they stood in one hall, which was surrounded by hangings of silver and white, Arbaces clapped his hands. As if by enchantment a banquet arose from the floor; a sort of throne, with a crimson canopy, rose to Ione's feet, whilst soft, sweet music was heard behind the curtains. The two sat down to the feast, and beautiful little child slaves waited upon them.

When the banquet was over, the cunning sorcerer began to speak to his guest again.

"My pupil," said he, "hast thou never wished to put aside the veil of the future, and to behold the shadows of the things that are to be? I must tell thee that by my arts I have learned, not alone the mysteries of the dead, but the fate of the living. Wilt thou let me show thee what thine own fate is to be? Wilt thou see the shadows of the future perform their part?"

Ione trembled, and thought of Glaucus. Were their two fates to be joined? She longed to know, yet she hesitated, for she was awed by, and afraid of, the Egyptian. Still he persuaded her by encouraging words, and at length she let him lead her by the hand from the banquet-room and out into the scented, moonlit garden.

"Where are we going?" she asked wonderingly.

"Only yonder," replied her host, pointing to a small building which stood at the end of a path between the trees; "it is a temple made sacred to the Fates."

They passed into a narrow hall, at the end of which hung a black curtain. Arbaces lifted it; Ione entered, and found herself in complete darkness.

1. Why was Nydia disturbed when she found that Ione was not at home?
2. Why did Nydia go to the temple of Isis?
3. What warning had Arbaces received?
4. Where did the banquet come from?

CHAPTER 9

THE FIRST SIGNAL

"Do not be afraid," said the Egyptian; "the light will rise at once."

As he spoke, a soft glow appeared, and as all became lighter Ione saw that she was in a room hung all around with black. A black couch stood beside her; in the centre of the room was a small altar, on which stood a tripod of bronze. At one side, upon a tall column of granite, was a huge head of black marble. The head wore a crown of wheat-ears, and was an image of the great Egyptian goddess.

Arbaces stood before the altar, and poured into

the tripod the contents of a brazen vase. Suddenly a blue, quick, darting flame leaped up. The sorcerer drew back to Ione's side, and muttered some words in a tongue which she did not understand. The curtain at the back of the altar waved to and fro, then parted slowly; and in the space between Ione saw a landscape, which grew brighter and more beautiful each moment. A shadow glided across the scene, and slowly took shape, and lo! in the figure before her Ione beheld herself!

The landscape behind the figure faded away, and in its place arose a throne in a palace hall. Slaves and guards stood round the throne, and a pale hand held over it the likeness of a crown. Then another figure appeared, dressed in a dark robe, and with its face hidden. This figure knelt at the shadowy Ione's feet, clasped her hand, and pointed to the throne. Ione's heart beat fast; she was thinking of Glaucus.

"Wouldst thou know who the shadow is?" said the voice of Arbaces, very low. As Ione whispered "Yes" he raised his hand. The shadow dropped its mantle, and Ione shrieked, for the figure was that of the Egyptian!

"This is thy fate!" breathed Arbaces in her ear. "Thou shalt be the bride of Arbaces."

Ione started, the black curtain closed over the shadows, and the sorcerer knelt before her, clasping her hand, telling her of his great love, and begging her to wed him.

Astonished and confused, Ione said firmly: "I cannot. I love another."

At that a change came over the Egyptian. He rose to his fullest height, towered above her, dark and terrible, and shouted: "By the gods! You dare not — it is impossible!"

Frightened now, Ione burst into tears. The sorcerer seized her, but she sprang away. As she did so, a tablet fell from her bosom to the ground. Arbaces pounced upon it and read it — it was the letter she had received from Glaucus that morning. Half dead with terror, Ione sank upon the couch.

"Is Glaucus the man thou lovest? Speak!" thundered the Egyptian.

"He is," gasped Ione, and clasping her hands she looked round vainly for help or escape.

"Then hear me," said Arbaces, sinking his voice to a dreadful whisper; "thou shalt go to thy tomb rather than wed him!"

He grasped her roughly, but she tore herself away, and rushed to the entrance of the room, pulling at the curtain before it. Again he seized her, and again she broke away, and fell, exhausted, at the foot of the column which bore the head of the goddess. Arbaces paused for a moment, then once more darted towards her.

At that moment the curtain was torn aside; a strong hand caught the Egyptian fiercely by the shoulder, and, turning, he saw the angry faces and flashing eyes of Glaucus and Apaecides.

"Ah!" he muttered, glaring from one to the other. "What Fury hath sent ye hither?"

"Atè," [1] answered Glaucus, and threw himself upon the Egyptian.

Apaecides lifted his sister, now senseless, on to the couch, and stood over her with a knife in his hand, watching the struggle between the others, and ready to plunge his weapon into the breast of Arbaces if he should be victorious.

The two foes by this time were locked in each other's grasp, fighting like animals, seeking each other's throat, rocking to and fro. Each was stronger than most men, and neither could overcome the other. They seemed to coil around each other; now they were before the altar, now at the foot of the column. They drew apart for breath, and Arbaces, leaning against the column, clasped it, looked up to the great head, and cried out:

"O ancient goddess, protect thy chosen servant now! Take thy vengeance upon the upstart who dares attack him and slight thee!"

As he spoke, the face of the goddess seemed suddenly to glow with life. The black marble flushed a vivid crimson; lightning played round the head, the eyes became like balls of fire and seemed fixed in withering anger upon the Athenian. In spite of his courage, Glaucus turned pale and faltered, and as he did so, Arbaces sprang upon him.

[1] Atè, the goddess of Evil.

"Die, wretch!" he thundered; "the Mighty Mother claims thee as a living sacrifice!"

Taken thus by surprise, Glaucus lost his footing, slipped on the polished floor, and fell at the base of the column. Arbaces planted a foot on his breast; but at that moment Apaecides, who knew the sorcerer's tricks too well to have shared the Greek's dismay at the sight of the angry head, rushed forward. His knife gleamed in the light, but the watchful Egyptian caught his arm and wrenched the weapon from him. One blow stretched the slight young priest on the ground, and with a fearful yell Arbaces shook the knife above the head of Glaucus.

The Greek gazed up at it without shrinking, when suddenly, at that dreadful moment, the floor heaved beneath them. A mightier spirit than that of the Egyptian was abroad — the dread *Spirit of the Earthquake*, which could laugh to scorn both human wrath and the magic of human cunning. The earth groaned and trembled; far and wide along it went a hoarse, rumbling sound; the curtains of the room shook as if in a storm; the altar rocked, the tripod reeled, and, high above them, the column swayed from side to side. The black head of the goddess fell from its pedestal, and as the Egyptian stooped over his victim, the marble mass struck him, right between the shoulder and the neck, crushing him to the ground.

"The Earth has saved her children!" gasped

Glaucus, staggering to his feet. " Blessed be the earthquake! Let us thank the gods for their goodness!"

He helped Apaecides to rise, and then turned Arbaces over. The sorcerer seemed lifeless. Again the earth shook beneath them; they were forced to cling together. The earthquake ceased as suddenly as it began, but they waited no longer, and hastened from that dreadful place, Glaucus carrying Ione in his arms.

In the garden they met flying groups of terrified women and slaves, too full of their own fear to notice the strangers. " *The earthquake! The earthquake!*" was their one cry; and Apaecides and his companions passed them, and, hurrying down one of the paths, reached a small open gate. Beside it, on a little mound, the moonlight fell on the figure of the blind girl. She was weeping bitterly.

1. What did the vision reveal to Ione?
2. Why was Arbaces so angry with Ione?
3. Who *tried* to save Glaucus?
4. What *did* save Glaucus? And how?

CHAPTER 10

THE MEETING

Olinthus the Christian stood in the forum, and looked upon the busy scene before him.

The wide space, with its marble pavement, its

colonnades and statues, its Pantheon [1] and its Temple of Jupiter, was filled with a cheerful and many-coloured crowd. Money-changers sat at their stalls; merchants and seamen in strange costumes crowded around them; lawyers and magistrates passed in and out of the stately public buildings; business men gathered beneath the colonnade, talking eagerly about the earthquake of the night before; and traders showed what they had to sell to the sturdy farmers who had come in from the neighbouring country. All was chatter and bustle, and over all a bright sun shone from a deep blue sky. Above the hum of the crowd arose the sounds of labourers' tools, as men worked upon the columns of one of the public buildings. *The columns are unfinished to this day!*

Near a quiet entrance to the forum Olinthus saw Apaecides, who, wrapped in a mantle that partly hid his priest's robes, was watching him closely. Something in the wistful gaze of the young man made the Christian stop and say, as he saluted him, "Peace be with you!"

"Peace!" echoed the priest, in so sorrowful a tone that it went at once to the heart of the other.

"In that wish," he said gently, "are all good things. Peace, like the rainbow, rests upon the earth, but its arch is lost in heaven. It is a reflection of the Everlasting Sun, a sign of all that God and Man can be to each other. *Peace* be with you!"

[1] Pantheon, a temple sacred to all the gods.

"Alas!" began Apaecides, when he caught the curious looks of several passers-by, who wondered what a Christian and a priest of Isis could possibly have to say to each other. He stopped short, and said in a low tone, "We cannot talk here. I will follow thee to the bank of the river; there is a walk there which is always quiet about this time."

Olinthus bowed his head, and passed on through the streets, followed by the priest.

At length they came to a walk beside the river Sarnus, where they sat down upon a bench under some trees, and began to talk earnestly together. Olinthus asked the young man if he were happy as a priest of Isis. Then Apaecides sadly told him how wretched and perplexed he was, how he had longed to follow all things that were true and good, yet he had been tricked by a wicked sorcerer and had been led to share in his evil deeds.

"I have added sin to rashness and to sorrow," he said, "but now the veil is torn for ever from my eyes. Yet all seems dark and gloomy around and within me; I know not if there be gods above, or whether, beyond the present, there is death or a future life. Tell me, then, what thy faith is. Clear away my doubts, if thou canst."

So Olinthus began to speak of the one true God, of His Son, Christ the Saviour, and of all He suffered upon earth so that man might be pardoned for all sins and live with Him for ever in Heaven.

He spoke with such earnestness that Apaecides listened eagerly to every word.

"Come," said the Christian at last, "come to the humble place where a few of us meet; listen there to our prayers; join with us in our simple sacrifice — not the sacrifice of living victims, or of garlands, but of pure thoughts offered up to God on the altar of each man's heart. Come!"

Thus Apaecides, after a moment's pause, followed his companion to a small house in the city, where a little congregation of Christians was gathered. There the priest of Isis was welcomed by all; there he saw the wooden crucifix, their only image; and there he listened, as the Word of God was read and explained, and the prayers of those simple, earnest folk were offered up to the Almighty Father. There, too, he was blessed by a saintly old man upon whom Christ Himself had once performed a miracle.

The sore heart of Apaecides felt as if a gentle, healing hand had been laid upon it. He was refreshed and strengthened. He heard the little children, who mingled with the company, repeat the Lord's prayer; and he felt at last that he had become as one of them — to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

1. Why did Apaecides say "we cannot talk here"?
2. To what place did Olinthus take Apaecides?

CHAPTER II

JULIA AND ARBACES

Soon after the first signal of the earthquake, Glaucus and Ione were betrothed. It was now August, and their marriage was fixed for the next month. Meanwhile, the happy lovers met every day. In the mornings they sang and played together; in the evenings they went for sails upon the sea or long drives into the country. Nydia was almost always with them; but day by day, as she felt their deep content and happiness in each other, the heart of the blind girl grew more sad and lonely, and became filled with strange feelings of anger and jealousy.

Another person, too, was jealous that Glaucus had chosen Ione to be his bride. This was the daughter of Diomed the merchant, the haughty and handsome Julia, who had long loved the noble young Greek and wished him to love her. Meeting Nydia one evening, she invited her to visit her the next day at her father's house, and there, questioning the flower-girl, she learnt that Glaucus was to wed Ione in a month's time.

At this news she started, with pale cheeks and flashing eyes; but, hiding her feelings from Nydia, she asked the girl if she knew any love-charms. "For they tell me," she said, "that thou art from Thessaly, and Thessaly is the land of magic, of witches, and of love-spells. Now thou

must know, blind girl, that I love — but I am not loved in return! This stings my pride, and so I long to hurt him who has hurt me — thou canst not know his name, but no matter. I long to have him love me above all else, not that now I may love him in return, but that I may drive him from me with scorn. If thou thyself knowest no love-charms, hast thou ever heard of any Eastern magician in this city who has such an art? I do not mean any foolish fortune-teller or juggler of the market-place, but some more powerful and mighty sorcerer of India or of Egypt."

"Of Egypt — yes!" said Nydia, shuddering. "Who in Pompeii has not heard of Arbaces the sorcerer?"

"Arbaces! I will seek him this very day," answered Julia firmly; and not all the blind girl's warnings could turn her from her purpose. The two parted in a short time, and Julia promised Nydia: "Thou shalt know all about my visit if thou wilt come to me at this hour to-morrow."

Arbaces was still living, in spite of the terrible shock he had had when the marble head almost crushed out his life. Now he was slowly recovering from his wounds, and for the time being he left the lovers alone, but it was only to brood over the hour and the means of his revenge.

"This Greek boy, who has once defeated my plans, shall not escape me a second time," he

vowed to himself. "But how shall I take my vengeance upon him? — how? — how?" So he racked his brains, making plan after plan, and casting each one away as soon as it was formed. "O Atè, if thou art indeed a goddess, help me now!" he cried.

It was just at this time that Julia visited him, and asked him for a love charm.

Diomed's daughter was a stranger to him, and at first he refused rather scornfully to grant her request. "Love-spells," he said in a haughty tone, "are not among the secrets Arbaces has studied so deeply to gain."

Presently, however, he began to question her, and learnt how she longed to triumph over a rival, to see as her suitor the man who had passed her by for another, and to know that that other was cast off in her turn for the rich and handsome Julia. At last he drew from her the man's name, and when he learnt that it was Glaucus, the Egyptian sank back in his seat, staring before him and muttering to himself. He fancied he saw his revenge in sight already.

"Listen to me, maiden," he said after a long pause. "I pity thee and will help thee. I have not dabbled in love-charms, but I know one who hath. There is a powerful witch who dwells upon the slopes of Vesuvius. She has gathered all the herbs which have the power to chain love for ever: she knows me and fears my name: she will give thee a love-draught which will bring

Glaucus to thy feet. Fear nothing. But how, when thou hast it, wilt thou give him this draught?"

"My father has invited him to a banquet the day after to-morrow," answered Julia. "Then I can put it in his wine-cup."

"So be it," replied the Egyptian, and his eyes flashed with such fierce joy that Julia trembled. "To-morrow evening go in a litter [1] to that inn which stands amidst beautiful gardens, two miles from the city. It is well known. There I will meet thee, and guide thee to the witch. When the twilight hides us, none will cross our path. Now go home, and fear not. By Hades [2] swears Arbaces, the sorcerer of Egypt, that Ione shall never wed with Glaucus!"

When he was alone again, the Egyptian burst forth: "In the very hour of my despair the stars have aided me, and sent this fair fool to guide me to vengeance! A love-draught! — ay, the love-draught shall be a poison for the Greek — a poison that I could not have given him myself, lest his death might thus be tracked to my door. But the witch! — she shall give the draught to the maiden, and the maiden shall give it to him."

He stepped out upon his balcony, and gazed up at the sky. It was fair and clear except for one mass of cloud, far away, which showed that a storm was brewing.

[1] Litter, a kind of frame for supporting a bed, on which travellers were carried from place to place.

[2] Hades, the underworld.

"It is like my vengeance," thought Arbaces. "The sky is clear, but the cloud moves on."

1. Name two people who were jealous of Glaucus and Ione.
2. Why did Julia visit Arbaces?
3. Why was Arbaces so ready to help Julia?
4. How did Arbaces help Julia?

CHAPTER 12

THE WITCH'S CAVERN

That same evening, Glaucus and Ione went for a drive in the country. Their way lay through vineyards and olive-groves and woods, and then upon a rough road that wound round the slopes of Vesuvius. As they were returning, the storm which the Egyptian had foreseen began. First came low growls of distant thunder; then rain fell heavily and lightning flashed. The sky darkened with sudden swiftness, and in a moment, as it seemed, the tempest was upon them.

As the driver was urging his mules along the stony, uneven track, a wheel of the carriage was wrenched off, and the carriage itself overturned. No one was hurt, but they could drive no farther. They were still a long way from the city, among wild woods and rugged rocks, and there was no house near.

The driver offered to go and find a blacksmith who lived about a mile away. He might mend the

wheel; and Glaucus said that in the meanwhile he and Ione would try to seek some shelter.

The rain poured down as if the heavens had opened; the thunder crashed above them, and the lightning struck one of the trees before them and split its great trunk in two. Glaucus, who had wrapped Ione in his cloak, drew her out of the wood and up the slopes of the mountain; and presently they saw a red light before them in the gloom. Hoping that it came from some cottage or friendly shepherd's cave, they climbed painfully up towards it, among huge rocks overhung with wild bushes. Slowly they drew nearer to the light, and presently found themselves standing at the mouth of a cavern.

A fire blazed at the back of it, and over the fire hung a metal pot; on a tall iron stand a lamp burned; rows of herbs and weeds hung drying in bunches on the rocky wall behind the fire, and a fox crouched before it, with bristling hair and gleaming teeth. In the centre of the cave stood a rough statue with three heads formed by the skulls of a dog, a horse, and a boar.

A very old woman sat beside the fire — a dreadful old woman with drawn and hollow cheeks, blue lips, stony eyes, and long grey hair. She seemed to the visitors to be dead, so ghastly and still was she. But at length she stirred and asked in a hollow voice: "Who are you? What do you want here?"

At those awful tones Ione shrank back; but

Glaucus, remembering the fury of the storm, drew her into the cave.

"We are wanderers from the city," he said, "overtaken by the storm, and we saw your light. May we shelter by your fire awhile?"

As he spoke the fox arose and moved towards them, growling.

"Down, slave!" said the old woman; and at the sound of her voice the beast lay down at once, but still kept its fierce red eyes upon them.

"Come to the fire if you will," she went on, turning to Glaucus and his companion. "I never welcome living thing save the owl, the fox, the toad, and the viper — so I cannot welcome you; but come to the fire without welcome."

Glaucus took off Ione's cloak, and made her sit down upon a log. The old woman did not stir, and at last, after a long and uneasy silence, the young man said:

"Hast thou lived here long?"

"Ah, long! — yes," was the answer.

"It is a dreary place for thee," he went on.

"Ha! you may well say that. The abode of the wicked is beneath us!" replied the hag, pointing her bony finger to the earth. "And I will tell you a secret: the dim things below are preparing evil for you above — you, the young, the thoughtless, and the beautiful."

"You speak ill words," said Glaucus. "You are an uncivil welcomer, old woman."

"Hush, dear Glaucus! Do not provoke her," whispered Ione.

"None but the wretched," said the hag, "should ever seek me."

"And why the wretched?" asked the Greek.

"I am the witch of Vesuvius," she replied with a dreadful grin. "My trade is to give hope to the hopeless: for those crossed in love I have love-draughts; for the misers, promises of treasure; for those who hate their fellows I have poisons; but for the happy and the good I have only curses! Trouble me no more." And she would not speak again.

By this time the storm had become less fierce, and the moon shone into the cavern. Presently Glaucus saw a large snake under the witch's seat: it reared its head angrily, and seemed about to spring upon Ione. The young man caught quickly at one of the half-burned logs on the hearth; and as it watched him the snake darted out, and, hissing loudly, raised itself on end until its head was almost on a level with his own.

"Witch!" cried out Glaucus, "order thy creature down, or thou wilt see it dead!"

"It has been robbed of its sting," said the witch, now aroused. But before the words were out of her mouth, the snake had sprung toward Glaucus. Quick and watchful, he leaped aside, and at the same time struck so heavy a blow upon its head that it fell helplessly among the embers of the fire.

"I CURSE THEE"

The witch sprang up with a face of fury, and turned her awful gaze upon the Greek.

"Thou hast had shelter under my roof and warmth at my hearth," she said in a slow and bitter voice; "thou hast returned evil for good; thou hast struck at and perhaps slain the thing that loved me and was mine — nay, more, the creature above all others held sacred to the gods by men. Now hear thy punishment. I curse thee and thou art cursed! May thy love be blighted — may thy name be blackened — may thy heart wither and scorch — may the spirits of evil mark thee as their own! Glaucus, thou art doomed! Away!" And she turned from him and knelt down beside the snake.

"Oh, Glaucus, what have we done? Let us go!" cried the terrified Ione; and the lovers hastened out of the cave and down the mountain. On the road they found their mended carriage awaiting them, and soon they were driving back to the city.

At the city gates a litter passed them, going out to the country, and someone within it spoke to the sentinel. They both knew the voice. It was that of Arbaces the Egyptian.

1. What accident happened to Glaucus and Ione?
2. Where did they seek shelter?
3. Whom did they meet? Were they made welcome?
4. Why did the witch curse Glaucus?

CHAPTER 13

THE LOVE CHARM

A few hours later the sorcerer sat in the cave of the witch, who knelt before him as a slave might, and called him " Mighty Hermes, the Lord of the Burning Girdle ". And indeed, beneath his Eastern robes he was wearing that night a belt that seemed to burn like fire.

" Hear me!" he said to the hag. " To-morrow evening there will come to thee a vain maiden seeking a love-charm to give to one whom she loves, but who now loves another. Instead of a love-draught, give her one of thy most powerful poisons. I command thee to obey me — it is for vengeance that I seek thee! This youth whom I would sweep from my path has crossed me, in spite of my spells. I tell thee that this Glaucus must die!"

" Glaucus, didst thou say, mighty master?" struck in the witch, and her pale eyes glared with rage. " Then hear me! I am thy slave, but if I give to the maiden that which will destroy the youth's life, I shall surely be found out, and, perhaps, so wilt thou! But if, instead of that which would stop the heart, I give that which will burn into the brain, that which will make him who drinks it unfit for the uses of life — a raving madman — will not thy vengeance be satisfied?"

"O witch!" was the Egyptian's reply, "how much better than death is such a doom! For this service thou shalt have twenty more years of life to work evil in the world! Thou shalt not serve in vain the Lord of the Burning Belt." So saying, he cast a heavy purse at her feet. "Farewell," he went on; "fail me not. To-morrow night we meet again." And the next moment he was gone.

On that night, and at the same hour that Arbaces visited the Witch of Vesuvius, Apaecides was baptized a Christian.

. . . . . .

The next morning Nydia obtained leave to spend the day and the following night with Julia. Her heart was full of wild thoughts; she felt strangely excited, and longed to handle the love-charm, and to know if it really could be all-powerful.

So, deep in thought and filled with a burning impatience, she awaited Julia's return from the cavern that evening. Diomed's daughter, when she came at last, was trembling with fright.

"Oh, the gods be thanked!" she gasped, "I have come back safely from that terrible place! What awful things I have seen! That dreadful hag and her spells! But I have got the love-draught, and she swears that it will work aright. Ione will become as nothing to him, and I, I alone, will be the one whom Glaucus shall love!"

"Glaucus!" exclaimed Nydia.

"Ay, girl," the other answered. "I did not

tell thee his name before; but I see now that I may trust thee wholly. It *is* the handsome Greek."

Nydia's heart swelled until she felt that it must burst, and she had to gasp for breath. What had happened? Glaucus, through her help, was to be turned from Ione, only to be made by powerful magic to love Julia! Then a thought flashed across her, and she grew calmer. She was to sleep that night in Julia's room: she might take away the love-draught! In a short time her mind was made up.

By and by she said to Julia: "Thou hast the charm; let me hold it in my hands." And she did so. "How small the bottle is!" she went on. "What colour is the draught?"

"Clear as crystal," replied Julia, taking the little bottle into her own hands again. "Thou couldst not tell it from water."

"And how is it sealed?"

"Only by one little stopper — I am taking the stopper out now — the draught has no scent."

"Will it begin to work at once, when it has been taken?" was Nydia's next question.

"It may, or it may not for a few hours. But, sooner or later, it is sure."

Presently Nydia pretended to admire the perfume in one of the bottles upon Julia's dressing-table. "The bottle is set with gems of some value, but I have a hundred costlier ones," said Julia carelessly. "Take it, child, as a gift from me."

Nydia bowed her thanks, and placed the bottle in her robe.

It was very late when at last Julia sent away the slaves who had undressed her, and put the love-charm under her pillow. Both girls lay down, and Julia fell asleep almost at once. But Nydia lay wide awake with beating heart, listening to her companion's calm breathing; and when her ear told her how deep the other's sleep was, she rose up without a sound.

"Now befriend me, Venus!" [1] she said under her breath.

She poured the scent from Julia's gift upon the floor, and rinsed the bottle several times with water that stood beside her bed. Then, feeling her way to Julia's bed, she gently slipped her hand under the pillow, and grasped the love-charm. Julia did not stir. Her regular breath fanned Nydia's burning cheeks. The blind girl took out the stopper, and poured the contents of the bottle into the bottle which had held the perfume. It held the love-draught easily. She refilled the small bottle with water, put back the stopper, and softly replaced it beneath the sleeper's pillow. After that she crept back to bed to wait for morning.

At sunrise she dressed herself, hid her treasure in her bosom, and took up her staff. Julia was still asleep, but the blind girl had told her the night before that she must return very early to

[1] Venus, the Roman goddess of love.

her mistress Ione, so she knew there was no need to waken her hostess. In a few moments she was out in the quiet street.

"Glaucus," she murmured, "all the love-charms of the wildest magic could not make thee love me as I love thee! Glaucus, my fate is in thy smile; and *thy* fate is in these hands!"

1. Who was the witch's next visitor after Ione and Glaucus?
2. Why did this visitor come?
3. What was in the bottle that the witch gave to Julia?
4. What was in the bottle beneath Julia's pillow at sunrise?

CHAPTER 14

APAECIDES

Apaecides was no sooner baptized than Olinthus told him that he could no longer remain a priest of Isis — he could not worship the One True God and at the same time serve the gods of the heathens. Nay, more, Olinthus said, he saw that Apaecides could now be the means of showing to the people how false was the worship of the goddess. He was sure that Heaven meant the young man to open their eyes, and thus, perhaps, prepare the way for hundreds to be turned to the Christian faith.

"The next time they meet for worship, and to hear the oracle[1] at the festival of Isis," said Olin-

[1] Oracle, the answer of a god or goddess to a question put by priest or people.

thus, "go before the people, and show them how they have been tricked. Fear not. The Lord, Who took care of Daniel, shall take care of thee; and we, the company of Christians, will be amongst the crowd, to help thee, and to urge the folk to rise against Isis."

Apaecides was very ready to agree to the other's plan, though he knew it to be a dangerous one. The two men had met in a beautiful grove, called the grove of Cybele;[1] and they then fixed a time to meet in that place on the following evening, to talk over the matter again. For one of the festivals of Isis was to be held in a day or two.

They had been standing near the small temple of Cybele; and as they left the grove, Calenus, the evil priest of Isis, came from behind the temple, where he had overheard something, though not all, of what had been said. He made up his mind to hide there again on the next night; and, when he had learnt more of the Christians' plans, to tell Arbaces of them.

Soon after this, Apaecides visited his sister. The two sat down together in her beautiful garden, and Ione, seeing that he was uneasy and unhappy, did her best to soothe him. Their beliefs were no longer the same, and this troubled Apaecides, for he knew that his sister still worshipped the gods of the Greeks and Romans, as she had been taught to do in her childhood. Indeed, she had heard very little of any other God.

[1] Cybele, a Greek and Roman goddess of agriculture.

But now Apaecides would not speak of present troubles. He made Ione sing to him song after song, and he drew her to talk of their happy childhood days together; and when he rose to leave her, it was with a calmer mind.

"Ione," he said, holding her hand in his, "if you should hear men speak evil of me, you will not believe them?"

"Never, my brother, never!" replied Ione earnestly.

His whole face glowed with a strange feeling that his sister could not understand. He gazed long at Ione, as if he were never to behold her again, embraced her, kissed her fondly, and the next moment was gone.

Later in the evening, Glaucus walked with his friend Sallust to the house of Diomed, to attend the wealthy merchant's splendid banquet. Sallust, the good-natured Roman, was in his idle way very fond of Glaucus — almost as fond as he was of rich food and wine! Glaucus, in his turn, liked Sallust the best of his companions.

"With all your faults, Sallust," he said to him teasingly, as they went on through the gay, crowded streets, "you really are the best bad person I ever met! And I believe, that if my life were in danger, you are the only man in all Italy who would stretch out a finger to save me."

"Perhaps *I* should not, if it were in the middle of supper!" returned Sallust, laughing.

That night, after the banquet, when almost

all her father's guests were gone, Julia gave to Glaucus a string of costly pearls — a wedding-present for his bride, as she said. Then, stopping short his thanks, she poured some wine into a small bowl. Into that bowl she had put, unseen, the contents of the bottle which she thought contained the love-draught.

"You have drunk many toasts to-night with my father," she said to him, smiling; "one now with me. Health and fortune to your bride!"

She touched the cup with her lips, and passed it to Glaucus. Following the polite custom of those days, he drained the cup, whilst she watched him with sparkling eyes. She had been told that the draught might not work at once, yet she eagerly hoped that it would. She was disappointed when she found Glaucus coolly putting down the cup, and talking to her in the same calm tones as before. She kept him as long as she could, yet no change took place in his manner.

"But to-morrow," thought she, when he was gone at last, "to-morrow, alas for Glaucus!"

Alas for him, indeed!

1. Who spied upon Apaecides?

2. What did Julia think was in the cup of wine which she gave Glaucus? What really was in it?

CHAPTER 15

MADNESS

When Glaucus reached his own home, he found Nydia sitting under the colonnade. She had been awaiting him, listening for his step; for, anxious, half hopeful, half fearful, she eagerly longed to try the love-charm upon him, yet at the same time she shrank from doing so.

It was a still and beautiful starlit night. Nydia told him she had been tending the flowers, and thought she would rest a little before going back to Ione. Glaucus sat down. "It has been warm," he said; and presently asked for some cooling drink to be brought to him. Here was Nydia's chance. She rose with a beating heart, and said: "I will make you the summer drink that Ione loves — of weak wine and honey, cooled in snow."

She was away a few moments, then returned with the drink, which Glaucus took from her. The blind girl leant, trembling, against the wall for support; her face was pale as death; she locked her hands together and waited breathlessly. What would she not have given then to have had her sight!

Glaucus had lifted the cup to his lips. He had already drunk about a fourth of the liquid, when he suddenly stopped, struck by the strange look upon Nydia's face.

"Why, Nydia! Nydia!" he exclaimed. "What

is the matter, little one? Art thou ill, or in pain? What ails my poor child?"

As he spoke he put down the cup and rose to go towards her, when a quick, cold pang shot to his heart. He grew dizzy, and felt bewildered; the floor seemed to glide from under him; a strange, unearthly gladness seized him. He burst into a loud, wild laugh, clapped his hands, and leaped into the air. The blood rushed through his veins, and throbbed loudly in his head, until his temples felt ready to burst; and then a kind of darkness came over his eyes, a darkness that was not complete, for he could still dimly see things before him. What was most strange, he did not feel himself ill — but he was gliding on to madness, and he did not know!

Nydia had not been able to reply to his question, but his fearful laugh aroused her. She could not see his wild movements, or how he reeled as he tried to walk to and fro; but she heard the words that now came from his lips — broken, rambling, foolish words — and she grew terrified. Rushing to him, she felt with her arms until she touched his knees, then, falling to the ground, she clasped them, weeping, and crying:

"Glaucus! Glaucus! Speak to me! You do not hate me? Oh, speak!"

He answered her, raving.

"They are opening the veins of the Faun [1] yonder," he babbled. "Come here, jolly old god!

[1] Faun, a kind of god of the Greeks and Romans, half man, half goat.

Thou ridest on a goat, eh? Oh, beautiful! I see a blue stream, a forest, and a fountain. What is that form, stealing through the boughs? Oh, look upon yonder face! Ha! fly! it is one of the wild nymphs![1] Whoever sees her becomes mad — fly! See, she has discovered me!"

"Oh, Glaucus, Glaucus!" Nydia cried again. "Do not rave so, or thou wilt kill me!"

Now a change came over the Greek. He bent over Nydia, smoothed her hair, and looked at her wistfully. The sight of her seemed to bring Ione to his mind, for he suddenly burst out:

"Ione, thou lovest me not — thou art unkind to me. The Egyptian hath spoken lies about me to thee. Ho! dark form, why risest thou like a cloud between me and mine? I know thee — on earth men call thee Arbaces. Fly, dim shadow — thy spells cannot harm us!"

"Glaucus! Glaucus!" murmured Nydia, and in her dismay and remorse she fell senseless at his feet.

"Who calls?" he said loudly. "Ione — it is Ione! They have carried her off — we will save her — where is my stilus?[2] Ha, I have it! I come to rescue thee, Ione! I come!"

So saying, he rushed out of the garden, through the house, and into the streets, muttering to himself. The citizens gave way to his staggering

[1] Nymph, a goddess of the mountains, forests, meadows, or waters.

[2] Stilus, a sharp-pointed instrument which the Greeks and Romans used for writing by scratching on wax tablets. The stilus was generally carried in the girdle, and served also as a weapon.

steps; they thought he was a reveller who had been drinking. But those who looked twice upon his face started in a nameless fear.

Making his way towards Ione's house, he passed the busier part of the city, and presently entered the lonely grove of Cybele.

1. Who gave Glaucus the witch's poison?
2. How much did he drink?
3. What effect did the drink have on Glaucus?
4. Where did Glaucus go after drinking?

CHAPTER 16

MURDER!

Late that evening, Arbaces set out to visit Julia, for he was eager to know whether she had given the witch's draught to the Greek.

The moon of a beautiful southern night shone down upon the ancient grove of Cybele, making the stately trees cast long black shadows across the turf, and gleaming upon the white walls of the small temple. A figure glided stealthily into the grove, and, slipping between the trees, hid itself among the high bushes that grew behind the temple walls. It was Calenus, the priest of Isis, who had come to overhear the talk between Apaecides and Olinthus.

Presently the tall form of Arbaces, on his way to Diomed's villa, entered the far end of the

grove; and at the same instant Apaecides, coming to meet his fellow-Christian, crossed the Egyptian's path. Arbaces stopped and spoke to him, and at the sound of the sorcerer's voice Apaecides halted sharply, and gazed at him with a bitter, scornful look.

"Villain and cheat!" he said. "Thou hast escaped death, then! But think not that thou canst cast thy evil net over me again. — I am armed against thee!"

"Hush!" said Arbaces, very low, flushing with anger at the other's words. "Speak lower; thou mayest be overheard, and if thou wert — why —"

"Dost thou threaten? What if the whole city has heard me?"

"Hold, and hear me," said the Egyptian. He then began a long speech, pretending to be sorry for the plans he had formed against the young man and his sister. He wished to make amends, he said, and he ended by asking Apaecides to give him the hand of Ione in marriage.

"My sister loathes the very air thou breathest," Apaecides replied. "Tremble, O evil deceiver! for even now I am making ready for the hour when thou and thy false gods shall be unveiled. Thy unholy life shall be opened to the day, thy juggling oracles shall be shown as the trickeries they are, the fame of the idol Isis shall be a scorn, and the name of Arbaces shall be a mark for the hisses of hate!"

The Egyptian grew pale, and looked round

him to see if anyone was near. His threatening look of anger was terrible to see, as he fixed his eyes on the other.

"Apaecides," he said, "beware! What is it that thou wouldst do? Dost thou speak in hasty anger, knowing no fixed plan, or hast thou some settled purpose?"

"I speak through the spirit of the True God, whose servant I now am," answered the Christian boldly, "and knowing that by His grace human courage has already fixed the time when thy deceit and thy demon's worship shall be made an end of. Ere the sun has risen three times, thou wilt know all! Dark sorcerer, tremble and farewell!"

Rapid thoughts chased one another through the Egyptian's brain. He saw before him a firm barrier to his marriage with Ione, a fellow-champion of Glaucus in the contest against him, the man who would blacken his name and make bare his deceits and his evil ways. His love, his fame, even his very life might be in danger, for the day and hour seemed to have been fixed for some plot against him. He knew by the words of Apaecides that he had become a Christian, and he knew the unconquerable fearlessness and earnestness of such men. This was his enemy — he grasped his stilus — an enemy now within his power! They were standing just before the temple; he cast a hasty look round him — all was lonely and utterly silent.

"Die, then, in thy rashness!" he muttered. "Away, thou stumbling-block in my path!"

And just as the young Christian turned to go, Arbaces raised his hand high over the left shoulder of Apaecides, and plunged his sharp weapon twice into his breast.

Apaecides fell without a groan, pierced to the heart, at the very foot of the temple wall.

Arbaces gazed upon him for a moment. But presently he saw the danger of lingering in that place. Carefully wiping his stilus on the long grass, he drew his cloak around him and was about to go when he saw, coming up the path before him, the figure of a young man. The newcomer's face was dead-white in the moonlight; he staggered as he walked, and chanted a mad and rambling song. It was Glaucus, and the Egyptian saw with fierce joy that his reason was gone.

"So!" he thought in triumph; "the hag's draught has worked, and fate hath sent two of my foes for me to crush at once!"

He stepped aside into the bushes, whilst Glaucus came towards the dead body. When he saw it he paused, put his hand to his brow as if to gather his thoughts together, and said:

"Ho, Endymion![1] Sleepest thou so soundly? What has the moon said to thee? It is time to wake!" And he stooped over Apaecides to lift him.

[1] Endymion, a beautiful shepherd, kissed by Diana the moon-goddess as he lay asleep upon a mountain.

As he did so the Egyptian, all his feebleness forgotten, sprang from his hiding-place, and struck the Greek to the ground. Then, raising his powerful voice, he shouted:

"Ho, citizens! Help me — help! Come hither! A murder — a murder before your very temple! Help, or the murderer will escape!"

At the same time he placed his foot on the Greek's breast; but Glaucus was already helpless. He lay there like a log, except that now and then broken, babbling words came from his lips. Arbaces drew the young man's stilus from his girdle, dipped it in the Christian's blood, and laid it beside the body.

1. Who was hiding behind the bush in the grove?
2. Name the people in the story who were in the grove that night.
3. Who was murdered? And by whom?
4. How did the murderer save himself?

CHAPTER 17

IN THE GROVE OF CYBELE

In answer to the Egyptian's shouts, several citizens, some with torches, rushed into the grove, and thronged round the place where the young men lay.

"Lift up the body," said Arbaces, "and guard the murderer well."

They raised the body, and great was their horror to find it was that of a priest of their adored Isis. But still greater, perhaps, was their surprise to find the accused man was Glaucus the Athenian.

"Glaucus!" they cried. "Who would have believed it?"

"I would sooner," whispered one man to his neighbour, "believe it to be the Egyptian himself."

Here a centurion[1] thrust himself through the crowd, and began to ask questions. When Glaucus was pointed out to him as the murderer, he exclaimed:

"He! — he looks more like the victim! Who accuses him?"

"I," said Arbaces, drawing himself up haughtily. Then, in answer to a further question, he gave his name and said that, as he was passing through the grove, he saw the Athenian and the priest talking together. He was struck by the Athenian's strange movements, and thought he was either drunk or mad. Suddenly he saw Glaucus raise his stilus and stab the other twice, before he himself had time to stop him.

"In my horror and anger," went on the Egyptian, "I struck the murderer to the ground, and he fell without a struggle. By this I think he could not have been in his senses when he stabbed; for, as I have only lately risen from a sick-bed,

[1] Centurion, a Roman commander of a hundred soldiers.

my blow was feeble, and Glaucus hath a strong frame, and is young."

Now the Greek's eyes were seen to open, and his lips to move.

"Speak, prisoner," said the soldier. "What sayest thou to the charge?"

"The charge — ha! ha!" muttered Glaucus. "Why, it was merrily done. When the old hag set her serpent at me, what could I do? But I am ill — I faint — the serpent's fiery tongue hath bitten me! Carry me to bed, and send for a doctor. Oh, mercy, mercy! I burn — how I burn!" And he fell back with a groan in the arms of those who stood by.

"He raves," said the officer pityingly. "and in his madness he hath struck the priest. But he must go before the magistrate; a pity — he is so young and so rich. Yet the crime is dreadful: a priest of Isis, in his very robes, too, and at the foot of our sacred temple!"

The excited crowd shuddered. "Away with him to prison — away!" they cried; and one voice shouted loudly above the others:

"The lion will not want a gladiator now!"

"True! This comes just in time for the games!" cried several.

Just then a sturdy man made his way through the throng, and planted himself directly before the Egyptian. It was Olinthus the Christian; but at first he saw only the dead Apaecides.

"Murdered!" he said. "Have they found out

thy noble purpose, and by death prevented their own shame?"

Then he turned, looked full at Arbaces, and said in a loud, deep voice:

"Murder hath been done upon this body! Where is the murderer? Stand forth, Egyptian! For, as the Lord liveth, I believe *thou* art the man!"

For an instant a disturbed look flitted across the Egyptian's dark face. But he said proudly:

"I know who is my accuser, and I guess why he accuses me. Men and citizens, this man is the most bitter of the Nazarenes, or Christians, as they call themselves. Do you wonder, then, that he dares to accuse even an Egyptian of the murder of a priest of Egypt?"

"It is Olinthus the Christian, the Unbeliever!" shouted several voices.

"Peace, brethren," said Olinthus calmly, "and hear me. This murdered priest of Isis before his death was baptized a Christian. He showed to me all the dark sins and sorceries of yonder Egyptian, and all the frauds of the false goddess Isis. He was about to show them to you, also. He, a stranger, harmless, without enemies! — who should shed his blood but one who feared his witness? Who might fear it the most? Arbaces, the Egyptian!"

He then solemnly claimed the body of Apaecides for Christian burial — the young man should not, he declared, be buried with the heathen cere-

monies of the idol Isis. The centurion stepped forward again.

"Hast thou, Olinthus, any proof of the charge thou hast made against Arbaces?" he said.

The Christian was silent. The Egyptian laughed scornfully.

"Dost thou claim the body of a priest of Isis as one of the Nazarenes or Christians?" went on the soldier.

"I do."

"Swear, then, by yonder temple and statue of Cybele, that the dead man was of your faith!"

"I hate your temples!" cried Olinthus, "I disown your idols! How can I swear by Cybele, then?"

"Away with the Unbeliever! Away with him to death!" cried the crowd.

"O vain and blind ones!" went on Olinthus, unheeding; "can you believe in images of wood and stone? Can they help you? Is yonder carved thing a goddess? Hath it made man? Alas! by man was it made. Lo! see how worthless it is! — and see your own folly!"

Thus saying, he strode across to the temple, and struck the wooden statue from its pedestal.

So daring a deed filled even the mildest of the crowd with rage and horror. All together they rushed upon him, seized him, and would have torn him in pieces had not the centurion stopped them.

"Peace!" he said. "We waste time. The

murderer and the unbeliever must both go before the magistrates. Place the priest's body on a litter — carry it to his own home."

At that moment a priest of Isis stepped forward, saying: "I claim the body, according to the custom of the priesthood."

"Thou shalt be obeyed," said the centurion.

Arbaces, as he turned, met the eye of that priest of Isis. It was Calenus. Something in his glance made the Egyptian mutter to himself:

"Could he have seen the deed?"

The people swept out of the grove, excited and shouting.

"To the beasts with the prisoners!" they cried. "We have a lion and a tiger, and now there is one a-piece for them! Ho! A man for the lion and another for the tiger! What luck!"

1. Who accused Glaucus of being the murderer?
2. Why was the crowd glad to have a murderer?
3. What charge did Olinthus make against Arbaces?
4. Why was Olinthus arrested?
5. To whom was the body of Apaecides delivered?

CHAPTER 18

PRISONERS

Before the trial of the two accused men, Olinthus the Christian was lodged in one of the city prisons, and Glaucus, under a guard, at the house of his friend Sallust, who had become the Greek's

surety[1] until his trial by the senate.[2] This was to take place soon, and it was expected to finish before the public games. For there was little doubt in the minds of most men that he would be found guilty, and flung to the lion. The people of Pompeii loudly demanded the blood of one who had slain a priest of their adored goddess; and the cunning Egyptian, whilst pretending not to favour such violence, secretly caused the priests of Isis to urge them on.

As for Olinthus, he was told that he might obtain pardon if he would sacrifice to Cybele or Isis. He firmly refused, and so his fate seemed as certain as the Greek's.

Ione, her heart torn with grief, was mourning the death of her beloved brother, and just then she seemed scarcely to understand that Glaucus had been made a prisoner under that dreadful charge and was awaiting his trial. Arbaces, not knowing what she might do to help Glaucus after her first grief was over, had gained permission from the magistrate to take her to his own house (since he was her guardian) after her brother's funeral. But Ione did not know that she was thus to be made a prisoner.

In the meantime, Arbaces wished more than anything else to make Glaucus confess the crime he had not committed. If he did so, thought the Egyptian, Ione would never marry one whom she

[1] Surety, one who gives his word for the security of a prisoner and for his appearance at a trial.

[2] Senate, the body of lawgivers in ancient Rome.

believed to be her brother's murderer, and thus he, Arbaces, might find it easy to woo her and make her his bride.

"And I *can* save him," said Arbaces to himself, "by persuading Julia to admit she gave him the witch's draught, and that will excuse him. But if he does not confess, why, Julia must hold her tongue — as she will be willing to do, through fear — and he must die! Can he not be persuaded that in his excitement he struck the blow? That would give far greater safety to me even than his death. We must try."

So one night he went to Sallust's house, and asked to see the prisoner. The Greek's senses had by this time returned to him, for it will be remembered that he had fortunately not drunk the whole of the witch's draught; but he was still feeble and ill. The struggle between reason and madness, life and death, had been fierce. The youth and strength of Glaucus had conquered, but the glory and freshness of his life seemed to have gone for ever.

He refused with angry scorn to sign the paper which Arbaces showed to him — a paper which set forth his guilt of the crime — though the Egyptian told him he had seen him strike the blow, and swore to him that by confession he should be saved from a shameful death.

"What words are these?" cried Glaucus. "Murder and Apaecides! Did I not see him stretched on the ground before me, bleeding and

dead? And wouldst thou persuade me that I did the deed? *I* the murderer of Ione's brother? *I* confess to have hurt even one hair of the head of him she loved? O hateful man — go, leave me! Who will dishonour his name to save his life? A shameful death, sayest thou? Shame is not in the loss of other men's good opinion — it is in the loss of our own. Base Egyptian! Leave me to live without self-reproach — or to die without fear. Wilt thou go? Mine eyes hate the sight of thee!"

Angry and disappointed, Arbaces left the house, and on the threshold almost stumbled over Nydia, who had long waited there to hear news of Glaucus. She knew the Egyptian's voice, and sprang up.

"Oh, dread man!" she cried. "Save him! He lies within — ill — and I am the hateful cause! And they will not let me in to see him. Wilt thou save him?"

"Child, follow me home," was all he replied. "I would speak to thee. For his sake I ask it."

He went on, and presently Nydia followed his steps.

"I must secure this girl," said Arbaces to himself. "There may be danger for me in her chatter. As for the vain Julia, she will not give her secret away."

At his own house he learnt from Nydia that her hand, and not Julia's, had given to Glaucus the fatal drink. He saw that, if she were free, she would speak, at the trial, of the witch's draught

and of how it had worked on the Greek; and this might win a pardon for the accused man. Arbaces therefore pretended to soothe her, and presently left her, locking her in the room. He then ordered one of his slaves to care for her wants and guard her well.

Early the next morning, the body of Apaecides was carried from his sister's house, and burnt upon the funeral pyre. As Ione was returning home with her maidens after the last sad ceremonies, she met with Arbaces and some of his followers. He spoke to her gently, calling her his pupil, and showing her the magistrate's writing which entrusted her to her guardian's care. Ione drew herself proudly aside.

"Dark Egyptian," she said, "begone! It is thou — not Glaucus, not Glaucus! — who hast slain my brother! Is it to thy care, thy hands still wet with his blood, that they will give the sister? Ha! thou turnest pale! Pass on, and leave me to my woe!"

But Arbaces was in a hurry. He ordered her to be placed in the litter which stood by; the bearers moved on quickly; and the unhappy Ione was soon carried from the sight of her weeping maidens, and lodged, another prisoner, in the Egyptian's house.

1. Why had Glaucus recovered from the effects of the poison?
2. What did Arbaces want Glaucus to do?
3. What happened to Nydia?
4. Where was Ione taken after her brother's funeral?

CHAPTER 19

CUNNING

When the captive Nydia learnt from Sosia, the slave who guarded her, that the trial of Glaucus had begun and that he was likely to be sentenced to a terrible death, she was filled with grief and despair. Arbaces, said the slave, was his accuser; and now Nydia understood why she was a prisoner: if she were free she might be able to help Glaucus. She knew that the sorcerer had her in a snare, and oh! how she panted for release! But Sosia feared his master too much to give her her liberty, and so the blind girl set to work to gain it, if she could, by cunning.

She discovered that the slave longed more than anything else to know when he should become a free man; and so, that night, she pretended that he should learn his fortune by questioning the Demon of the Air. Before beginning the questions she made the simple Sosia set the door of her room ajar and also open a small gate in the garden, so that the demon, as she told him, might enter easily. She then blindfolded the slave, and told him to ask his questions and listen carefully for the answers.

Whilst he was tremblingly waiting for a reply which never came, Nydia slipped noiselessly away; and it was only when Sosia, growing angry

at last with a demon who so stupidly remained dumb, tore the handkerchief from his eyes, that he found he had been tricked. Not only that, but Nydia, when leaving, had taken away the light and locked the door behind her. He did not dare to call aloud or to knock, lest his master should overhear him and punish him for disobedience.

Meanwhile Nydia had passed lightly through the house without meeting anyone, and was about to make her way towards the garden gate (for she knew the surroundings of the house well) when she suddenly heard steps coming towards her, and then the dreaded voice of Arbaces himself.

. . . . . .

It was the second night of the Greek's trial; and just about the time that Sosia was awaiting the demon's visit, Calenus, the priest of Isis, sought Arbaces and met with him in his garden. There he told him what the Egyptian partly guessed: that upon the night of the murder he was hiding in the grove of Cybele and saw Arbaces stab Apaecides to death. The sorcerer received this news very calmly.

"Hast thou told any other living soul of what thou didst see?" he asked.

"By the fear of thy vengeance — no!" was the reply.

"Well, then, be silent still; and when the Greek has met his doom — as he will, for to-morrow the sentence of his death will go forth:

the senate does not relent — when all is over, I say, I will make thee rich."

"If thou wouldst keep me silent, thou must pay something now," said the greedy and cunning Calenus. "Thy life is very precious," he added, grinning, "and thy wealth is very great."

"Speak out," said Arbaces. "What shall be the sum?"

"Arbaces, I have heard that in thy secret treasury, beneath the ancient arches which prop this stately house of thine, thou hast piles of gold, of vases, and of jewels. Thou mayest easily spare out of those piles enough to make Calenus one of the richest priests in Pompeii, and yet not miss the loss."

"Come, Calenus," said Arbaces winningly, and with a frank and generous air, "thou art an old friend, and hast been a faithful servant. Thou shalt go down with me to that treasury, thou shalt behold the uncounted gold and the priceless gems; and thou shalt, for thine own reward, bear away with thee this night as much as thou canst hide beneath thy robe. When Glaucus is no more, thou shalt pay the treasury another visit. Do I speak as a friend?"

"Oh, greatest and best of men!" was the priest's reply; and, full of triumphant joy, he turned to follow the Egyptian.

It was just at this moment that Nydia heard the voice of Arbaces, as she was about to pass into the garden. She paused for a moment in fear and

doubt, when she suddenly remembered an underground passage leading to another door which opened on to the garden. If the door were unlocked, she could get out without being seen. She turned back quickly, felt her way down a flight of stairs, and was soon at the entrance to the passage. Alas! the door there was closed and locked. Whilst she was still trying it, she heard behind her the voice of Calenus, and, a moment after, that of Arbaces in low reply.

1. How did Nydia escape from Sosia?
2. What did Calenus know about the murder of Apaecides?
3. What did Arbaces promise to Calenus?

CHAPTER 20

NYDIA AND CALENUS

Nydia could not stay where she was, for the footsteps behind her seemed to be coming towards that very door. She sprang forward, and felt herself on unknown ground. The air became damp and chill, and she thought she might be among the cellars of the great house, when again her quick ear caught the sound of steps and voices. She hurried on with outstretched arms, which every now and then touched thick pillars of stone. With wonderful skill the blind girl threaded her way along, the air growing damper

every moment, and the voices and footsteps following her.

At length she was stopped by a wall which blocked her path. There seemed to be no place where she could hide from those who were now gaining upon her, and Nydia wrung her hands in despair, then hurried on by the side of the wall. Coming suddenly against one of the sharp buttresses which here and there jutted out from it, she stumbled and fell. Hurt and shaken, she uttered no cry, but crept into the corner formed by the buttress, so that on one side at least she was hidden from view; and there she waited breathlessly.

Meanwhile Arbaces and Calenus were coming towards her. They were in a huge underground hall, whose low roof was supported by heavy pillars. Bare rough walls, formed of great blocks of stone, gleamed in the light of the pale lamp Arbaces carried; and serpents, lizards, and toads glided into the shadows from beneath the men's feet. The hall, at the end, branched off into two passages, and Arbaces turned down the one to the right.

"The gay Glaucus will be lodged to-morrow in a place not much drier, and far less roomy, than this," said Calenus, as they passed the very spot where, in the deep shadow of the buttress, Nydia cowered trembling.

"Ay, but then he will have dry room, and space enough, in the arena on the day after. And

to think," went on Arbaces slowly, " to think that a word of thine could save him and send Arbaces to his doom!"

" That word shall never be spoken," said Calenus.

" Right, my Calenus! it never shall," returned the Egyptian, leaning his arm affectionately on the priest's shoulder; " and now — here we are."

The light trembled against a small door, heavily bound with iron and set deep in the wall. Arbaces drew a key from his girdle, and, turning it in the rusty lock, said:

" Enter, my friend, whilst I hold the lamp high so that thou mayest see the treasure."

The impatient Calenus did not wait to be bidden twice. He stepped quickly over the threshold, and as he did so the Egyptian's strong hand pushed him violently forward.

" *The word shall never be spoken!*" said Arbaces with a loud laugh of triumph, and he slammed the door upon the priest.

Calenus had fallen down several steps, but he sprang up again to the door, beating at it fiercely, and crying aloud in what seemed more like a beast's howl than a man's voice: " Oh, set me free — set me free, and I will ask no gold!"

Arbaces laughed again, as the words came to him faintly through the heavy door. Then he stamped his foot.

" All the gold in the world will not buy thee a crust of bread," he cried. " My treasures lie not

ARBACES PUSHED HIM VIOLENTLY FORWARD

there, but in the opposite passage. Starve, wretch! None will hear thy cries, and none will ever know that thus dies the man who threatened, and could have ruined, Arbaces. Farewell!" And he turned and went back along the dim hall.

When the echo of his footsteps had died away, Nydia stirred and shivered. What words of terror, yet of hope, she had heard! Glaucus was to be doomed the next day, but there lived one who could save him and send Arbaces to death in his place; and that one was shrieking, groaning, and praying within a few steps of her hiding-place!

Guided by the priest's despairing cries, she felt her way to the door, and spoke to him gently through the keyhole. She told him what she, unseen, had overheard, and said that if she herself could escape from those halls, she might save him.

"Did I hear aright?" she asked. "Canst thou save the Greek from the charge against his life?"

"I can — I can!" cried the half-frantic Calenus. "For that reason (may the Furies slay the foul Egyptian!) Arbaces hath snared me thus, and left me to starve and rot in this horrible den!"

"They accuse Glaucus of murder," went on Nydia. "Canst thou prove that he is innocent?"

"Only free me," panted Calenus, "and the proudest head in Pompeii is not more safe than his. I saw the deed done — I saw Arbaces strike the blow. I can show the true murderer and release the innocent man. But if I perish, he dies also."

"And thou wilt tell all thou knowest?"

"Willingly — oh, how willingly, blessed stranger! Yes, if Hades itself were yawning at my feet! Revenge upon the false Egyptian! — revenge! — revenge!"

He shrieked out the last words in his rage and fear; and Nydia said: "I shall deliver thee. Wait in patience and hope."

"But be careful — be wise, sweet stranger," Calenus cried. "Speak not to Arbaces — he is harder than these walls! Seek the magistrate — tell what you know — get his written permission to search this place. Bring soldiers, and clever smiths — these locks are very strong. Time flies — I may starve — starve! — if you are not quick. Go — go at once!"

Nydia glided away, and, feeling with outstretched arms again along the pillared hall, she reached the end of it, and the passage which led to the upper air. But there she paused, and set herself to wait an hour. She felt she would be safer then, for all the household would be sunk in sleep.

It was long after midnight when she crept into the moonlit garden, and found her way to the gate. Alas! it was now locked! One of the household servants had fastened it, and was even then looking for her in the garden with Sosia, whom he had found and set free earlier in the evening.

An instant later, and the two saw her as she

still groped in despair at the gate. Sosia seized her. "Ha! runaway! I have thee—eh?" he cried; and, stifling her shrieks with a handkerchief thrust in her mouth, he bore her into the house, and locked her once more in the room from which she had escaped a few hours before.

1. Where did Nydia seek refuge?
2. What did Arbaces mean when he said to Calenus, "The word shall never be spoken"?
3. Why was Nydia so eager to save Calenus?
4. What prevented Nydia from escaping?

CHAPTER 21

IN THE DUNGEON

The trial of Glaucus and Olinthus was over, and both men had been sentenced to death by the senate. Next day the Athenian, armed only with his stilus, was to meet the lion in the arena; whilst Olinthus, naked-handed, must face the tiger. And all Pompeii, gathered there for amusement, would look on at the terrible sight.

After his sentence, Glaucus was not taken again to the house of Sallust, the only friend of his distress. He was led along the forum till the guards stopped at a small door by the side of the temple of Jupiter. The place may still be seen. The door opened in the centre, swinging round on its hinges like a turnstile, and through this narrow space they thrust the prisoner. They

placed before him a loaf and a pitcher of water, and left him to darkness, and, as he thought, to loneliness.

Glaucus felt as if he were held in some fearful dream. His pride, and the knowledge that he was innocent, had upheld him at the trial, when the eyes of all men were upon him; but now, knowing what dreadful fate awaited him upon the morrow, his heart almost failed him. He thought of his former friends; not one, except Sallust, had tried to help him. He thought of Ione: no message had come from her; no doubt she too had forsaken him, believing him guilty of the murder of her brother. He groaned aloud, and a voice spoke to him out of the gloom. "Who is that?" it said. "Glaucus the Athenian, is it thou?"

"They called me so in my happy hours," returned the prisoner; "they may have other names for me now. And *thy* name, stranger?"

"Is Olinthus, thy fellow in the prison as at the trial."

The two men then began to talk together, gaining some sort of sad comfort from each other's company. Olinthus cheered Glaucus greatly by telling him that he did not believe him to be guilty. He was certain, he said, that Arbaces was the man who had murdered Apaecides, for he alone had cause to fear him. And the Christian went on to tell of the plan which he and Apaecides had formed together to bring to light the

trickeries of the Egyptian priests and the evil life of the sorcerer.

"Tell me, man of a strange belief," said Glaucus after a while, "thinkest thou that, for our errors and faults, we shall be for ever punished by the powers above, whatever name thou givest them?"

"God is just," said the Christian warmly, "and He will not desert His creatures because of their human faults. God is merciful, and will punish none but the wicked who will not be sorry for their sins."

There was silence for some minutes; then the Greek said softly:

"Christian, dost thou believe that the dead shall live again — that beyond the grave our good name shall shine pure from the mortal mists that unjustly dim it in the blind world here—that those who have loved on earth shall meet again hereafter?"

"Do I believe that, O Greek? No, I do not believe — I *know*!" answered Olinthus, "and it is that blessed knowledge that upholds me now. O Cyllene, my own wife!" he went on passionately, "torn from me ere we had been married a month! — shall I not see thee yet, and before many days are past? Welcome, welcome death, that will bring me to heaven and thee!"

Something in this sudden outburst moved the Greek's heart towards the Christian. He felt a strange sympathy between himself and his companion, and he crept nearer to him.

"Yes," went on Olinthus, his words seeming to glow in his earnestness, "the soul shall live for ever — the dead shall meet again — that is the great truth a God suffered death itself to bear witness to and proclaim. The true God's true Heaven is the portion of the good."

"Tell me, then, of thy religion, and explain to me thy beliefs and thy hopes," said Glaucus earnestly.

Olinthus made haste to obey. And there — as it often was in the early days of the Christian belief — in the darkness of the dungeon and over the approach of death, the dawning Gospel shed its soft and holy rays.

1. What was to happen to Glaucus and Olinthus?
2. What did Glaucus and Olinthus talk about in the dungeon?

CHAPTER 22

A CHANCE FOR GLAUCUS

As the judgment-day of Glaucus drew towards its close, Nydia, kept a close prisoner by Sosia her gaoler, almost gave way to despair. Almost, but not quite, for she knew that, impossible as her escape seemed, the only chance for the Greek's life rested on her, and so she must be calm and quick-witted, in order to seize whatever opportunity there might be.

She had spent the day in forming plan after plan to get free, but was forced to give up each

one. She saw that Sosia was her only hope: if she could not trick him again, might she not bribe him? She would try! He longed to be a slave no more: was she not wearing ornaments — costly bracelets and a beautiful chain, the gifts of Ione and of Glaucus — which would buy his freedom?

When twilight came, she called aloud to him to come and talk to her a little; she could bear the loneliness no longer, she said. Sosia was fond of gossip himself, he pitied one who had no one to talk with, and so he did as she begged him. "But mind, no more tricks!" said he.

"No, no. Tell me, dear Sosia, what is the hour?"

"It is already evening — the goats are going home."

"O gods! How has the trial gone?"

"Both are to die!"

Nydia stifled the cry that rose to her lips. "When do they suffer?" she murmured.

"To-morrow, in the arena. If it were not for thee, little wretch, I should be allowed to go with the rest and see the show."

Nydia leant back for a few minutes, faint and sick. Then she gathered herself together, and asked Sosia how much money he needed to make up the price of his freedom. He told her, and she offered him her chain and bracelets, which, she said, were worth much more than the sum he named, if he would only let her out of her prison

for an hour. But Sosia, dreading his stern master, firmly refused.

"Well, then," said Nydia quickly, "thou wilt not, at least, refuse to take a letter for me — a letter to Sallust, the friend of Glaucus?"

"And what do you want with him?" asked Sosia doubtfully.

"Glaucus was my master," answered Nydia; "he bought me from a cruel man. He alone has been kind to me, and now he is to die. I shall never live happily if I cannot, in his hour of doom, let him know that one heart is grateful to him. Sallust is his friend; he will let him have my message."

"I am sure he will do no such thing. Glaucus will have enough to think of between now and to-morrow without troubling his head about a blind girl."

"Man," said Nydia rising, "wilt thou become free? The offer is in thy power; to-morrow it will be too late. Never was freedom more cheaply bought. Thou canst easily leave the house without being missed, and thou canst return in half an hour. Wilt thou refuse liberty for such a trifle?"

Sosia was greatly moved. To be sure, the girl's request seemed a foolish one; but what was that to him? After thinking for a moment he hesitated no longer. "Give me the trinkets and I will take the letter," he said.

At Nydia's request he brought her a tablet of wax and a stilus, and the blind girl, who had been

taught to write in the happy days before she was a slave, wrote a message in Greek, and carefully fastened and sealed her letter. Then she gave it to Sosia, making him swear most solemnly that he would give it into the hands of none but Sallust. This he promised earnestly to do, for her words frightened him, and he really meant what he said. He locked the door upon his prisoner, and took the key with him; then, wrapping himself from head to foot in a dark cloak, he slipped out of the house unseen, for it was now dark.

Sallust was at supper, with only his favourite freedman for company, and he was trying to forget his grief for his friend's doom by eating and drinking, especially by drinking. Indeed, he had drunk so much wine by the time Sosia put the letter in his hand, that he had not enough sense left to read it.

"Am I a man to think of foolish letters," muttered he, "when my friend is going to be eaten up? No, no! I cannot eat another tartlet — my grief chokes me! Poor, dear Glaucus!"

His head sank upon his breast; and the next moment his slaves carried him off to bed.

Sosia left the house. He had kept his promise. He went home under the starlight, through the streets of the lovely city. This was the last night of the gay Pompeii!

1. What made Nydia think that she could bribe Sosia?
2. What did Sosia agree to do?
3. Why did Nydia's plan fail?

CHAPTER 23

THE LAST DAY OF POMPEII

The dawn of the last day of Pompeii broke grey and still. The air was hot, and a low, thin mist hung over the city and the plains around it. Though all was so calm, the waves of the sea were ruffled and seemed to run back from the shore in fear. But the cloud that had rested so long over Vesuvius had suddenly vanished.

The city gates were opened at daybreak, and horsemen, foot-passengers, carriages and chariots poured in. The streets were crowded with citizens and strangers from the neighbourhood, all dressed in their holiday clothes, all chattering and laughing gaily, all thronging to the huge arena to see the dreadful show.

That morning Arbaces the Egyptian awoke in terror from a horrible dream, to see the witch of Vesuvius standing beside his bed.

"I have come to warn thee," she said in a hollow voice. "Listen to me. Some evil hangs over this fated city. Fly, while there is yet time. In my cavern is a vast gulf, and in that gulf I have lately seen a red, dull stream creep slowly, slowly on; and I have heard mighty sounds hissing and roaring through the gloom. Last night the stream was no longer dull, but fiercely bright; all night long the rock shook and trembled, and

I heard a grinding, as of wheels, beneath the mountain. Before daybreak I climbed the mountain, and there, in the very top, I saw a great hollow which I had never seen before. From it curled a faint smoke, and the vapour was deathly, and I gasped and sickened and nearly died. I went back to my cave. I took my gold and my drugs, and left that place which for so long had been home to me. For I remembered the dark prophecy which saith, 'When the mountain opens the city shall fall'. Dread master, be warned and fly!"

"Witch," he replied, "I thank thee for thy care. On yonder table stands a cup of gold. Take it: it is thine. I did not dream that there lived one who would have saved Arbaces from destruction. And so, farewell."

When the witch had left him, the Egyptian summoned his slaves, and began to dress, in his most splendid robes and jewels, for the show at the amphitheatre.[1] It was the custom for men of rank to be accompanied to all such amusements by a procession of their slaves and freedmen; and the long "family" of Arbaces was already arranged in order, to follow the litter of their master. Only, to their great vexation, Sosia, Nydia's gaoler, and the slaves who waited upon Ione, were ordered to remain at home.

"Callias," said Arbaces to his chief servant

[1] Amphitheatre, an open building of an oval form, with rows of seats all round, rising one above another.

as he dressed him, "I am weary of Pompeii. I have bought a vessel which is lying in the harbour, and in three days, if the wind is favourable, I shall leave the city and take my pupil, Ione, with me. The day after to-morrow we shall begin to remove my stores."

Before he left the house the Egyptian stepped out upon a high balcony, and from there saw dense crowds of men pouring fast into the amphitheatre; and heard the cry of the assistants and the straining of the ropes as they raised the huge awning under which the citizens were to watch at their ease the agonies of their fellow-men. Suddenly a wild, strange sound went forth, and as suddenly died away. It was the roar of the lion.

Sallust roused himself late that morning. Three times he had awakened, and three times turned over with a sigh, trying to forget that that day his friend was to meet death. At length, unable to sleep longer, he sat up to find his favourite freedman sitting as usual by his bed.

"Has it begun — the amphitheatre?" he asked.

"Long since, O Sallust. Did you not hear the trumpets and the trampling feet?"

"None of my people have gone to the spectacle?"

"Certainly not: your orders were too strict."

"That is well. How I wish the day were over! What is that letter yonder on the table?"

"That? Oh, the letter brought to you last night. Shall I open it for you, Sallust?"

"Do: anything to turn away my thoughts. Poor Glaucus!"

The freedman opened the letter, and glanced over it. For some moments the uneven lines traced by the blind girl's hand puzzled him; but suddenly he cried: "Good gods! noble Sallust! What have we done not to attend to this before? Hear me read!

"'Nydia, the slave, to Sallust, the friend of Glaucus! I am a prisoner in the house of Arbaces. Hasten to the magistrate! get my release, and we shall yet save Glaucus from the lion. There is another prisoner within these walls—one whose witness can free Glaucus from the charge against him, one who saw the murder and can point out the murderer. Hasten! Quick! quick! Bring with you armed men, and a skilful smith, for the dungeon of my fellow-prisoner is strong. Oh! by thy right hand and thy father's ashes, lose not a moment!'"

"Great Jove!" exclaimed Sallust, starting. "And this day — perhaps this very hour — he is to die! There is no time to be lost. Arm all my slaves instantly. The streets are empty. We will hasten ourselves to the Egyptian's house and set the prisoners free. Quick, quick! Davus there! My gown and sandals, the papyrus and a reed.[1] I will write to the magistrate, to beg him to delay the death of Glaucus, for that, within an hour, we

[1] Papyrus, an Egyptian sedge, or coarse, grass-like plant, the stems of which, in ancient days, were made into writing material. The reed was used for writing on papyrus and parchment.

may yet prove him innocent. So, so, that is well. Hurry with this, Davus, to the magistrate at the amphitheatre. See it given to his own hand. Now then, O ye gods! help me to help my friend!"

1. Where were the citizens of Pompeii going?
2. What warning did Arbaces receive? And from whom?
3. What did Sallust do that he should have done the night before?

CHAPTER 24

THE ARENA

The great amphitheatre was filled with spectators; and Arbaces, sitting in his place amongst them, gazed round at the mighty, impatient crowd. It seemed as if the whole population of the city was present there.

On the highest row of seats sat the women, their gay dresses looking like some gaudy flower-bed. On the lower benches round the arena were the high-born and wealthy visitors — the city magistrates and senators. The passages which, by corridors at the right and left, gave entrance to these seats, were also the entrances for those who were about to fight. All around the building wound unseen pipes, from which, as the day went on, cooling, scented showers would be sprinkled over the spectators. The assistants were still busy fixing the great awning which was

meant to cover the whole; but, owing to some fault either of the workmen or the machinery, it was not arranged that day so well as usual, and a large gap was left at the back of it. Those who were not under the awning grumbled loudly, and Pansa the magistrate, at whose expense the show was given, looked much vexed at this hitch. But now it was time for the spectacle to begin.

With a loud flourish of trumpets the gladiators entered the arena in procession, and marched very slowly round the oval space. They were all big men, with splendid, muscular limbs, and they were to fight with one another in pairs, to the death.

One man, called the *retiarius*, or netter, was armed only with a three-pronged spear like a trident, and a net to entangle his opponent. He was to fight with a thick-set gladiator who had a round shield, a sword and a helmet, but no body-armour. Two young gladiators with bare, shining limbs were to fight together first in the Greek fashion with the cestus,[1] and afterwards in armour with swords and shields. They were followed round the arena by two fighters riding light, prancing horses. These men bore lances and round shields; their armour was woven with bands of iron, but it covered only the thighs and the right arms. Short cloaks hung from their shoulders to their saddles, and their legs were bare save for sandals which were fastened a little above the ankle.

[1] Cestus, the loaded boxing-glove of the Romans.

The show began with a combat with wooden swords between the various gladiators matched against each other. This sham contest lasted only an hour, and most of the spectators were pleased when it was over: it was not exciting or terrible enough for them; they had come to see blood spilt and life lost, and they had little interest in anything else.

It was often the custom to begin the sports by the most cruel of all; when some gladiator would be met by the beasts and slain first. But Pansa had arranged this time that the death of Glaucus and Olinthus should be kept for the last spectacle, since, in the eyes of the crowd, it was the greatest.

So the gladiators were paired, and fought, every man, bravely and skilfully, and at least one man out of every pair, for the last time. The victors were loudly applauded, the dead and dying were dragged out of the arena, over which fresh sand was strewn; and another pair of fighters stood up together before the excited crowd.

Just as the last two men — a fine Roman warrior and a graceful young gladiator of Pompeii — met in the arena for their final fight, one of the attendants of the amphitheatre put a letter into Pansa's hand. He opened it, read it and read it again, with surprised and unbelieving looks, and then, muttering, "It is impossible! The man must have lost his senses, to dream of such follies!" he threw the letter carelessly aside, and

settled himself once more to watch the combat.

The dreadful fight was over at last. The young gladiator fell upon the earth, dead, with the Roman's sword through his breast. His last look had been towards his poor father, a slave, who sat among the spectators — that father for whose sake he had fought, meaning that the money he made by the combats should buy the old man's freedom.

And now rich scents were wafted round the arena, the air of which had grown hot and stifling; and the attendants scattered fresh sand over the open space.

"Bring forth the lion and Glaucus the Athenian," ordered Pansa. And a deep, breathless hush, of mingled interest and terror, spread over the still crowd.

1. What was wrong with the awning?
2. Who wrote the letter that was given to the magistrate?

CHAPTER 25

TO THE LION!

Glaucus, summoned from his prison by the guards, turned to Olinthus for a last embrace and a blessing. The Christian's tears flowed fast as he clasped the young heathen to him.

"Oh that I might say to thee, 'We two this

night shall meet in Paradise!" " he whispered.

" It may be so yet," answered the Greek with a tremble in his voice. " They whom death parts not, may yet meet beyond the grave. To the earth, the beautiful, beloved earth, farewell for ever! Good officer, I come!"

" Courage!" said one of the guards. " Thou art young and active. They give thee a weapon. Despair not, and thou mayest conquer yet!"

Glaucus did not reply. They anointed his body, placed the stilus in his hand, and led him into the arena.

When the Greek saw the eyes of thousands upon him, he felt all fear and weakness leave him. He flushed, and drew himself proudly to his full height, and stood before them all like one of the old god-like heroes of his native land. The murmur of hatred and horror at his crime, which had met him as he entered, died into silence and, with a quick sigh, the crowd turned towards a dark object in the centre of the arena. It was the grated den of the lion.

" How warm it is!" said one of the women spectators; " yet there is no sun. How I wish those stupid men could have fastened up that gap in the awning!"

" Oh, it is warm, indeed!" answered her companion. " I feel faint and sick!"

The lion had been kept without food for twenty-four hours, and all through the morning had been strangely restless. Its keeper thought it

was hungry, yet it seemed to be filled with fear rather than with rage; its roar was painful and distressed. It started up in its den and then lay down again; started once more, and cried aloud, and at last lay still, breathing heavily.

Pansa, with a pale face, looked anxiously round him, and hesitated. The crowd became impatient. Slowly he gave the sign; the grating was removed, and the beast leaped out with a glad roar.

Glaucus had bent his limbs so as to give himself a firm stand at the expected rush of the lion. His small, shining weapon was raised on high; he would try for one thrust, at least, through the eye to the brain of his foe.

But, to the astonishment of all, the lion did not even seem to notice him.

At the first moment of its release it stopped short, half raised itself, and snuffed the hot air with quick sighs. Then suddenly it sprang forward, but not upon the Greek. It trotted round the arena, looking anxiously from side to side, as if it sought to escape. Once or twice it tried to leap up the parapet that divided it from the audience, and, failing, gave a baffled howl. It did not seem to be either angry or hungry; its tail drooped; its eye wandered listlessly towards Glaucus, then glanced away again. At length, as if tired of seeking for some escape, it crept moaning into its den and lay down.

The people, at first surprised, grew angry and

more impatient. Were they to miss the best show of all that day? Pansa called to the keeper.

"How is this? Prick him forth with the goad, and then close the door of the den."

As the keeper was about to obey, a loud cry was heard at one of the entrances. There was a tumult: voices broke forth and were suddenly silenced. All eyes turned wonderingly in the direction of the disturbance; the crowd gave way, and suddenly Sallust appeared among them — Sallust, hot, breathless, half exhausted.

He gazed round the ring. "Remove the Greek!" he cried. "Hasten — he is innocent! Arrest Arbaces the Egyptian! *He* is the murderer of Apaecides! I bring with me one who saw with his own eyes the death of the priest. Room there — stand back! Give way for the priest Calenus!"

Pale and haggard, Calenus was helped into the very row where Arbaces sat.

"The priest Calenus — Calenus!" echoed the crowd; and Pansa asked him gravely: "What hast thou to say?"

"Arbaces of Egypt is the murderer of Apaecides, the priest of Isis," he said hoarsely; "these eyes saw him deal the blow. It is from the dungeon into which he plunged me that the gods have raised me to proclaim his crime! Release the Greek! *He* is innocent!"

"It is for this, then, that the lion spared him. A miracle! a miracle!" cried Pansa.

"A miracle, a miracle!" shouted the people.

"*Arbaces to the lion!*" And the shout echoed from coast to sea: "*Arbaces to the lion!*"

"Officers," continued Pansa, "remove the accused Glaucus, but guard him yet. The gods shower their wonders upon this day."

As he gave the word of release, a cry of joy rang out, and the voice was the voice of a girl — a child. The crowd echoed it back with glad sympathy.

"Silence!" said the grave Pansa. "Who is there?"

"The blind girl Nydia," answered Sallust. "It is her hand that has raised Calenus from the grave, and delivered Glaucus from the lion."

"Arbaces of Egypt," said Pansa, "thou hearest the charge against thee. Thou hast not yet spoken. What hast thou to say?"

The gaze of the crowd was fixed upon the Egyptian. At the shout, "Arbaces to the lion!" he had trembled, and his dark cheeks grew pale. But now he rose calmly, drew himself up, and proudly returned the angry glare of the eyes around him. Then he began to speak, and in a cunning speech defended himself skilfully, declaring he was innocent. But as he ended, and Pansa rather doubtfully ordered him to be removed and the sports to be continued, the priest Calenus sprang up.

"What!" he cried, turning round to the people, "shall Isis be slighted thus? Shall the blood of her priest still cry for vengeance? Shall

justice be delayed, and the lion be cheated of his prey? *To the lion — to the lion with Arbaces!*"

He spoke like one filled with a god-like power, so strong was his hatred against the man who would have sent him to a horrible death. The people looked at him and shuddered.

"A god speaks from the mouth of the holy man!" they cried. "*To the lion with the Egyptian!*"

And with that cry the thousands leaped up as one man, and rushed down upon Arbaces like the waves of the sea. In vain did Pansa lift his voice; in vain did the guards try to form a barrier against that surging multitude. The people had been made already savage by the sights they had seen that day, and now they thirsted for more blood.

In despair and terror, the Egyptian glanced over the rushing people — and suddenly saw, right above them through the gap in the awning, a strange and awful sight. He saw — and his cunning brought back his courage. He stretched his hand on high.

"Behold!" he shouted in a thunderous voice which stopped the rush of the crowd and silenced its roar; "behold how the gods protect the guiltless! See how their avenging fires burst forth against the false words of my accusers!"

The eyes of all followed his movement, and saw, with dreadful dismay, a huge vapour shooting from the top of Vesuvius, in the form of a

giant pine-tree. Its trunk was black; its branches were of fire — a fire that changed every moment, now fiercely bright, now of a dull red, that again blazed forth with a horrifying glare!

1. How did the lion behave when it was let out of the den?
2. How did Sallust and Calenus interrupt the performance?
3. What words did the crowd shout?
4. What did Arbaces see through the gap in the awning?

CHAPTER 26

THE EARTHQUAKE

Throughout the amphitheatre there fell a dead silence, broken only by the sudden roar of the lion. Then there arose the shrieks of women, whilst men stared at each other but were dumb. At that moment they felt the earth shake beneath their feet; the walls of the arena trembled; and beyond, in the distance, was heard the crash of falling roofs. A second later the mountain-cloud seemed to roll towards them, dark and rapid; at the same time it cast forth a shower of ashes mixed with great pieces of burning stone. Over the vineyards and the streets, over the amphitheatres, far and wide, fell that awful shower.

The people forgot Arbaces; they thought only of safety for themselves. All turned to fly, pressing, crushing against one another, and trampling recklessly over the fallen, as they poured out of

the arena. Some rushed home, to collect their treasures and escape whilst there was time; others, dreading the showers of ashes that now fell in torrents over the streets, fled into houses or temples for shelter. But darker and more mighty spread the cloud above them.

Meanwhile Glaucus, scarcely knowing whether he was awake or dreaming, had been led by his guards into a cell. Suddenly there was a cry at the door, and Nydia appeared, flinging herself at his feet and sobbing with joy.

"Nydia, my child! My preserver!" he exclaimed.

"Glaucus! oh, let me feel thy touch! Yes, yes, thou art living! We are not too late! That dreadful door — I thought it would never give way! And Calenus — we had to wait — hours, it seemed — whilst they gave him food and wine. But thou art living still, and I — *I* have saved thee!"

There was a sudden cry outside, the sound of rushing feet, and voices filled with terror: "The mountain — the earthquake! The earthquake!"

At that sound the guards fled, joining the rest, and Glaucus and Nydia were left to save themselves. Taking the blind girl's hand, the Greek hurried through the passages until he found the dungeon where Olinthus was. The Christian was kneeling in prayer.

"Arise, my friend, and fly!" Glaucus cried. "See, Nature has delivered thee!" And he led

the other out, showed him the terrible cloud casting forth its showers of ashes and pumice stones, and bade him harken to the cries of the fleeing crowd. "Fly! Seek thy brethren, and farewell!" cried Glaucus, and the next moment was gone, with Nydia beside him.

She told him where Ione was; and the two hastened through the streets to the Egyptian's house. It was deserted, except for a few cowering slaves. Hurrying from room to room, and calling as he went, Glaucus found Ione at last, and, seizing her in his arms, carried her out to where Nydia awaited them.

It was now dark as night. As the three left the house they heard steps coming towards it, and then the voice of Arbaces. The sorcerer had returned to seek his treasures and Ione before he fled from the doomed city. But in the darkness the foes did not see each other, though they were so near. Only, in the thick gloom, Glaucus dimly caught the moving outline of the Egyptian's white robes.

The cloud over the city had now settled into a solid mass, less like the deepest gloom of a night in the open air than the close darkness of some narrow room. Vivid and terrible lightnings — blue, snake-green, and crimson — played around Vesuvius, darting forth through the columns of smoke, and from time to time lighting up the whole city. In the pauses of the burning showers was heard the rumbling of the earth

beneath, and the groaning waves of the restless sea.

The ashes in many places were already knee-deep; and the boiling showers which came from the volcano's steaming breath forced their way into the houses, bearing with them a strong, choking vapour. In some parts of the city huge pieces of rock, hurled upon the house roofs, sent masses of ruins into the streets; and, as the day went on, the movement of the earth could be felt more and more. Sometimes the larger stones, striking against each other as they fell, shot out sparks of fire, which set vineyards and houses aflame. Here and there in the entrances of temples, torches had been set; but these were soon put out by the showers and winds.

By the light of the flames could be seen parties of terrified people, some hurrying towards the sea, some flying from it, for the waters had left the shore, which, dark as ink, gave no shelter from the storm of cinders and rocks.

Through these dreadful scenes Glaucus made his way, half carrying Ione, and led by the blind girl, to whom the darkness was as day. She was guiding them towards the sea, by which they meant to try to escape. Suddenly a rush of hundreds of people swept by them. Nydia was torn from the side of Glaucus, who, with Ione, was borne onward; and when the crowd — whose figures they could not see, so thick was the darkness — was gone, they found that Nydia was

gone also. Glaucus shouted her name. There was no reply. They went back, but in vain — she was not to be found. It was plain that she had been swept along in the opposite direction by the crowd. Their friend was lost; their guide was gone! Now, which way could they go?

1. Why did Glaucus go to the Egyptian's house?
2. Why was Nydia such a useful guide?

CHAPTER 27

THE SORCERER'S DOOM

Bewildered in the close darkness, Glaucus and Ione wandered on, the ashes falling on their heads. After some time Glaucus found they had been moving in a circle, and were in the very place they had left an hour ago. Whenever the lightning lit up the scene, they saw the streets were strewn with scorching cinders, some in dry heaps, some mixed with the boiling torrents from the volcano. They saw, too, the bodies of the dead and dying, and heard the groans of stricken, helpless folk, and the wild shrieks of women's terror.

"Oh, Glaucus, my dearest!" panted Ione. "I can go no farther! Let me die here!"

"For my sake, courage, sweet Ione!" he answered; "courage yet! See, there are torches

coming this way — how they brave the fiery wind! It is some folk escaping to the sea — we will join them."

The winds and showers ceased suddenly; the air was quite still; the mountain seemed at rest, as though it were gathering fresh fury for its next burst. The torch-bearers moved quickly on. A calm voice said: "We are nearing the sea. Freedom and riches to each slave who outlives this day! The gods themselves tell me we shall be delivered. On, then!"

The torchlight flashed in the eyes of the lovers; they saw a number of slaves bearing heavily-laden chests, and, in front of them, with a drawn sword in his hand, the tall figure of Arbaces.

"By my fathers!" he cried, "Fate smiles upon me even through these horrors! Away, Greek! I claim my pupil Ione!"

"Traitor and murderer!" cried Glaucus, glaring upon his foe. "Fate hath guided thee to my revenge! Come one step nearer — touch but Ione's hand — and I will tear thee limb from limb!"

Suddenly, as he spoke, the place became lighted with a deep, vivid glow. The mountain shone like a giant pile of fire. From its peak there rose two monstrous shapes, blood-red, facing each other, like demons battling for a world. Below them, the mountain slopes were inky-black, except in three places, where rivers of molten lava, or burning rock, flowed down in crimson streams

towards the city. Through the still air was heard the rattling of the fragments of rock, hurtling one upon another as they were borne down the slopes.

The slaves shrieked aloud, and, cowering, hid their faces. The Egyptian himself stood rooted to the spot, the glow lighting up his majestic features and jewelled robes. High behind him rose a tall column bearing a bronze statue of the Roman emperor Augustus, and in that dreadful light it seemed an image of fire.

Glaucus faced Arbaces, one arm round Ione, his other hand grasping his upraised stilus. The Egyptian took a step towards them — it was his last on earth! The ground heaved beneath him, throwing all around upon their faces; a mighty crash sounded through the city, as roofs and pillars toppled down; the lightning played an instant on the emperor's statue — then shivered bronze and column. The ruin fell, splitting the solid pavement where it crashed. The prophecy of the stars was fulfilled.

Glaucus had fallen, stunned, with the rest. When he came to himself, the glow still lit up the scene, the earth still slid and trembled beneath him. Ione lay senseless beside him, but that moment he did not see her. His eyes were fixed upon a ghastly face that, without limbs or body, looked out from beneath the shattered column — a dreadful face of agony and despair. The eyes opened and shut quickly, the lips quivered and

grinned; and then a sudden stillness fell over the hideous features.

So died the cunning sorcerer -- the great Arbaces — the Lord of the Burning Girdle — the last of the royal line of Egypt.

1. Where did Arbaces and Glaucus meet for the last time?
2. How did Arbaces die?
3. In telling of the death of Arbaces, the story says, "The prophecy of the stars was fulfilled". What does this mean?

CHAPTER 28

ESCAPE

Glaucus caught up Ione and fled along the street. A duller shade fell over the brightness, and, as he turned towards the mountain, behold! one of the two giant crests at its crown rocked and wavered. Then, with a fearful sound, it fell, and rushed, a broad stream of fire, down the mountain side. A volume of blackest smoke gushed forth and rolled on, over air, earth, and sea.

Another and another shower of ashes fell; darkness once more enwrapped him; and Glaucus, his brave heart failing him at last, sank beneath the cover of an arch, and, clasping Ione to him, awaited his death.

Meanwhile, Nydia had in vain tried to find her companions. More than once she returned to the

place where she had lost them, and, not meeting them, had seized upon hurrying men and women to ask if Glaucus had been seen; but the rushing folk only dashed the poor girl aside in their frantic haste. At length she made up her mind to go towards the sea-shore; she and her friends, she remembered, had been on their way thither when they were parted; perhaps she would find them there. So, guiding herself by her staff, she threaded the streets in safety, her small, slender form cleverly avoiding the masses of ruin that blocked the way, and moving untouched by the falling stones and the boiling streams of water.

Yet the groups of fleeing people hindered her a good deal, and at last, when a party of torch-bearers rushed full against her, she was thrown violently down.

"What!" said the voice of one of them, "is this the brave blind girl? By Bacchus,[1] she must not be left here to die! Up, my little one! So — so. You are not hurt? That's well! Come along with us — we are for the shore!"

"O Sallust, it is thy voice! The gods be thanked! Glaucus! Glaucus! Have you seen him?"

"Not I. No doubt he is out of the city by this time. The gods who saved him from the lion will save him from the burning mountain."

The kindly Roman, as he talked, drew her along with him towards the sea, not heeding her

[1] Bacchus, the Roman god of wine.

frantic pleadings that he would stay awhile to look for Glaucus. Just as Sallust and his party gained the direct path leading from the city to the port, the mountain, as we have said, burst into flame, the floods of lava broke forth, and then came the earthquake. The little company found themselves among a great crowd of people, more than half the population of the city, some going towards the shore, some coming from it, not knowing whither to fly. More and more folk joined them every moment; and with the throng came the slaves of Arbaces, carrying the treasure that had once belonged to their lord. Sosia was the only one whose torch was still alight, and as its light fell upon Nydia's face he knew her.

"Of what use is thy liberty now, blind girl?" he said.

"Who art thou?" she replied. "Hast thou seen or heard of Glaucus?"

"Ay, I saw him but a few minutes since, crouching beneath the arch of the forum — dead or dying — gone to join Arbaces, who is no more!"

Nydia answered not a word. She slipped from Sallust's side, glided through the throng behind her, and went back into the city. She reached the forum, and the arch; she stooped down, feeling around her, and calling the name of Glaucus.

A weak voice answered her: "Who calls on me? Is it a messenger from the other world? Lo! I am ready!"

GLAUCUS FOLLOWED HIS GUIDE

"Glaucus! Glaucus!" the girl cried. "Arise! Follow me — take my hand! Thou shalt be saved!"

In surprise and sudden hope the Greek arose. "Nydia still?" he said wonderingly. "Ah! thou art safe, then!"

The tender joy in his voice went to the blind girl's heart, and she blessed him for his thought of her.

Half leading, half carrying Ione, Glaucus followed his guide. Carefully avoiding the path which led to the crowd she had just left, she chose another way, and went on towards the sea.

After many halts they reached the shore, and joined a group of people who, bolder than the rest, had made up their minds to risk any danger rather than stay amidst those terrible scenes. In darkness they put out to sea in a ship which had been floating close to the shore, and as they left the land the channels of fire down the sides of Vesuvius threw a redness over the waves, and showers of dust and ashes fell, thick as hail, upon the ship.

With other wearied folk they sank exhausted upon the deck, and fell asleep, whilst the ship sailed on to safety.

1. Who helped Nydia to the sea-shore?
2. Why did Nydia run back to the forum?

CHAPTER 29

THE NEXT MORNING

Over the sea the dawn broke, peaceful and beautiful after that night of horror, as the vessel drifted calmly onward to its port. Far away in the distance the broken fragments of the destroying cloud, streaked with red, still lingered in the sky; but the white walls and gleaming pillars, which once had shone upon those fair shores, were no more. Then, and for ever afterwards, Pompeii was a city of the dead.

As the rosy light lit up the sleeping figures on deck, Nydia rose softly from where she had lain all night at the feet of Glaucus. She bent over him, kissed his forehead timidly and sadly, and felt for his hand: it was clasped in Ione's. She sighed, kissed him once more, and with her hair wiped the night dews from his face.

"May the gods bless you, noble Greek!" she murmured; "may you be happy with your dear one! May you sometimes remember Nydia! Alas! She is of no further use on earth!"

So whispering she turned away, and crept along to the farther side of the ship. There, pausing, she bent low over the sea. The cool spray dashed upward to her hot brow. "It is the kiss of death," she said; "it is welcome. O sacred Sea, give me rest! Rest — rest! There is no other heaven for a heart like mine!"

A sailor, half dozing on the deck, heard a slight splash in the water. He looked up drowsily, and behind, as the ship sailed on, he fancied he saw something white above the waves; but it vanished in an instant. He turned round again, and dreamed of his home and children.

When Glaucus and Ione awoke, their first thought was of each other — their next of Nydia. She was not to be found: none had seen her since the night. Every corner of the vessel was searched: there was no trace of her. Mysterious from first to last, the blind Greek girl had vanished for ever from the living world. They guessed her fate in silence; and Glaucus and Ione, drawing nearer to each other, forgot their deliverance, and wept as for a lost, beloved sister.

. . . . . .

Ten years after the destruction of Pompeii, Glaucus in Athens sent a letter to his friend Sallust in Rome.

"You ask me to visit you in Rome," he wrote; "no, Sallust, come to me at Athens instead. I shall see Rome no more: I have no pleasure in its glittering, noisy joys; henceforth in my own land I dwell for ever. My beloved wife Ione is beside me as I write. The sunlight quivers over Hymettus,[1] and along my garden I hear the hum of the summer bees. Am I happy, you ask? Oh, what can Rome give me equal to what I possess

[1] Hymettus, a mountain about two miles from Athens, famous for its bees and honey.

in Athens? — Athens, mother of the Poetry and the Wisdom of the world!

"Sallust, I have adopted the Christian faith. After Pompeii was destroyed I met once more with Olinthus. I had been preserved from the lion and the earthquake, and in that miracle he taught me to behold the hand of the unknown God. I listened — I believed. Ione, too, is now a believer in the same creed — a creed, Sallust, which, shedding light over this world, gathers all its glory, like a sunset, over the next. We know that we are joined in the soul, as in the flesh, for ever and for ever.

"In this manner, O glad-hearted and kindly Roman, I greet life and await death. But come hither and see what enjoyment, what hopes, are ours. In the meanwhile — Farewell!"

. . . . . .

Nearly seventeen hundred years had rolled away when the city of Pompeii once more saw the light.[1] Its walls were as fresh as if they had been painted yesterday; not a colour was faded on the rich mosaic of its floors. In its forum, the half-finished columns were as they had been left by the workman's hand; in its gardens were the statue and the vase; in its halls the treasure-chest; in its theatres the metal ticket of admission; in its rooms the furniture and the lamp, the fragments of the last feast, the perfumes and the rouge of beautiful women long since dust. At

[1] The city was destroyed A.D. 79. It was re-discovered A.D. 1750.

one of the city gates were found the remains of a Roman guard, still at his post, still awaiting permission to leave it and escape — a sentinel faithful unto death. Everywhere were the bones and skeletons of those who had once lived and fulfilled their duties and taken their pleasures in that city of luxury.

The houses of Glaucus, of Sallust, and of Diomed, the Temple of Isis, and many another beautiful building, may be seen to-day by any traveller. In the midst of the city, those who cleared away the ruins found the skeleton of a man cut entirely in two by a fallen column. The skull was a strange one, and curious folk even now may behold it — all that is left of Arbaces the Egyptian.

Looking upon these silent witnesses of a world which has passed for ever, a stranger from a bleak and far-off northern island paused under the fair Italian skies, and wrote this story.

1. Why did Nydia throw herself into the sea?
2. What became of Glaucus and Ione?
3. How long is it since Pompeii was destroyed?