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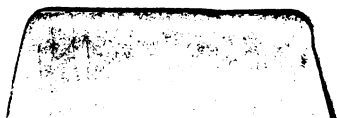
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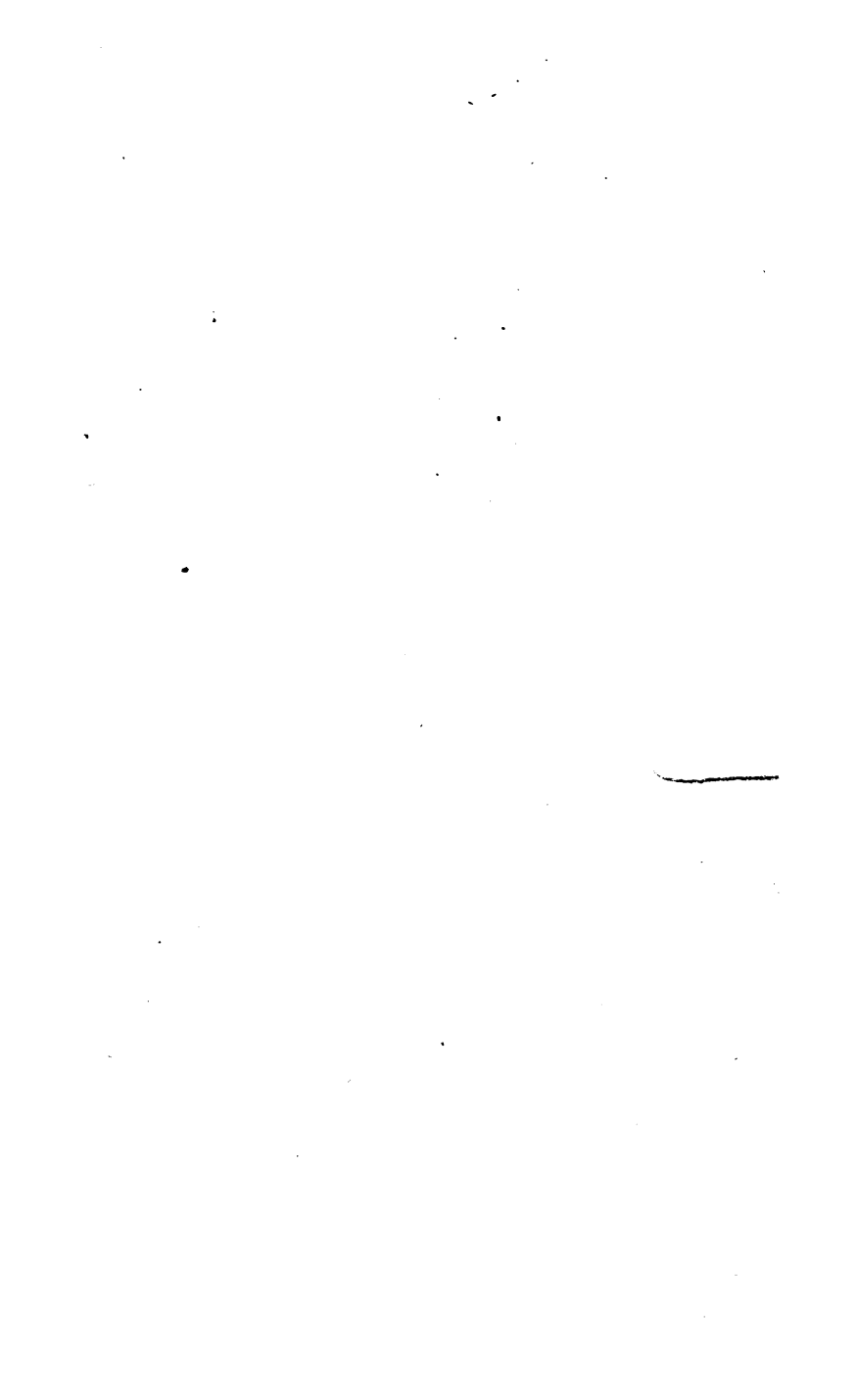
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V A L E R I U S;

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ROMAN STORY.

They'll sit by the fire, and presume to know what's done i' the Capitol!

SHAKESPEARE.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

NEW-YORK:

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V A L E R I U S.

CHAPTER I.

SINCE you are desirous, my friends, that I should relate to you, at length and in order, the things which happened to me during my journey to Rome in the time of Trajan, —notwithstanding the pain which it must cost me to throw myself back once more into many of the feelings of that eventful time, —I cannot refuse to comply with a request, the motive of which, I doubt not, is as laudable as its expression is earnest. I am now an old man, and have lived for threescore years in a remote province of an empire, happy, for the most part, in the protection of enlightened, just, and benevolent princes ; yet I remember, far more accurately than things which occurred only a few months ago, the minutest particulars of what I saw and heard while I sojourned—a young man, and more than half a stranger—among the luxuries and cruelties of the capital of the world, as yet very imperfectly recovered from the effects of the flagitious tyranny of the last of the Flavii. You will not wonder, after you shall have heard my story, that I should be able to speak so distinctly about circumstances so remote ; for none of you, even now, my young friends, need to be informed, that out of some of those circumstances the main threads of my earthly destiny were evolved. To that period I refer the commencement of a connection, which long formed the principal felicity of my domestic life ; and if, in my conduct through the years either of business or of repose, I have exemplified any principles worthy of your adoption or imitation, for this also my gratitude is due to

the not lightly purchased experience of the same now distant period.

My father, as you all have heard, had come with his legion into this island, and married a lady of British blood, some years before the first arrival of the great Agricola.

In the wars of that illustrious commander, during the reigns of Vespasian and Titus, he had the good fortune to find many opportunities of distinguishing himself; but when his general was recalled to the capital by the mean jealousy of Domitian he retired from public life, and determined to spend the remainder of his days in peace, on the lands which belonged to him (chiefly in right of his wife) here in Britain. He laid the foundations of the house in which I have now the pleasure of receiving you; and here, in the cultivation of his fields and in the superintendence of my education, he found abundant employment for the energies of a very active, though by no means an ambitious mind. Early in the reign of Trajan, he died, after being confined to his apartment for a few days by an illness which neither my mother nor myself considered as seriously dangerous, till the very evening of its termination. Our grief knew at first no bounds; and well might it be so, for never did either Roman or British dwelling lament the departure of a more generous, kind, and affectionate master. My mother, who, in wedding him, had offended the greater part of her own kindred, now that he was gone, had no tie to bind her affections to the earth, excepting myself, her only child, who had scarcely yet entered the threshold of manhood. In my society, therefore, her only hope of human comfort resided; while I, on my part, loved her with strong and undivided filial love, of which (however that circumstance may be counterbalanced by other advantages) I have never seen any examples among sons educated at a distance from the unwearied eye of parental affection.

We were not rich—we had enough for all our wants; and the melancholy into which my mother gradually declined was not of a nature so severe as to prevent us from spending many hours of innocent happiness beneath the shade of these then younger and greener elms. I look back, even now, with a sad and sorrowful tenderness to the memory of that first summer and more cheerful

winter, which we passed together on this spot after the death of my father. I cannot pretend to regret the accident which immediately afterward separated me from the most gentle of mothers—Alas! never to see her more upon the earth. Yet, how deeply was the happiness of my returning hour stained and imbittered by that sorrowful privation! There was a void in my heart, which it was long before even the fulness of conjugal devotion could entirely fill up and satisfy. In losing her, I had lost the last and strongest link that connected my contemplation of the present with my memory of the past. My early years of infancy and boyhood now existed for nobody but myself; and I could scarcely bear to look back upon them, now that those eyes were closed for ever in whose watchful light all their safety and almost all their happiness had consisted. But I was still young, and had bright hopes before me, that ere long withdrew my attention from the dark places of recollection. It is the common rule of nature, that our parents should precede us to the grave; and it is also her rule, that our grief for them should not be of such power as to prevent us from entering, after they are gone, into a zealous participation both of the business and the pleasures of life. Yet, in all well-regulated spirits, the influence of that necessary and irremediable deprivation, however time may soothe and soften it, has a deep and an enduring resting-place. In the midst of the noisiest, busiest hours of after-life, the memory of that buried tenderness rises up ever and anon to remind us of the instability of all human things, and wins rather than warns us to a deliberate contemplation of futurity. Such is the gentle and abiding effect of that, at first sight, grievous and altogether intolerable affliction. Now, indeed, that every day brings to me some new testimonial of the near approach of my own dissolution, I have begun to regard all these things with another eye, and to find, in the contemplation of my reunion with the dear friends I have lost, a far more than sufficient consolation for the inconvenience occasioned to me by reason of their temporary absence. But it must yet be long ere the course of nature shall bring this last source of happiness near to your eyes, and teach you, as I have of late been taught, how near to each other at times

may be found not only the physical effects but the proximate causes of pleasure and of pain.

One evening towards the end of the winter following the death of my father, I was sitting with my mother in the small room where we breakfasted this morning, when letters were brought to me by a messenger from Venta, which immediately engaged the most anxious consideration of us both. They were all from Rome, and written, for the most part, by members of my father's family resident there, none of whom either my mother or myself had ever seen. It was mentioned in all of them, but most fully and distinctly in that of Caius Licinius, the lawyer (who was near of kin to our house), that by the death of a certain old patrician, Cneius Valerius by name, I had become legally entitled to a very considerable fortune, to claim and take possession of which demanded my immediate presence in the metropolis. My rights, said this jurist, were indeed called in question by another branch of the family, but were I on the spot, his professional exertions, he had no doubt, would be able to gain for me a complete, if not an easy victory. He hinted, at the same time, that whatever private interest he or any of his friends could command should be heartily at my service, for the sake of my father and of my name.

My mother and I endeavoured as well as we could to understand the nature of the case; but the authority of Licinius, of whose character we had always heard great commendation, was sufficient of itself alone to determine us in the end. After ruminating for a long while in silence, my dear mother at last said to me, "Yes, Caius, we must part for a season. You owe it to these kind friends, no less than to your father's memory and your own interest, to make a fair attempt for the recovery of this disputed inheritance. You are young, and have seen no cities, except Venta,* which your father used to call a village; but I trust to your good heart, and your love for me, that if you succeed you will immediately come back to enjoy your wealth here within sight of your mother, and at a distance from those sudden changes to which the great city is from time to time subjected. Take care

* *i. e.* Venta Belgarum—Winchester.

that you abide in Rome no longer than is absolutely necessary, for fearful reports have reached us of the increasing wickedness of its inhabitants. Despatch your business as speedily as the circumstances may permit, and do not grudge any expense which may enable you more quickly to see the end of it. To-morrow and next day must be spent in preparing you necessaries for so long a journey ; but on the third day I wish you to depart, for there is nothing more pernicious than delay in matters of importance ; and besides, my son, the sooner you go the sooner may I look for your return. And now, since I know you are to depart, my dear Caius, it would be but a trifling consolation for me to keep you a few days more lingering here. You will take the faithful Boto with you, and all will go well ; for the gods will have pity on a widow, and the son of a widow."

CHAPTER II.

I WENT to bed with a heart unequally divided between grief and joy. The idea of parting for such a length of time from my dear parent, whose whole happiness I knew was centred in myself, could not but be a painful one ; and this, I think, was uppermost within me while I was undressing, and even for a few minutes after I had laid my head upon my pillow. The natural thirst for novelty, however, for which so large a fund of gratification was now held up to my fancy, did not long suffer these melancholy thoughts to predominate. The love of travel had never before been excited in my bosom ; but now that I knew I was so soon to embark for Italy, the delights which I might there hope to experience came crowding and kindling upon my imagination. The dark and pine-clad banks of my native Anton, said I, shall now be exchanged for that golden-waved Tiber, of which so many illustrious poets have sung—whose course is continually bearing the treasures of all nations to the common centre of earth---the imperial city ; or conveying from thence

to the remotest and most barbarous regions, the dictates of the most refined and exalted people, whose hands have ever been invested with the dominion of the world. Instead of moving here among the ill-cemented and motley fabric of an insulated colony, and seeing only the sullen submission of barbarians, on the one hand, or the paltry vanity of provincial deputies on the other, I shall tread the same ground with the rulers of the earth, and wear, among native Romans, the gown of my ancestors—I shall behold the Forum, which has heard the eloquence of Cicero and Hortensius—I shall ascend to the Capitol, where Cæsar triumphed—I shall wander in the luxurious gardens of Sallust, or breathe the fresh air in the fields of Cato—I shall gaze upon the antique majesty of temples and palaces, and open my eyes on all that art and nature have been able to heap together through eight long centuries, for the ornament of the chosen seat of wisdom and valour. It was thus that one splendid vision chased another across my fancy, till I fell asleep in a bewilderment of wonder and admiration—to dream of nothing but pomps I had never witnessed, and pleasures I had never betaken.

I awoke next morning rather earlier than usual, my spirits I suppose having been too much excited to admit of a longer repose. I came down-stairs in a strange mood; but I believe my demeanour might be one of almost perfect indifference; for, to say truth, the melancholy idea of leaving home and parting with my mother on the one side, and the gay inspiring prospect of visiting Rome on the other, had neutralized each other within me; at least in so far as was necessary for producing an apparent absence of all keen emotion on my countenance. I could not help starting, however, when, on coming into the old hall in the back part of the house yonder, I found my mother already busily engaged with her maidens in preparing my wardrobe for the purposed journey. She was giving directions to one of them in a distinct voice when I entered; but she broke off suddenly when she saw me, and I could observe that her eyes looked red and heavy. Shortly after, she made an excuse to go into an inner apartment, and then one of the more ancient females said to me, ceasing from her occupation, "Oh yes, Caius; it is one thing to have the appearance of being

occupied among such matters, and another to have one's heart really in them. To my thinking, if your mother had not slept little, she would not have been so early astir, touching these new garments of yours. But the gods grant you a fair voyage, and may you come soon back, such as you now are, to your mother : for without you, her life will be a burden to her ; and if you returned from the great city full of such airs as we see in some of those young centurions and the like, none of us would be able to love you as we now do ; so that you would find a house not filled with friends (as you will now leave it), but with utter hirelings."

While we were yet speaking, Boto entered the apartment, having been already warned by my mother concerning the journey on which he had been selected to accompany me. It was not certainly on account of his skill in the tongue of Rome that Boto had been chosen for this duty ; for although he had lived all his days in the vicinity of the Roman colonists at Venta, there was scarcely a single person within the bounds of the British Belgæ that spoke worse Latin than poor Boto. He was, nevertheless, a man of strong natural sagacity, possessing a shrewdness of discernment, concerning whatever things had fallen under his customary observation, such as I have seen excelled in few people of any station. It is true, that he was one of those who lean more to the evil than the good opinion concerning both the characters of mankind and the transactions of the world. But, although this defect had not escaped the observation of my mother, we may suppose that she thought a turn of that sort might be culpable in a British farm-yard, and yet highly advantageous for a young stranger about to visit, for the first time, the great city—which was, and is, the centre of attraction to all the vices, as well as to all the wealth of the universe.

Howbeit, the man entered with a countenance firm and cheerful, in which no one could discover any symptom either of diffidence respecting his own qualifications for this new office, or of regret at being separated from these maidens (the truth is, few of them were either very young or pretty), in whose company so many years of gentle

servitude had already glided equably and comfortably over his sun-burnt countenance and thickly matted head of yellow bristles. He held in his left hand a large broad-brimmed petasus of my father's, which he was polishing with his dexter, that it might assume a more respectable appearance on the meditated expedition; over his shoulder hung an old tunic of dark-coloured cloth, a few rents in whose texture he was desirous of having sewed up by the nimble fingers of some of the damsels. His huge boots already flapped about his ankles. In short, it was visible to all present that the mind of the man was altogether engrossed with the great business of his departure from a soil which, it may be, had, according to his opinion, already too long engrossed the whole of his accomplishments. The carelessness and indifference stamped upon his visage had in them, at first glance, something repulsive to my feelings; but nothing is more effective, in situations of novelty, than the influence of a merry face; and the high animal spirits depicted on the coarse features of Boto were not long in exciting again within me a full portion of that juvenile buoyancy which had been somewhat lowered by my observation of my dear mother's sorrowful deportment.

My mother, coming in soon after, partook, I think, in some measure of the general hilarity which had already been diffused over us all by the mirthful demeanour of the zealous Boto. From time to time, indeed, her countenance fell, and the tremours of her voice indicated how great was the internal conflict of her feelings. The work of the maidens, however, went on unweariedly, and the sounds of the wheel and spindle echoed all day long through the apartment. I myself, glad to escape now and then from the sadness of her looks and the din of their preparations, went forth into my fields, pretending that I had certain necessary directions to give touching the management of the farm affairs previous to so long an absence. But Boto continually threw himself in my way, and discoursing loudly and triumphantly, in his own coarse and jocular manner, concerning the fine sights we were about to see, I found myself constrained not merely to tolerate, but to participate in the liveliness of his mood.

The airs of superiority he assumed in talking to such of the husbandmen as we met with gave them, indeed, visible dissatisfaction, but amused me more than I chose to admit by word or gesture. It was reported to me, that in the evening he invited several of these rustics to drink with him in one of the out-houses, where his exultation knew no limits. He was going to Rome, he said ; for his young master very well knew he could never get on in such a journey without the helping eye and hand of Boto ; and he had a brother in Italy already (he had gone over with a certain illustrious Roman some ten years before), and from him (for he had no doubt he would meet with him as soon as our arrival should be known) he would doubtless receive all requisite information concerning the doings of the great city. The usefulness which, he doubted not, I should be constrained to acknowledge in his manifold qualifications, would, without all question, entitle him to some signal reward—perhaps nothing less than manumission on his return. “In that case, my jolly lads,” cried the fervent Boto, “I shall come back with a whiter tunic among you ; but, believe me, I shall still be the same man I leave you notwithstanding—we shall have a merry cup of mead at our meeting, and I shall tell you all I have seen of the fine things of Rome, and the wickedness of her inhabitants ; for, if we may judge from what we see among these new legionaries, one will have need to keep all one’s eyes about one in the midst of the gowned gentry.”

The two days passed more quickly than any I ever remember to have spent amid this strange mixture of mirth, and sorrow, and noisy preparation. I expected a very melancholy supper with my mother, on the evening of the second ; but, luckily for us both, perhaps, a few of our neighbours, who had heard the news of my approaching departure, came in to pay their respects, and offer their good wishes ; so that the night being far spent ere they went away, we took to our respective chambers without having any opportunity of indulging in needless lamentations together. I arose with a sad heart in the morning, and found breakfast already waiting, my mother having been up a full hour before me. She kissed me

with silent tears when the meal was concluded ; and our horses being already at the gate, Boto and I took leave of them all, and, pushing on, were glad when the winding of the road shut us from the view of the group that remained stationary at the porch of this dwelling. We could not forbear, however, from pausing for a moment when we had reached the height of yonder acclivity. Where that single tall naked pine now stands buffeted by the wind, then grew a thick grove, of which that stately relic alone survives. It was there that I turned round to gaze once more on the quiet verdure of these paternal fields, and our small pastoral stream glistening here and there beneath the shady covert of its margin. Boto turned himself with me, and, in spite of all the glee he had been manifesting in prospect of our journey, I could perceive, from the clouded eye of the peasant, that he too, when it had come to the point, was leaving, not without a struggle, the scene of all the happy years he had yet spent upon the earth. He said nothing, but I saw that his heart was full, and I interpreted the caresses he lavished from time to time on his mule, as so many symbols of the relenting tenderness with which he now regarded all he had left behind him. I, for my part, pushed my horse into a hard trot, being willing to lose something of my heaviness of spirit in the spring of animal exertion. They that knew us saluted us kindly and cheerily as we passed them on the way ; and the bustle of the seaport,* which we reached just as night was setting in, soon swallowed up or discomposed all our attention.

I had at first intended to cross over to Gaul, and traversing that province, enter Italy, either by the route of the Alps, in case we could procure convenient guides and companions, or by some vessel sailing from Marseilles to Forum Julii to Ostium. But the advice of one of my neighbours, who had himself been a great traveller, made me alter this plan, and resolve rather to commit myself to the care of a certain captain, who, as he said, was just about to sail for Italy by the way of the Pillars of Hercules, in a vessel laden with tin from the mines of

* Probably Clausentum, which is supposed to be the same with our Southampton ; or perhaps the ancient Port Peris—i. e. Portchester.

Britain. We found this man, with all his passengers, already prepared for the voyage ; and it was intimated to us that we should certainly set sail at an early hour in the morning.

CHAPTER III.

THE cries of the mariners arranging the tackle of their ship, and the blowing of the pilot's trumpet at the extremity of the pier, were the first sounds that met our ears in the morning. In a few minutes, we, and all our baggage, were safe on board. The anchor was uplifted, and the sail hoisted, with the usual libations and other ceremonies. In a word, such was the hurry in which every thing was done, that I scarcely persuaded myself I was thoroughly awake, till, rubbing my eyes, I perceived the white cliffs already lessening behind us. The first throbs of nausea soon afterward began to agitate my stomach, and I was ere long in too lamentable a condition to enjoy even the grotesque and rueful grimaces by which the visage of Boto signified his unwilling submission to the same inexorable enemy.

It were useless for me to detail to you at length the objects which met our eyes, during a voyage which is every day performed by so many of your acquaintance, and the particulars of which therefore, (I doubt not), have been already abundantly explained to you all. For the first three or four days, indeed, I was so heavily afflicted with this malady, occasioned by the motion of the vessel, that I could bestow but little attention on any external object ; my eyes were so confused and dazzled, that I saw nothing beyond the corner of the deck, on which, for the sake of open air, I had caused my carpets to be laid ; and a few ejaculations to Castor and Pollux were all the articulate sounds that I uttered. By degrees, however, the weight of my depression began to be somewhat alleviated ; and at intervals, more particularly during the night-

watches, if I was not altogether in possession of myself, I was at least well enough to enjoy a sort of giddy and half-drunken delight in watching the dark billows as they rose and retreated from the beak of the ship; the continual dash and roar with which they heaved and writhed, like some innumerable rout of tormented and infuriated monsters; the angry groan with which they received the plunging keel; and the sullen mutterings of disappointed wrath with which their broken strength was afterward heard growling behind the high poop on which I reclined. There were moments also in which the comical behaviour of Boto, under this new species of calamity, could furnish me, as it had already done the more hardy and experienced of my fellow-voyagers, with a great store of mirth. From time to time, indeed, his stomach, naturally of a brazen construction, recovered for a few minutes possession of its usual energies, which were then sufficiently displayed in the enormous messes of salt provisions and biscuit which the hungry valetudinarian devoured in our presence. At these moments, also, the simplicity and quaintness of his remarks failed not to diffuse laughter among all that stood within reach of his voice. For example. Hearing some passenger remark that there was much pleasure in ploughing the deep, he forthwith signified his desire to know in what respects a ship resembled a plough. Whereupon the stranger, laughing, conducted the trembling rustic to the foaming prow, and bade him look down and observe how it cut and disparted the waters like a ploughshare. But Boto then asked, where were the oxen? and he was answered, that the winds were the oxen, and that the ropes and tackling were in place of the reins and traces; an explanation which not a little amazed him. He said, however, after a brief pause, that the sea appeared to him to be already so much furrowed with waves, that, had he been the Greek Jason, he would never have thought of bestowing any additional labour upon it. For which last observation the tawny Boto was commended, as not without ingenuity.

Shortly afterward, being taken with another fit of the nausea (whose unwelcome return had probably been accelerated by the copiousness of his luncheon), poor

Boto lay down at all his length upon the deck, listless and inanimate, rolling his large eyes about heavily and slowly, like some dying fish; and by his lugubrious wailings and contortions exciting the derision of the bystanders, whom he had before more cheaply amused by the simple manner in which he expressed his wonder concerning maritime objects. Near him, upon the deck, sat a certain captain of the Prætorian Bands, one of our fellow-passengers, who, more than any other of those that were in the ship with us, displayed a florid complexion and cheerful eye, unalterable by the fluctuation of the waters. This man had served in all the wars of Agricola, and accompanied that great general even in his perilous circumnavigation of the islands which lie scattered in the stormy ocean to the north of Britain. He had also gone back to Rome with his commander, not, like him, to extenuate imperial jealousy by the affectation of indolence, but to seek for new occupation on some other disturbed frontier of the empire. In Syria and Cappadocia he had spent some years; after which, he had attended the emperor himself through the territories of Mæsia and Illyricum, and all those countries he traversed, and retraversed, during that shameful contest in which so many Roman eagles were made the prey of barbarous enemies, and which terminated at last in that cowardly treaty, by which Domitian granted a kingly diadem to Decebalus, and condescended to place the Roman Senate among the tributaries of a Dacian savage. Our friend had also strutted his part in that gorgeous triumph, or rather succession of triumphs, by which the defeated and disgraced prince, on his return from Dacia, mocked the eyes and ears of the incredulous and indignant Romans. In a word, he had partaken in all kinds of fortune, good and evil, and preserved his rubicundity and equanimity unaltered in them all. Having attained to a situation of comparative ease in the Prætorian Bands, he had now been visiting Britain on a special message from the new emperor, and was returning in the hope that no future accident of fortune, or princely caprice, would ever again make it necessary for him to quit the sports, and shows, and festivities of the capital.

Being ignorant who Boto was, this good-natured man sat down beside the suffering and complaining peasant, endeavouring to withdraw his attention from the pangs of his sea-sickness, by pointing out the different boats which came in view as we held on from the Gobæan rocks,* keeping close to the shore as we went, in order to shun, as well as we could, the dashing and rolling fury of the Aquitanic Ocean.† “Behold these fishing-vessels,” he would cry, “which have undoubtedly been upon the coast of Rutupia‡ for oysters, or it may be about the mouth of yonder Ligoris§ for turbot, and are now stretching all their canvass to get home with their booty to imperial Italy. Smooth be your winds and fair your passage, oh rare fish!” To which the downcast Boto would reply, “Lavish not, oh master, your good wishes upon the mute fish, which have been accustomed to be tossed about during the whole of their lives; but reserve them rather for me (unhappy), who am thus tormented in an unnatural and intolerable manner;” or perhaps, “Speak not, I beseech you, of oysters, or of turbot, or of any other eatable, for I believe I shall never again feel hungry, so grievously are all my internal parts discomposed and tormented. Oh that I had never left my native fields, and bartered the repose of my whole body for the vain hope of gratification to my inquisitive eyes!”

By degrees, however, custom reconciled all of us to the motion of the bark, and the weather being calm during the greater part of the voyage, I enjoyed at my leisure the beauties both of the sea and of the shores along which we glided. From time to time, we put in for water and other necessaries, to various seaports of the Spanish Peninsula; but our stay was never so long at any place as to admit of us losing sight of our vessel. Our chief delight, indeed, consisted in the softness and amenity of the moonlight nights we spent in sailing along the coasts of Mauritania—now the dark mountains of the family of Atlas throwing their shadows far into the sea, and anon its margin glittering with the white towers of Siga, or Gilba, or Cartenna, or some other of the rich

* Brest. † Bay of Biscay. ‡ Richborough, in Kent. § The Loire.

cities of that old Carthaginian region. On such nights it was the custom of all the passengers to be congregated together upon the deck, where the silent pleasures of contemplation were, from time to time, interrupted by some merry song chanted in chorus by the mariners, or perhaps some wild barbarian ditty, consecrated by the zeal of Boto to the honour of some ancient indigenous hero of the north. Nor did our jovial Prætorian disdain to contribute his share to the general amusement of the assembly; it is true, he had only one stave, but, to make amends for this, he was never weary of singing it. It was a boisterous war-song, composed, I doubt not, by some light-hearted young spearman, which our centurion had probably learned by heart, without any regular exertion, from hearing it sung around many a British and Dacian watch-fire. He assumed, in singing it, the very air and aspect of a common legionary, and, indeed, without doing so, he would not perhaps have chosen to give utterance to words in which so large a share of the ordinary soldier-like license was imbodyed. It was whispered to us, that Domitian himself had more than once heard him sing it with satisfaction, although, assuredly, it contained many expressions by which the imperial vanity could scarcely have been flattered. But there is no reason to doubt that Domitian, like other tyrants, had his hours of good-natured relaxation. The cord even of self-love will not always endure to be held upon the stretch.

With stories of warlike achievements and marine peril, with songs and music of the lute, and, above all, with copious draughts of generous wine (whereof, by the centurion's providence, the vessel contained good store), we contrived to pass the time in a very cheerful manner, till we reached the Lilybæan promontory. We tarried there two days to refit some part of our rigging, and then stretched boldly across the lower sea, towards the mouth of the Tiber. We were becalmed, however, for a whole day and night, after we had come within sight of the Pharos of Ostium, where, but for the small boats that came out to us with fresh fish and fruit, we should have had some difficulty in preserving our patience; for, by this time, our stock of wine was run to the last cup, and

nothing remained to be eat but some hard and mouldy biscuit, which, I believe, had survived two voyages between Italy and Britain. During this unwelcome period of delay, the kind Prætorian endeavoured to give me as much information as he could about the steps necessary to be pursued by me on my arrival in the city. But, to say truth, his experience had lain chiefly among martial expeditions and jovial recreations, so that I could easily perceive he was no great master of the rules of civil life. From him, however, I was glad to find that the reputation of Licinius was really as great at Rome as it had been represented to us in our province; and I could observe, kind as he had been during the whole voyage, that he treated me with a yet greater measure of attention after he was informed of my relationship to that celebrated jurist.

The vessel lay quite steady and unmoved upon the breast of the sea; but, notwithstanding, there were few on board that retired to rest during the last night of our voyage, so great was the excitement of our minds in the prospect of soon touching the soil of Italy. In me, above all, who had never before even gazed upon those illustrious shores, imagination and curiosity worked so powerfully, that, had I retired to my sleeping-place, I am sure I could not once have closed mine eyelids. We sat, therefore, all together towards the prow of the ship, watching the red lustre shed from the Pharos, which mingled on the glassy waves with the softer and more tremulous radiance of the stars. Early in the morning, a light breeze sprung up from the west, and with joyful acclamations the sails were once again uplifted. The number of mariners on board was insufficient for impelling the heavily laden vessel altogether by the force of oars, but now they did not refuse to assist the favouring breeze with strenuous and lively exertion. The Prætorian captain, Sabinus, cheered and incited them by his merry voice, and even the passengers were not loath to assist them in this labour. My slave, among the rest, joined in the toil; but his awkwardness soon relieved him from his seat on the bench—a disgrace which, without

question, he would have shared with his master, had I been equally officious.

In a word, the green waves were shorn rapidly asunder by our keel; and ere long, we could trace with exactness, the form and shape of those enormous structures by which the munificence of Augustus had guarded and adorned that great avenue of nations to the imperial city. Those huge mountains of solid marble projected on either side into the open deep, between which the heavy billows of Tiber could be seen forcing their way into the bosom of ocean—but still preserving, for a space, their own distinctness of colour—surpassed every notion I had ever been able to form of the extent to which human art may carry its rivalry of nature. Their square and immoveable masses were garnished here and there with towers and battlements, on which the Prætorian pointed out to me the frame-work of those terrible catapults, and other enormous engines of Roman warfare, of which no specimens have ever been seen by us in Britain. As we drew nearer, we could distinguish the faces of the innumerable crowds collected on the mole to receive us, and the other vessels whose approach had been deferred overnight by the supervening calm. At length we crossed the bar, and our hawsers were affixed in safety to the rings of the pier.

CHAPTER IV.

No sooner had we stepped upon the shore, than we were surrounded by a great throng of hard-favoured persons, who pulled us by the cloak, with innumerable interrogations and offers of service. Among these, the varieties of form, complexion, and accent were such, that we could not regard them without especial wonder; for it appeared as if every tribe and language under heaven had sent some representative to this, the great seaport of Rome. The fair hair and blue eye of the Gaul or German might

here be seen, close by the tawny skin of the Numidian or Getulian slave, or the shining blackness of the Ethiopian visage. The Greek merchant was ready, with his Thracian bondsmen carrying his glittering wares upon his back—the usurer was there, with his arms folded closely in his mantle—nor was the Chaldean or Assyrian soothsayer a-wanting with his air of abstraction and his flowing beard.

Boto, as if alarmed with the prevailing bustle, and fearful lest some untoward accident should separate him from me, kept close behind me, grasping my gown, I rather think, with his brawny hand. But our good friend Sabinus did not long leave us in this perplexity; for, having hastily engaged the master of a small barge, whom he found there, to carry him to Rome, he insisted that I and my attendant should partake of this easy method of conveyance along with him. Having intrusted this man, therefore, with the care of all our baggage, and appointed the time at which we should be ready to depart with him, we followed the guidance of the Prætorian into a neighbouring tavern; for he asserted it would be absurd to leave Ostium without having first regaled ourselves with a good breakfast, after the long abstinence (so it pleased him to speak) of our voyage. Nor in truth did we require much persuasion; for the smell of some new loaves, which a certain lad was carrying on his head in a basket, had already affected us with a strong desire to banish from our palates the flavour of the mouldy ship-biscuit. With bread, then, hot out of the oven,—with bunches of golden grapes on which the morning dew had not yet had time to dry,—and milk, warm and foaming from the cow, we feasted in a primeval, indeed, but nevertheless in a luxurious manner. One flask of rich Falernian we exhausted on the spot; but reserved several others to be consumed during our ascent of the Tiber. The very firmness of the ground beneath the foot is, after a long sea-voyage, sufficient to give hilarity to the traveller; and there is exquisite delight in simply walking up and down, and stretching forth legs and arms with the security of land motion. In this gratification Boto, above all others, abundantly indulged himself; insomuch, that the centu-

tion and I, while we were under the hands of the barber, could not help laughing at the uncouthness and extravagance of his rustic agility, displayed in the inn court, of which the window of our apartment commanded a prospect. The barber was willing to clip our hair, as well as to shave our beards, but Sabinus prevented me from yielding to this exertion of his skill by a derisive gesture; and told me afterward, that had I submitted to such an operation at Ostium, I should probably have been unfit to appear in public at Rome for a fortnight; for, said he, the leaders of the fashion change the style of their hair-dressing continually, and it would be thought extremely barbarous to enter the theatre or the baths, or to be seen at any spectacle, without having taken care to follow their example in all such particulars.

Shaved, therefore, but not clipped, we removed, as soon as our business at Ostium was ended, to that part of the river where our boat waited for us; Boto following at our heels, in company with a freedman belonging to Sabinus, and bearing in a basket our store of Falernian for this lesser voyage. We found the vessel small but convenient, furnished with a beautiful awning, under which cushions and carpets were already stretched out for our repose. The oars were soon in motion, and we began to emerge from among the forest of masts with a rapidity which astonished me; for the multitude of vessels of all sizes, continually crossing and re-crossing us, was so great, that at first I expected every moment some dangerous accident might occur. The skill, however, of the steersman, and the alacrity with which the boatmen shipped their oars on either side when the signal was given from the helm, were such, that we soon perceived there was no peril in our circumstances; insomuch, that ere long I found myself stretched out at full length, in an attitude of perfect unconcern, occupied with nothing but the view on the shores of the river; for from these even the remarks of my merry companion had no power to draw me away. By degrees, indeed, even these failed altogether to keep alive my attention—the sleeplessness of the preceding night, and the abundance of our recent repast, conspiring to lull me into a gentle doze, which continued for I know

not what space. I awoke greatly refreshed, and found we had already made considerable progress; for the continual succession of stately edifices, each surpassing the other in splendour, on the banks of the stream, failed not to indicate the greater vicinity of the metropolis. The dark green of the venerable groves, amid which the buildings were for the most part imbosomed, and the livelier beauties of the parterres which here and there intervened between these and the river, afforded a soft and refreshing delight to my eyes, which had so long been fatigued with the uniform flash and dazzle of the Mediterranean waves, and the roughness of the sea-beaten precipices. The minute and elaborate cultivation everywhere visible—the smoothness of the shorn turf on the margin—the graceful drooping foliage of the ancient planes and alders—but, above all, the sublimity of the porticoes and arcades, and the universal air of established and inviolable elegance which pervaded the whole region, kept my mind in one continual elevation of pleasurable wonder. Here and there a gentle winding of the stream conducted us through some deep and massy shade of oaks, and elms, and sycamores; whose branches, stretching far out from either side, diffused a sombre and melancholy blackness almost entirely over the face of Tiber. Loitering carelessly, or couched supinely, beneath some of these hoary branches, we could see, from time to time, the figure of some stately Roman, or white-robed lady, with her favourite scroll of parchment in her hand. The cool and glassy rippling of the water produced a humming music of stillness in the air, which nothing disturbed, save only the regular dash of the oars, and, now and then, the deep and strenuous voice of our cautious helmsman. Anon would ensue some glimpse of the opening champaign, descending with all its wealth of golden sheaves to the very brink of the river—or, perhaps, the lively courts of a farmyard stretching along the margin of some tributary streamlet—or some long expanse of level meadow, with herds of snow-white heifers. I could not gaze upon the rich and splendid scene without reverting, with a strange mixture of emotions, to the image of this my native land; its wild forests, shaggy with brushwood and un-

profitable coppice, through which of old the enormous wild deer stalked undisturbed, except by the adder of the grass, or the obscene fly of the thicket; its little patches of corn and meadow, laboriously rescued from the domain of the wild beast, and rudely fortified against his continual incursions;—the scattered hamlets of this our Brigian valley,* and my own humble villa—then far humbler than it is now. At one moment—how strange, said I to myself, that I, born of a Roman father, and allied to some of the greatest names of Rome, should be only now for the first time surveying the near effects of Roman magnificence and refinement! It is time, indeed, that my eyes should be taught to look on other objects than those to which they have hitherto been accustomed. At others, I could not check altogether some rising reflections of a more melancholy nature. Alas! said I to myself, with a distrustful shaking of the head—these gorgeous prospects are indeed the results and the symbols of ancient cultivation—and these beautiful mansions are inhabited by refined and noble dwellers. But who shall say what measure of true happiness is enjoyed by those that I see here, sauntering though they be, even as the poets have feigned the careless demeanour of their Elysium? Who shall say, but a few months ago, how many of these I behold would gladly have escaped from the near arm of imperial tyranny, and the mutual suspicions of oppressed and injured men, into some wild ravine of Britain, to lay down their head every night in safety, and awaken to contend with no cunning but that of the fox—no ferocity but that of the boar.

When the heat of the sun was greatest, we pushed our bark into a little creek, where the boatmen rested themselves for a space from their labours; and we, along with the master, made an end of the provisions we had brought along with us. Having halted as long as we deemed expedient, we resumed our seats on the vessel; but the fervour of the atmosphere being much diminished, our canopy was no longer upheld. By degrees the shades of

* The village of Broughton, on the road from Winchester to Salisbury, is supposed to mark the site of the Roman *Brigæ*. It stands not far from the river Test, anciently called the Anton, or Entum.

evening began to spread themselves over the east ; but we did not see the sun for a long time previous to his setting, by reason of the hugeness of the trees, and their impervious foliage. Trees, and temples, and gardens, and meadows, and towns, and villages, were, ere long, lost in one uniform sobriety of twilight ; and it was already quite dark, when the centurion, pointing to the left bank, said, " Behold these gigantic willows, which dip their long boughs down into the water—these are the gardens of Cæsar—beyond, is the Portian Gate, and the street of the Rural Lares. In a few moments we shall see the lights of the Sublician Bridge, and be in the city."

At these words I started up, and gazing forward, could already penetrate through the mists of evening into the busy glare of a thousand streets and lanes, opening upon the river. The old city wall, on the left side, was visible ; where, after having swept round the region towards the Vatican and Janicular Hills, it brings the last of its turrets close down to the Tiber, over-against the great dock-yards by the Field of Brutus.

Its shadow lay in frowning darkness far out upon the stream, and we glided for some minutes in silence beneath the influence of the venerable rampart. Through a forest of triremes, galleys, and all sorts of craft, we then shot on to the bridge—beneath the centre arch of which our steersman conducted us. Beyond, such was the hum of people on the quays, and such the starlike profusion of lights reflected in the water, that we doubted not we had already reached the chief seat of the bustle of Rome. On, however, we still held our course, till the huge bulk of the theatre of Marcellus rose like a mountain on our right. It was there that we ran our bark in to the shore, not far from the little bridge—the third as you ascend the river—which conducts to the island and the temple of Æsculapius. While our friend was settling matters with the master, and the boatmen were bringing out our baggage, I stood for a little space by myself in silence, on the elevated quay. Below me lay the bark, in which Boto and the centurion were still engaged. Here am I alone, I might almost say to myself, in the greatest city of the world—not one of whose inhabitants I have ever, so far

as I know, conversed with. Up and down, wherever my eye fell, it rested on some bright spot in the river, answering to some light in bark or edifice, kindled by hands and for purposes to which I was equally a stranger. Here a long tier of reflected radiance bespoke, it may be, the vicinity of some splendid portico—of palace, or temple, or bath, or theatre; there a broad and steady blaze of burning red indicated the abode of artisans, resolved, as it seemed, on carrying their toil into the bosom of the night. Between, some small single speck of tinier lustre betrayed, perhaps, the lamp of the solitary student, or the sober, social hour of some peaceful family, assembled around the hearth of their own modest lares. Behold me then, said I, in the capital of the globe. Alas! were I to be swallowed up this moment in the waves of Tiber, not one of all these lights would be dimmed by reason of my calamity.

After my companions had joined me, the dwelling of Licinius was the first thing I inquired after; and being informed that it was at no great distance, the friendly Sabinus insisted upon escorting me thither in safety, before he repaired to his own abode. We walked, therefore, along two or three proud streets, which brought us near to the Pantheon of Agrippa, and there the house of my kinsman was easily pointed out to us by some of the passers-by. Its porch was decorated with recent palm-branches, which, as the centurion asserted, must have been placed there by the joyful hands of some fortunate client, whose cause had that day been pleaded and won by the orator. Here having taken leave of this kind person, and having promised to visit him ere many days should elapse, I and my faithful Boto at length arrested our steps. The gate was thrown open as soon as we knocked; and, having left my attendant among the crowd of slaves in the vestibule, I was speedily conducted into the presence of my kinsman, who received me in a polite and, at the same time, affectionate manner.

I found him in a small upper chamber, lighted by a single silver lamp, suspended from the roof, enjoying, as it appeared, repose and relaxation after the exertions which he had been making during the anterior part of the day.

He was reclining at table when I entered ; and although supper was long over, some fruits and other trifling things still remained on the board. At table with him there was no one present, excepting a certain rhetorician or philosopher, whom he introduced to me as the superintendent of his son's education, and the young Sextus himself, a modest and ingenuous youth, who sat at the lower extremity of his father's couch. He was indeed a very mild and amiable young man, and I had more pleasure, after a space, in surveying his aspect than the more marked lineaments of the other two. At first, however, nothing riveted my attention so much as the fiery and energetic physiognomy of the pleader himself. The forepart of his head was already quite bald, although the darkness of the short curls behind testified that age was not the cause of this deformity. His eyes were black and rapid, and his eyebrows vibrated upwards and downwards in a remarkable manner, not only when he spoke, but even when he was silent ; indicating, as it appeared by their transitions, every new train of thought and imagination within his mind. His style of conversation was quick and fervid, and his gestures vehement as he spoke ; it being apparent, that from restlessness and vanity of disposition, he was continually exercising a needless measure of mental activity and anxiety. Not satisfied with his own more than sufficient richness of ideas, no thought could be expressed by any other person which he did not immediately seize for his own, and explain, even to him by whom it had been first suggested, with much fluency and earnestness of illustration. On the other hand, the hired philosopher, who wore a long beard reaching down even unto his girdle, preserved in all things an uncommon demureness of manner, restraining every salient movement of his own mind, and watching, with the gravity of a Numa, the glancing eyes and sharp features of his patron. A roll of yellow parchment graced the left hand of this dealer in wisdom, while the other was employed in selecting from the table such articles as were most agreeable to his palate. Licinius, although meager in person, and at that time parched with long declamation, seemed to live in such a state of intellectual excitement that he thought little either of eating or drinking ; there-

fore the venerable stoic, resigning for the most part his share of the conversation, amused himself, in exchange, with the more trivial gratifications abandoned to him by the pleader. Nor, if one might draw any conclusion from the rosiness of his complexion, and the portliness of his whole figure, was this the first occasion on which he had exercised that species of humility. Partly fatigued by my travel, partly confounded by the novelties I had seen and heard, and was now seeing and hearing, I myself did not disdain from time to time to taste of the fine old Chian of Licinius; a huge flagon of which that stood on the board already rose light in my hand, by reason of the eager though not very frequent familiarities of the disciple of Zeno.

When Licinius had inquired of me concerning my native place, and those kinsmen whom he had in that distant region, and when he had also spoken at some length of the affairs which had brought me to the city, his conversation was naturally directed to subjects which were more new, if not more interesting to me. "You would no doubt observe," said he, "the palm branches at my door. They were won to-day, by a five hours' harangue before the Centumviri, wherein, if I did not satisfy myself, it appears that my friends, nay, even my customary opponents, have discovered no ground of complaint. It is only in contests such as these that able men have now any opportunity to exercise themselves, and preserve some remembrance of those ancient worthies and great public characters that once adorned the state. To these things, therefore, O Valerius, I entirely devote myself; nor aim, like other citizens of my rank, at passing the day in slothful diversion, and ending it with far-fetched luxuries. At supper my table is furnished only with moderate fare; while, in other houses, I know not how many roasted boars and pompous sturgeons have been regaling, with the rich perfume of their sauces and stuffing, the nostrils of guests who love the meat more than the man who gives it. This worthy person, whom I retain in my dwelling to instruct my only surviving son, knows how laborious is my course of life, and what an impatient crowd awaits my appearance every morning that I rise. The

young man himself will, I hope, ultimately tread in the same steps, and afford to a future generation the image of the former Licinius." With these, and the like discourses, he occupied our ears till it was time to retire to sleep; and then he intimated to me that he had allotted to me an apartment in his house, which he expected I would continually occupy during my residence in the city. But being informed that I had a British slave along with me, he insisted on having this man sent for into the supper-chamber, that he might see him, as he expressed it, before the genuine unsophisticated barbarian had been corrupted by keeping company with the lying Greeks, and other cunning menials of the metropolis. Whereupon, it was commanded that Boto should come up; and he was forthwith ushered in by a certain leering varlet, with rings in his ears, whose face resembled some comic mask in the habitual archness of its malicious and inquisitive look.

Not few were the bows and scrapes with which my Briton entered the penetralia of this great Roman's mansion; neither was the astonishment inconsiderable with which the keen eyes of the orator rested upon the coarse and tawny outlines of Boto's visage. "So, friend," said Licinius, "and you have ventured to come to Rome without so much as shaving your beard!" But the merry and good-natured tone in which these words were uttered having somewhat reassured the bashful rustic, he gave a sly side-look towards the stoic (who, it must be observed, had never once looked at him, but sat back in his couch all the time, preserving unmoved the sage severity of his demeanour), and replied to Licinius, "Pardon me, O master, for coming thus into your presence; but I knew not, till Dromo here told me, that beards were worn in Rome only by goats and the wisest of mankind." The words of the barbarian amused the orator—but, turning round to his own slave, "Ah! Dromo," said he, "do I already recognise the effects of your teaching?—beware the whip—and corrupt not this honest Briton, at your peril." He then asked of Boto various questions concerning his recent voyage; to all of which he made answers in a sufficiently sagacious manner, after his own fashion.

Great contempt, however, was depicted on the face of the silent stoic during this conversation ; which he, no doubt, looked upon as a very unworthy condescension on the part of Licinius ; till at last, having, in a leisurely manner, poured out and drank the last of the flagon, the indignant Xerophrastes (for that was his name) arose from his couch and departed. As he withdrew, he unfortunately struck his knee on the corner of the table, which elicited from his stubborn features a sudden contortion, expressive of anguish. This, however, he immediately smoothed off ; and, twisting his involuntary stoop into an obeisance to Licinius, the sage walked away in a sufficiently grave and decorous manner. The young lad, whose name, if I have not already mentioned it, was Sextus, did not witness these circumstances without turning away his face to hide a smile ; but I, fearing to diminish his respect for his master, refrained from joining him in any outward expression of mirth.

CHAPTER V.

LICINIUS then showed me the way to my sleeping-room, to which I was glad to retire, being in fact quite worn out by the number of objects which had that day tasked my sight. My sleep was sound and sweet ; nevertheless, when the morning began to dawn, I was awakened by the first glimmerings of light, and found that my thoughts became at once too busy to admit of a return to slumber. I therefore arose, and went to walk in an open gallery with which my chamber was connected. This gallery commanded a prospect of a great part of the city, which at that hour appeared no less tranquil than stately, nothing being in motion except a few small boats gliding here and there upon the river. Neither as yet had any smoke begun to darken the atmosphere ; so that all things were seen in a serene and steady light, the shadows falling broadly westward over streets and squares—but pillars,

and porticoes, and obelisks, and arches, rising up everywhere with unsullied and undisturbed magnificence, into the bright air of the morning. The numerous poplars and alders, and other lofty trees of the gardens, also seemed to be rejoicing in the hour of dew and silence ; so fresh and cheerful was the intermixture of their green branches among the surrounding piles of white and yellow marble. Near at hand, over the groves of the Philoclean Mansion, I could see the kingly dome of the Pantheon, all burnished with living gold—and the proud colonnades of the Flaminian Circus, loaded with armies of brazen statues. Between these and the river, the theatres of Pompey and Marcellus, and I know not how many beautiful temples, were visible, each surpassing the other in chaste and solemn splendour. Across a more crowded region to the westward, my eye ascended to the Capitol, there to be lost among the central magnificence of the Mistress of the World ; while, still farther removed from me (although less elevated in natural situation), the gorgeous mansion of the Emperor was seen, lifted up, like some new and separate city, upon its enormous fabric of arcades, high over all the remains of that forest of elms and sycamores by which Nero had once dared to replace the unhoused tenants of the Palatine. Behind me, the Flavian Amphitheatre,* the newest and the most majestic of all Roman edifices, detained the eye for a space from all that lay beyond it—the whole splendid mass, namely, of the Esquiline---and those innumerable aqueducts which lie stretched out, arch after arch and pillar after pillar, quite over the peopled champaign to the very ridge of the mountains. But why should I vainly essay to give to you, by cold words of description, any idea of the peerless prospect that everywhere surrounded me ! Lost amid the pomp of this unimagined human greatness, I was glad to rest my sight, ever and anon, upon the cool waters of old Tiber, in whose face nothing of all this was truly depicted, except the serene and cloudless beauty of that Italian sky ; temple and tower, and every monument of art, being mellowed down into a softer and more tolerable grandeur.

* The Coliseum.

As I stood upon a projecting balcony, looking abroad upon the Imperial City, I heard some person stepping softly along the floor, and, being screened by some pillars, looked back into the gallery without subjecting myself to observation in return. The noise, I found, was occasioned by one of the slaves of Licinius (the same I had remarked over night), who had an air of much vigilance about him on this occasion, looking about from side to side with a very anxious expression of countenance, as if afraid of being detected in some impropriety. I heard him tap gently at the door of one of the apartments adjoining to my own, and thought I could distinguish from his whisper that it was Sextus on whom he called. It was even so ; for very shortly after—that modest young man, opening the door, courteously asked, “ Well, Dromo, good Dromo, what news ?—Have you seen or heard any thing of her ?—Speak low, I beseech you, and remember that my preceptor sleeps in the next room.”

“ Which preceptor ?” replied Dromo : “ count me your best preceptor, and I will teach you how to manage all the rest.”

“ Xerophrastes, I mean. Speak low, Dromo,” said the young man in an earnest whisper ; “ he is close at hand ; and if he be thus early astir, as is not improbable, with these eternal parchments, he may hear every word you say—be quiet, I pray you.”

“ Poh, poh,” returned the slave ; never mind the black-bearded Athenian, for I have found out some curious facts about him lately, which will serve to bridle his tongue at any time. I will ride upon him and rein him in the most beautiful manner, so that you will admire to see the motions I can draw out of him.”

“ Oh Dromo, Dromo,” said Sextus, shaking his head, “ remember that a rhetorician is far above the sphere of a rascally slave like you ; and if I find you attempting to ride your betters any farther than is absolutely necessary in this affair, I will pluck you from your seat, Dromo, and lay you sprawling on the sand at once.”

“ Well, well ; do not speak so loud,” replied Dromo ; “ but I think it is natural for all slaves to have an antipathy against these grammarians, who often despoil them of

their just influence in a family ; and, in fact, make mere slaves of them."

"A great hardship to be sure, Dromo ; and what would you have ?"

"I would have a reasonable share of influence, Master Sextus, and neither more nor less than my due."

"Your due, Master Dromo," replied the youth, "is to be seen in the thong of sleek leather which hangs at the foot of the staircase ; and many is the time and oft that I have saved you from it ; for which you may perhaps have to thank the beauty of her who has rendered you necessary to me, as much as my own good nature. But no more idle words at present—what have you got to tell me ?"

"I have just been down," answered he, "to the herb-market, by the river-side yonder—for that early sort of drudgery is sure to be laid on my back ; but I do not complain of my hardships for this once. Well—I had made my bargain, and was coming away, when I saw one of old Capito's men, who had just come in from the villa, driving an ass laden with choice articles from the country, which he told me were meant as presents for different persons. Whereupon it forthwith occurred to me, that I might perhaps be able to suck something out of him concerning the young lady. So I asked the man if there was any present for his master's brother Lucius, the senator. To which he replied, that he had brought nothing for Lucius but a letter ; adding, that he believed its purport was to invite the two young ladies to come out and enjoy the beauty of the season. 'And when,' said I, in a careless manner, 'do you suppose they may be coming ?'—'Oh, this very day, I suppose,' quoth he ; 'for I heard orders given about their apartments.' Now, my dear Master Sextus, I no sooner got this information from him than I ran hither as swiftly as my legs would carry me. You can easily go out, as if by chance, to pay your respects to the old gentleman. You will there have an opportunity of seeing her for a long while together ; and perhaps be able to put in a word for yourself ; for they say there's nothing helps on a courtship so much as a shady walk among the fields."

“ Ah, Sempronia !” cried Sextus, “ then I shall approach you, and speak to you at last. What will she think when she sees me there ? and how will she speak to me ?”

While he was uttering these words, Dromo suddenly started, and came peeping, on tiptoe, towards the place where I stood. Whereupon I stepped from behind my pillar, and said to the astonished youth, “ Fear not, Sextus, that I shall intermeddle with your secrets, or make any use of what I have accidentally overheard. But I wish you would satisfy my curiosity, and inform me who is this lady, and what may be the meaning of all this concealment.”

Here Dromo, perceiving that his young master was a good deal confused, came forward and said, “ From observing your looks last night, when I was making a handle of yon barbarian to torture our friend of the porch, I think you are a good-natured person, who would not willingly bring any of us into trouble. The truth is, that Licinius wishes my young master here to marry a certain lady, who has already had wet eyes over the ashes of a first husband ; but who is of noble birth and very rich. Now Sextus, being only eighteen, does not like this great lady so well as she likes him—and has, in fact, lost his heart elsewhere.”

“ Dromo,” answered I, taking young Sextus by the hand as I spoke, “ this is a pretty common sort of story ; but I shall take no side till I have seen both of the ladies ; and the sooner your ingenuity can bring that about, the more shall I be beholden to you.”

“ We shall try,” replied the slave, observing that I had overcome the reluctance of the lover ; “ but in the mean time I observe that the clients are beginning to assemble in the porch, to await the forthcoming of Licinius. Go, therefore, and get some breakfast for yourselves, for, by-and-by, you will both of you be expected to accompany the orator to the Forum, to hear him plead ; which, between ourselves, will be, I guess, a good six hours’ job for you, unless you manage matters dexterously.”

This last hint produced a visible effect on the countenance of Sextus ; but, nevertheless, we went down to

gether immediately to an apartment where some bread and grapes were prepared for us; and there, with much juvenile ingenuousness, he opened his heart to me concerning those things with which I had fortuitously been made acquainted. But what surprised me most of all was to hear, that although he had been enamoured of Sempronius for several months, and was well acquainted with several of her relations, he had never yet seen her except at certain places of public resort, nor enjoyed any opportunity of making known his passion. While I was expressing my astonishment at this circumstance, we were interrupted by Xerophrates, who came to inform us that Licinius, having already descended into the hall, was about to issue forth, and desirous of our company, if no other occupation detained us. We accordingly followed the philosopher, and found his patron where he had indicated, pacing to and fro, in the highest state of excitation, like a generous steed about to scour the field of battle. The waxen effigies of his ancestors stood at one end of the hall, some of them defaced with great age; and upon these he frequently fixed his ardent eyes. Seeing me enter, he immediately cried out, "Come hither, my friend and kinsman, and I shall presently conduct you to a scene worthy, above all others, of the curiosity of a stranger."

With this, arranging his gown, and putting himself into a dignified attitude, he ordered the porter, who stood chained by the door, to throw wide its massy valves; which being done, the litigants and consulters who were without received the orator with acclamations, and surrounded him on all sides. Some of the poorer ones I observed kissing the hem of his garment, and dodging wistfully at his elbows, without ever attracting a word or look from him; while those of a higher class came forward more familiarly, seeking to impress particular circumstances upon his memory, and paying him compliments on the appearance he had made the day before in the Centumviral Court. Encircled by this motley group, he walked along towards the great Forum which is also called the Roman—followed at a little distance by Sextus, the preceptor, myself, and some freedmen of his household. In moving on, we passed, by accident, the door

of another great pleader, by name Bruttianus, who stood there attended in a similar manner. When he perceived Licinius, this man took from his doorpost a green palm-branch, and waved it towards us in a vaunting manner; but our friend, saluting him courteously, cried out, with his sharp and cutting voice, "We shall try it again." Whereon Xerophrastes, immediately stepping up to his patron, began thus—"How this vainglorious person exposes himself!—he is certainly a weak man; and his tones, by *Hermes*, are more detestable than those of an African fowl." At which words, Sextus tipped me the wink; but I did not observe that Licinius was at all displeased with them. Yet, soon after, Bruttianus having overtaken us, the processions were joined, and the two great pleaders walked the rest of the way together in a loving manner, exchanging complimentary speeches; to which Xerophrastes listened with a very edifying gravity of visage.

At length we entered that venerable space, every yard of whose surface is consecrated to the peculiar memory of some great incident in the history of Rome. Young Sextus allowed me to contemplate for some time, with silent wonder, the memorable objects which conspired to the decoration of this remarkable place; but after the first gaze of astonishment was satisfied, proceeded to point out, in order, the names and uses of the principal structures which rose on every side over its porticoes—above all, of its sublime temples—into whose cool and shady recesses the eye could here and there penetrate through the open valves. Nor did the ancient rostrum, from which Tully had declaimed, escape our observation—nor, within its guarding rail of silver, the rising shoots of the old mysterious fig-tree of Romulus—nor the rich tessellated pavement which covered the spot that had once yawned an abyss before the steady eye of Curtius—nor the resplendent Milliare pillar which marked the centre of the place. In a word, had the gathering crowds permitted, I could have willingly spent I know not how many suns in listening to the explanation of such magnificent objects; but these, and the elevated voice of Licinius, who was just beginning his harangue, soon compelled me to attend to things of another description.

Within one of the proud ranges of arcade on the side nearest to the Capitoline cliff and stairs, a certain majestic patrician had already taken his seat on an elevated tribunal—his assessors being arranged on a lower bench by his side, and the orators and clients congregated beneath him. The first who addressed him was, as I have said, Licinius; and truly, although his speech was not of very great length, it was sufficient to impress me with an admiration of his genius, such as I had never before been constrained to feel for any display of talent exhibited in my presence. I know not, indeed, if, in the whole wide range of human accomplishments, there be any one the first contemplation of which inspires so much wonder into the breasts of those unaccustomed to its exercise as this of oratory. It is the first and great natural weapon by which intellect asserts its superiority over corporeal strength; and, therefore, to acknowledge its power in him that witnesses its energies is, in effect, a vindication of the dignity of his own nobler part. The most refined and expert in the ways of men can never entirely defend themselves against this celestial weapon, any more than they can open their eyes and yet refuse to bear witness that there is light in heaven, or walk abroad at noonday and not feel the fervour of the sun. But if they cannot fail to acknowledge this godlike power, those that, like myself, come strangers to the scene of oratorical triumph, cannot fail to bow down and submit themselves, in awful homage, beneath its sway. When I heard the clear and harmonious periods of my kinsman following each other in their undoubting sweep of energy; when I observed with what apparent skill he laid his foundations in a few simple facts and propositions, and then with what admirable art he upreared from these a superstructure of conclusions, equally easy as unexpected—equally beautiful as ingenious; when, above all, he had conducted us to the end of his argument, and closed the whole magnificent strain with one burst of passionate eloquence, in which he seemed to leave even himself behind him, I could not but feel within myself as if I had been till now a stranger, not only to the most splendid but to the most awful of enchantments—as if I had now, for the first time, contemplated the

practised strength of reason, and the imbodyed might of the soul. Such were my raptures on hearing the first oration of Licinius; and truly the applauses painted in the faces of those that surrounded me were a sufficient pledge to me that they did not spring from my own inexperience. Yet I have lived to discover that the talent which so greatly excited my wonder is often possessed from nature, or acquired through practice (though not, it is true, to any thing like the same splendid extent or perfection, yet in a measure which, at that time, would have afforded me scarcely inferior delight), by men whose understandings are of no extraordinary rank. It was not till after many visits to the Roman Forum that I found myself enabled to discriminate between the real merits of a speaker of genius like my kinsman, and that trick of wordiness by which some of the most commonplace and prosaic of his rivals at first affected me with almost as much admiration as I could bestow on himself.

The keen and lively gestures of the fervid Licinius, whose soul seemed to speak out of every finger he moved, and who appeared to be altogether immersed in the cause he pleaded, were succeeded by the solemn and somewhat pompous stateliness of Bruttianus, who made a brief pause between every two sentences, as if he were apprehensive that the mind of the judge could not keep pace with the stream of his illustrations, and looked round ever and anon upon the spectators with a placid and assured smile, rather, as it seemed to me, to signify his approbation of their taste in applauding him than his own pleasure in their applauses. Nevertheless, he also was a splendid speaker, and his affectation displeased the more because it was evidently unworthy of his understanding. While he was speaking I observed that the stoic preceptor was frequently shifting his place among the crowd, and muttering everywhere expressions of high contempt. But this did not disgust me so much as the gross adulation of that fixed attitude of ecstasy in which he listened to the discourse of his own patron, and the pretended involuntary exclamations of his delight. "Oh admirable cadence!" he would say; "I feel as if I were draining a honeycomb. Oh harmonious man, where have I, or any

other person here, sucked in such sweetness!" These absurd phrases, however, were caught up forthwith, and repeated by the numerous young men who hung upon the skirts of the orator, and seemed, indeed, to be drinking in nectar from the speech, if one might judge from their countenances. From their taking notes in their tablets from time to time, and from the knowing looks they assumed at the commencement of every new chain of argument, I guessed that these might be embryo juriconsults, preparing themselves by their attendance for future exertions of the same species; and, indeed, when I listened to their conversation at the close of every speech, I thought I could perceive in their tones and accents studied mimicry of the natural peculiarities of Licinius, Bruttianus, and the other orators. Altogether, the scene was to me as full of amusement as of novelty, and I could willingly have remained to the end of the discussion. But looking round, my eyes chanced to fall upon young Sextus, and I could not but see that his mind was occupied in matters quite remote from the business of the Forum and the merits of the pleaders. He stood with his arms folded in his gown, and his eyes fixed upon the ground, only lifting them up from time to time with an impatient air towards a side entrance of the Forum, or to observe by the shadows on the opposite porticoes what progress the sun was making towards the south.

Perceiving, at length, that Xerophrastes had his back turned towards us, and that his father was entirely engaged with his tablets during the speech of another orator, he plucked me by the sleeve. I understood his meaning from his looks, and followed him quickly through the crowd, nor did we look back till we had left the noise of the forensic assembly entirely behind us. "I am depriving you," he then said, "of no great gratification, for that old creature is indeed possessed of much natural shrewdness; but the asperity of his temper is such, that I am sure you could not have listened to him for many minutes without great disgust. In fact, he is excessively bitter, from observing that his reputation is rather eclipsed by some other younger people, and looks for all the world like some old worn out and discarded cat, grinning from the top of the wall at the amorous dalliance in which his faithless

mistress is indulging some sleeker rival of the whisker. You are too good-natured to be able to find any delight in the angry sneerings of such an envious person ; and his age would prevent you at the same time from willingly giving way to any contemptuous emotions. Let us depart from the city, and I will be your guide to the villa of Capito. But if any questions be asked on our return, you can say I was anxious to show you something of the other regions of the city."

CHAPTER VI.

ALTHOUGH anxiety to show me the city was to be the pretence for the sudden departure of Sextus from the Forum, nothing could be less in his intentions than to waste any further portion of the morning in what he naturally enough imagined might be just as well deferred to some other day, during which he should have no prospect of meeting with the fair Sempronia. He hurried me forward, on the contrary, in a manner which all my sympathy with his emotions could hardly prevail upon me to pardon, through twenty noble streets, and past innumerable glorious edifices, before each of which I would gladly have paused—such was the yet unsated ardour of my curiosity. Nevertheless, seeing him entirely wrapped up in his own anxious thoughts, I did not oppose myself to his inclinations. Ere long, having passed the Hill of Gardens, I found that we had gained the eastern limit of the city. His steps increased in rapidity when he perceived that we were treading the free surface of the Salarian way ; in-somuch that I could scarcely cast even a passing glance on the lofty pillars and other funereal monuments which confer such an air of solemn magnificence on that wide avenue of the capital.

A sharp walk of about an hour and a half brought us within sight of the suburban of Capito. A lofty wall protected the fields of this retirement from the intrusive

eyes of passengers on the public road, over whose summit nothing could be discovered but the tall green boughs of planes and sycamores waving to and fro in the gentle agitation of the western breeze. We entered by a small side-door, and immediately found ourselves, as if by some magical delusion, transported from the glare of a Roman highway, and the hum of men, into the depth and silence of some primeval forest. No nicely trimmed path conducted our feet through the mazes of this venerable place. Every thing had at least the appearance of being left as nature had formed it. The tall fern rustled beneath us as we moved ; the untaught ivy was seen spreading its careless tresses from tree to tree overhead ; the fawn bounded from the thicket, and the scared owl screamed on the pine-top. By degrees, however, the gloom lessened around us as we approached the mansion itself, till at length, over an open space of lawn, we perceived the simple but elegant porch of entrance, and the line of colonnade that extended all along that front of the building. We passed under the porch, and across a paved court, in which a fountain was playing, into the great hall, the windows of which commanded all the other side of the place—a most noble prospect of elaborate gardens gradually rising into shady hills, and lost in a distance of impenetrable wood. Here a freedman attended us, who informed us that Capito had retired from the house into a sequestered part of the grounds with some friends from the city ; but that if we chose we could easily join him there. We assented, and following his guidance, ere long traversed no narrow space of luxuriant cultivation. From one perfumed terrace we descended to another ; till, having at last reached a certain green and mossy walk, darkened all its length by a natural arching of vines and mulberries, the freedman pointed to a statue at the farther end of it, and told us it stood over-against the entrance of his master's summer-house. When we reached the statue, however, we could not at first perceive any traces of the summer-house. The shaded avenue terminated in face of a precipitous rock, from which there fell a small stream that was received beneath in a massive basin, where its waters foamed into spray without transgressing the margin. A thousand delicious plants and far-sought

flowers clustered around the base of the rock and the brink of the fountain, and the humming of innumerable bees mingled with the whispers of the stream. We stood for a moment uncertain whether we should move on or retire, when we heard some one calling to us from the centre of the rock ; and presently, passing to the other side of the basin, descried, between the rock and the falling water, a low entrance into what seemed to be a natural cave or grotto. We stooped, and passing its threshold, found ourselves within one of the most luxurious retirements that was ever haunted by the foot of dryad. A sparry roof hung like a canopy of gems and crystals over a group of sculptured nymphs and fauns, which were placed on a rustic pedestal within a circular bath, shaped out of the living stone. Around the edge of the waveless waters that slumbered in this green recess were spread carpets rich with the dies of Tyrian art, whereon Capito was reposing with his friends. He received Sextus with the warmest kindness, and me with distinguished politeness, introducing us both to his companions, who were three in number—all of them, like himself, advanced in years, and two of them wearing long beards, though their demeanour was destitute of any thing like the affected stateliness of our friend Xerophrastes. These two, as our host informed us, were Greeks and rhetoricians—the third, a patrician of the house of Pontii, devoted, like himself, to the pursuits of philosophy and the pleasures of a literary retirement. They were engaged, when we joined them, in a conversation which had sprung from the perusal of some new metaphysical writer, on which they were delivering very different opinions. One of the Greeks, the more serene looking of the pair, was defending its doctrines, which I guessed to be those of the Garden, with earnestness of manner, although in a low and measured cadence of voice ; the other espoused the opposite side, of the Porch, with much quickness of utterance and severe animation of look ; while the two lordly Romans seemed to be contenting themselves, for the most part, with listening, although it was not difficult to perceive, from the expression of their countenances, that the one sided in opinion with the stoic, and the other (which was Capito himself), with the Epicurean disputant.

They all arose presently, and proceeded to walk together, without interrupting the conversation, along the same shaded avenue which Sextus and myself had already traversed. He and I moved along with them, but walked a little in their rear—my companion being still too much abstracted to bestow his attention on what they were saying; while I myself, being but little an adept in such mysteries, amused myself rather with the exterior and manners of the men themselves, than with the merits of the opinions they were severally defending. The two Greeks were attired in the graceful costume of their own country, which was worn, however, far more gracefully by the Epicurean than his brother,—the materials of his robe being infinitely more delicate, and its folds arranged with studied elegance, whereas the coarse garment of the stoic had apparently engaged less attention. Nevertheless, there was a much more marked difference between the attire of Capito and that of Pontius Mamurra; for the former was arrayed in a tunic of the whitest cloth, beneath which appeared fine linen rollers, swathing his thighs and legs, to protect them, as I supposed, from the heat and the insects, and a pair of slippers, of dark violet-coloured cloth, embroidered with silver flowers; while the other held his arms folded in the drapery of an old but genuine toga, which left his yet strong and sinewy nether-limbs exposed to the weather, all except what was covered by his tall black sandals and their senatorian crescents.

As we passed on, our host from time to time directed the attention of his visitors, more particularly of the two Greeks, to the statues of bronze and marble, which were placed at convenient intervals along the terraces of his gardens. The symmetry of these figures and the graceful simplicity of their attitudes inspired me with I know not what of calm and soothing pleasure such as I had never before tasted, so that I thought I could have lingered for ever amid these haunts of philosophic luxury. The images were, for the most part, portraits of illustrious men—Greeks, Romans—sages and heroes; but beautiful female forms were not wanting, nor majestic representations of gods and demi-gods, and all the ethereal imaginations of the Grecian poets. Seeing the name of Jupiter

inscribed upon one of the pedestals, I paused for a moment to contemplate the glorious personification of might and wisdom, depositing, at the same time, a garland of roses at the feet of the statue—upon which I could observe that my behaviour furnished much cause of mirth to the Epicurean Demochares; while, on the contrary, Euphranor, the disciple of the Porch, approved of what I did, and rebuked his companion for saying any thing that might even by possibility disturb the natural piety of an innocent youth. But the Roman stoic stood by with a smile of stately scorn; and utter indifference was painted on the countenance of Capito. At another time, Sextus having staid behind to examine the beauties of a certain statue of Diana, which represented the goddess stretched out in careless slumber on the turf, with a slender greyhound at her feet, the Epicurean began to rally me on having a taste inferior to that of my friend, whose devotion, he said, could not be blamed, being paid to an exquisite imitation of what the great Nature of things had decreed should ever be the most agreeable of all objects in the eyes of a person of his age. “Whereas you,” continued he, “appear to be more occupied with deep-hung eyebrows, ambrosial beards, and fantastic thunderbolts, and the other exuberances of Homeric imagination.”

To this reproach I made no reply, but Capito began to recite some noble verses of a hymn of Calimachus, in which both the Greeks joined him; nor could any thing be more delightful than the deep rolling grandeur of those harmonious numbers. A sudden exclamation of Sextus, however, ere long interrupted their recitation, and Capito, looking up a long straight pathway, leading from the villa, said, “Come, Valerius, we shall soon see whether you or Sextus is the more gallant to living beauties, for here come my two nieces, Athanasia and Sempronia; and, I assure you, I don’t know of which of them I am the more proud. But Sempronia has indeed more of the Diana about her, so it is probable she may find a ready slave in our friend Sextus.”

We advanced to meet the young ladies, who were walking slowly down the avenue, and their uncle, having tenderly saluted them, soon presented us to their notice

Sextus blushed deeply when he found himself introduced to Sempronia, while, in her smile, although she looked at him, as if to say she had never seen him before, I thought I could detect a certain half-suppressed expression of half-disdainful archness—the colour in her cheeks at the same time being not entirely unmoved. She was, indeed, a very lovely girl, and in looking on her light, dancing play of beautiful features, I could easily sympathize with the young raptures of my friend. Her dress was such as to set off her charms to the utmost advantage, for the bright green of her Byssine robe, although it would have been a severe trial to any ordinary complexion, served only to heighten the delicious brilliancy of hers. A veil, of the same substance and colour, was richly embroidered all over with flowers of silver tissue, and fell in flowing drapery well-nigh down to her knees. Her hair was almost entirely concealed by this part of her dress, but a single braid of the brightest nut-brown was visible low down on her polished forehead. Her eyes were black as jet, and full, as I have already hinted, of a nymph-like or Arcadian vivacity—together, indeed, she was such a creature as the Tempe of the poets need not have been ashamed to shelter beneath the most luxurious of all its bowers.

The other young lady—it is Athanasia of whom I speak—she was not a dazzling beauty like Sempronia, but beautiful in such a manner as I shall never be able to describe. Taller than her cousin, and darker haired than she, but with eyes rather light than otherwise, of a clear, soft, somewhat melancholy gray—and with a complexion for the most part paler than is usual in Italy, and with a demeanour hovering between cheerfulness and innocent gravity, and attired with a vestal simplicity in the old Roman tunic, and cloak of white cloth—it is possible that most men might have regarded her less than the other; but for my part, I found her aspect the more engaging the longer I surveyed it. A single broad star of diamonds, planted high up among her black hair, was the only ornament of jewelry she wore, and it shone there in solitary brightness, like the planet of evening. Alas! I smile at myself that I should take notice of such trifles in describing the first time I ever gazed on Athanasia.

At the request of the younger lady, we all returned to the grotto, in the neighbourhood of which, as I have already mentioned, our tasteful host had placed the rarest of his exotic plants, some of which Sempronia was now desirous of inspecting. As we paced again slowly over those smooth shaven alleys of turf, and between those rows of yews and box, clipped into regular shapes, which abounded in this more artificial region of the place, the conversation, which the appearance of the two beauties had disturbed, was resumed; although, as out of regard to their presence, the voices of the disputants pursued a lower and milder tone than before,—a natural mark of respect, by-the-way, to the gentleness of female spirits, which we must all have remarked on many occasions. I must confess, however, that, mild as was the manner of the discourse, I could not help being somewhat astonished, and even displeased, with finding that a virtuous and polite Roman could permit such topics to be discussed in the hearing of females; above all, that he did not interpose to prevent Demochares from throwing out so many sarcastic reflections concerning the deities whose statues were placed in the garden. A beautiful Mercury in particular, which we all paused to admire, elicited many sarcastic observations, that I could easily see were far from being agreeable to the fair cousins. But the greatest of all was my wonder at the behaviour of Capito himself, who, after we had again entered that delightful grotto, turned himself to me as if peculiarly, and began a deliberate and ingenious piece of declamation concerning the tenets of his favourite philosophy,—such as the fortuitous concourse of atoms, the transitory and fluctuating nature of all things, and the necessity of snatching present enjoyments, as nothing permanent can be discovered whereon to repose the mind. With great elegance, indeed, of language and illustration, did he enlarge on these golden theories of the sages of the Garden; nor did he fail to intersperse his discourse with many exquisite verses from Lucretius and other poetical followers of his sect. Such, however, was the earnestness of his declamation, that I could not help believing him to be quite sincere to what he said, and asked him, not without anxiety, whether he had all his life been an Epicurean, or whether it was only

of late that he had espoused that discipline. Nor have I at this distance of time any difficulty in recalling the tenor of his answer. "Young man," said he, "the question you have now put to me is not the first instance I have had of your sagacity; which, indeed, considering at once your age and provincial education, is such as may truly command the respect of all of us. To be born wise, Fate or Heaven has denied to the children of human race. It is their privilege to win wisdom for themselves; the fault is their own if they do not die wise.

"When a young man first enters upon the theatre of the world, bright hopes are around him, and he moves onward in the buoyancy of conscious power. The pride of young existence is the main and animating centre of all his thoughts; or rather, it is the essence and extract of all his innumerable sensations. Rejoicing in the feeling of the real might that is, it is his delight to think—to dream—of might existing and exerted as for ever. New to the material, but still more new to the moral world, he believes in the stability of all things whose transitory nature has not been exhibited before him. New to the tricks of mankind, he believes that to be said truly which, why it should be said falsely, he is unable to conjecture. For him, superstition has equal potency to darken the past and illuminate the future.

"At that early period when ignorance is of itself sufficient to produce a certain sort of happiness, the ambition of the human mind is too high to admit the reception of such doctrines as I, an old man, and an experienced traveller in the mazes of the world, have no shame in avowing. But time moves on, young man, and every hour some tender plant of *hope* or of *promise* is crushed into the dust beneath his unmerciful tread. The spirit clings long and closely to its favourite delusions. The promise that is destroyed to-day springs into life to-morrow in some new shape; and Hope, like some war-ring deity of your poets, bleeds and sickens only to revive again. Nevertheless, disappointment at length gathers to itself the vigour of an enduring form. The horizon becomes colder and darker around our sphere of vision—the soul waxes faint and more faint within our bosoms. It is then that man at last be-

gins to recognise the true state, not of his own nature alone, but of all things that surround him—that, having tasted much of evil, he is taught to feel the value of good—and weaning himself from vainglorious dreams, learns the great lesson of practical wisdom, to enjoy the moments as they pass—to snatch some solid pleasure at least amid a world of vision and imagination; so, in a word, as the poet has expressed it, he may not have reason to complain in the hour of death that he has never lived.

“In me,” he continued, “you behold one that has gone through the experience necessary to produce an entire acquiescence in these doctrines. I am one of those, O Valerius! who have resolved to concentrate, after this fashion, the whole of my dreams upon the hour that is. There are not wanting, indeed, here and elsewhere, persons who profess the same theories, only in the view of finding excuse and shelter for the practice of vice. But till it be proved that the practice of vice is the best means of enjoyment, in vain shall it be asserted by our opponents that our doctrine is essentially adverse to virtue. The mistakes or the misdeeds of individuals must be estimated for nothing; for where is the doctrine that may not be shown to have been defended by impure livers? The founder of our sect is acknowledged, by the most virulent enemies of his theories, to have been the most blameless of men, and they, I must take leave to believe, can never be sincere friends of virtue who doubt that he who is a true worshipper of pleasure may also be the worshipper of virtue.”

There was a certain something, as I thought, more like suppressed melancholy than genuine hilarity in the expression of the old man's face, as well as in the tone of his voice, while he gave utterance to these sentiments; nor did any of those present appear desirous of protracting the argument; although I did not imagine from their looks that any of them had altered their opinion. What, however, I could not help remarking in a particular manner was, the gentle regret painted in the beautiful countenance of Athanasia while her uncle was speaking. The maiden sat over-against him all the while, with her cheek

supported on her left hand, pale and silent, with an expression of deep affection and tender pity. From time to time, indeed, she cast her eye upward with a calm smile, but immediately resumed her attitude of pensive abstraction. Her uncle took her hand in his when he had done speaking, and kissed it tenderly, as if to apologize for having said any thing disagreeable to her. She smiled again upon the skeptic, and then rising gracefully, walked by herself (for I could not help following her with my eye) down into a dark walk of pines that branched off at the right-hand from the entrance of the grotto. There I saw her stoop and pluck a beautiful pale flower, streaked all over as with spots of blood. This she placed in her bosom, and then rejoined us with a more cheerful aspect; after which, we all walked towards the villa. Nor did it escape my notice, that, although Sempronia appeared willing to avoid Sextus as we went, it always happened by some accident or other that he was nearer to her than any other person of the company.

They were both at a little distance behind the rest of the party, when Euphranor addressed himself to me, saying, "Is not this young man, your companion, the same that is under the guidance of a certain rhetorician, by name Xerophrates?"

"The same," said I, "and a wary, sage-looking person indeed is his tutor. I believe he also is of the Porch."

"Yes, no doubt he is of the Porch," interrupted Demochares; "anybody may see that with half an eye, my good friend Euphranor; for he has a beard that Zeno himself might have been proud of, and walks withal in as dignified a manner as if he conceived himself to be the chief pillar of the Porch, if not the very Porch itself."

"Yes, yes, who shall prevent Demochares from having his jest?" replied the stoic Euphranor with great gravity; "but Valerius must not be permitted to go away in the belief that this hero of the beard is really what he pretends to be."

"Why, what does the man pretend to be?" cried our host; "he wears a long beard, and writes himself Athenian and rhetorician—I see no pretence in the matter."

“Oh no, Capito,” says Euphranor, “you cannot be in earnest in what you say ; the man is a mere quack and, for that matter, if you only heard him utter ten words, you would be abundantly satisfied that he is no Athenian. The man is by birth a Thessalian, and his gutturals still remind one strongly of his native hills.”

I felt considerably interested in this discourse, and would gladly have heard more of it, but it was interrupted by the nearer approach of the rest of the party, and, ere long, we all entered the house together.

CHAPTER VII.

BEFORE the hour of taking the bath, we exercised ourselves for some time in the tennis-court, where I could not help wondering very much at the vigour and agility displayed by old Capito and his companions. I was then conducted into the baths, where, after being washed and perfumed in the most luxurious manner, I was arrayed in an elegant supper-garment by one of the slaves of our host. At table we were joined again by the ladies, who both reclined on the same couch with their uncle. Three comely youths alone attended us, in short tunics, and girt with napkins of fine linen ; but, during the repast, an ancient female slave stood in silence behind the couch of the young ladies. A small fountain of alabaster played between two tall candelabra of the same material, at the farther end of the apartment ; and a young damsel stood beside them, swinging slowly from time to time a silver censer, from which clouds of delicate odour rolled up to the mirrored roof.

In all things the feast was splendid ; yet there was no appearance of useless or vain ostentation. Every thing was conducted in a style of great calmness and order, without the least formality. The repast interrupted not the conversation, which went on in a manner to me equally instructive as entertaining ; although I must con-

ness, the presence of Athanasia sometimes rendered me inattentive to what was spoken. I could not divest myself of the idea, that some unknown circumstance was pressing on the mind of the fair creature—that some secret feeling had obtained the chief possession of her thoughts; and that when she smiled upon those that addressed her, it was oftentimes only to conceal her ignorance of that which had been said.

Being asked by Capito, I endeavoured, among other things, to inform him and his friends, as far as I could, concerning the then condition of this island, which, more particularly after the exploits of Agricola, had naturally come to be a subject of much interest in the imperial city. In return, the chief topics of public concern which then occupied the capital were discussed by them, as I perceived, in a great measure on my account; and I listened with delight to the praises, which they all agreed in bestowing on the heroic and beneficial sway of the new emperor. Many anecdotes were narrated, which tended to strengthen the feelings of reverence and admiration with which I had already been accustomed to contemplate the character of Trajan. But others were told, as the conversation went on, which I could not so easily reconcile with the idea I had previously formed of him.

In particular, I was not a little disturbed with what they told me concerning his treatment of the Christians, who, as we understood in Britain, had been suffered to live in tranquillity ever since Nerva acceded to the empire. But now, from the circumstances related to me, it appeared that the mild and humane Trajan had taken up, in regard to this unfortunate sect, the whole aversion of Domitian himself; insomuch, that every day some cruel catastrophe was made known of some person who had adopted their tenets. Being ignorant of the nature of these tenets, and having heard only in general terms that they were of Jewish origin, and in their nature extremely dark and mystical, I was at a loss to conceive any rational method of accounting for the extreme hatred of the prince, or rather for his condescending to give himself so much trouble concerning a matter of so much obscurity and apparent indifference.

Capito, however, assured me, that although I might have good occasion to wonder at the steps taken by the emperor, it would no longer be said by any one that the progress of the Christian sect deserved to be considered as a matter either of obscurity or of indifference. "On the contrary," said he, "from what you have just heard of the numbers and quality of those that have lately suffered various punishments on account of their adherence to this strange superstition, you cannot hesitate to admit that the head of the empire has been justified in considering it as a subject well worthy his attention. As to the merits or demerits of the superstition itself, or of those that have embraced it, these are very different matters."

"The only question," said Mamurra, "with which Trajan had any business, was, whether this Jewish superstition be, or be not, inconsistent with the established religion of our ancestors and the state. Rome has grown and flourished under the protection of the gods our fathers worshipped; and the laws and institutions of the empire are all built upon the foundation of reverence for these guardian deities. If this Asiatic worship can exist along with that of the gods of the Capitol, what should we or any have to say against it? We have adopted the gods of many nations; nor do I see why, because the Jews have been unfortunate in a contest with Rome, we should take it for granted that their deities are unworthy of respect. Destiny has willed that Rome should be the mistress of the world; but it seems neither necessary nor fitting that she should carry her control into the secret parts of men's minds, and interfere with their notions of religious obligation. If, however, it be so, as we have all heard asserted, and as I doubt not Trajan believes, that he who embraces the creed of the Christians becomes from that hour an infidel in regard to the deities of Rome, and, therefore, a scorner of those principles on which the security of the Roman government and law is established; then, I say, the prince does well in extirpating such an intolerant and intolerable superstition. And if the thing be in itself deserving of such severity, I do not see that we should attach any blame to Trajan for behaving as he has done. Domitian was a tyrant and a monster c

humanity, and Nerva was wise and good; and yet it may be, that in regard to these Christians, the principle of Domitian's conduct was right in the main, and that of Nerva's wrong in the main. As to the unnecessary brutalities of *the fly killer*,* we have no occasion to take them into the account. But you, my friend Capito, regard both sides of the question, I have no doubt, with pretty much the same measure of indifference."

"Nay," replied Capito, "in this matter you do me very much injustice. I never can regard with indifference any question in which the interest of the empire and the honour of Trajan are concerned. And moreover, it would be great hypocrisy in me to pretend that I can regard without concern any question which involves, as I think the present assuredly does, one of the greatest interests of the whole human race—I mean the right of adopting, each man for himself, whatever opinion may appear to be the most rational concerning all matters of religious belief. But if you mean only to say, that I am indifferent about the nature of this Christian superstition, you are, I must confess, so far in the right. I have no knowledge of its dogmas, and I have no great desire to have any knowledge of them. I presume they have their full share of that old eastern barbarity, in the shady places of which the elder Greeks used to think they could discover the outlines of something really grand and majestic. But as for me, I have ceased, as you well know, to be a student of any such mysterious and difficult matters."

"There is no occasion," resumed Mamurra, "why you should give yourself any trouble about them: I do not pretend, any more than you, to enter into the merits of the Christian superstition; I only say, that if the superstition be found incapable of subsisting among the subjects of the Roman state without danger to the public interest, the prince does well in repressing its progress. That is the *only question* of which I spoke."

* Domitian was so called, in consequence of the reports circulated concerning the nature of his solitary pastimes. Hence the famous answer recorded in Suetonius: "Is there any one with Cæsar?" "No—not even a fly."—*Ne musca quidem.*

"There is, indeed, no other," said Capito, "and I thought of none."

"And how do you answer it, dear uncle?" cried Athanasia (lifting herself up, for the first time, to take part in the conversation).

"Nay, Athanasia, my love," said the old man, "to answer that is the business of the prince, and of the senate—not mine. I meddle not with it at all; I only regret that blood should be shed and citizens exiled; above all, in the reign of a just and merciful prince. Sempronia," continued he, "what is that strange story your father was telling about one of the daughters of Serennius?"

"Of Serennius Tertulla, do you mean?" said Sempronia.

"Yes, Sempronia, it was the same."

"Oh, uncle!" replied Sempronia, "her story was nothing extraordinary, as times go. It was only, that she had a flirtation with a handsome young Greek, and the handsome young Greek happened to be a Christian—and she was converted by the handsome young Greek—and she was found out in going with him to some secret assembly of these people, in a vault somewhere by the Vatican Hill—and her papa has been glad to send her to Corsica, or some other desolate island, partly to escape the notice of the lawyers, and partly, I suppose, in hopes that the quietness of the island, and the absence of all the handsome young Christians, may, perhaps, in time restore poor Tertulla to her right mind—this is all. Do you think that a strange story, uncle?"

"Not if it be exactly as you have told it, Sempronia; but I am afraid you have been wicked enough to give it a colouring of your own. What says Athanasia?"

Athanasia started on being addressed so by her uncle, but made no reply, except that she was sorry for Tertulla, and had never heard any thing of the handsome young Greek before. I could not, however, help suspecting, from the expression of her face, that she knew more of the affair than she was willing to acknowledge; for she was the only one of the company who did not laugh at the account given of it by her cousin. On the contrary,

her looks were graver than before ; and I would fain have asked her whether she had been a friend of this Tertulla at any time, but was afraid that I might appear imperitently inquisitive, and therefore kept silence.

By this time the evening was somewhat spent, and the increasing darkness of the chamber warned us that we ought to be thinking of our return to the city. I looked towards Sextus as if to signify what I thought, but he refused to meet my eye, although I perceived he was not unconscious of my purpose. At the moment, however, when I was on the point of speaking, the room, which, as I have said, was cloudy, was getting rapidly darker, became all of a sudden filled with so deep a shade, that none of us could help remarking it ; and Sempronia, leaping from her couch, exclaimed, that she was sure there was thunder in the skies, for that she felt as if there were something stifling in the air, and the stillness all around was like that of midnight.

No sooner had she said so than we found she had judged aright ; for the deep voice of the thunder was heard as if rending the woods around, and flash after flash of lightning gleamed along the horizon ; and anon, after a brief pause, the wind howled as if set free from some captivity, and the rain began to fall in big, heavy drops. Every one sat silent, as if awe-struck ; but Sempronia was the only one that seemed to be in terror from the tempest. Nevertheless, my eyes rested more on Athanasia, who looked paler than she had done, although her countenance still preserved all its serenity, and her eyes were turned calmly towards the open doors of the portico, in the region where the lightnings had been visible.

The rain poured down heavily for a space, and the wind was loud along the grass, and in the air, till the thunder began to mutter again from among the distant trees, and then all other sounds ceased, as if rebuked and chastened before its voice. I looked and saw the fire dart across the eastern sky, and heard the terrible growling from the low clouds. "How awful," said I, "is the voice of Jupiter !" Athanasia folded her arms upon her bosom, and lifting her eyes to heaven, made answer in a whisper, "How awful is the voice of God !" She then dropped

her left hand on the end of her couch, and half unconsciously taking hold of it in mine, I asked her if she was afraid. "No," said she, "I am not afraid; but the heaviness of the air makes me a little faint, and I never can listen to the thunder without feeling something extraordinary within me." In saying so, she did not withdraw her hand from mine, and I thought I felt it tremble; but perhaps this might have been no more than the suggestion of my imagination.

By degrees, the sounds of the thunder were heard more and more distant; but, the rain and the wind continuing all around us, Capito said he could not think of our going into the city that evening, and that we must all make up our minds to remain in the villa. The countenance of Sextus brightened up when he heard him say so, and he looked to me as if to ask my assent. To say the truth, I was as willing to stay as he could be; so we easily permitted ourselves to be persuaded, and our host despatched a messenger to Rome, to inform Licinius of the cause of our absence. The old man then led us into another apartment, which was richly furnished with books and paintings. Here he read for some time out of one of the poets to a party, none of whom, I am afraid, were very attentive in listening to him, till, the hour of rest being come, the attendants entered, and we were conducted to our several apartments, Sextus and myself, indeed, being lodged in the same chamber.

CHAPTER VIII.

WE were no sooner left alone than I began to rally my friend on the beauty of his mistress, and the earnest court he had been paying her during the whole of the day. The youth listened with blushes of delight to the praises of Sempronia, but seemed not to have the least idea that he had been so fortunate as to make any favourable impression on her mind. On the contrary, he scarcely

appeared to be aware of having done any thing to attract particular attention from her, and expressed much astonishment when I assured him that his behaviour had been such as could not possibly admit of more than one explanation in the eyes of a person so quick and vivacious as the lovely Sempronia.

After we had both retired to our beds, and the lights were extinguished, we still continued for some time to talk over the incidents of our visit, and the future prospects of Sextus and his love; until at length sleep overpowered us in easy bonds, and agreeable dreams followed, I doubt not, in the hearts of us both, the thoughts and sights of a delightful day. Mine surely were delightful, for they were all of Athanasia. Yet, even in these visions of the night, I could never see her face without some strange impression of mystery. I saw her placid smile—I heard the sweet low cadence of her voice—but I felt, and I could not feel it without a certain indescribable anxiety, that her deep thoughts were far away busied about something of which I knew nothing.

I awoke early, and lay for a long while ruminating in silence. The most natural explanation of all things appeared to be, that she was occupied with some secret, perhaps unhappy passion. But I know not how it was, that I could not bring myself to rest satisfied with this conclusion.

I arose, and drew near to the bed of Sextus; but seeing that he was fast asleep, and that a quiet smile was on his lips, I could not think of awaking him. But the sun shone bright into the apartment, and I resolved to walk forth and breathe the balmy air of the morning.

My steps were directed, almost unconsciously, to the same part of the gardens where I had first seen Athanasia on the preceding day. The moisture was still lying heavy there on the green paths, and the birds were singing among the glittering leaves; the godlike statues stood there in their silent beauty,—the lightnings had not scathed them—the wind had not shaken them—and the rain-drops had fallen on them only to refresh their pale loveliness. I walked to and fro, enjoying, without an effort, the enchantment of the scene;—a new feeling of

the beauty of all things seemed to have been breathed into my soul, and the pensive grace of Athanasia hovered over my imagination, like some presiding genius of the groves.

At length I found myself near the favourite grotto of Capito, and I stood over-against its entrance for some space, contemplating the augmented stream as it fell from the superincumbent rock, and regretting the ravage which the nightly tempest had made among the slender shafts and delicate blossoms of the flowers that were planted around its basin. Twice I thought I heard the murmurs of a human voice near me, and twice I persuaded myself that it was only the rippling of the waters; but I listened more attentively, and the third time I was satisfied that some person must be in the grotto. I passed between the water and the rock, and looking in, beheld the fair creature that had been occupying so many of my thoughts kneeling far in the grotto, with her back to the place where I stood.

Her long black tresses hung all down her shoulders; her hands seemed to be clasped before her; and although she was silent for the moment, I was satisfied that the sounds I had heard had been those of supplication. To disturb her by advancing farther would have been impious; to retire without the risk of disturbing her almost impossible: but I remained there fixed to the spot, without perhaps considering all these things, as I should have done. The virgin modesty of her attitude was holy in my eyes, and the thought never occurred to me, that I might be doing wrong in permitting myself to witness the simple devotions of Athanasia. "Great God, listen to my prayers," was all I understood of what she said; but she whispered for some moments in a lowly and fervent tone, and I saw that she kissed something with her lips ere she arose from her knees. She then plunged her hands into the well, by whose brink she had knelt, and turned round to the light. "Athanasia, forgive me," was already on my lips; but on seeing me, she uttered a faint cry, and fell prostrate upon the marble. I rushed forward in an agony, and found that she had swooned away. I lifted up her head, and laid it in my bosom, and laved water on

it from the fountain, till I saw her lips tremble. At last she opened her eyes, and after gazing on me wildly for a moment, she gathered her strength, and stood quite upright, supporting herself against the wall of the grotto. "Great heavens!" cried I, "in what have I offended, that I should be rendered the cause of affliction to Athanasia? Speak, lady, and say that you forgive me."

"I thought," said she, with a proud calmness, "that Valerius was of Roman—of patrician blood. What brings him to be a spy upon the secret moments of a patrician maiden?"—Then bursting into a tone of unutterable fervour, "Speak," said she, "young man, what have you heard? How long have you stood here? Am I betrayed? Am I ruined for ever? Tell me the worst, and let me begone to my kindred."

"Witness, heaven and earth!" cried I, kneeling to the ground before her, "and witness, every god, that I have heard nothing, except to know that you were praying. What you asked I know not—to whom you prayed I know not—I have only seen you kneeling, and been guilty of gazing on your beauty."

"You heard not the words of my prayer?" said she.

"No, not its words, Athanasia, nor any thing of its purpose."

"Do you swear this to me, young man?"

"Yes, I swear by Jupiter and by Rome—as I am a man and a Roman, I know not, neither do I desire to know, any thing of what you said. Forgive me for the fault of my indiscretion—you have no other to forgive."

Athanasia paused for a moment, and then resuming more of her usual tone of voice (although its accents were still somewhat disturbed and faltering), said to me, "Valerius, since the thing is so, I have nothing to forgive—I blame you for nothing—I have nobody to find fault with but myself. It is you that must pardon me for my suspicion and my fervour. I have injured you, and I repent of it."

"Distress me not, Athanasia," said I, "by speaking such words as these. You wound me more than ever, if you proceed."

"From this hour, then," said she, "what has passed here is forgotten by us both. We blot it from our memo-

ries;" and with that, as if in token of the paction, she extended to me her hand. I kissed it as I knelt, and swore that all things were safe with me; but added, as I arose, "that I was afraid I should be promising more than I should be able to perform,—did I say I should be able to forget any hour or any place where I had seen Athanasia?"

"Nay," said she, "no compliment, or I shall begin to suspect you of insincerity."

I was then about to withdraw from the grotto; but seeing a scroll of parchment lying at the feet of Athanasia, I stooped and presented it to her, saying, "I was afraid she might forget it."

She took it eagerly, and saying, "Of that there was no danger," placed it in her bosom, within the folds of her tunic. She was then gathering up her black tresses, and fastening them hastily on the back part of her head, when we heard the sound of footsteps not far off, and beckoning to me to remain where I was, she darted from me, and in a moment vanished among the trees. I waited for a few minutes, and then stepping forth, beheld her walking at a distance, beside her cousin, in the direction of the villa. They were soon lost among the paths, and I returned alone into the grotto.

I sat down beside the dark well, wherein she had dipped her hands, and mused in a most disturbed mood on all the particulars of this strange and unexpected interview. Every motion of her features—every modulation of her voice, was present with me; I had gathered them all into my heart, and I felt that I must cherish them there for ever. From the first moment I saw her, my eyes had been constrained to gaze upon her with an interest quite novel to me; but now I knew that she could not smile without making my heart faint within me, and that the least whisper of her voice was able to bring tears into my eyes. Now I thought of my own unworthiness, and could not help saying to myself, "Why should a poor ignorant provincial, such as I am, be torturing himself with the thoughts of such a creature as this?" Then again some benign glance of hers would return before me, and I could not help having some faint hopes that her innocent heart might be won to me by faithful unwearied

love. But what always threw me back in despair was, the recollection of the mystery that I knew hung over her mind, although what it was I could not know. That she had been saying something in her prayers which could not be overheard without *betraying*,—nay, as she said, *ruining* her,—she had herself confessed to me. What could be this strange secret, so cherished in dread and in darkness by this lovely maiden? A crime? No, no crime could sully the clear bosom of her innocence; no consciousness of guilt could be concealed beneath the radiant beauty of that heavenly visage. But perhaps, although guiltless herself, she had been made the confidant of some erring,—some unhappy friend. Perhaps, in her prayer, she had made mention of another's name, and implored the pardon of another's guilt * * * *. Last of all, why might it not be that the maiden loved, and was beloved again in secret; that, from circumstances to me unknown and impenetrable, she might have reason to regard any casual betrayal of her love as a calamity; and that, having uttered the name of her lover in her secret supplications, her terrors might all have been occasioned by her apprehensions of my having overheard it? And yet there was something in the demeanour of Athanasia that I could not bring myself to reconcile entirely with any one of these suppositions. Had she feared that I had overheard any confession of guilt,—even of the guilt of another,—surely some semblance of shame would have been mingled with her looks of terror. Had she apprehended only the discovery of an innocent love, surely her blushes would have been deeper, and her boldness less. Yet the last solution of the difficulty was that which haunted me the most powerfully.

When I came forth into the open air I was astonished to perceive that the sun was already high in heaven, and I proceeded in haste towards the villa, not doubting that Sextus and Capito would be greatly astonished by the length of my absence. I found them and the ladies walking under the northern colonnade, having returned, as they told me, from a fruitless search after me through almost the whole of the garden. I looked to Athanasia, as if to signify that she well knew where I might have been

found ; but, although I saw that she perfectly understood my meaning, she said nothing in explanation. Sextus drew me aside shortly after, and told me that his father had sent to inform him that our presence was necessary in the city before supper-time, to attend a great entertainment which was to be given that evening by the lady whose cause he had successfully pleaded in the Forum on the preceding day ; which lady, I now for the first time learned, was no other than the same Marcia Rubellia to whom his father was very anxious the youth should be married. The success of this pleading had increased very much the wealth of the lady, and of course, as Sextus very well knew, the anxiety of Licinius for the proposed union ; and to remain at the villa any longer was, he said, entirely impossible, since he already suspected his father had not been quite pleased with him for leaving the Forum the day before without staying to hear out a cause in which his duty, if not his inclination, ought to have made him feel so greatly interested.

We bade adieu, therefore, to our kind host and the young ladies, not without more reluctance than either of us durst express, and ready promises to return soon again to the villa. We found Dromo and Boto waiting for us at the gate, the former of whom looked a thousand unutterable things at his young master and me when we joined them, while the latter appeared to be as joyful in seeing me again as if we had been parted for a twelvemonth. The two slaves were mounted on asses, but they led horses for our conveyance ; so we mounted with all speed, and were soon beyond the beautiful enclosures of the villa of Capito. As soon as we were fairly out of sight of the house, Dromo began to ply Sextus with innumerable questions about the result of the visit, all of them in bad Greek ; that, as he said, there might be no chance of what passed being understood by *the druid* ; for by that venerable designation, he informed us, the primitive Boto had already come to be best known in the vestibule of Licinius. " Ah ! " quoth he, " there is no need for many words ; I am sure my young master has not been behindhand with himself. If he has, it is no fault of mine, however. I put Opportunity into his hands, and she, you

know, as the poets say, has only one lock of hair, and that is in front."

Sextus being very shy of entering into particulars, I found myself obliged to take upon me the satisfying of the curiosity of this inquisitive varlet, which I did in a manner that much astonished Sextus, who by no means suspected that in the midst of my own attention to the other cousin I had been able to take so much notice of what passed between him and Sempronia. However, the good youth took a little raillery all in good part, and we laughed loudly in unison at the triumphant capers which the whip of Dromo made his poor ass exhibit in testimony of his satisfaction with the progress which all things appeared to be making. We reached the mansion of Licinius about three hours after noon, and were told by the slaves in attendance that Xerophrastes had gone out some time before, and that Licinius himself was already busy in arraying himself for the feast of Rubellia.

CHAPTER IX.

HER mansion was situated about the middle of the Suburra, in a neighbourhood nowise splendid, and itself distinguished, on the side fronting to the street, by no uncommon marks of elegance or opulence. A plain brick wall covered almost the whole of the building from the eye of the passenger ; and what was seen deserved the praise of neatness rather than that of magnificence. Nevertheless, the moment one had passed the gate, and entered the court, one could not help perceiving that taste and wealth had been alike expended abundantly on the residence of Rubellia : for the broad terrace and gallery behind were lavishly adorned, the one with sculpture and the other with paintings ; and the gardens, which these overlooked, appeared to be both extensive and elaborate.

We were conducted through several pillared halls, and then up a wide staircase, of somewhat sombre magnifi-

cence, into the chamber, where the company were already in part assembled, and busy in offering their congratulations to the mistress of the feast. She was so much engaged with their flatteries that she did not at first perceive our entrance ; but as soon as she knew who had come, the chief part of her attention was devoted, I shall not say in what proportions, between her victorious advocate and his blushing son. Nevertheless, the kinsman of Licinius and the companion of young Sextus had no occasion to accuse the fair lady of negligence, although he was not quite so vain as to imagine that he owed all her civilities to the favourable impression of his own figure and address.

To me the whole scene was of course perfectly novel—to you, could you behold it at this moment, it would, I am sure, be almost equally so ; for rapidly as we have been advancing in our imitation of the manners of the capital, our island most unquestionably has never yet displayed any thing that could sustain the smallest comparison with what then met my eyes in the stately saloon of this luxurious widow. The group around her was gay and various, and she herself was exquisitely worthy of forming its centre ; for she was young and handsome, and dressed in a style of the utmost splendour, and her deportment was equally elegant and vivacious.

Her complexion was of that clear rich brown which lends to the eye a greater brilliancy than the most exquisite contrast of red and white ; and over which the blood, when it does come into the face, diffuses at once the warmest and the deepest of blushes. Her hair appeared to be perfectly black, unless where the light streaming from behind her gave an edging of glossy brown to the thick masses of her curls. Her robe of crimson silk was fastened by a girdle, which seemed to consist of nothing but rubies and emeralds, strung upon threads of gold. She wore a tiara that rose high above her tresses, and was all over resplendent with flowers woven in jewelry ; and around her delicate wrists and ankles were twined broad chains of virgin gold, interspersed with alternate wreaths of sapphire. Her form was the perfection of luxury ; and although I have said

that her deportment was in general lively and brilliant, yet there was a soft seriousness that every now and then settled in her eyes which gave her for a moment a look of melancholy that seemed to me more likely to be in harmony with the secret nature of her disposition. I watched her in particular when she spoke to Sextus: her full rich-toned voice was then merry, and her large eyes sparkled; but when she was engaged with any other person she could not help gazing on the beautiful youth in silence; and then it was that her countenance wore its deepest expression of calmness—I had almost said, of sadness.

Had I not spent the preceding day at the villa of Capito, I dare say I should have wondered at the coldness with which Sextus appeared to receive all the marks of her favour; and as it was, I could not help contemplating this fair creature with a mixture of admiration and pity,—emotions, one of which was, I doubt not, partaken by all present—the other was probably confined to myself. I had been gazing on her in this manner I know not how long, from another part of the room, when I heard a hearty chuckle from behind me, and thought I could not be unacquainted with the voice. Looking round, I saw, not without delight, the stately figure of my Prætorian captain, Sabinus, whose cheerful eye soon distinguished me, and who forthwith came up to salute me in the most friendly manner. I introduced him to Licinius and Sextus, the former of whom expressed himself as being much gratified with the attention the centurion had shown to me during our voyage; so that I felt myself, as it were, no longer a stranger in the place; and the lutes and trumpets at that moment announcing that supper was ready to be served up, I took care to keep close to Sabinus, and to place myself near him on the couch.

The room in which the feast was prepared communicated by a pair of brazen folding-doors, richly sculptured, with that in which the company had assembled; but from it, although the sun had not yet gone down, all light was excluded, excepting what streamed from golden candelabra and broad lamps of bronze suspended overhead from the high and painted ceiling. The party might con-

sist of about twenty, who reclined along one semicircular couch, the covers of which were of the softest down and the frame-work inlaid with ivory,—the part of the room enclosed by its outline, which resembled that of a horse-shoe, being occupied with the table, an open space, to which the attendants had free access. We had no sooner taken our seats than a crowd of slaves entered carrying large boards upon their heads, which being forthwith arranged on the table, were seen to be loaded with dishes of gold and silver and all manner of drinking vessels, also with vases of rare flowers, and urns of perfume. But how did the countenance of Sabinus brighten when the trumpet sounded a second time, as if from below, and the floor of the chamber was suddenly, as it were, pierced in twain, and the pealing music ushered up a huge roasted boar, all wreathed with stately garnishings, and standing erect on his golden platform as on a chariot of triumph!

“Ah! my dear boy,” cries he, “here comes the true king of beasts, and only legitimate monarch of the woods. What should we not have given for a slice of him when we were pent up, half-starved and fainting, in that abominable ship of ours! All hail, most potent conqueror! but whether Germanic or Asiatic be thy proper title I shall soon know, when that expert Ethiopian has daintily carved and divided thee.”

But why should I attempt to describe to you the particulars of the feast? Let it suffice, that whatever idea I had formed of Roman luxury was far surpassed, and that the splendour of the entertainment engaged the attention of all except Rubellia herself, who, reclining immediately above Sextus, kept her eyes fixed almost all the time it lasted upon his luxuriant curls of dark hair, unless when she caused the young damsel her cup-bearer to pour out to her wine in a goblet of onyx, which she touched with her lips and then handed to the indifferent boy. When the supper was half over the folding-doors were again thrown open, and there entered a group of maidens and beautiful youths, who danced before us to the music of the lute, and scattered crowns of roses at the feet of Rubellia and her guests. She herself placed one of them on

the head of Sextus, and another on that of his father, who lay on the other side of her, and then caused a large cup of wine to be carried all around, whereof each of us tasted, and drank to the health of the orator, in whose honour the entertainment was made. The ladies that were present imitated the example of the hostess, and crowned such as were by them; but Sabinus and I, not being near enough to any of them, received that courtesy from some of the dancing maidens. Libations were poured out abundantly on the marble floor, and all the gods were invoked to shower down their blessings on Rubellia and those that had been so fortunate as to serve her. Sweet strains of music resounded through the tall pillars of the banqueting-room, and the lamps burned heavily in an atmosphere overloaded with perfumes.

It appeared to me from the beginning that my friend Sabinus witnessed, not without some feelings of displeasure, the excessive attentions which Rubellia lavished on young Sextus; and I gathered, from the way in which he every now and then looked towards them during the supper, that, had the place permitted, he would not have allowed such things to go on without some comment. But when we had left the banqueting-room and removed to another apartment, where, amid various entertainments of dancing, music, and recitation, Rubellia still retained close to herself the heir of Licinius, the centurion made to himself abundant amends for the previous restraint to which his temper had been subjected.

"Confess now," said he, "that she is a lovely creature, and that your British beauties are tame and insipid when compared with such a specimen of Roman fascination; and confess, withal, that this curled boy is either the most ignorant or the most insusceptible of his sex. Good Heavens! in what a different style was she treated by that old magistrate whose very bust there in the corner looks quite blank and disconsolate with its great white eyes, while she, that sat for so many months pale and weeping by his bedside, is thinking of nothing but to bestow all the wealth he left her on a beardless stripling, who appears to regard the bust and the beauty with almost equal indifference. Alas! poor old withered

Leberinus, little did you imagine that so small a vial would suffice to hold all her tears. My only wonder is, that she still permits your marble image to occupy even a corner of her mansion; but no doubt you will soon be sent on your travels. I dare say some cold pedestal in the garden will, ere long, be the best berth you need look for. Well, well, you see what fools we may all be made by the cunning of these pretty crocodiles. Thank the stars, I have, as yet at least, escaped that worst of all calamities. I hope my dotage, when it does come, will not show itself in the same shape with that of my good old friend. Had she wished to marry some respectable man, who might be a protection to her and her money, one might have thought less of the matter; but this is really too much. I hope the ghost of the worthy prætor will not frown unseen by her bedside the night she takes this Adonis to her arms. If I were in his place I should give her curtains a pretty shake. By Hermes! it would not be a pretty monument and a flowery epitaph that would make me lie still."

"How long is it," said I, "since this venerable magistrate died? Surely she has allowed him the decency of a twelvemonth's grief, before she began to give fine suppers, and perceive the beauty of Sextus?"

"Whether it be a twelvemonth ago or not," replied the centurion, "is more than I can take upon me to decide; all I know is, that it appears to me as if it were but yesterday that I supped here (it was just before I set off for Britain), and saw the young lady reclining, even at table, with those long black curls of hers in the bosom of the emaciated Leberinus. By Jupiter! the old man would not taste a drop of wine unless she kissed the cup—she coaxed every morsel he swallowed down his throat, and clasped the garland round his bald pate with her own fingers; ay, twice before that sleek physician, that solemn-faced Greek, whom you see at this moment talking with your kinsman, advised her to have him carried to his bed. For all the gravity of his looks, I would lay a trifle that worthy Bœotian has his own thoughts about what is passing as well as I. But the worst-pleased face in the whole room is, I think, that of old Rubellius himself yon-

der, who has just come in, without I suppose being aware that any such feast as this was going forward. Without question, the crafty old usurer is of opinion he might have been invited. I promise you I can interpret the glances of that gray-headed extortioner to a nicety—(well I may, for it is not the first time I have had an opportunity of studying them). Well, well," quoth he to himself, "she may do as she will with the bonds of Leberinus; but she might have remembered that a codicil can be easily tacked to the end of a living man's testament."

"But, after all," said I, "one must admit, that if she married old Leberinus to please her father, the widow has some right to choose her second husband according to the pattern of her own fancy."

"Oh! by all means," answered he; "let her please herself; let her make a fool of herself now, if she will. She may perhaps learn, some time or other, that it is as possible to have too young a husband as to have too old a one."

"Come now, Sabinus," said I, (for the bitterness with which he spoke convinced me what was at the bottom of his mind), "confess that if she had selected some well-made, middle-aged man—some respectable man—some man of note and distinction, you would have judged less harshly of poor Rubellia; some good-looking captain of Prætorians, we shall say."

"Ah! you cunning dog," said he; "who would have thought that you had brought so much wickedness from that new world of yours? But do you really think she will wed Sextus? The boy appears strangely cold. I should not wonder, when all is done, if the match were more of the orator's seeking than his own."

"I can only tell you," said I, "that I have never heard Licinius mention any thing about it; and I dare say Sextus would be very sorry to think of losing his liberty for the sake of the wealth of Leberinus—ay, or for that of old Rubellius to boot."

"Ah! my young friend," quoth he, "you are not quite acquainted with the way in which these matters are managed at Rome. If we had you six weeks at the other side of the Viminal we should teach you better."

I know not how long this sort of talk might have lasted ; but Licinius put an end to it by joining us, and soon engaged the worthy centurion and several more of us with some lively but unintelligible discussion on the merits of some new edict, of which none of us had ever heard, or were likely ever to hear any thing again. We were glad to escape from the lawyer into another room, where some Greek slaves were performing a sort of comic pantomime that appeared to give more delight to old Rubellius than any other of the spectators. As for Sextus, I saw plainly that he was quite weary of the entertainment, and anxious to get away ; but we were obliged to remain till after Licinius was gone, for it was evident that he wished his son to see out the last. But no sooner had we heard his chariot drive off, than the young man and I took leave of the lady, and withdrew. Sabinus lingered a moment behind us, and then joined us in the vestibule, from which, his course lying so far in the same direction as ours, we all proceeded homewards on foot ; and it was very fortunate, as you shall hear, that we had on this occasion the company of the centurion, for not a few things occurred that night which I should have been sorry not to have observed, and of which, but for him, it would nevertheless have been impossible for me to have been witness.

We had proceeded along the street of the Suburra for a considerable space, and were already beneath the shade of the great temple of Isis and Serapis (which stands on the northern side of the Esquiline Hill, nigh over-against the Amphitheatre of Vespasian), when, from the opposite side of the way, we were hailed by a small party of soldiers, who, as it turned out, had been sent from the Prætorian camp in search of Sabinus, and one of whom had now recognised his gait and stature, notwithstanding the obscurity of the hour and the distance at which we were walking. The centurion went aside with the leader of these men for some moments, and then informed us that it was very fortunate they had so easily recognised him, as the business on which they had been sent was such as did not admit of being negligently dealt with. "To-morrow," said he, pointing to the amphitheatre before us, "that glorious edifice is to be the scene of one of the

grandest shows exhibited by Trajan since his accession to the empire. It is the anniversary of the day on which he was adopted by Nerva, and the splendour of the spectacle will be in proportion to the gratitude and veneration with which he at all times regards the memory of that excellent benefactor. But there are some parts of the exhibition that I am afraid old Nerva, could he be present to behold them, would not regard with the same feelings as his successor."

"Surely," said I, "the beneficent Trajan will not stain the expression of his gratitude by any thing unworthy of himself, or that could give displeasure to Nerva?"

"Nay," replied the centurion, "it is not for me to talk about any thing that Trajan chooses to do being unworthy of Trajan; but you well know that Nerva would never suffer any of the Christians to be molested during his reign, and now here are some of these unhappy fanatics, that are to be compelled either to renounce their faith in the face of the assembly to-morrow, or to die on the arena. It is to inspect the condition of these unfortunates, who, I know not for what reason, are confined in a dungeon below the ramparts in the vicinity of our camp, and to announce to them the final determination of their fate, that I, as centurion of the night, have now been summoned. If you are curious to see the men, you are at liberty to go along with me, and I shall be greatly obliged to you for your company to boot."

My curiosity having been considerably excited in regard to the new faith and its adherents, in consequence of certain circumstances, some of which I have already narrated, I was very desirous to accept of this offer. Nor did Sextus any sooner perceive that such was my inclination than he advised me to gratify it, undertaking, at the same time, himself to go straight homewards, and satisfy his father, in case of any inquiry, that I was in a place of safety, and under the protection of Sabinus. With him therefore, and with his Prætorians, I proceeded along various streets which led us by the skirts of the Esquiline and Viminal Hills, on to the region of the Mounds of Tarquin, over-against which, as you have heard, the great camp of those bands is situated,—if indeed that

ought of right to be called by the name of a camp which is itself a city of no slender dimensions, and built with great splendour of architecture, spread out beyond the limits of Rome, for the accommodation of that proud soldiery. There my friend took me into his own chamber, and furnished me with a cloak and helmet, that I might excite no suspicion by accompanying him on his errand. The watch-word of the night also was given unto me, which, as I call to mind, was *silent faith*; and shortly issuing forth a second time, we came to the gate of the prison-house wherein the Christians were lying.

Now, when we had entered into the guard-room, we found it crowded with spearmen of Sabinus's band, some of whom were playing at dice, others carousing jovially, and many wrapped up in their mantles, and asleep upon the floor, while a few only were sitting beneath the porch with their spears in their hands, and leaning upon their bucklers. From one of the elder of these the centurion, after having drawn him aside out of the company, made inquiry straightway concerning the names and condition of the prisoners, and whether as yet they had received any intelligence of that which was to come to pass on the morrow. The soldier, who was a grave man and well stricken in years, made answer, "that of a surety the men were free-born and of decent estate, and that he had not heard of any thing else being laid to their charge, excepting that which concerned their religion. Since they have been here," he continued, "I have been several times set on watch over them, and twice have I lain with one of them in his dungeon: yet have I heard no complaints from any of them, for in all things they are patient. One of them only is to suffer to-morrow—but for him I am especially concerned, for he was known to me of old, having served often with me when I was a horseman in the army of Titus, all through the war of Palestine, and at the siege of Jerusalem."

"And of what country is he?" said Sabinus. "Is he also a Roman?"

"No, sir," answered the spearman, "he is no Roman; but he was of a troop of the allies that was joined oftentimes to our legion, and I have seen him bear himself on

the day of battle as well as any Roman of us all. He is by birth a Greek of the seacoast ; but his mother was of the nation of the Jews, and he was brought up from his youth according to their law."

"And yet, although the son of a Jewess, he was with us, say you, at the siege of Jerusalem?"

"Even so," replied the man ; "and not he only, but many others ; for the Jews, you know, were divided against themselves ; and of all them that were Christians, it was said that not one abode in the city, or gave help to defend it. For, as this man himself hath sworn to me, the oracles of the Christians, and their prophets, had of old given warning that the city must fall into the hands of Cæsar, by reason of the wickedness of that people. Wherefore, when we set our camp over-against Jerusalem, these men all passed out from the city, with their wives and their children, and dwelt safely in the mountainous country, until all things were fulfilled. But some of these young men fought in our camp, and did good service, because the place was known to them, and they had acquaintance with all the secrets of the Rock. Of these, this man was one. He and all his household had departed from the ancient religion of the Jews, and were believers in the doctrines of the Christians, for which cause he is to suffer on the morrow ; and of that, although I have not spoken to him this evening, I think he has already received some intelligence, for certain of his friends passed in to him, and they covered their faces as they went in, as if weeping."

"Are these friends still with him?" said Sabinus.

"Yes," answered he, "for I must have seen them had they come forth again. Without doubt, the two women are still with him in his dungeon."

"Women!" quoth Sabinus ; "and of what condition think you they may be?"

"That I know not," replied the soldier ; "for, as I have said, they walked in muffled in their mantles. But one of them, at least, is a Roman, for I heard her speak to him that is by the door of the dungeon."

"How long is it," said the centurion, "since they went into this prison?"

“ More than an hour,” replied the soldier, looking at the water-clock that stood beneath the porch ; “ and if they be Christians, they are not yet about to depart, for they never separate without singing together, which is their favourite manner of worship.”

He had scarcely uttered these words, when the soldiers that were carousing within the guard-room became silent, and we heard the voices of those that were in the dungeon singing together in a sweet and lowly manner.

“ Ah, sir !” said the old soldier, “ I thought it would be even so ; there is not a spearman in the band that would not willingly watch here a whole night, could he be sure of hearing that melody. Well do I know that soft voice—Hear now, how she sings by herself—and there again, that deep strong note—that is the voice of the prisoner.”

“ Hush !” quoth the centurion ; “ heard you ever any thing half so divine ? Are these words Greek or Syrian ?”

“ What the words are I know not,” said the soldier ; “ but I know the tune well ; I have heard it played many a night with hautboy, and clarion, and dulcimer, on the high walls of Jerusalem, while the old city was beleaguered.”

“ It is some old Jewish tune then,” said Sabinus ; “ I knew not those barbarians had had half so much art.”

“ Why, as for that, sir,” replied the man, “ I have been all over Greece and Egypt—to say nothing of Italy—and I never heard any music like that music of the Jews. Why, when they came down to join the battle, their trumpets sounded so gloriously that we wondered how it was possible for them ever to be driven back ; and then, when their gates were closed, and they sent out to beg their dead, they would play such solemn awful notes of lamentation that the plunderers stood still to listen, and their warriors were delivered to them with all their mail as they had fallen.”

“ And the Christians also,” said Sabinus, “ had the same tunes ?”

“ Oh yes, sir—why, for that matter, these very tunes may have been among them, for aught we know, since the beginning of their nation. I have stood sentinel with this very man, and seen the tears run down his cheeks by the

starlight, when he heard the music from the city, as the Jewish captains were going their rounds upon the battlements."

"But this, surely," said the centurion, "is no warlike melody."

"I know not," quoth the old soldier, "whether it be or not—but I am sure it sounds not like any music of sorrow,—and yet, what plaintive tones are in the part of that female voice!"

"The bass sounds triumphantly, in good sooth."

"Ay, sir, but that is the old man's own voice—I am sure he will keep a good heart to the end, even though they should be singing their farewell to him. Well, the emperor loses a good soldier the hour old Thraso dies. I wish to Jupiter he had not been a Christian, or had kept his religion to himself. But as for changing now, you might as well think of persuading the prince himself to be a Jew, as talk to Thraso about that."

"That last high strain, however," quoth Sabinus, "has ended their singing. Let us speak to the women as they come out; and if it be so that the man is already aware of what is to be done to-morrow, I see not why we should trouble him with entering his cell. He has but a few hours to live, and I would not willingly disturb him."

"I hear them coming," said the soldier.

"Then do you meet them," said Sabinus, "and tell them that the centurion wishes to speak to them ere they go away—we will retire some space, and talk to them out of hearing of the guard."

With that he and I withdrew to the other side of the way, over-against the door of the prison; and we stood there waiting for the women under a certain old fig-tree, that grew close by the city wall. In a few minutes two persons, arrayed even as the soldier had described, drew near to us; and one of them, without uncovering her countenance, said,—“Master, we trust we have done no evil in visiting the prisoners; had it been so, surely we should not have been permitted to enter without question or difficulty proposed.”

These words were spoken in a voice tremulous and agitated, as if with grief rather than with terror; but I

could not help starting when I heard them, for there were one or two tones in the voice that I thought I could not be mistaken in believing I had heard before; however, I commanded myself, and heard in silence what Sabinus replied to the women.

“Be not alarmed,” said he; “there is no offence committed, for no orders have been issued to prevent these men from seeing their friends. I sent for you, not to find fault with what you have done, but only to ask whether this prisoner has already been told that the emperor has announced his resolution concerning him, and that he must die to-morrow, in the Amphitheatre of Vespasian, unless he renounce his superstition.”

“He knows all,” answered the same voice; “and is prepared for all things but dishonour.”

“By heavens! Valerius,” whispered Sabinus, “it is no mean person that speaks so—this is the voice and the gesture of a Roman lady.” Then raising his voice, “In that case there is no need for my going into the dungeon; and yet, could I hope to say any thing that might tend to make him change his purpose, I would most gladly do so. The emperor is as humane as he is just, and unless when rebellious obstinacy shuts the gates of mercy, he is the last that would consent to the shedding of any blood. For this man, of whose history I have just been hearing something, I am in a particular manner interested, and to save him, I wish only I had power equal to my inclination. It is Thraso of whom I speak—Is there no chance of convincing him?”

“He is already convinced,” replied the voice, “and no one can move him. Thraso will die in honour, as he has lived in honour.”

“Could his friends do nothing to bend him?”

“His friends have been with him already,” said the voice, again becoming every moment more clear and steadfast; “but they were poor friends that would seek to save the body of Thraso at the expense of the soul of Thraso.”

This last sentence was spoken so distinctly, that I knew I could no longer be mistaken; and I was on the brink of speaking out, without thinking of the consequences that

might possibly occur, when she that had spoken, after appearing to regard me steadily through her veil, uttered a faint cry, and dropping on her knees before Sabinus, said, "Oh, sir! to us also be merciful, and let us go hence ere any one behold us!"

"Go in peace, lady," answered the centurion, "and henceforth be prudent as well as kind;" and they went away from us, and were soon lost to our sight in the windings of the street. We stood there for some moments in silence, looking towards the place where they disappeared. "Strange superstition," said Sabinus; "what heroism dwells with this madness!—you see how little these men regard their lives;—nay, even women, and Roman women too—you see how their nature is changed by it."

"It is, indeed, a most strange spectacle," said I; "but what is to be the end of it, if this spirit become diffused widely among the people?"

"In truth I know not," answered the centurion: "but many have already died from this cause, and yet we have heard of none who had once embraced this faith renouncing it out of fear for their lives."

"And in the days of Nero and Domitian," said I, "were not many hundreds of them punished even here in the capital?"

"You are far, very far within the mark, Valerius," said he, "when you speak of hundreds; and not a few of those that were sent into exile in those days, because of their Christianity, were, as you may have heard, of no ordinary condition. Among these there were Flavius Clemens, the consular, and his wife Domitilla; both of whom I have often seen in my youth—both relations to the family of Vespasian—whom, notwithstanding, all the splendour of the imperial blood could not save from the common fate of their sect. But Nerva suffered all of them to live in peace, and recalled such as were in exile, excepting only Domitilla, whose fate has been regretted by all men; but I suppose it was not at first judged safe to recall her, lest any tumult should have been excited in her name, by those that regretted (and I am sorry to say these were not a few) the wicked license of which they had been deprived by the death of her tyrannical kinsman, and the

transition of the imperial dignity into another line. She also with whom we have been speaking is, I am sure, a Roman lady of condition ; and you may judge of her zeal, when you see that it brings her hither at midnight, to mingle tears and prayers with those of an old legionary, such as this Thraso. Did you observe that the other female both walked and stood behind her. You may depend upon it that was her slave or freed wōman."

"I observed all this," answered I. But little did Sabinus suspect that I had observed so much more than himself had done. Little did he know with what emotions I had listened to all that had been said. He had never seen Athanasia, nor could he read my secret thoughts, to understand with what feelings I had learned that Athanasia was a Christian. Before parting from him, I said I should still be gratified with being permitted to see Thraso ; and although he declined entering himself, he accordingly gave command that the door of his dungeon should be opened for me, requesting me, at the same time, to refrain from saying any thing more to the man than was necessary for explaining the apparent purpose of my visit—the communication, namely, of the fate that was reserved for him and his companions on the morrow.

So saying, the centurion withdrew to the camp ; and the same old spearman with whom he had conversed at the porch carried a torch in his hand, and showed me the way into the dungeon of the prisoner.

CHAPTER X.

BETWEEN the first door, whereof the soldier relaxed the heavy bolts, and the second, which appeared to be almost entirely formed of iron, there intervened a short space, which was occupied by a few broad steps of old and very massive mason-work ; and upon the lowest of these steps I stood waiting till he should open the second door. It was some time before he accomplished this, for

several keys were applied before he discovered the right one; but at last the lock turned, and the heavy door swung away from before him so speedily that the air, rushing out of the vault, extinguished in a moment the flame of the torch; insomuch, that we had no light excepting that which streamed from an aperture high up in the wall of the dungeon itself; a feeble ray of starlight alone—for the moon had long ere this time been gone down, which, nevertheless, sufficed to show us to the prisoner, although we at first could see nothing of him.

"Soldiers," said the old man, in a voice of perfect calmness, "for what reason are you come?"

"We come," said my companion, "by command of the centurion, to inform you of things which we would willingly not have to tell—to-morrow Trajan opens the Amphitheatre of Vespasian."

"My old comrade," said the prisoner, interrupting him, "is it your voice I hear? I know all this already; and you know of old that I fear not the face of death."

"Alas! Thraso, I know well you fear not death; yet why, when there is no need, should you cast away life? Think well, I beseech you, and reserve yourself for a better day."

"The dawn of that better day, Romans, already begins to open upon my eyes. I see the east red with the promise of its brightness. Would you have me tarry in darkness, when I am invited to walk forth into the light?"

"Thraso, your words rejoice me," answered the spearman; "and I am sure all will rejoice in hearing that you have at length come to think thus—Trajan himself will rejoice. You have but to say the word, and you are free."

"You mean kindly," said the old man, rising from his pallet, and walking towards us as far as his fetters permitted; "you mean kindly, therefore I blame you not. But you are much mistaken—I have but to keep silence, and I am free."

"Alas! Thraso, what mean you? Do you know what you say? You must worship the gods in the morning, else you die."

"Evening and morning, and for ever, I must worship

the God that made heaven and the earth. If I bow down to the idols of Trajan, I buy the life of a day at the price of death everlasting. Tempt me not in your kindness: I fell once. Great God, preserve me from falling! I have bid farewell to my friends already. Leave me to spend these few hours by myself—leave me to prepare the flesh for that from which the spirit shrinks not." So saying, he extended his hand to the spearman, and the two old men embraced each other tenderly before me.

"Prisoner," said I, "if there be any thing in which we can serve you, command our aid: we have already done our duty to the centurion; if, without transgressing that, we can do any thing that may give ease to your mind now, or, after you are gone, comfort to your kindred, you have but to speak."

"Sir," replied he, "I see by the eagle wings on your helmet that you are one in authority, and I hear by your voice that you are young. There is a certain thing concerning which I had some purpose to speak to this my old brother in arms; but if I may rely on that which you have said, without question your power is greater to execute that which I desire."

"Speak with confidence," said I; "although I am a Roman, and bear all loyalty to the prince, yet this Prætorian helmet is not mine, and I have but assumed it for the sake of having access to your prison. I am no soldier of Trajan: whatever I can do for you without harm to others, speak, and I will do it. I will swear to you—"

"Nay, sir," said he, "swear not—mock not the God of heaven by invoking idol or demon—I believe your word; but there is no need why any other should be witness to my request."

"I will retire," said the spearman, "and keep watch at the door; surely there is no need for me to say that whatever I might hear should be safe within me. But I am no more than a poor spearman, and this young patrician can do much more than I. Let him alone hear and execute your commands."

"Be it so," said the prisoner, a second time embracing him; "I would not willingly expose you to any needless

danger; and yet I see not what danger there is in all that I have to ask."

With this the old spearman withdrew; and being left alone with Thraso, I took his hand, and sitting down beside him on his pallet, shortly explained to him the circumstances under which I had come thither.

"Young sir," said he, "I know not what is about the sound of your voice, and the frankness of your demeanour; that makes me feel confidence enough to intrust you with a certain thing, which concerns not myself, nor any hope of mine, for that were little—but the interests of one that is far dearer to me than I can express, and who, I hope, will live many happy days upon earth, after I shall have sealed my belief in the message of God by blood that has of old been exposed a thousand times to all mortal perils, for the sake of things whereof I have long perceived the worthlessness. But a very short while ago, and I might have executed this thing for myself; but weakness overcame me at the moment of parting, and I forgot till it was too late."

"If it be any thing which you would have me convey to any one, say where I may find the person," I said, "and be assured I shall deliver it in safety."

"Sir," he proceeded, "it is even so; I have here with me certain writings, which I have carried for these twenty years continually in my bosom. Among these is one of the sacred books of the faith for which I am to die, and I would fain have it placed in the hands of one to whom I know it will be dearest of all, for the sake of that which it contains; but, I hope dear also for the sake of him that bequeaths it. Will you seek out a certain Roman lady, and undertake to give into her own hands, in secret, the scroll which I shall give you?"

"I will do my endeavour," said I; "and if I cannot find means to execute your command, I shall destroy the book with my own hands before I quit Rome—for my stay here is uncertain."

"If you cannot find means to do what I ask safely," he replied, "I do not bid you destroy the book—that is yours, to do with as it shall seem good to you—but I conjure you to read it before you throw it away. Nay, even

as it is, I conjure you to read it before you seek to give it to her whose name I shall mention."

"Old man," said I, "almost I believe that I already know her name, and more besides. If it be so that I have conjectured aright, be assured that all you ask shall be fulfilled to the letter; be assured also, that I would die with you to-morrow, rather than live to be the cause or instrument of any evil thing to her that but now visited you in your dungeon."

"Alas!" cried the old man, starting up, "lay not this also, Oh Lord! upon my head. Let the old bear witness—but let the young be spared, to serve thee in happier years upon the earth!"

"Be not afraid," said I; "if it was Athanasia, no one suspected it but myself; and I have already told you that I would die rather than bring evil upon her head."

"Yes," he answered, after a pause—"it was, indeed, Athanasia. Yes, young man, who is it but she that would have left the halls of nobles, and the couches of peace, to breathe at midnight the air of a dungeon, that she might solace the last moments of a poor man, and, save the bond of Christ, of a stranger! But if you have known her before, and spoken with her before, then surely she must indeed be safe in your hands. You know where she dwells—that I myself know not. Here is the scroll, from which that noble maiden has heard my humble voice essay to expound the words of eternal life. I charge you to approach her with reverence, and give into her own hands my dying bequest; yet, as I have said, deliver it not to her till you have yourself read what it contains."

"Christian," said I, placing the writing in my bosom, "have no fear—I will read your book, and ere two nights have gone over my head, I shall find means to place it in the hands of Athanasia; and now, farewell."

"Nay, not yet, for the last time. Will you not come in the morning and behold the death of a Christian?"

"Alas!" said I, "what will it avail that I should torture myself with looking on the shedding of your blood? The prince may have reason to regard you as an offender against the state; but I have spoken with you in your solitude, and I know that your heart is noble. Would to

heaven, that by going thither I could avert your fate! but that is in your own hands, and though die you will, why should I see you die?"

"Methinks, sir," he replied, "it may be weakness; but yet methinks it would give me some further comfort in my death to know that there was at least one Roman there who would not see me die without pity; and besides, I must have you constrain yourself, that you may be able to carry the tidings of my departure to her of whom we have spoken. Her prayers will be with me, but not her eyes. You must tell Athanasia the manner of my death."

"For that cause," said I, "I will constrain myself, and be present in the amphitheatre."

"Then, farewell," said he; "and yet go not. In whatsoever faith you live, in whatsoever faith you die, the blessing of an old man and a Christian can do you no harm." So saying, the old man stood up, and leaning his hand on my head as I sat, pronounced over me a blessing which I never shall forget. "The Lord bless thee—the Lord enlighten thy darkness—the Lord plant his seed in thy kind heart—the Lord give thee also to die the death of a Christian!"

When he had said so, he sat down again; and I departed greatly oppressed in spirit, yet feeling, I know not how or why, as I would rather have lost many merry days than that dark and sorrowful hour in the prison of this old man. The soldiers in the guard-room were so much engaged in their different occupations, that they heeded me not as I stepped silently to the gate; and I was soon out of sight of their flaming watch-fires, and far from the sounds of that noisy mirth of theirs, which contrasted so strangely with the mournful silence of the dungeon I had quitted.

There was something in the total silence of the proud Roman streets—in their dreary and heavy desertedness—that accorded far better with the feelings of my mind as I walked along; and I ruminated on all that I had seen and heard, without being disturbed by any sight or sound of life, or the excitation of life. Wherever there is shadow there is also brightness; but the uniform face of

the gray twilight admits of no bold contrasts of the deep and the dazzling; and it is then that the mind also can best array itself in the calm sobriety of contemplation. It was not, indeed, the first time that I had thought of death; but it was the first time that I had been in the presence of a human being foreseeing distinctly, and quietly awaiting, the termination of his mortal existence; and I could not help asking of myself, with a certain fearful anxiety, how, under similar circumstances of terror, I should have myself been able to sustain my spirits; to what resources I should, in such a moment, look for the support which seemed to have been vouchsafed so abundantly to this old man; by what charm, in fine—by what tenet of philosophy, or by what hope of religion, I should in the midst of life be able to reconcile myself to a voluntary embrace of death. To avoid disgrace, indeed, and dishonour, said I, I think I could be Roman enough to dare the worst; but this poor man is willing to die rather than acknowledge, by one offering on the altar, the deities in whose worship all his Greek ancestors have been trained; yet who, except perhaps a few obscure individuals that have adopted the same new superstition, would think this man dishonoured by returning to the religion of his fathers? Deep indeed must be his conviction of the truth of that which he professes to believe; serious indeed must be his faith, and high his trust. I could not help sometimes thinking to myself, what if, after all, his faith should be true and his trust wise! The thoughts of the gentle Athanasia, too, were not unmingled with my meditations concerning the heroic demeanour of Thraso; and I felt within myself some obscure presentiment, that from her lips I should yet receive explanation of all, which at that moment appeared to me to be so much enveloped in mystery.

Musing and meditating thus, it was no wonder that I, who knew so little of Rome, should have soon wandered from the straight way to the home of my kinsman. In truth, but that I at last caught at the turning of a street a glimpse of the Flavian Amphitheatre, which I had before passed on my way from the feast of Rubellia—and of which I had been hearing and thinking so much during my

visit to the quarters of the Prætorians—I might, perhaps, have been long enough of discovering whereabouts I was. I had a pretty accurate notion of the way from that grand edifice to the house of Licinius, and therefore moved towards it immediately, intending to pass straight down from thence into the Sacred Way. But when I came close to the amphitheatre, I found that, surrounded on all sides by a city of sleep and silence, that region was already filled with all manner of noise and tumult, in consequence of the preparations which had begun to be made for the spectacles of the succeeding day. The east was just beginning to be streaked with the first faint blushes of morning; but the torches and innumerable lanterns, in the hands of the different workmen and artificers employed there, threw more light than was sufficient to give me an idea of all that was going forward. On one side, the whole way was blocked up with a countless throng of wagons: the conductors of which, almost all of them Ethiopians and Numidians, were lashing each other's horses, and exchanging, in their barbarous tongues, violent outcries of, I doubt not, more barbarous wrath and execration. The fearful bellowings that resounded from any of the wagons which happened to be set in motion amid the choking throng intimated that savage beasts were confined within them; and when I had discovered this, and then regarded the prodigious multitude of the wagons, I cannot say what horror came over me at thinking what cruel sights, and how lavish in cruelty, were become the favourite pastimes of the most refined of people. I recognised the well-known short deep snort of the wild-boar, and the long hollow bark of the wolf; but a thousand fierce sounds, mingled with these, were equally new and terrific to my ears. One voice, however, was so grand in its notes of sullen rage, that I could not help asking a soldier, who sat on horseback near me, from what wild beast it proceeded. The man answered that it was a lion; but then what laughter arose among some of the rabble, that had overheard my interrogation; and what contemptuous looks were thrown upon me by the naked negroes, who sat grinning in the torch-light, on the tops of their carriages! Then one or two of the soldiers

would be compelled to ride into the midst of the confusion, to separate some of these wretches, fighting with their whips about precedence in the approaching entrance to the amphitheatre; and then it seemed to me that the horses could not away with the strong sickly smell of some of the beasts that were carried there, for they would prance and caper, and rear on end, and snort as if panic-struck, and dart themselves towards the other side; while some of the riders were thrown off in the midst of the tumult, and others, with fierce and strong bits, compelled the frightened or infuriated animals to endure the thing they abhorred—in their wrath and pride, forcing them even nearer than was necessary to the hated wagons. In another quarter, this close-mingled pile of carts and horses was surmounted by the enormous heads of elephants, thrust high up into the air, some of them with their huge lithe trunks lashing and beating (for they too, as you have heard, would rather die than snuff in the breath of these monsters of the woods), while the tiara'd heads of their leaders would be seen tossed to and fro by the contortions of those high necks, whereon for the most part they had their sitting-places. There was such a cry of cursing, and such a sound of whips and cords, and such blowing of horns, and whistling and screaming, and all this mixed with such roaring, and bellowing, and howling from the savage creatures within the caged wagons, that I stood, as it were, aghast and terrified, by reason of the tumult that was round about me.

I went in, however, for a moment, to the amphitheatre itself, by a little side-way, admission to which was afforded to me in return for a few pence. Here, as yet, all things were in order, for the hour had not yet come for giving the wild beasts entrance to the several huge dens, or cages, prepared for them along one side of the arena. A few carpenters only were seen in one corner, erecting a sort of low stage, and singing merrily at their work, of whom I made inquiry concerning the purpose of that which they were setting up; whereupon one of these fellows also began to jeer and to laugh, saying, "Whence come you, good sir, that you do not know a common scaffold when you see it? It is surely not the first time that

a Christian has had his head chopped off in this amphitheatre."

"By Pluto, I am not so sure about that matter," quoth another. "I don't know whether any of the dogs were ever beheaded here or not; if they have been, I can only say it was better than they deserved."

"There spoke a true man," cries a third. "I say with the old Flavian boys, that beheading is too pretty a death for a Jew, any day of the year. No, no; keep beheading for Romans—let citizens have their own. Things are come to a pretty pass nowadays, when they show us nothing but lions against lions, and tigers against tigers. By Jove, I would rather see one of those misbelieving atheists set right before the mouth of a true Getulian lion's cage, and hear his bones cracked ere all be over,—I say, I would rather see that, than fifty of your mere beast-fights."

"After all," rejoined the first, "it must be allowed that Domitian had a fine eye for the amphitheatre."

"Who doubts it?" says the other. "Rome has never seen any thing that deserved to be called a show since he was killed by that low pack of sneaking traitors. They say Nero was still better at that sort of work; but 'let the skinless Jew believe,' as the saying is, seeing is believing with me. I desire to see no better sport than poor Domitian gave us the very week before his death. We shall never live to see his like again!"

"Come, boys," rejoins one of the rest; "don't speak so despairingly neither. I had begun to think that these *good princes*, as they call them, would never show us a bit of real sport again at all. Now, this is at least something. Slowly and surely, as they say. Who can tell what may follow? and besides, if the worst come to the worst, we shall still have lions against lions, tigers against tigers, Dacians against Dacians, and now and then a Jew or a Christian, or whatever you please to call him, exhibited *solus* on such a stage as this. Come, come, don't make matters worse than they are."

The coarse laughter of these men, and the cold heartlessness of their discourse, sickened my very soul; and I remember, as if it were but yesterday, the loathing with

which I turned from them. The filthy ruffians showed that they knew well enough I was displeased with them, and I half-regretted, as I strode away from them, the want of that Prætorian helmet, which I well knew would have effectually preserved me from the insolence of their mirth. Howbeit, I was too well pleased to gain a distance at which I could no longer be troubled with them, and walked with rapid steps along the wide streets, over the tall buildings of which the light of the morning was now beginning to shine red and broad; while the air, being agitated with a quick and strong breeze, refreshed my cheeks and temples as I moved onward whereof, indeed, I had need, being heated with the glare and noise from which I had escaped, and faint withal, after the manner of the young, from the want of sleep.

CHAPTER XI.

I WAS admitted into the house by Dromo, who seemed to have been looking out for me; for he opened the door almost before I had time to knock at it. He regarded me as I entered with a very cunning face; insomuch that I comprehended, without difficulty, he believed me to have spent the night in some scene of debauch; but he, nevertheless, attended me, without saying a word, into my chamber. He then assumed a countenance of great reflection, and advised me, with much appearance of friendly concern, to go to bed, even although I could not stay long there; "because," said he, "you will feel much fresher when you get up; and let me tell you, you must be up early, for I have already been with Licinius, who intends to send Sextus with a present to the fair Lady Rubellia immediately after breakfast; and you may be sure Sextus will insist on your company, for he can do nothing without you. Ah! had it not been for a certain pretty creature that I could name, the young gentleman would not, I am confident, have permitted you to be

going the rounds in this way-by yourself. But I take it something amiss, and shall tell him so, that he did not depute me (who am not particularly enamoured of any young lady just at present) to go with you, and take care of your safety. I only wonder how you have got home so well, as it is."

"Indeed," said I, "good Dromo, I cannot help wondering a little at that part of it myself—for I have been all through the city, and lost my way half a dozen times over, and yet here you see I am."

"The more reason," quoth the slave, "that you should send some nice little offering to Mercury's temple over the way, in the morning—a few sesterces will be quite handsome—and if you have no objections I shall willingly take care of them for you. Mercury, as all men will tell you, is the great guardian of all that travel about in the dark; and besides, he is himself the patron of all love expeditions. But, to say the truth, you are not the only person that owes a gift to that shrine; for the worthy sage Xerophrastes—he, too, has been a night-traveller as well as you—and he has not yet come in. I have my doubts whether, when he does so, he will be as sober as you are—but I must take care to be at my post, and admit him in silence, for the time is not yet come to blow his private doings. Trust me, this is not the only vagary I have set down to his account—all in good time—all in good time. But what says my master Valerius touching the offering to the great god Hermes?"

I saw by the expression of the knave's face that it was necessary the sesterces should be forthcoming; though I had my doubts whether he would have been satisfied with seeing them intrusted to any other hands than his own.

"Here they are," said I, "my good Dromo; and remember, that although Mercury, among other things, is the god of thieves also, he will not be well pleased if you curtail his offering."

"Never mind," answered the varlet, as he was shuffling out of the room, "never mind—Mercury and I understand each other of old. Go you to bed, and try to get a little of your own old British red into your cheeks

again ; for Licinius has a hawk's eye, and will be sure to have his suspicions, if he see you come down with such a haggard wo-begone look as you wear just at present. You must remember you have not a long beard to cover half your face, and all your iniquities, like the venerable Xerophrates."

So saying, he left me to my couch, indeed, but not to slumber ; for busy thoughts kept me broad awake, till, after the lapse of perhaps an hour, young Sextus entered my apartment, already arrayed with more than usual elegance, to execute, however unwillingly, the message of his father. He had in his hand a small casket of open ivory-work, which he flung down on my bed, saying, "Get up, my dear Valerius, and save me at least from the pain of going alone, with these gewgaws, to this rich lady. Would to Heaven my father would marry her himself, and then I should have no objection to carry as many caskets for him as he pleases. But do you get up and assist me ; and as we go along, you shall tell me what you have seen and heard in company with your jovial Prætorian."

I was soon ready, and ascended, along with my young friend, a splendid chariot, which Licinius had commanded to be ready for our conveyance. I told him shortly, as we glided through the streets, as much as I judged it expedient to be made known concerning the events of the preceding night ; and, in particular, when I perceived that our charioteer was making a long circuit, in order to avoid the neighbourhood of the Amphitheatre of Vespasian, I could not help expressing to him the effect which had been produced in my mind by my casual inspection of the preparations made therein for the festival of the day.

"I am afraid," said he, after hearing my story, "that if such have been your feelings, in seeing some of the preparations alone, you will scarcely be willing to witness the exhibition itself ; and yet I would fain have you to overcome your aversion, both because, whatever you may think of the propriety or impropriety of such things, it is not fitting that you should go away from Rome without once, at least, seeing with your own eyes how the-

are actually conducted ; and more particularly, because I much suspect Rubellia intends to be present at the festival—in which case I should be sorry to be compelled to attend upon her without you ; and as to leaving her at the gate of the amphitheatre, that, you know, would be quite impossible, unless I wished openly to contradict the wishes of my father.”

I did not think it fitting to inform young Sextus of the promise under which I had already come, to be present at this great show, for purposes very different from those of paying attention to Rubellia, or shielding him from the necessity of spending a whole morning alone with her ; but to set his mind at rest, I assured him he should not want any comfort my presence could afford him ; although not without, at the same time, expressing my astonishment that he should consider it at all probable a lady so delicate as Rubellia would choose to sit among the spectators of an exhibition so abounding in circumstances of cruelty.

“Nay, nay,” answered he, “as for that matter, there is scarcely a lady in Rome that would be more scrupulous on that head than my gay widow ; and to tell you the truth, one of the things that makes me most unwilling to go myself, is the fear that Sempronia also may be there ; and, perhaps, when she sees me with Rubellia, give credence to some of the reports which have been circulated (not without my father’s assent, I think, if all were known) concerning this odious marriage, which I swear to you shall never take place, although Licinius were to drive me from his door, and adopt a stranger in room of me.”

“In good truth, Sextus,” I made answer, “if Sempronia thinks there is any thing serious between the widow and you, she must think you a pretty rascal, for the violent love you made to herself the whole of the day we were at the villa. But I am sure she will easily perceive, by your countenance, that you do not regard Rubellia, handsome as she is, with any extraordinary admiration ; whereas if you were not conscious of it, I am sure she must have been so—there was never a face of more passionate love than yours, all the time you were in *her* company. And even now, the very mention of her name calls a glow into your cheeks,—

yes, and even into your eyes,—that I think would flatter Rubellia, could she excite such another, more than all the jewels of all the caskets your father will ever send to her.”

“Distract me not, oh Valerius!” said the youth, interrupting me—“distract me not with speaking of that too lovely and, I fear, too scornful girl. Do you not perceive that we have at last struck into the Suburra, and are quite near to Rubellia’s house?”

“Indeed and so we are,” said I, looking out of the carriage. “I suspect you are quite right in thinking she means to be present at the amphitheatre, for there is a crowd, see you, of urchins assembled all about her gate, and I perceive it is a brilliant group of equipages that has attracted them. Of a surety, she proposes to go thither in all her splendour.”

“Good heavens!” replied he, “I believe all the world is to be there. I don’t remember ever to have passed so many gay chariots in my life; and as for the rabble, see what a stream of heads continues pouring down out of every alley along the street. My only hope is, that Rubellia may arrive too late for the best situations, and perhaps disdain to witness the spectacle from any inferior part of the amphitheatre; and yet she must have interest no doubt to have secured herself good accommodation beforehand.”

He had scarcely said so when our chariot stopped, and we just descended from it in time to meet Rubellia stepping down from her portico with a gay cluster of attendants all about her. On seeing us, however, she immediately beckoned with her finger, and said, “Oh! are you come at last? Well, I must take Valerius along with myself, for I insist upon it that I shall be better able to point out to him what is worthy of his notice than any one of my company; and you, Sextus Licinius, come you also into my chariot—we will not separate you from your Orestes.” She said so with an air of sprightly ease and indifference, and immediately sprung into the carriage. An elderly lady, with a broad merry face, went into it also, but there was still room for Sextus and myself; and

as for the rest of the party, they followed us in the other carriages that were waiting behind that of Rubellia.

The crowds by this time had accumulated in the street to such an extent that our horses could not advance otherwise than at a very leisurely pace; but the noise of the multitude as they rushed along, and the tumult of expectation visible on every countenance, prevented us from thinking of any thing but the approaching festival. The variety, however, and great splendour of the equipages around us, could not but attract some portion of my attention. Now it was an open chariot, it may be drawn by three or four milk-white Thessalian horses abreast, in which reclined some gorgeous female, blazing all over with jewelry, with a cluster of beautiful boys or girls around her, administering odours to her nostril; and perhaps some haughty knight or senator now and then offering the more precious refreshment of his flattery to her ear. Then, perhaps, would come rumbling along a close clumsy wagon, of the old-fashioned matronly sort, stuck quite full of the members of some substantial plebeian family—the fat, comfortable-looking citizen, and his demure spouse, sitting well back on their cushions, and having their knees loaded with a joyous and exulting progeny of little lads and lasses, whose faces would every now and then be thrust half out of the window, in spite of the frown of the father and the mother's tugging at their skirts. And then again there might be heard a cry of "Place, place," and a group of lictors would be discovered, shoving everybody aside with their rods, to clear the passage before the litter of some dignified magistrate, who, from pride or gout, preferred that species of motion to the jolting of a chariot. Such a portly person as this would soon be hurried past us, in virtue of the obsequence enforced by his attendants, but not before we had time to observe the richness of the silken cushions on which he lay extended, and the sweetness of the cloud of perfumes that was hovering about him, or yet the air of majesty with which he submitted himself to the fan of the favoured freedman, whose business it was to keep those authoritative cheeks free from the contamination of common plebeian dust and flies. Anon, a jolly band of young gallants

on horseback would come pushing rapidly along, to not a few of whom the fair Rubellia would vouchsafe her salutation as they passed. But wherever the carriage was stopped for an instant, by reason of the crowding together of all this multitude, it was wonderful to see the number of old emaciated men and withered hags that would make their way close up to the windows, and begin calling upon Rubellia, and all her attendants, to give them money to purchase a single morsel of food. The widow herself leaned back on these occasions, as if to avoid the sight of these poor creatures; but she pointed with her finger to a bag of small coin that hung in a corner of the chariot, and from it Sextus distributed abundantly to the one side and I to the other; and yet it was impossible to give to every one; insomuch that we were surrounded all the way with a mingled clamour of benedictions from those that had received, and execrations from those that had got nothing, and noisy ever-renewed solicitations from that ever-swelling army of mendicants. At last, however, we arrived in safety at the western gate of that proud amphitheatre—the same around which I had, the night before, witnessed that scene of tumultuous preparation. One of the officers in waiting there no sooner descried the equipage of Rubellia than he caused a space to be laid open for her approach, and himself advanced, with great civility, to hand her into the interior of the amphitheatre; but she whispered to Sextus and me by no means to separate from her in the crowd, although, indeed, the care we were obliged to take of the old lady that was with her might have been sufficient pledge that we could not be removed to any considerable distance.

Behold me, therefore, in the midst of the Flavian amphitheatre, and seated, under the wing of this luxurious lady, in one of the best situations which the range of benches set apart for the females and their company afforded. There was a general silence in the place at the time we entered and seated ourselves, because proclamation had just been made that the gladiators, with whose combats the exhibition of the day was appointed to commence, were about to enter upon the arena, and show themselves in order to the people. As yet, however, they

had not come forth from that place of concealment to which so many of their number were, of necessity, destined never to return; so that I had leisure to collect my thoughts, and to survey for a moment, without disturbance, the mighty and most motley multitude, piled above, below, and on every side around me, from the lordly senators, on their silken couches, along the parapet of the arena, up to the impenetrable mass of plebeian heads which skirted the horizon, above the topmost wall of the amphitheatre itself. Such was the enormous crowd of human beings, high and low, assembled therein, that when any motion went through their assembly, the noise of their rising up or sitting down could be likened to nothing, except, perhaps, the far-off sullen roaring of the illimitable sea, or the rushing of a great night-wind among the boughs of a forest. It was the first time that I had ever seen a peopled amphitheatre—nay, it was the first time that I had ever seen any very great multitude of men assembled together within any fabric of human erection; so that you cannot doubt there was, in the scene before me, enough to impress my mind with a very serious feeling of astonishment—not to say of veneration. Not less than eighty thousand human beings (for such they told me was the stupendous capacity of the building), were here met together. Such a multitude can nowhere be regarded, without inspiring a certain indefinite, indefinable sense of majesty; least of all, when congregated within the wide sweep of such a glorious edifice as this, and surrounded on all sides with every circumstance of ornament and splendour, befitting an everlasting monument of Roman victories, the munificence of Roman princes, and the imperial luxury of universal Rome. Judge, then, with what eyes of wonder all this was surveyed by me, who had but of yesterday, as it were, emerged from the solitary stillness of a British valley—who had been accustomed all my life to consider as among the most impressive of human spectacles, the casual passage of a few scores of legionaries, through some dark alley of a wood or awe-struck village of barbarians.

Trajan himself was already present, but in nowise, except from the canopy over his ivory chair, to be dis-

tinguished from the other consul that sat over-against him ; tall, nevertheless, and of a surety very majestic in his demeanour ; grave, sedate, and benign in countenance, even according to the likeness which you have seen upon his medals and statues. He was arrayed in a plain gown, and appeared to converse quite familiarly, and without the least affectation of condescension, with such patricians as had their places near him ; among whom Sextus and Rubellia pointed out many remarkable personages to my notice : as, for example, Adrian, who afterward became emperor ; Pliny the orator, a man of very courtly presence, and lively, agreeable aspect ; and, above all, the historian Tacitus, the worthy son-in-law of our Agricola, in whose pale countenance I thought I could easily recognise the depth, but sought in vain to discover any traces of the sternness, of his genius. Of all the then proud names that were whispered into my ear, could I recollect or repeat them now, how few would awaken any interest in your minds ! Those, indeed, which I have mentioned have an interest that will never die. Would that the greatest and the best of them all were to be remembered only for deeds of greatness and goodness !

The proclamation being repeated a second time, a door on the right-hand of the arena was laid open, and a single trumpet sounded, as it seemed to me mournfully, while the gladiators marched in with slow steps, each man naked, except being girt with a cloth about his loins—bearing on his left arm a small buckler, and having a short straight sword suspended by a cord around his neck. They marched, as I have said, slowly and steadily ; so that the whole assembly had full leisure to contemplate the forms of the men ; while those who were, or who imagined themselves to be, skilled in the business of the arena, were fixing in their own minds on such as they thought most likely to be victorious, and laying wagers concerning their chances of success, with as much unconcern as if they had been contemplating so many irrational animals, or rather indeed, I should say, so many senseless pieces of ingenious mechanism. The wide diversity of complexion and feature exhibited among these devoted athletes afforded at once a majestic idea of the

extent of the Roman empire, and a terrible one of the purposes to which that wide sway had too often been made subservient. The beautiful Greek, with a countenance of noble serenity, and limbs after which the sculptors of his country might have modelled their godlike symbols of graceful power, walked side by side with the yellow-bearded savage, whose gigantic muscles had been nerved in the freezing waves of the Elbe or the Danube, or whose thick strong hair was congealed and shagged on his brow with the breath of Scythian or Scandinavian winters. Many fierce Moors and Arabs and curled Ethiopians were there, with the beams of the southern sun burnt in every various shade of swarthiness upon their skins. Nor did our own remote island want her representatives in the deadly procession; for I saw among the armed multitude—and that not altogether without some feelings of more peculiar interest—two or three gaunt barbarians, whose breasts and shoulders bore uncouth marks of blue and purple, so vivid in the tints that I thought many months could not have elapsed since they must have been wandering in wild freedom along the native ridges of some Silurian or Caledonian forest. As they moved around the arena, some of these men were saluted by the whole multitude with noisy acclamations, in token, I supposed, of the approbation wherewith the feats of some former festival had deserved to be remembered. On the appearance of others, groans and hisses were heard from some parts of the amphitheatre, mixed with contending cheers and huzzas from others of the spectators. But by far the greater part were suffered to pass on in silence; this being in all likelihood, the first (alas! who could tell whether it might not also be the last) day of their sharing in that fearful exhibition!

Their masters paired them shortly, and in succession they began to make proof of their fatal skill. At first, Scythian was matched against Scythian—Greek against Greek—Ethiopian against Ethiopian—Spaniard against Spaniard; and I saw the sand died beneath their feet with blood streaming from the wounds of kindred hands. But these combats, although abundantly bloody and terrible, were regarded only as preludes to the serious busi-

ness of the day, which consisted of duels between Europeans on the one side and Africans on the other ; wherein it was the wellnigh intransgressible law of the amphitheatre, that at least one out of every pair of combatants should die on the arena before the eyes of the multitude. Instead of shrinking from the more desperate brutalities of these latter conflicts, the almost certainty of their fatal termination seemed only to make the assembly gaze on them with a more intense curiosity, and a more inhuman measure of delight. Methinks I feel as if it were but of yesterday, when, sickened with the protracted terrors of a conflict that seemed as if it were never to have an end, although both the combatants were already covered all over with hideous gashes, I at last bowed down my head, and clasped my hands upon my eyes, to save them from the torture of gazing thereon further : and I had scarcely done so, when Rubellia laid her hand upon my elbow, whispering, "Look, look, now look," in a voice of low steady impatience. I did look, but not to the arena : no, it was upon the beautiful features of that woman's face that I looked ; and truly it seemed to me as if they presented a spectacle almost as fearful as that from which I had just averted mine eyes. I saw those rich lips parted asunder, and those dark eyes extended in their sockets, and those smooth cheeks suffused with a steadfast blush, and that lovely bosom swelled and glowing ; and I hated Rubellia as I gazed, for I knew not before how utterly beauty can be brutalized by the throbbings of a cruel heart. But I looked round to escape from the sight of her ; and then the hundreds of females that I saw with their eyes fixed, with equal earnestness, on the same spot of horrors, taught me, even at the moment, to think with more charity of that pitiless gaze of one.

At that instant all were silent, in the contemplation of the breathless strife ; insomuch that a groan, the first that had escaped from either of the combatants, although low and reluctant, and half-suppressed, sounded quite distinctly amid the deep hush of the assembly, and being constrained thereby to turn mine eyes once more downward, I beheld that, at length, one of the two had received the sword of his adversary quite through his body.

and had sunk before him upon the sand. A beautiful young man was he that had received this harm, with fair hair, clustered in glossy ringlets upon his neck and brows; but the sickness of his wound was already visible on his drooping eyelids, and his lips were pale, as if the blood had rushed from them to the untimely outlet. Nevertheless, the Moorish gladiator who had fought with him had drawn forth again his weapon, and stood there awaiting in silence the decision of the multitude, whether at once to slay the defenceless youth, or to assist in removing him from the arena, if perchance the blood might be stopped from flowing, and some hope of recovery even yet extended to him. Hereupon there arose, on the instant, a loud voice of contention; and it seemed to me as if the wounded man regarded the multitude with a proud and withal contemptuous glance, being aware, without question, that he had executed all things so as to deserve their compassion, but aware, moreover, that even had that been freely vouchsafed to him, it was too late for any hope of safety. But the cruelty of their faces, it may be, and the loudness of their cries, were a sorrow to him, and filled his dying breast with loathing. Whether or not the haughtiness of his countenance had been observed by them with displeasure, I cannot say; but so it was, that those who had cried out to give him a chance of recovery were speedily silent, and the emperor, looking round, and seeing all the thumbs turned downward (for that is, you know, the signal of death), was constrained to give the sign, and forthwith the young man, receiving again without a struggle the sword of the Moor into his gashed bosom, breathed forth his life, and lay stretched out in his blood upon the place of guilt. With that a joyous clamour was uplifted by many of those that looked upon it, and the victorious Moor, being crowned with an ivy garland, was carried in procession around the arena by certain young men, who leaped down for that purpose from the midst of the assembly. In the mean time, those that had the care of such things dragged away, with a filthy hook, the corpse of him that had been slain; and then raking up the sand over the blood that had fallen from him, prepared the place, with indifferent countenances,

for some other cruel tragedy of the same kind, while all around me the spectators were seen rising from their places and saluting each other ; and there was a buzz of talking as universal as the silence had been during the combat ; some speaking of it, and paying and receiving money lost and won upon its issue ; some already laughing merrily, and discoursing concerning other matters, even as if nothing uncommon had been witnessed ; while others again appeared to be entirely occupied with the martial music which ever struck up majestically at such pauses in the course of the cruel exhibition ; some beating time upon the benches before them, others lightly joining their voices in unison with the proud notes of the trumpets and clarions. But as for Rubellia, she talked gayly with Sextus, inviting him to ridicule me along with her, for the strangeness of behaviour I had displayed.

The sun by this had already mounted high in the heavens, and the glare became so intolerable that men could no longer fight on equal terms ; which being perceived, the emperor gave command to look after the wild beasts, and in the mean time (for I heard his voice distinctly) to hold Thraso the Christian in readiness, and give warning to the Flamens that they should have their altar set forth.

CHAPTER XII.

AFTER saying so, the emperor, attended by those immediately about his person, withdrew by his private method of access ; but Rubellia told me he had only gone to the Palatine by the subterraneous path, for the purpose of taking some refreshment, and that there was no doubt he would return in time to witness the remaining parts of the spectacle. This example, however, was followed in some sort by a great part of the spectators, for some departed altogether from the walls of the amphitheatre, while many more were seen moving from place

to place, crossing from one vomitory to another, and paying their respects to different parties of friends, who had occupied places at a distance from them during the combats of the gladiators. In the mean time, certain servants of Trajan's household were observed giving directions in the arena to a great number of persons, who afterward began to distribute baskets of dried fish, bread, and other eatables among such as chose to accept of them; while viands of a more costly description were introduced among the wealthy by slaves and freedmen of their own. Neither were the bearers of water-jars idle, nor such as make a trade of selling fruit and wine upon the Roman streets; least of all, those whose traffic is in snow, for the purpose of cooling liquor; of whom, I believe, hundreds were scrambling in all quarters over the benches, and whistling shrilly as they moved, which is their method of signifying the presence of that in which they deal.

Now the Lady Rubellia was not one of those who would ever leave her friends destitute of the means of refreshment on such an occasion; as this; and accordingly, two or three of her household were soon with us, bearing jars of sweetmeats in their hands, also divers baskets of fruit, and flasks of wine, with all the other appurtenances of a luxurious collation. We had scarcely begun to taste of these things, when our attention was attracted by some one leaping with great activity from one row of benches to another, behind us; and looking round, I discovered, with ease, the rosy countenance of Sabinus, whose anxiety to join us was, as I immediately suspected, the cause of all this violent exertion. An ordinary person would have sought some circuitous method of approach, rather than attempt the sheer descent from one of the stone parapets which rose immediately in our rear; but the brawny limbs of the centurion shrunk not from that adventurous leap; and, in a word, I soon found him seated beside us, and bowing and smiling to Rubellia with all his usual mixture of boldness and suavity. He delayed not long from participation in the delicacies that stood before us; but, on the contrary, forthwith lifted up a goblet full of Falernian, and having set it to his lips, drank down with-

out stopping, till he could see the very foundation of its interior gold. His fingers also soon became acquainted with the receptacles of fruit and confectionary ; and from the zealous attention he paid to their contents, I was half inclined to have some little suspicion that he might perhaps have remained in his original situation, had he not chanced to observe the slaves of Rubellia as they came up the vomitory with their comely-looking napkin-covered baskets upon their heads. As it was, his arrival was highly acceptable to all of us, except perhaps to Rubellia herself, who, I thought, looked as if she were not over-much pleased with the interruption his mirthful talk occasioned to the conversation on which she had been endeavouring to fix the attention of Licinius.

For that, however, another interruption, no less effectual, had been already prepared in another part of the assembly, from which the sage Xerophrastes had for some time, I doubt not, been casting eyes not less longing than those of the Prætorian, on the banquet wherein we were sharing. There was such a crowd, however, immediately below us, that I know not whether the philosopher would ever have been able to make his way to the coveted region where we sat, had it not been that we heard his voice in disputation, and entreated those that opposed his passage, if possible, to make room for him. The first glimpse we had of his countenance showed us that the squeezing of those about him had been giving him serious inconvenience ; for his countenance was wonderfully purple, and the drops of perspiration stood visible on his bald front ; insomuch that although we could not help smiling at his ruefulness of visage, it would have been excessively cruel to neglect giving our assistance to extricate him from a plight apparently so agonizing.

The persons to whom he was immediately addressing himself, moreover, seemed to be listening to him with such utter unconcern that it was impossible not to feel somewhat displeased with them, for treating so disrespectfully one whom his gray hairs alone might have entitled to at least some decent portion of courtesy. In vain did he represent to them (for we heard his strong voice distinctly every now and then, in spite of the tumult that

surrounded him), that it was not for the sake of any personal ease or convenience he was desirous of penetrating into an upper part of the amphitheatre. In vain did he seek to explain to them that it was the call of duty, and the sense of moral obligation, which instigated him to that difficult and perilous ascent. In vain did he reiterate "My pupil"—"my disciple"—"my young disciple"—"my scholar Sextus Licinius"—"the son of Caius Licinius"—"the son of the great orator Caius Licinius is there,—and how can I permit myself to remain absent from him!" In vain did he enlarge upon the constancy of attention which philosophers owe to those who are placed by the hands of parents under their superintendence. In vain did he address himself to the pity of the young; not less vainly did he appeal to the reason of the old, obtesting half the deities of Olympus to the purity of his motives, and the truth of his statements,—all were alike careless of him, his motives, his statements, his duties, his sufferings, and his desires. No sooner, however, did Sextus and I begin to show the interest we took in his situation, than Sabinus raised himself up on the bench, and called aloud on those that surrounded the old man, with a voice of much sternness and authority, to let him pass immediately at their peril.

Many eyes were forthwith turned towards us; and whether it were the dignity and haughtiness of the centurion's own voice and attitude, or that his Prætorian garb alone gave him much weight in the assembly, the resistance whereby the stoic had been so long and so grievously obstructed was very soon relaxed, and Xerophrates enjoyed an opportunity of almost entirely recovering his usual serenity of aspect before he reached us. The first thing he did was to accept of a goblet which I held out to him, and to drain it in a manner that would have done no discredit to the centurion himself; then he swallowed two or three great handfuls of grapes; and then at length turning round, with much courtesy did he thank us all, but most of all the centurion, for the part he had taken in working out his deliverance from the hands, as he expressed it, of those inhuman and illiterate persons, enemies alike to science and to virtue; "while

you," he continued, "oh most brave and gallant warrior, have shown that in your breast, as in that of Epaminondas of old—of Alexander himself indeed—and of your own illustrious Julius—the reverence of the Muses and of divine philosophy does not disdain to inhabit along with the ardour of active patriotism, and the spirit-stirring delights of Mars."

"Oh! as for that," interrupted Rubellia, with a smile, "all the world knows that Sabinus is quite a philosopher—he was just beginning a very learned harangue when we were attracted by your voice in the crowd; and you have the more reason to thank him, because he was cut very unseasonably short, in consequence of the distress in which we perceived you."

"Most noble lady!" replied the stoic, "you know not how much, you have delighted me; from the first moment, indeed, that my eyes rested upon the countenance of your heroic friend, I suspected that he had subjected himself to some other discipline besides that of camps. I saw the traces of thought, lady—and serious contemplation. The mind can never exercise its faculties without conveying some symptoms of those internal operations to the external surface of the visage. The soul can never energize habitually without betraying its activity in the delicacy and acumen which the more elegant and susceptible parts of the corporeal frame acquire during those elaborate and mysterious processes of thought. I saw, therefore, and suspected. But what thanks are not due to you, for having so agreeably confirmed me in this happy suspicion! Of a surety, the noise and tumult of the camp are not so well adapted for the theoretic or contemplative life, as perfect leisure and retirement; yet, who shall doubt that the soul of great energy can overcome all such disadvantages? Who shall think that the spirit of Socrates did not eagerly philosophize during the campaign he served? Who shall say that the Stagyrte must have suspended his acute although imperfect investigations, even although he had accompanied his royal pupil across the Hellespont, and attended all the motions of his victorious army, instead of staying at home to teach the youth of Greece? Who, finally," said he, casting his courteous eyes full on the

Prætorian, "shall suspect but that this generous warrior has been effectually advancing the growth of philosophic science within his own mind at least,—if not composing works in his intervals of leisure, destined hereafter to benefit and instruct the world, even although he may have been attending the flight of the Roman eagles from utmost Britain to the desert frontiers of the Parthian?"

"Nobody, indeed," replied the sportive lady, "nobody, indeed, who has enjoyed any opportunity of being acquainted with the centurion, can have any doubt on that head. Sabinus," she continued, turning towards him, "what philosophic treatise are you at present engaged with? Come, now, speak out, and truly; are you still busy with your *περι της φυσικης τε οιστρης βαρχικης*,* that you were quoting from the other night?—or are you deep in '*the delight of contemplation*'?—or—"

"Not at all," quoth the centurion, interrupting her; "I am only deep in *love*—"

Saying so, he laid his hand in a very tender fashion upon his breast, and even, as I thought, began to throw a little sentiment into his eyes; but he had no opportunity of going on with his speech, for Xerophrastes had no sooner heard him utter the word *love*, than he immediately began to pour out a new rhapsody.

"Love!" quoth he, "ha! love: in good sooth, a noble subject, and one concerning which not a few laudable treatises have been composed by the philosophers. Yet, without question, much remains to be done in this matter; and I should be most proud if the illustrious Sabinus would vouchsafe to me a perusal of his invaluable speculations. Without question," he continued, "you have commenced with a proper definition and division of the subject. You have distinguished between what is properly called *love*, and the other more or less kindred affections with which hallucinating writers have too often committed the error of confounding it. You have described, in the first place, the difference between it and the *storgé*, or natural affection which parents have for their offspring—an affection in which not a few of the

* "Concerning the nature of the Bacchio stimulus."

irrational tribes appear (if physiology may be trusted) to us even superior to the human race."

"Hens, for example," quoth the centurion, with a face of infinite gravity.

"Even so—*hens*," continued the sage; "an apt illustration and an acute. I perceive, indeed, lady," whispered he to Rubellia, "that you have not deceived me concerning the attainments of this your noble friend—*hens*—a most acute illustration!—See you now, O Sextus!" he went on, "it is not the characteristic of true philosophy to despise those illustrations which are drawn from the affairs of ordinary life, and the common surfaces of things. No: it is rather her part to show forth her own intrinsic excellence and splendour, by raising that which is in itself low and customary, to unknown and unexpected dignity, by her methods of felicitous and beautifying application. See you, now, with what unexampled skill this hero—this philosopher, I should rather say—may I presume to add, this brother-philosopher?—has illustrated the nature of *love* in this treatise of his, by introducing the domestic habits of your common household fowl? Such things should not pass unheeded by the young aspirants to learning, because these, more than any other circumstances, may furnish them with encouragement to proceed in their course, by showing how many of the materials of philosophy lie everywhere under the eyes of the most common traveller of the path of life; and how assuredly it is the fault of the individual himself, if he neglect the means of spiritual advancement which are sure to be afforded in whatever situation may chance to have been assigned to him."

"I beg your pardon for interrupting you," said Rubellia; "but Sabinus has almost finished the grapes while you have been speaking; and I would only just beg to suggest, that it is the fault of the individual Xerophrastes, if he neglects the means of corporal refreshment, which may yet be afforded him by what remains in the basket."

"Most kind lady," resumed he, "your benevolence is worthy of your nobility. But you know not how much the philosophy I have embraced tends to lessen the natural desires of man for such things as you allude to—nevertheless," he continued, "I will not refuse to partake yet

further of your bounty ; for, of a surety, I have been sorely dealt with in the multitude, as yourselves witnessed."

So saying, he took hold of the basket, and began to feel in the bottom of it, but found very little to his purpose ; for, to say the truth, the rest of the party had been almost as eager in their attentions to it as the jolly centurion himself. A few slender bunches, notwithstanding, were still there, one of which the philosopher thrust into his mouth, and the rest he concealed beneath one of the folds of his huge mantle, until he should have made an end of his criticism on the imaginary treatise of the newly dubbed sage Sabinus. While he was busied in hemming and coughing, and other obvious and not to be mistaken preparations for a renewal of his harangue, I could with difficulty keep myself from laughing outright, so egregiously was the natural language of the broad, jovial, and unreflective countenance of our worthy centurion at variance from the notion of his attainments and pursuits, which this merry lady had been amusing herself with instilling into the mind of the pedagogue. Rubellia herself, however, appeared to enjoy the thing far more keenly than either Sextus or I ; insomuch that I was afraid Xerophrastes would penetrate through the joke she was playing off upon him, before he had given himself his full swing in regard to the commendation of the Prætorian. But Sabinus on his side was, as it seemed, of opinion that he had already heard enough of such disquisitions ; for he had scarcely seen out the last cup of Rubellia's Falerian, ere he began to give hints that he wished very much to descend into the arena, for the purpose of observing the animals about to be exhibited, while they were yet in their cages. Xerophrastes, however, even when he had heard him signify this desire, appeared still to be resolved on considering him as one of the philosophic order of mankind ; for he at once offered to accompany him, saying that the visit was of course intended for the gratification of some scientific curiosity, and that therefore he should think himself extremely culpable did he neglect the opportunity of going along with him.

"Come, come, then," quoth the good-natured Sabinus,

“since you will have it so, by all means prepare yourself for the descent: but at least allow me to precede you, that there may be no risk of any more untimely obstructions, such as you have already this day experienced.”

“Most assuredly, noble centurion,” replied Xerophrates “in this, as in all things, I shall be proud to be enumerated among your followers. Sextus, my pupil, also,” he added, “and his friend, will of a certainty accompany us, that they may benefit by our discourse, as well as by seeing whatever may be subjected to our observation.”

“Nay, my friend,” said Rubellia, “that were not quite fair, neither; would you leave the ladies entirely by themselves in the midst of the amphitheatre? I hope Sextus Licinius, at least, will have the courtesy to remain with us for our protection.”

So saying, she laid her hand on my companion’s arm, with a look which satisfied me she was quite resolved not to part with him. The old lady who was with her then said something about the impropriety of leaving only one of the party to attend upon two females; but I took advantage of her low tone to pretend ignorance of that which she had uttered, and immediately rose to accompany the centurion and Xerophrates.

“You had better go quickly,” said Sextus, as we departed; “for surely the interval of the spectacles must, by this time, be wellnigh at an end; and if those that have gone out once begin to rush in again, you may perhaps have some difficulty in regaining your places.”

“Give fear to the winds,” quoth Sabinus; “am not I with them, that know every lion-feeder in Rome by the head-mark? and how do you suppose that there is any chance of the exhibition recommencing without my having sufficient warning? It is not for nothing that I have lost and won so many thousand sesterces in the amphitheatre. No, no—I wish only as much respect were paid to experience everywhere else as it is in the arena to your true old bettor. Already,” he added, “I perceive that half a dozen of those knowing characters down below, about the entrances to the dens, have detected me, even at this distance, and I know they are wondering very much among themselves that I have not yet descended

among them. They must fancy my purse is in a very poor state indeed, when I don't seem to think it worth while to take even a single peep at the beasts ere they are brought out of their cages. Come, Xerophrastes, my most worthy brother in philosophy, and you, my jolly fellow-voyager, Valerius, let us be alert; and move downward, else we may chance, when all is done, to arrive the day after Platæa."

With that we began to descend with much alacrity, and, leaving the reluctant Sextus to his fate, were soon near to the margin of the arena. We had no sooner arrived there than an old skin-dried limping Numidian, with a bit of lion's hide fastened round his loins—one who, from his leanness and blackness, had very much the appearance of having been baked to a cinder,—observed the centurion, and drew near to him with many nods and significant grins of recognition. Sabinus, on his part, seemed noways backward to acknowledge this old acquaintance; but, on the contrary, began to talk with him in a strange sort of broken dialect, which, as I afterward learned, was chiefly composed of Punic vocables,—and all, I doubt not, concerning the business of the day. After this had lasted some minutes, he took Xerophrastes and me by the hand, and seemed to introduce us to the Numidian, who then desired us all to come down, and he would conduct us to a place where we should see something not unworthy of being seen. I was just about to follow these directions when I felt my gown seized from behind, and looking round, observed that it was my faithful man Boto, who, from the heat and confusion of his aspect, appeared not to have come thither without a considerable struggle. Sabinus, seeing him, said, "Ah! my old friend Boto, how have you come to this part of the amphitheatre? We must not leave you behind us, however; of a surety, you have never seen a lion—you shall descend along with your master; and who knows but we may persuade Xerophrastes that you also are a brother philosopher?"

"Most noble master," replied the grateful slave, "I saw you and Valerius from the very topmost bench of the place; where I have been sitting for these three hours with Dromo, and I no sooner saw you than I was determined

to draw near to you, if it were possible. To go from this place up to yonder quarter would perhaps be impossible ; but it is never a very difficult matter to go down in this world ; so, saving your presence, masters all, I trundled myself over the benches, and when heads were in my way, I e'en trundled myself over them too."

"It is well, good Briton," quoth the centurion—by this time we had crossed the arena,—“and now prepare to exercise your eyes as well as you already have exercised your limbs ; for know, that very near to you is the abode of nobler animals than even your lord hath ever observed."

With this the old Numidian opened one of the iron doors looking in upon the arena, and having received some money from us, admitted us to the sight of a long flight of marble steps, which appeared to descend into the bowels of the earth, far below the foundation of the amphitheatre.

"Come along, masters," quoth he ; “we had better go down this way, for we shall have a better view of the animals so than on the other side. My master, Sabinus, will tell you all, that old Aspar knows as much about these things as any Numidian in the place."

"Indeed, since my old friend Bisbal is gone," quoth the centurion, “there is not another of the whole set that is to be compared to you."

"Ah !" replied Aspar, “Bisbal was a great man ; there is not a feeder in Rome that is worthy to tie the latchet of his sandals, if he were alive."

"Why, as to that," said the other, “old Bisbal was very seldom worth a pair of sandals worth the tying, when he was alive ; but, come on, we have no great leisure for talking now, and Aspar can, of a surety, show a lion with any Bisbal that ever wielded a whip. Come on."

We soon reached a large vaulted place, apparently below the amphitheatre, the sides of which were almost entirely covered with iron gratings,—while up and down the open space were strolling many strange groups of men, connected in different capacities with the bloody spectacles of the arena. On one hand, we saw some of the gladiators, who had already been combating, walking

to and fro with restless and agitated steps, as if they had not yet been able to recover themselves from the violent state of excitement into which their combats had thrown them. Even of such as had been victorious, I observed that not a few partook in all these symptoms of uneasiness; and the contrast thus exhibited to the proud and haughty mien of calmness they had so lately been displaying affected me with a strange sense of the irrational and inhuman life these unhappy persons were condemned by folly or necessity to lead. The blood had forsaken the lips and cheeks of others, and from the fixed stare of their eyes, it appeared that their minds were entirely withdrawn from every thing passing around them. Their limbs, so recently nerved to the utmost show of vigour, were now relaxed and unstrung, and they trod the marble-floor with heavy and straggling feet. But they that appeared to me to be in the most wretched state were such as, they told us, expected to be led forth shortly to contend with the wild beasts, in whose immediate vicinity they were now walking. The prospect of combating with a human opponent calls into action the fierceness and the pride of man; but he that has to fight with a beast, how should he not be weighed down with the sense of mortal degradation; and how should the reason that is in him not fill him, in such a prospect, with dispiriting and humbling, rather than with strengthening and stimulating, thoughts? Howbeit, the centurion, although the most good-natured of mankind, being rendered from custom quite callous to these things, immediately entered into conversation with some of those unfortunates, in a tone of coolness and unconcern that shocked me the more because it did not seem in the smallest degree to shock those to whom his words were addressed. Among other topics, he enlarged at much length to one of them upon the best method of evading the attack of a tiger.

“Look ye now,” said he, “there are some that are always for taking things, as they call it, in good time,—these will be pointing their swords before the creature makes his spring; but I have seen what comes of that, and so has old Aspar here, if he would be honest enough to confess it. The true way is, to watch his eye when he is sitting; let him fairly fix upon his mark, and spring; but

at the moment when he is taking his leap, then is the time for the gladiator to start aside, and have at him with a side-thrust. Your side-thrust is the only one I would lay an *as* upon."

"It was always on the side-thrust," quoth the grinning Aspar,—“it was always on your cool steady side-thrust, the moment he had sprung, that the great Bisbal used to stake himself. Ha! ha! I was fond of the side-thrust in my day myself; but I got a scratch once; witness my poor leg, masters,—and since then I am a poor feeder.”

“I was always clear for the side-thrust,” quoth Sabinus. “I never saw it fail but twice, and then, to be sure, the men died; but they could have had no chance at all with the front-guard; and it is always something,” continued he, clapping one of the poor expecting gladiators on the back,—“it is always something to have a chance. Be sure you try him with the side-thrust, if it come to your turn to-day.”

The poor creature—he also was an African—lifted up his head on being so addressed, and showed all his white teeth in a melancholy attempt at a smile; but said not a word in reply, and forthwith became as downcast as ever again. But the centurion took little or no heed of the manner in which his advice had been received. He contemplated the man's figure for a moment, as if to form some judgment concerning the measure of his strength; and after doing the like in regard to some of his companions, commanded Aspar to show us where the prime lions of the day were reposing.

The Numidian no sooner heard him say so, than he seized in his hand a long pole that was leaning against one of the pillars of the vault, and led us to a certain part of the grated wall, behind which was the den, wherein six monstrous Atlantic lions were kept. I looked in upon them with wonder, and not without dread, through the iron net-work of the doors. An imperfect gleam of light descended from above upon their tawny hides and glaring eyes. They, like the gladiators, seemed also to be preparing for the combat; but not, like them, in fear, nor in cold dewy tremours; for the deprivation of food, which they had been made to suffer in prospect of the exhibition

had roused all the energies of their savage natures ; inso-
much that a sulky and yearning rage seemed to spread
through every nerve and sinew of their gigantic frames,
and to make them paw their quadrangular prison with
long and pliant strides. They moved, however, as yet, in
total silence ; so that Boto, having fixed his eyes upon
them, took courage to approach the grate,—slowly, never-
theless, and with a face that appeared to lengthen an inch
for every inch he advanced. But when he had almost
touched the bars, one of the huge lions came forward
towards him, with something between a growl and a sigh,
which made Boto spring backward with great and sur-
prising agility, and with such force, that both he and
Xerophrastes, who happened unfortunately to be stand-
ing a little way behind him, were overthrown at all their
length upon the floor.

Hereupon the centurion and the limping old keeper
immediately burst out into loud laughter ; but Xerophras-
tes, rising and shaking his garment, said with some warmth,
“ Think not, oh Sabinus, that any sudden start of fear has
thus ridiculously stretched me upon the floor ; but attrib-
ute the mischance only to this rude offspring of British
earth, whose unreclaimed natural feelings are still shame-
fully affected by natural causes.”

“ Castor and Pollux,” quoth the centurion,—“ you take
every thing too seriously, my friend.”

“ I take it not seriously,” replied he, with admirable
gravity. “ My philosophy forbids me to do so ; it has
steeled me against externals.”

“ Has it so, in faith ?” rejoined the centurion. “ I think
something of your equanimity is, in fact, owing to the
trifling circumstance, that you have in reality received no
injury whatever from your tumble. And as to steeling,
let me tell you, I think the iron in the grated door there
is much better placed than in the bosom of a philosopher :
for, in the door, it serves the purpose of preventing all
harm ; but if these animals were once out, all the mental
steel of which you boast, would not save every bone in
your body from being cracked in the twanging of a bow-
string.”

“ You speak,” replied Xerophrastes, “ as if you had em-

braced the tenets of a sect not worthy of the lovers of wisdom—you speak as if the artificial contrivances of human workmen were all in all. An iron cage may confine wild beasts ; but can cages be made for all those misfortunes to which mankind are liable, and against which the force of the mind is their only means of defence? Can you cage the Eumenides, when they come to avenge a life spent in ignoble indolence and degrading luxury?”

“In truth,” replied the centurion, with a smile, “I have never seen the Eumenides except once, and that was in the theatre of Athens. But Boto perhaps has been more fortunate. Did you ever see the Eumenides, good Boto?”

“No, master,” replied stupidly the perplexed Boto, “I never was at the theatre.”

“Ye gods!” exclaimed the stoic, his lips smiling with lofty scorn—“Ye gods! of a surety this Britain must have been the last spot rescued from the dominion of Chaos!”

CHAPTER XIII.

BUT while we were yet contemplating those enormous animals, and amused with the perplexity of Boto, the trumpets were blown in the amphitheatre, and no sooner did the sound of them penetrate into the vaults, than it was evident, from the bustle which ensued, that the emperor had returned to his place, and that the spectacle was about to recommence. With all speed, therefore, did we reascend to the upper air, leaving the gladiators in the act of mustering in their respective quarters of the gloomy vault ; and the feeders not less busied in preparing their beasts for the expected combat. Had we not been under the protection of Sabinus, we should have attempted in vain to regain our places ; but he being an acknowledged and current authority, known in every department of the amphitheatre, the door-keepers, and other functionaries, durst refuse him nothing ; insomuch

that room was made for us where no room appeared; and, in a word, we shortly found ourselves once more seated by the side of Rubellia and Sextus.

The day was by this time considerably advanced; and, in spite of the awnings spread all overhead, the rays of the sun were so powerful that the marble benches felt hot to the touch, wherever they were exposed to them; and altogether there was such a glare and fervour throughout the place, that my eyes began to be weary of gazing; and very gladly would I have retired, rather than remain to see out the rest of the exhibition. Nevertheless, there was no appearance of any one having gone away in weariness; but, on the contrary, the seats, and even the passages, seemed to be more crowded than they had been in the anterior part of the morning.

The arena was perfectly vacant when I looked down upon it; but in a short time a single old man, who, as Rubellia told me, had, without doubt, been found guilty of some atrocious wickedness, was led forth from a small wicket on the one side, and presently, his fetters being struck off, those that conducted him retired, leaving him alone upon the sand. The eyes of this malefactor refused at first to look steadfastly on the objects around him, and it seemed to me that he had probably been long confined in some dark place, so grievously did the dazzling splendour reflected from the floor and walls appear to bewilder and confound him. Nevertheless, after a brief space, he seemed, in some measure, to recover himself, and assumed a posture of calm resignation, leaning with one hand against the parapet, as if he needed support to uphold himself. Pallid and extenuated were the outlines of the old man's visage, and his hair and beard exhibited not a little of the squalidness attendant on long and hopeless confinement; yet there was something in the attitude, and even in the countenance, of the man, which made me harbour the suspicion that he had not, at some former period, been altogether unacquainted with the luxuries and refinements of social life. The beauty, indeed, of the mould in which his form had originally been cast, might, perhaps, have been the sole cause of these casual demonstrations of elegance; yet it was impossible not to regard

the man with greater interest, by reason of the contrast which imagination could suggest between what he once might have been, perhaps had been, and what he now was.

A feeling of somewhat the same sort seemed, of a truth, to pervade many more in the assembly besides myself; and I heard a continual whispering among those around me, as if there was a general anxiety to learn something concerning the history of the man. No one, however, appearing to be able to say any thing concerning him, I kept my eyes fixed upon himself, awaiting the issue in silence. Judge, then, what was my surprise when one of the heralds of Trajan, having commanded that there should be silence in the amphitheatre, said, "Let Thraso of Antioch come forth and answer to the things that shall be alleged against him." To which the old man, who was alone in the arena, immediately made reply, "Here am I—my name is Thraso of Antioch." In vain, however, even after hearing the well-remembered voice, did I attempt to persuade myself that the face was such as I had pictured within myself; for, as to seeing it, I have already told you that utter darkness prevailed in the dungeon all the time I was there with him.

Then arose the prefect of the city, who had his place immediately under the chair of the prince, and said in a voice which, although not loud, was heard distinctly all through the amphitheatre, "Thraso of Antioch, being accused of blasphemy and contempt for the gods, has been brought hither, either to refute this charge, by doing homage at the altar of Jupiter Best and Greatest; or, persisting in his rebellion against Rome, and the prince, and the religion of the state, to suffer openly the punishment which the laws of the state have affixed to such perversity. Let him remain where he is until the Flamens invite us all to join in the sacrifice."

Then Thraso, hearing these words, stepped forth into the middle of the arena, and folding his arms upon his breast, stood there composedly, without once lifting up his eyes, either to the place from which the prefect had spoken to him, or to any other region of the amphitheatre. The situation in which he stood was such, that I com-

manded, where I sat, a full and distinct view of every movement of the old man's countenance, and assuredly my eyes were in no danger of being directed away from him. For a few moments there was perfect silence throughout the assembly, until at length the same herald, who had previously spoken made proclamation for the doors to be thrown open, that the priests of Jupiter might have access to the arena. Whereupon there was heard forthwith a noise, as of the turning of some heavy machinery, and a part of the ground-work of the arena itself appeared to be giving way, right over-against that quarter in which Thraso had his station. But of this the purpose was soon manifested, when there arose from underneath into the space thus vacated, a certain wooden stage, or platform, covered all over with rich carpetings, whereof the centre was occupied by a marble altar, set forth already with all the usual appurtenances of sacrifice, and surmounted on one side by a gigantic statue of bronze, in which it was easy to recognise all the features of the great Phidian Jupiter. Neither had the altar any sooner made its appearance there, and the sound of the machinery, by which its great weight had been lifted, ceased to be heard, than, even as the herald had given command, the main gates of the amphitheatre were expanded, and thereby a free passage prepared for the procession of the Flamens. With that, all those that were present in the amphitheatre, arose from their seats and stood up, and a sweet symphony of lutes and clarions ushered in the sacred band to the place appointed for them. And first of all, there marched a train of fifty beautiful boys, and then an equal number of very young maidens, all, both boys and maidens, arrayed in white tunics, and having their heads crowned with oaken garlands, and bearing in their hands fresh branches of the oak-tree, which, above all the other trees of the forest, is, as you have heard and well know, held dear and sacred to Jupiter. Then these youthful bands were separated, and they arranged themselves, the boys on the right and the girls on the left-hand of the altar, some of them standing on the arena itself, and others on either side, upon the steps of the platform whereon the altar was fixed; and beautiful indeed was their array, and comely

and guiltless were their looks ; and much modesty was apparent, both in the downcast eyes and closed lips with which some of them stood there to await the issue of their coming, and in the juvenile admiration wherewith others of them were regarding the wide and splendid assemblage around them ; insomuch that I could not but feel within myself a certain dread and fearfulness, when I saw the feet of so many tender and innocent ones placed there upon the same hot and guilty sand which had so often drunk the blood of fierce beasts and cruel malefactors—alas ! which had drunk the blood of the innocent also—and which was yet to drink thereof abundantly.

And after them there came in the priests themselves of Jupiter, arrayed in the white garments of sacrifice, walking two by two, the oldest and principal of them coming last. And behind them again were certain younger assistants, clothed also in white, who led by a cord of silk inwrought with threads of silver a milk-white steer, without spot or blemish, whose horns were already gilt, and his broad brows crowned with oak-leaves and roses. And last of all entered the Vestal Virgins, none of whom had ever before been seen by me, and they also walked two by two ; and no one could contemplate without veneration the majesty of their demeanour. With broad fillets were they bound around the forehead, and deep flowing veils hung down to their feet, entirely covering their faces and their hands ; nevertheless, their dignity was apparent ; and it was not the less impressive by reason of the great mystery in which all things about them appeared to be enveloped.

Imagine, therefore, to yourselves, how magnificent was the appearance of all things, when youths and damsels, and priests and Vestals, had taken their places according to the custom of their sacred observances ; and all that innumerable company of spectators yet standing up in the amphitheatre, the choral hymn was begun, in which every voice there was united, except only that of Thraso the Christian. Now, it was the soft low voices of the young maidens that sounded, and then these would pause and give place to the clearer and more piercing notes of the boys, that stood on the other side of the altar ; then

again the priestesses of Vesta would break in from afar with their equable harmony ; and anon, these in their turn ceasing, the Flamens of Jupiter would lift up their strong deep chanting, until, at the appointed signal from him that stood on the highest step of the altar, with the cup of libation in his hand, the whole people that were present burst in and joined in the rushing stream of the burden, " Jupiter, Jupiter, hear us ! hear us, father of gods and men ! " while the wine was poured out, gushing red upon the marble, and the incense flung on high from fifty censers, rolled its waves of smoke all over the surface of the arena, and quite up to the gorgeous canopy of that resounding amphitheatre. Magnificent indeed was the spectacle, and majestic the music ; yet in the midst of it, how could I take away my eyes from the pale and solitary old man, by reason of whose presence alone all these things were so ? With calm eyes did he regard all the pageantry of those imperial rites ; with closed lips did he stand amid all the shouting multitudes. He bowed not his head ; he lifted not up his hand ; neither would he bend his knee, when the victim was slain before the horns of the altar ; neither would he in any thing give semblance of being a partaker in the worship.

At length the song ceased, and there was a proclamation again for deep silence ; and the prefect of the city, addressing himself once more to Thraso, said unto him, " Impious and unhappy man, with great clemency have all things been conducted as concerning thee. When, after long imprisonment and innumerable exhortations in private and in public, thou hadst always rejected every means of safety, and spurned from thee the pardon of those in whose hands thy being is placed, yet, notwithstanding of all thine obstinacy and continual rebellion, was it determined that, in the face of all the people, thou shouldst once more have free grace offered to thee, provided only thou shouldst, when all the assembly worshipped, join thy voice with them, and bow thy head also towards the altar of Jupiter. Nevertheless, all that now hear me shall bear witness, that with open and visible contumacy thou hast rejected this opportunity also, of being reconciled unto the prince and the empire ; that,

when every knee was bent, and every voice lifted up, thou alone hast stood upright, and thy lips alone have been closed. If it be so that, from some inflicted rather than voluntary perversion of mind, thou hast never yet been able to understand the danger in which thou art placed, know now, that there remains no hope at all for thee, except for a moment ; and let the strong fear of death open thine eyes, that thou mayst see where thou art, and for what purpose thou hast been brought hither. Thou art a born subject of Rome, and thy life can only be held by thee in virtue of obedience to the laws of the prince and the senate. These laws are clearer and more distinct upon nothing than the necessity that all men should acknowledge the deities of Rome ; and of good reason, since if they be despised and their authority set at naught, by what means shall an oath be ratified, or a pledge given ? or how may the head, which counsels and protects, be assured that the members shall not be lifted up against it ? Let silence remain in the assembly, and let Thraso of Antioch make his election, whether he will give obedience to the laws, or suffer the penalty of their transgression."

Then the prefect, and all those round about Trajan, sat down, and there was a deep silence throughout the lower region of the amphitheatre, where for the most part they of condition were placed ; but when the rabble, that sat above, beheld the stern and resolute countenance with which the old man stood there upon the arena, it seemed as if they were enraged thereby beyond measure, and there arose among them a fierce uproar, and a shouting of hatred ; and, amid groans and hisses, there was a cry from innumerable voices, of "Christian ! Christian !—Blasphemer ! Blasphemer !—Atheist ! Atheist !—A tiger ! A tiger ! Let loose a tiger upon the Christian !"

Nevertheless, the old man preserved unmoved the steadfastness of his demeanour, and lifting up his eyes to the place from whence the tumult proceeded, regarded the ferocious multitude with a visage, not of anger, or of scornfulness, but rather of pity, and of calmness ; inasmuch that I perceived the nobles and senators were somewhat ashamed of the outcry, and the prefect of the

city arose from his place, and beckoned with his hand, until the people were weary of shouting, and order was in some measure re-established in the amphitheatre.

Then Thraso, perceiving that silence once more prevailed, lifted up his hand, and bowed himself before Trajan, and the great men of authority that were near to his chair, and said, with a firm clear voice, in the Roman tongue, "My name, O Trajan, is Thraso—the son of Androboulos. I am a native of Antioch, in Syria, and have in all things, except only in what pertains to this cause, observed throughout all the years of my life the statutes of the empire, as they by whose accusation I have been led hither shall themselves be constrained to bear abundant witness for me this day. My father was a Greek of Macedonian extraction, being descended from one of those that came to Syria beneath the banners of the great king Seleucus: but he took to wife a maiden of the Hebrew nation, and in process of time became a proselyte to the faith of her fathers. Nevertheless, he lived in trust and honour beneath the governors appointed by those that were before you in the empire, and brought up me and all his children to reverence, in all things that are lawful, the authority of Cesar. But as to the faith of the true God, whose worshippers ye blindly and foolishly call atheists and blasphemers, from that he neither swerved himself, nor would permit any of those that were in his household to depart. Now, when he had been a dweller for some time in Jerusalem, the great city of the Jews, he began to examine into those things which were reported publicly concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who is also called the Christ, of which things not a few that had been eye-witnesses, were then living in that city. And when he had been satisfied from their testimony that those miracles, of which you have all heard, were in truth performed in the sight of the people by Jesus of Nazareth, and had listened unto the words of their teachers, and saw how they proved that the old prophets of the Hebrews had foretold those wonderful works, he perceived that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Christ of God, and the great deliverer that had been promised to that people, even from the time of the patriarchs, and the beginning

of their nation. And he believed on him with all his household ; and I also, from a stripling, have, although unworthy, been a Christian ; for by that name were they first called in Antioch, the city of my birth.

“ But being brought into trouble by reason of his religion, which the rulers of the Jews abhorred, my father departed after a time, from Jerusalem, and dwelt with my mother in one of the villages of Palestine, until his death. Not long after which time, the Jews rebelled against Cesar, and the great war began, which terminated in the overthrow of Jerusalem, and the utter ruin of their nation. Now, when Vespasian first came with his army into those regions, I, being without employment in the place where we had our habitation, and having, moreover, taken up a great, and perhaps a sinful, wrath against the Jews, on account of the sufferings which my father had undergone among them, and of the evils which, at their hands, our whole household had sustained, joined myself to one of the bands of Syrian auxiliaries ; and although my mother entreated me, I could not be persuaded to refrain from following the camp of Cesar along with them. Of which thing it has often since then repented me, and in which, it may be, I still hold myself not to have done altogether as was right ; for if the Jews had offended Cesar, it was, indeed, a reasonable thing that Cesar should visit them with his vengeance ; but, peradventure, it behooved not any of them that were descended from the fathers of that people, to take part in the warfare. Nevertheless, being then young, and full of life, and, as I have said, irritated by the sense of domestic injuries, I scrupled not to fulfil in all things the duty of a true soldier, and followed the eagles of Vespasian and his son, even to the day when the lines were drawn around the Holy City ; and it was manifest, that the war could have no end, but in the eternal overthrow of the power of the Jews. Neither did the length of the siege weary me, or produce within me any sort of unwillingness ; but, on the contrary, so long as the city was beleaguered, I remained with the band in which I had numbered myself, and did in all things such service as my strength would permit. Even among the soldiers that have guarded my prison, since I

was led into Rome for the sake of that accusation which has been brought against me in the matter of my belief, even among them, I have seen the faces of some that were my comrades in that fierce war, and that long beleaguement, who also, if they be commanded, will not refuse to bear testimony before you, that all these are true, even as I have said, and that I was a faithful soldier, both of Vespasian and of Titus, unto the last. Neither, indeed, did I lay down arms immediately when Jerusalem had been sacked, and the temple burnt, according to the prediction of Christ, but went with Cesar along the seacoast, and was present with him all through the journeyings he made in Egypt, even to the day when he made his great festival at Alexandria, and crowned the ox Apis with his own hands, in the presence of all that people. On which day it was, that, for the first time, I also was accused of being a Christian, and at the command of Titus himself was interrogated by one of the rulers of the army.

“Now with shame and confusion of face must I acknowledge, that on that day I, from desire of life, forgot myself utterly, and being deserted of all steadfastness, went up to the altar in presence of my judge, and offered gifts there to one of the idols of the Egyptians, whereon I was declared free of all blame; and even received honour and commendation thereafter from them, on account of my services in the war. But, from that day, my spirit sunk within me, and I knew not what to do, by reason of the sorrow that came upon me for that which I had done; insomuch that I grew weary of all things, and determined to leave the band in which I was serving, that I might seek out, if it were possible, the habitation of my mother, and make atonement in secret for the wickedness of which I, unhappy and fearful man, had been guilty at Alexandria. Being absolved, therefore, from my oath of service, on account of the length of time I had remained with the army, I departed from Egypt, and, after a time, found out my mother where she was dwelling in the mountainous country of Palestine, to the north of Jerusalem. In going thither, however, I was constrained to pass by the place where I had so long lain in your camp, O Romans! and to look with my own

eyes on the sorrowful desolation of that ancient city, where so many holy prophets of the Hebrews had ministered, and so many great kings reigned, in the days of the old time, when their nation flourished and was chosen and favoured of the Almighty. And it was then, indeed, that I first began to repent me of having been present in the host of Titus, and of having had a part in that terrible destruction; to which, when I added the recollection of my own miserable timorousness, when I was accused, by reason of the faith that was in me, at Alexandria—of a surety, great was my perplexity, and I fled across the mountains with much speed, seeking in vain to fly from the stings and perpetual torment of my own meditations, which nevertheless continued even more and more to sink into my spirit; insomuch that when I came into the place where my mother was dwelling, scarcely could she recognise me, wasted and worn as I was with that perpetual misery of shame and repentance. Without reproaches, however, and indeed with great kindness, did she receive me into her habitation, even although, as I have said, she had been much offended with me because of my going up to the beleaguerment of the city of her fathers. But when I, being humbled, made confession to her and her household, and to all the faithful that were in that place, of the grievous sin whereof I had been guilty in Egypt, both she and all the rest of them busied themselves continually to comfort me, and to assure me that there was yet hope, if my repentance were sincere, and my resolution immoveable never again to yield myself to any similar temptation. One of them also, that had been ordained of the disciples of Christ to minister in holy things among the scattered believers that dwelt up and down in that region, came not many days after to the same place, and having publicly heard my confession in presence of the church there, gave unto me absolution, and admitted me once more to be a partaker with them in the ordinances of the sanctuary. From which day, O Trajan! I have never again been so far deserted of myself as to fall back into that miserable error, or by any cowardly word of mine, to deny the faith that is in me, which is the faith of the true God.

that made heaven and earth, and of his son Jesus Christ, whom he sent into the world to teach loving-kindness, and long-suffering, and patience among all kindreds, and tongues, and nations of mankind ; and to make expiation, by the accursed death of the cross, for the evil and the wickedness that is in the world. From which faith should I now depart, out of terror for that which, by your command, may befall me in this place, of a surety no comfort could ever again come to me in my mind, for I should be bowed down, and utterly miserable, out of grief and shame ; which as you yourself, O Cesar, will admit and acknowledge, is far worse than death itself, or any evil which the body of man can sustain. Neither could I have any hope of being reconciled unto the true God, whom I should have so, once and again, denied ; insomuch that neither in life nor in death should I be able to have any happiness ; for in life, what happiness is there to him that is ashamed of himself ? and in departing from life, what comfort can be given to him that, knowing the truth, hath openly abjured the truth for the sake of a few, at the utmost, and these most miserable and unhappy years ? I am an old man, and my near kindred and my friends are already dead, so that poor after all, and not worthy to be mentioned, is the sacrifice on which I have this day resolved. And as for you, O Romans, should I now make shipwreck of my faith, and tell a lie to save my life before you, with what contempt would yourselves be constrained forthwith to look upon me ! Whosoever is wise among you, according to the philosophy of the earth, would utterly despise me ; and whosoever is brave and steadfast of spirit would think foul scorn that a soldier of Titus should be so much afraid to die. Therefore, O Trajan, am I resolved to endure all things rather than sacrifice to your gods ; and if such be your will, I will not refuse to die for this cause, to which witness has already been borne in Rome by the blood of so many apostles, and other noble martyrs of Christ."

The old man, having said these words, bowed himself once more reverently before Trajan, and then folding his arms in his cloak, appeared to await submissively, yet boldly, whatever might be appointed concerning him.

Steadfastly did I look upon his face at that moment, to see whether it might exhibit no traces of wavering, or at least, if pride barred irresolution, whether, nevertheless, there might not appear some token of natural sorrow and human unwillingness to die : yet in vain did I scrutinize and seek therein for any such symptoms of spiritual weakness ; for although it was visible that, with the exertion of so long standing and speaking, to say nothing of thought and anxiety, his bodily strength was much spent, still his eye preserved all its firmness, and his brow remained quite serene ; and the parched lips of the old man did not once betray the least shadow of trembling. Methinks I see him even now, as he then stood—his deep calm eyes sometimes turned upwards to Trajan, but for the most part bent downward to the ground, beneath those gray brows of his, whose dark shade rested upon his large solemn eyelids. Upon his broad front, as he stooped, no hair appeared, but long hoary ringlets, clustered down on either side, mingling with the venerable although dishevelled beard, that lay upon his bosom. Heroic meekness was enthroned visibly upon all his lineaments, and a murmur began to run through the assembly, as if—even in a Christian—it were not possible to contemplate such things without admiration.

But, as they afterward related to me—for I myself was not indeed sufficiently attentive to it—Trajan, who had as yet, during all the occurrences of the day, preserved unmoved the majestic serenity of his countenance, when he observed this last movement in the spirit of the assembly, began all at once to be very indignant, that such things should occur in such a place, in consequence of the appearance merely, and the language, of a culprit and a Christian. I confess it, that I was too much occupied with gazing on Thraso, to have any leisure for remarking the particulars of the deportment of any other person present—no, not even of Trajan himself ; yet such had been the effect produced on me by the history which the old man delivered of himself, that I indeed was not prepared at the moment to find the strong arm of power directed ruthlessly and immediately against him. At least, said I to myself, after such a statement as this, the prince will

institute an inquiry among all those now present in the capital who are likely to be able either to contradict essentially, or to confirm essentially, the narrative in which this man has thought fit to embody his only defence. Many years indeed have elapsed since the walls of Jerusalem were shattered by the engines of Rome, and the golden gate of its antique temple refused to be any protection against the furious soldiery of Titus. Yet surely not a few of such as were present in that proud host must be still in life; yea, not a few of them must be now present in the capital of the world. The old spearman with whom I talked in the guard-room, and beside the ramparts underneath which Thraso was imprisoned, he surely cannot be the only witness that remains to give testimony to the truth of that which we have heard. He at least there is, and we shall forthwith have him at least confronted with Thraso.

Such were my own thoughts within me; judge, therefore, what was my astonishment when I heard the trumpet sound, and perceived that its note, without any word being spoken, was at once received as a sufficient warning by the priests and the Vestals, and the youths and the damsels, and all those that had in any way been connected with the service of the altar, that had appeared on the arena, to retire from the place whereon they stood, and leave the old man there alone, to await the issue of his destiny. Immediately on the signal being given by the trumpet did all these begin to move away; but although in silence they had at first marched into the amphitheatre, they did not retire from it in silence. Another hymn, on the contrary, in which also, as it seemed, different parts were allotted for each different order of singers, was begun to be sung by them even before they had moved from the arena; and after the last of their procession had disappeared behind the wide folding-doors of the amphitheatre, we still heard their voices chanting solemnly until they had entered the great temple of Isis and Serapis, which, as I think, I have already said, stands over-against it, on the very brink of the Esquiline. And while all were yet listening to their singing, and to the divine harmony of lutes, and other sweet-sounding instruments, that accompanied their voices, the slaves, and

other attendants upon the duties of the place, removed every thing from the arena, except only the altar and statue of Jupiter, which were still left where they had been placed; insomuch that ere they had made an end of singing, and we of listening, the old man was left alone there as at the beginning, when he first came forth into the centre of the amphitheatre.

But just when deep silence once more prevailed all over the immense assembly, and expectation was most intense concerning what should be at length commanded by Trajan, it fell out so that a little bald ape escaped through the bars of one of the grated doors, which were along the boundary-wall of the arena, and leaping forth upon the sand, began to skip up and down, challenging by all manner of foolish gestures the attention of those that sat over-against it, leaning down from the parapet. And immediately certain painted courtesans, that were sitting not far from thence, with gilded breasts and bright coloured garlands, and all other gorgeous trappings of the degradation of harlotry, began to throw down apples and nuts to the obscene creature, and to testify much delight in the grimaces with which it received them, hopping to and fro, and casting them away, and then catching them up again, with continual gibbering and prating; and no sooner did the rabble that were above perceive these things, than they all, as with one consent, began to applaud and to shout loudly; insomuch that the vaulted vomitories and wide arches of entrance, and all the marble walls of the spacious amphitheatre, re-echoed in a moment with peals of laughter, and with every wild sound of carelessness and merriment. While, in the mean time, the African feeders and naked gladiators, and all those hangers-on of the amphitheatre whom we had seen in the dark places down below, hearing now the sounds that had arisen among the assembly, began to show themselves in crowds from behind the same grated doors through one of which the monkey had escaped, and to partake in the mirth of the spectators, and to whistle upon the creature, and to excite it to new caperings, by their outcries and jeerings; insomuch that it seemed as if the minds of all present were entirely occupied with the pranks of this brute; and

that almost it was forgotten amid the tumult, not only for what purpose all that solemn and stately pageantry of priests and Vestals had just been exhibited before them; but even that such a being as Thraso was standing there upon the same arena, whereon that moping ape was diverting the multitude by its ridiculous gestures.

Now, for myself, who had never before looked upon any creature of this disgusting tribe, and had gathered only some¹ general notion of its appearance from the treatises of the physiologists, and the narratives of travellers, I could not, indeed, refuse to contemplate at first its motions with some curiosity and attention; but of a truth I knew not, after the scene had lasted for a little space, whether to be more humbled within myself by the monkey's filthy mimickings of the form and attitudes of mankind, or by the display of brutish heartlessness which burst forth from all that countless multitude, while gazing on that spectacle of humiliation.

But it was not until my eye fell again on Thraso, who stood all this time solitary and silent amid the surrounding hubbub, that my sorrow and indignation were the greatest, and that I felt the deepest scorn for the minds of those that filled the amphitheatre around me. There stood the old man even as before, with his arms folded in his gown, and his eyes resting on the sand before him, pale, calm, and unmoved in his meekness, even as if his ears had not once received any sound of all the shoutings and the joyous laughters of that unpitying rabble, that had come there to behold him die. Once, indeed—it was but once—I thought I could perceive that a slight emotion of contempt wreathed for an instant his thin and bloodless lips; but it seemed as if that were but the involuntary and momentary passing over him of one proud thought, and that he spurned it from him immediately, as a thing unworthy of the resolute and determined mind of his integrity, choosing rather to array himself in the divine armour of patience, than to oppose with any weapon of human passion the insults heaped upon his head by the cruel callousness of that degenerate congregation of men. And, whether it were so that the sight of all this did not affect me alone with such reflections, or only that they in author-

ity were afraid too much of the day might be occupied with what formed so unseemly an addition to the regular and ordained business of the assembly,—concerning this matter, I, indeed, cannot pretend to offer any conjecture ; but so it was, that while the uproar of mirth was yet at its height, certain of the lictors that were about the consular chairs leaped down into the arena, and beat the monkey back again among the feeders, and other base hirelings, that stood behind the grated doors of which I have spoken. Whereupon there was at once an end of the tumult, and the lictors having reascended to their places, the eyes of all men there present began once more to fix themselves upon Thraso the Christian.

And he also, when he perceived that it was so, and was sensible of the silence that once more prevailed, it seemed as if he too was aware that at last his appointed hour had come, and that he must needs prepare himself in good earnest for the abiding of the issue. For, instead of continuing steadfast in his place, as he had done during all the time he had as yet been exposed there, it appeared as if now at length, being swallowed up in the contemplation of his approaching fate, he had quite forgotten all the rules he had laid down to himself concerning his behaviour on the arena. Of a surety, I mean not to say that he had now lost remembrance of the courage which hitherto he had manifested,—or even that any the least symptom of changeableness was made visible upon his countenance. But it seemed to me, of a truth, that of such things as he had determined upon within himself before he came thither, touching the mere external demeanour of his bodily frame, the memory now, in this final moment of expectation, had somewhat passed away ; for Thraso stood still no longer on the centre of the arena ; but retaining his arms folded as they had been, and his eyes fixed upon the sand, he began to pace rapidly to and fro, in presence of all the multitude—traversing all the open space whereon he alone now was, from side to side, without so much as once looking up, or exhibiting any token that he was conscious of the presence of any man. By-and-by, nevertheless, in the deeper knittings of his brows, and the closer pressure of his extenuated lips, and then

again in the quivering of the nerves and muscles upon the arms and legs of the old man, as he moved to and fro before us, it was testified abundantly how keenly the spirit was at work within; the strong soul wrestling, it may be, with some last stirring temptations of the flesh, and the mind itself not altogether refusing to betray its sympathy with the natural shudderings of the body. But the moment that the herald of Trajan commanded attention in the assembly, and that the prefect of the city, who had formerly spoken unto him, began again to prepare himself for speaking, that moment did the old man appear to return at once again entirely to himself; and he fixed his eyes upon the prefect with even the same steadfastness as when he made his oration to Trajan, and the whole assembly of the people.

"By all the gods," whispered Sabinus at that moment into my ear,—“by all the gods of Olympus, this old man is a true soldier of Vespasian and of Titus. He will die, Valerius, for this superstition, even with the constancy of a Roman.”

“With all the constancy of a philosopher, say rather,” quoth Xerophrastes, who had overheard his whisper,—“yea, with all the constancy of a philosopher. Of a surety, there must be some lessons of nobility in this faith of the Jews.”

“Now speak not, but look at the old man,” interrupted Rubellia; “the signal is given for the executioner to come forth upon the arena.”

And I looked, and saw that the prefect of the city was standing up in his place, immediately below the chair of Trajan, and immediately he began to speak; and he said, first looking towards the people, “Let there be silence, and let no man stir in this place until this matter be ended.” And then addressing himself, as it seemed, to Thraso,—“With all patience,” proceeded he, “have the words which this man chose to utter in his defence been listened unto; but it must be manifest to all men that they contain no shadow of apology, but rather afford the strongest confirmation of all that had before been alleged against him. Instead of departing from his error, or offering any extenuation of its magnitude, the words of his address

have tended only to show what was already well known to all that have had any dealings with the adherents of this blasphemous sect,—that their obstinacy is as great as their atheism is perverse, and that no clemency can, without blame, be extended to their wilfulness, neither to the scorn wherewith they are resolved to regard all things sacred. Nevertheless, inquiry has been made, and confirmation has been given by those who were present in the wars of the divine Titus, as to that which this man hath said concerning his own service in the Roman host, throughout the glorious campaign of Palestine, and the siege of the city of the Jews. For which service, it hath seemed right unto Cesar, ever-merciful, that no circumstance of needless shame be added unto the death by which this Christian must now expiate before all them who have seen his contempt of the sacrifice of Jupiter, and heard his words of blasphemy against all the gods, the guilt of which, it is manifest to all, he hath been justly and necessarily accused. Let those, therefore, who have been commanded to bring forth a tiger, depart now with their beast, and let this man be beheaded before the altar of Jupiter; after which, for this day, the assembly will disperse; for, until the morrow, the spectacle of the wild animals, which the prince hath prepared, must be deferred.”

And when he had said so, the prefect made his obeisance again to Cesar, and sat down in his place; and immediately one of the doors of the arena was flung open, and there entered some slaves, bearing a wooden block upon their shoulders, behind whom followed also certain ill-favoured blacks, out of the company of African gladiators, one of whom carried bare in his hand a long and heavy sword, the surface of which glittered brightly as he moved, even as if it had been newly sharpened and burnished for the occasion. Seeing all which fatal preparations, Thraso immediately flung aside the long cloak in which hitherto his arms, and all his body, had been wrapped; and after regarding those that had come in for a moment with a steadfast eye, he turned himself to the place where the prefect was sitting, as if he had yet one word to say before he should submit himself unto the

sword of the African ; whereupon the prefect said, "If the prisoner hath yet any thing to offer, it is not too late for mercy—let him speak quickly."

"I have nothing more to offer, O Romans !" answered the old man, "as concerning that of which I have spoken before. But since already some favour has been extended to me by reason of my services in the army of Cesar, perhaps neither will this be refused,—that my body should be given to such as shall ask for it, that it may be treated without indignity after my soul is released from its habitation."

"It is granted," replied the prefect. "Is there any thing more ?"

"There is nothing," said the old man ; "this is all I had to ask of you."

With that, the block being already fixed upon the sand immediately in front of the altar of Jupiter, one of the Africans moved towards Thraso, as if to conduct him to the place where it behooved him to kneel ; but he, observing what was his intention, forthwith prevented him, and walked of himself steadily close up to him in whose hand the sword was unsheathed. Being come thither, the old man immediately took his station over-against the block, and having for a moment placed his hand upon his eyes, and moved his lips, as it seemed in fervent supplication, dropped his one knee on the ground, and stretched forth his neck towards the block ; but suddenly, after he had done so, he sprang again upon his feet, and began to gaze with a keen eye all around the assembly, as if he were in search of some one to whom he had something to say, the which he could not die without speaking. In vain, however, as it appeared, did he make this endeavour ; for after a little space, he shook his head despairingly, and gave over the steadfastness of his look. Nevertheless, he lifted up his voice, and, surveying once more the whole face of the amphitheatre round about, from side to side, said audibly, "There is one here who made last night a promise to me in my dungeon. I cannot see him where he is ; but I conjure him to take good heed, and execute, as he is a man and a Roman, all those things which he said to me he would do." Now when I heard him say so, I well knew within

myself that it was for me only his eye had been searching, and half did I arise from my seat, that he might see I was there, and observe my resolution to keep the faith I had plighted voluntarily to him in his prison. But Sabinus, who had not witnessed without attention the deep interest with which I had all along been contemplating the behaviour of the old man, called to mind, without difficulty, how he had left me the night before to do his errand to Thraso ; and comprehending something of that which was meant, held me firm upon the bench, whispering at the same time, in an earnest manner, "As you regard me, Valerius, and as you regard your own safety, be still."

Being constrained after this manner, I neither rose up nor made any attempt to attract the attention of Thraso—for which forbearance, I confess to you, I have since that day undergone the visitation of not a few bitter thoughts,—but remained steadily in my place, while the old man once more addressed himself to kneel down upon the block that was before him. Calmly now at length did he kneel, and with much composure did he place himself. Yet, before the gladiator was ready to strike, he lifted up his head once again, and gazed upward for a moment towards heaven, with such a countenance of faith and hope, that there went through all the assembly a murmur, as it were, and a stirring breath of admiration. Then bowed he for the last time his gray hairs, and almost before he had rested his neck upon the tree, the strong sword of the African smote thereon with merciful fierceness, and the headless trunk falling backward upon the sand, the blood spouted forth in a gushing stream, and sprinkled all over with red drops the base of the statue of Jupiter Capitolinus, and the surface of the marble altar, whereupon the sacrifice of the Flamens had that day been offered.

The executioner, having made an end of his duty, forthwith wiped his sword from the blood of the Christian, and advancing towards the seats of the magistrates, claimed the largess that was due to him from the prince's bounty, by reason of that which he had done ; which, when he had received, as is the custom, he and all his attendants withdrew immediately from the arena ; the

emperor at the same moment, and the consulars, and all they that were about him, departing also themselves from the assembly; and the whole amphitheatre speedily being filled with the clamours of a universal upbreacking and dispersion of that great multitude.

But as for us that had been sitting with Rubellia, we could by no means be prevailed with to accept of the lady's invitation to go home with her to supper in the Suburra; for the fatigue which had attended the gazing on so many and so various sorts of spectacles was not inconsiderable, and the day being already far spent, we were all willing to retire, as speedily as might be, to our respective places of abode. As for me, from Sabinus also, and Xerophrastes, and Sextus himself, I suddenly found myself separated, by reason of a sudden rushing among the crowd that surrounded the gates of the amphitheatre; so that after waiting there for a space, in expectation of being joined to them again, I perceived that I must of necessity return homeward entirely by myself.

Neither, after a moment, was I sorry that the thing had so fallen out; for, of a truth, the circumstances which had occurred in my presence had taken such possession of my mind, that I was sensible a short time spent by myself was very needful for the regaining of my usual manner of converse. Nay, so much was I occupied with those things, that even after having come as far as the arch of Titus, I could not refrain from turning back, and re-entering the walls of the amphitheatre, that I might once more behold the place on which that old man had died. But when I had come into the edifice, I found it now almost utterly deserted of all the multitudes that had filled it; insomuch that, walking over from bench to bench, my steps sounded as in a solitary place. I saw from a distance the body of Thraso still lying on the spot where it had fallen; but while I was yet looking thereon, and had some purpose to approach nearer, there entered, by one of the private passages, those friends of his to whom he had entreated that his body might be given. Three men and three women were all they that came for that mournful office; but both men and women of them had their faces wrapped in their garments, so that who they were,

neither I nor any one else could be permitted to discover. Having lifted up the body and the head, they placed them together reverently in a linen sheet, and then laying that upon an humble bier, they walked away with their sad burden, and disappeared from my view by the same postern through which they had entered at first upon the arena. But when they had gone away, the slaves of the edifice speedily came in, to put the sand, and all other things therein, in order; and seeing their labour commenced, I also was at length satisfied to take my final departure.

The sun had already been long gone down, ere I, filled with many melancholy meditations, and wellnigh spent utterly with the weariness of a sleepless night and a thoughtful day, reached at length the Martian Field, and entered once more the hospitable mansion of my kinsman.

CHAPTER XIV.

I SAW, my friends, that you listened with not less of indignation than of astonishment to the account which I yesterday gave you of a day spent in the amphitheatre of Vespasian. Neither did I expect that it should be otherwise with young persons of ingenuous minds, whose feelings have never been hardened by any personal experience of the life of Rome.

And yet, when you reflect a little more upon the matter, I think you will abate something of the wonder you manifested on hearing of the fondness of the Roman people for some of those cruel, ruthless spectacles. You will admit, at least, that there is a certain natural principle, on an exaggerated and morbid obedience to which, rather than on any total and absolute departure from the laws of our mind, much of that which excited so much of your astonishment and indignation also may be supposed to depend. In and by itself, I maintain it must always be a most interesting thing for a man to witness, in whatever

shape, the last moments of any human creature. Do not mistake me; I mean not those merely corporal struggles, in which there must always be every thing to revolt, and nothing to interest, because in them, it is evident, the nobler part of our nature can have no share—the soul being already swallowed up, and its divinity absorbed in the intense convulsions of animal suffering. These are things on which no eyes can gaze willingly, without indicating the degradation of the spirit at whose bidding they are moved. But before that curtain falls beyond which every one must shudder to penetrate, there is a last terrible act of the real tragedy, which must ever have power to fix the eyes with an earnestness not the less deep because of its being preceded by some struggles of reluctance. We live in a state in which, however we may clothe ourselves with the armour of levity, or with the more effectual armour of occupation, it is impossible that the one fearful idea of dissolution should not ever and anon come to scare us with its terrors. We feel that we are walking over a soil, on the most level and the most rugged parts of which it is equally possible we may meet with the dark pit wherein it is our destiny to stumble. How sudden or how gradual soever the inevitable fall may be, we well know we shall have little enough space to prepare ourselves for the last leap, when we shall be fairly on the declivity; and I maintain, once more, that it is a rational, no less than a natural, curiosity, which leads us to seek to supply, in some measure, this necessary defect, and to gather, if possible, from witnessing the last moments of others, some hints which may be of use to us, when our own dark hour shall come. We see a being standing on the edge of a precipice, to which the only thing we know certainly is, that we ourselves shall one day be brought; and shall it be possible to feel no curiosity concerning the manner in which he conducts himself on that giddy brink? That which is denied to us in our own person may, in part, be supplied in his; and the eyes which dwell upon his features, while they are filled with the overwhelming expectation of near approaching death, make the closest approximation of which our nature admits to penetrating the actual mysteries of the unseen region. For my-

self, I shall confess without scruple, that both wiser and better did I come away from all that mournful spectacle.

But perhaps I am joining together things which, after all, had no necessary connection, when I ascribe to my contemplation of the death of Thraso, and the other cruel sights which, as it seemed, were regarded with indifference and heartlessness by the great multitudes around me, so much of the salutary change which, about this period, my own spirit underwent; a change of which you have already oftentimes heard me speak, and of which shortly you shall hear me speak more at length.

The slumbers which followed that busy day of novelities and terrors were long and heavy; for utterly worn out were both mind and body, and youth hastened to repair the waste of its energies, by drinking deeply at the great fountain of natural refreshment. Nevertheless, although the hand of sleep had lain steadily upon me, when I awoke in the already confirmed light of morning I found myself yet filled with a confused and tremulous sense of excitation, as if the spirit had disdained to be idle after having received so much food for activity, and fancy had still been garnishing the passive sphere of the night with aerial representations of all the gorgeous and solemn realities of the by-past day. I lay there ruminating amid the dispersing shadows of the mysterious world of dreams, and scarcely as yet aware that a whole night had passed since I had returned from the amphitheatre, when I was at length roused to a sudden and complete recollection of all things by the entrance of Boto.

"My dear master," said he, making a sort of start after he had come in, "I was afraid you would be angry with me for not coming to you sooner, but now I perceive you have been as lazy as the rest of us. Why, surely you are not aware what time of day it is! What would my dear old lady over the water say, if she heard of my young master lying in bed till within three hours of noon! Oh, what a place is this you have brought me to! Why, when I awake in the morning, the first thought that comes into my head always is, What, Boto, and is it really possible that all that wide roaring sea lies between you and the quiet green banks of Anton! Is it truth, good truth, and

neither dream nor witching, that you, *Boto*, are in *Rome*! But I sometimes have to jump up and take a look out of the window before I am quite convinced; and then, to be sure, I know well enough that I, who used always to dream about driving cattle to *Venta*, and perhaps kissing a *Brigian* lass by the way, could never dream so many fine things unless I were really among them. Good heavens! what a heap of stories I shall have to tell, when we get safe back to old Britain!"

"Indeed, *Boto*," said I, "you will be quite a travelled man. Be sure you do not give yourself too many airs on the occasion."

"Travelled man, in faith!" replied the clown. "I should like to know, who it is that will be able to hold up his head with me when I am once fairly back again. Oh, how the old smith will be humbled! He thought himself such a mighty person, because my old master, your father, had taken him with him as far as *Camulodunum*,* and how he used to brag of what he had seen there; but now, I trow, *Master Pernorix* will be fain to talk quietly about his journeys. Oh, *Rome, Rome*! what fine things shall I have to tell them all about *Rome*,—and the lions, and the monkeys, and the elephants, and the fighting-men, and the Christian, and the emperor, and all the wonderful sights we saw yesterday. But the worst of it is, that nobody will ever be able to believe one-half of what I shall tell them. And when does my dear *Master Valerius* think we shall be returning to my old lady, and all the rest of them in *Britain*?"

"Of a truth, good *Boto*," said I, "that is more than I can pretend to give you any notion of; but I dare say, you shall have both time and opportunity to pick up a few more marvels still before we go. In the mean time, you are comfortable, I hope, in your quarters, and *Dromo* takes good heed of you?"

"*Dromo*," quoth he, looking as arch as his massive features would admit of, "*Dromo*, indeed! If I had nobody to trust to but him, I should be very ill off. *Dromo* is a great man; the young lord of the house has him up in his chamber every day to talk with him by himself; and

* Either *Colchester* or *Malden*.

when he comes down again, or returns from any of the errands he is sent out upon, there is no bearing with him in the courtyard, where we are all huddled together. As for the overseer, old Sarcalus, the freedman, he has quite given him up. Nobody dare speak about whipping him; he looks upon himself as almost as important a person as his master, I believe, if the truth were known; and yet I should not complain, for, after all, it was Dromo that carried me yesterday to the amphitheatre."

"Ay, that was very kind of Dromo—I should have thought of it myself. And did he not see that you got your supper snugly, when you came back?"

"Ah! now, master, don't make them whip me—I see they have told you all."

"All!" said I,—“I do assure you they have told me nothing about you; but come, speak out. It must be something very bad that would make me think of having you whipped. You have been only three days in Rome—I shall make allowance for a few vagaries, provided they be not very extravagant.”

"Well, then, Master Valerius," quoth he, "since they have told you nothing beforehand, and you seem inclined to be so good-natured with me, I shall e'en tell you all myself; and I hope you won't think me, after all, very much to blame."

"Speak out, my honest Boto, and remember there is Dromo also to be examined, in case you keep any thing back from me."

"Ah! master, but Dromo would not be so easily caught as poor Boto. Dromo is a cunning man, and a close; and besides, they say he was born in a city they call Crete, and the people of that place can't speak a word of truth, even although they were willing. Do not think any thing at all about Dromo; but trust entirely to your own poor Boto, and he will tell you every thing. Dromo is a sad dog."

I know not what more he might have proceeded to say concerning Dromo, had not that crafty Cretan, who without question had been listening all the while behind the door, just at that moment glided in on very delicate tiptoe, and coming close up behind the British slave, as he stood *in the act of haranguing me*, smote him a smart fillip upon

the cheek with the back of his fingers, mimicking, at the same time, the broad British accent of the man, and repeating after him into his tingling ears the words, "*Dromo is a sad dog—Dromo is a cunning man, and a close—Dromo would not be so easily caught as poor Boto.*" "Ha, ha! Master Valerius," then said he to me, "and so you would really take the trouble to ask questions of this worthy man, when you had it in your power to send for me: I thought it had not been for nothing that three persons I could name entered upon a certain alliance—but 'tis all one to the Cretan. Both Sextus and you may manage your own affairs for yourselves, if such be your pleasure."

I knew not on this whether to be more amazed with the impudence of the Cretan or the confusion of poor Boto, who stood rubbing his cheek with a strangely mingled aspect of sheepishness and sulkiness; but Dromo soon put an end to the affair, by turning round with a face of admirably feigned astonishment to my Briton, and saying, "Good heavens! Boto, are you still there? Do you not perceive that your master and I have something to say to each other in private? Begone, my good man; shall I never be able to render you susceptible of the smallest polish?"

These last words, being accompanied with a gentle push on the back, soon expelled poor Boto, who, nevertheless, did not depart without casting towards me a look of woful appeal over his shoulder. But I, perceiving plainly, in the midst of all his frolicsome behaviour, that Dromo had really something to say to me, and suspecting, of course, that the interest of Sextus might be concerned in what he had to say, suffered my slave to withdraw in good earnest. Dromo, after the door was shut, laid his finger upon his lip, and stood still for a moment in an attitude of close attention; but the heavy heels of the reluctant Briton were heard with great distinctness, lumbering along the marble floor of the gallery; so, being satisfied that there was no eaves-dropping in the case, the varlet seated himself forthwith in a posture of great familiarity on the nether end of my couch, and, to judge from the expression of his countenance, seemed evidently to be preparing himself for a disclosure of some importance.

At length, after not a few winks of much intelligence, it was thus he began:—

“ You may hear Boto’s story, sir, at any time you please, and I dare say it will amuse you ; but in the mean time I must really have you attend to me, for, without jesting, things are by no means in so fair a train as I had thought for my young master ; and if something effectual be not speedily discovered, I am really at a loss to think how we shall be able to get out of our difficulties in such a manner as may be either satisfactory to him or creditable to my management. But you had better get up and dress yourself, and while you are doing so, I will tell you every thing.”

I did as he bade me, and then the Cretan proceeded : —“ As I was coming out of the amphitheatre yesterday, I happened to find myself rubbing shoulders with a certain old fat Calabrian, whom I had seen before about Rubellia’s house in the Suburra, and thinking that no harm could possibly come of being civil to him, I began immediately to ask his opinion of the spectacles. Whereon I wish you had been there to see how much he was delighted with the attention I paid him, and how he plumed himself on being admitted to talk on such subjects with such a person as me ; for the man himself is but an ignorant fellow, and seems never to have kept company but with the grooms and hinds. From less to more, we began to be the greatest friends in the world ; and by the time we got to the arch, it was evident that we could not possibly part without having a glass together to cement the acquaintance. Well, we were just about to dive into one of the wine-cellars there, below the gateway, when I saw your friend Boto standing by himself in the middle of the street, apparently quite agaze and bewildered, and not able to form the smallest guess which way he ought to take in order to reach home ; and being a good-natured fellow, in spite of all that has been said, I immediately shouted out his name till he was compelled to hear me, and then beckoned to him to come along with us, which indeed he did without much coaxing.”

“ Well, Dromo,” said I, “ and so all your great news is, that you have been leading my Briton into one of your

debauches? In truth, I think you need not have made such an affectation of mystery withal."

"Stop now," quoth he, cutting me short; "if the slave be too slow, I am sure the master's quickness will make up for it. Hear me out before you begin commenting; such interruptions would bring the Stagyrite himself to a stand:—we were soon, all three of us, seated in one of those snug little places, which if you have not yet seen, you are ignorant of the most comfortable sight within all the four walls of Rome,—a quiet cleanly little place, just big enough for the company,—three good hassocks upon the floor, a handful of sausages, and a plate of dried fish as broad as the shield of Ajax, and a good old-fashioned round-bellied jolly jug of Surrentine in the midst of us. I dare say, there were a hundred besides employed in the same way in the house; but we shut the door, and were as private as behind the altar of Vesta."

"A tempting scene, Dromo; and what use did you make of your privacy?"

"All in good time,—all in good time, Master Valerius; you would have the apple before the egg, if one would indulge you, I think. We had scarcely emptied our first jug, ere the conversation between the Calabrian and me took a turn that was not quite unnatural; for slaves, however little you may trust them, will always be smelling out something of the truth; and you may be sure all this visiting, and feasting, and riding about in chariots, and sitting together at the amphitheatre, has not been going on without causing a good deal of talk both in this house and the Lady Rubellia's. The courtship was of course the subject of our conversation, and I, pretending to know nothing of it myself, except from the common report of the slaves about our house, affected to consider it as highly probable that the fat Calabrian might have had much better opportunities than mine of being informed how the affair really stood."

"And did he really seem to have any knowledge about it?" said I.

"Not much—not much; but still the man did tell me something that I think may turn out to be well worth the knowing. I am sure, said I (by this time Boto was fast

asleep)—I am sure, if Rubellia won't have my young master, it won't be for want of presents; for we all know he has already given her a whole casket of rings and bracelets that belonged to his mother, and he is sitting for his picture, which, they say, he is to give her besides. So much said I.

“‘And I am sure,’ quoth the Calabrian in return, ‘that if your young master don't have my lady, it won't be for want of presents neither; for she is the most generous, open-handed lady in the world, and that her worst enemies will allow, although her father be an old rogue, and a usurer, as all the town says he is. No, Dromo,’ continued he, ‘nor will it be for want of filters, nor of charms, nor of any thing that soothsaying can procure; for, between ourselves, my lady keeps up a constant traffic of late with all that sort of gentry; and what the issue of it all may be, Hecate only knows.’ Now, my dear Master Valerius, when I heard him speak of filters and charms, you may be sure I began to quicken up my ears more keenly than ever.”

“Poh! poh! Dromo,” said I; “you are not serious. You do not mean surely to make me think that you believe in the efficacy of love-potions, or any such quackeries as these?”

“Quackeries! do you call filters quackeries? Why, there was a girl once gave myself a filter that kept me raving for six months.”

“What sort of a looking girl was she, good Dromo?”

“Bah!” quoth he; “that's all utter nonsense. I see well enough what you are thinking of; but don't expect to drive me out of memory as well as judgment by any of your jeering. Heavens and earth! when did anybody ever hear of anybody denying the efficacy of filters? What an atheistical sort of barbarians those Britons must be that you have been living among! By Jupiter, if you had 'suffered as much from filters as I have done, you would be a little more shy of talking so contemptuously about them. I wonder you are not afraid of some evil coming upon you. Remember Dian's handful; remember the fate of Actæon!”

“Good Dromo,” said I, “I suppose you also suffered

from peeping. But talk seriously, are you yourself a dealer in filters, that you are so anxious I should believe in their power? Or what is your meaning?"

"My meaning," quoth he, with great vehemence of utterance, and smiting his forehead as he spoke,—“my meaning, Master Valerius, is just this, that if Rubellia gives Sextus such another filter as a certain cunning little damsel gave me, before I left the pleasant island of Crete, to be a drudge and a packhorse here in Rome, where a man may sweat all his life in another's service, without being once thanked for his pains, and perhaps be laid out, look ye, for a supper to the vultures at last, because nobody will treat his carcass to a blaze of old sticks,—I say, that if the Lady Rubellia contrives to give Sextus such another filter as that, the game's up, Master Valerius; and we may as well set about painting the dead, as try to save him from her clutches. The man's gone—he's as lost as Troy.”

“Well, well, Dromo,” said I, for I perceived there was no use in fighting it with him, “and have you not been able to hit upon any feasible scheme for averting this horrible filter?”

“Ay, have you come to that at last? that is just what I have been cudgelling my brains about, half of the time drunk, and half of it sober, for the last twelve hours. But if I do hit upon any thing, I shall need assistance. In such cases, the best judgment can do nothing by itself.”

“Fear not, my dear Dromo,” quoth I; “if my assistance can do you any good, you well know you can command it to the utmost.”

“Then prepare,” replied the Cretan, rising up with an air of much solemnity—“then prepare in good earnest; for, may Cerberus growl upon me, if I don't find out some scheme before another day goes over, and show you all what stuff I am made of. Impudent baggage, forsooth, to think of entrapping Sextus without consulting Dromo!—No, by Cretan Jove, she shall not accomplish it—no, not even with a sea of filters.”

“And, in the mean time,” said I, “what must Sextus do with himself?”

“He must not go near the Suburra; he must remain

closely at home ; and as for tasting any thing at her house, or any thing that comes from her—by heavens, if he does not take his oath against that, we may as well leave him to his destiny. If he will but take good care for this one day, I think there is every chance something may be hit upon ere the morning. I have got my cue, and shall not be idle, I promise you; but I undertake nothing unless you swear to keep Sextus safe, and at a distance from her, till nightfall.”

“ Good Dromo,” said I, “ make yourself easy on that score ; it will be a new circumstance indeed if we find any difficulty in persuading Sextus to stay a single day away from the Suburra.”

“ *Persuading !*” quoth the slave ; “ who ever heard of such a word as *persuasion* at such a crisis as this ? I tell you what it is, he *must* be kept away ; and if no other plan can be fallen on, I have a great mind to turn the key on him and his pedagogue both together. I heard them hammering at their lessons already as I came along ; and that puts me in mind that I have a very shrewd notion there is more between that bearded goat of ours and this Rubellia, than any of us had been suspecting. Unless that Calabrian lies—and I think lying is above his sphere—this old rogue has been oftener in the Suburra of late than we had any thought of. So help me Hermes ! I believe Licinius has been employing him to go his private messages to Rubellia—but that is only one insult more, and I shall have my revenge all in a lump.”

“ I think it very likely,” answered I, quite quietly, “ that Licinius may have been employing Xerôphrastes in some such embassies as these ; and if I mistake not the matter, he would feel himself quite as much in his element trotting along the Sacred Way, and so forth, on such errands for the father, as in expounding those musty parchments of his to the son.”

“ No matter for all that,” quoth Dromo, rubbing his hands ; “ the more enemies the more glory. Would Miltiades have been pleased had the Spartans arrived ? Leave all to me—take you care only of Sextus, and I am not afraid for any reinforcement that rascally rhetorician may bring against me.”

While he was saying so, the face of the Cretan ex-

hibited obvious symptoms of incipient glee ; and he concluded with snapping his fingers, and uttering a short keen whistle, such as you have heard from the lips of a hunter, when the dogs begin to bay around the thicket in which he suspects the boar has his lair. Seeing him so ecstatically occupied with the expectation of some active and bustling scene, I could not help participating, in some measure, in the feelings of the Cretan myself. In short, I could scarcely look upon his dancing eyes and grinning lips, without being touched for the moment with something of the genuine spirit of your managing go-between ; and so, " Dear Dromo," said I, " I beseech you, if it be possible, let me have a share in whatever you resolve upon."

" Watch well," replied he, evidently much flattered—" watch well during the day, and you shall see what you shall see, when the moon mounts above the Caelian, and the hour for grubbing among herbs and bones is come. But now I hear some one coming, and I think it is Licinius's own footsteps."

So saying, Dromo laid his finger once more on his lips, in token of secrecy, and glided from the room. Nor had his well-practised ears deceived him, for he had scarcely vanished into the gallery before my kinsman entered at the other side of the apartment.

" My dear Valerius," said he, saluting me affectionately, " I thought you were probably much fatigued with your spectacles, so I desired that nobody should call you this morning ; but I met Boto in the hall just now, and hearing from him that you were astir, I have come up to see you, for I wish particularly to have a little private conversation with you. If you have no objection, we will take a walk in the eastern portico, till such time as Xerophrates leaves Sextus at liberty for the day."

So saying, Licinius led the way along the gallery to the place he had mentioned, and in passing we also heard the deep voice of the rhetorician resounding among the pillars, and could even catch a few of the magniloquent phrases with which he was feeding the ears of his pupil. " Ay, ay," quoth my kinsman as we went on, " I wish, indeed, it were possible to inspire the youth with some proper sense of what is due to the dignity of principle."

and how absurd it is to think of gratifying idle whims at the expense of the dictates of duty. But I fear the boy is incorrigible; and alas! Valerius, I am very sorry to say that I suspect you have been looking on his errors with a countenance rather of favour and of confirmation, than, as I should have expected from you beforehand, of rebuke."

"My dear sir," said I, "you know not how much you distress me. I could rather die than encourage Sextus in any thing I thought evil; but, indeed, I have seen nothing to make me imagine him capable of following any such conduct."

"Come, by Hercules," returned he, "there is no occasion for so many words. I thought it very odd that you went away so soon from the Forum the other day, considering that you had never been there before; but I thought it doubly and trebly remarkable that Sextus should have accompanied you, knowing, as he must have done, how much I, at all events, was interested in the affairs of Rubellia. But I have since found out that it was not the society of old Capito alone—no, my friend, nor yet the alarm of a thunder-storm, that detained you at the villa. In a word, Valerius, I strongly suspect that Sextus is carrying on an intrigue with a young lady whom I never saw, but who, I am quite sure, will never be heiress to fifty sesterces, and that is the true cause of his reluctance concerning a match which, to say nothing of the pleasure it would give to me, is the only means by which I can see any prospect of the young man's fortune being made, and the dignity of our family kept up, after another effigy shall have been added to the long series that already adorn our hall. Infatuated and headstrong boy! if he owes nothing to himself or to me, is it possible that he can look upon that venerable line of sages and heroes, without feeling shame in the degradation of his own earth-stooping desires?"

"Without question, sir," said I, "you allude to the Lady Rubellia, whom, as I have heard from various quarters, you are desirous of seeing wedded to Sextus."

"Yes, Valerius, it is indeed to her I allude; and it is of the obstacle which—unwittingly, I doubt not, and heed-

lessly—you yourself have been throwing in the way of that much-desired union, that I have now to make my complaint. Of a surety, such is not the service that I had expected from my British kinsman. Rubellia is descended from a noble family, and both in possession and expectation her wealth is great. Two heavy fines laid upon me by Domitian, and the expense at which I have maintained my rank among the great patrons of Rome, these things together have impoverished me, not indeed in a manner unworthy of the lineage from which I am sprung, but to an extent not altogether convenient. In this boy my earthly hopes were placed; and see you now how they are all likely to be blasted for the sake of a dimpled cheek, and a pair of wanton eyes! or rather, indeed, I should say, for the sake of the malignant pleasure that is derived from thwarting my purposes: for, if beauty were what the boy wanted, where should he find beauty to be compared with that of Rubellia? Indeed, Valerius, I should before this time have made you acquainted with my intentions from my own lips, and then I am sure there would have been no occasion for any such conversation as this.” Then, after a pause, he continued, more sternly, “Of a surety it is my own foolish indulgence which has made my degenerate boy quite forget, not only what is the duty of a Roman son, but what is the power of a Roman father.”

“Nay, Licinius,” said I, interrupting him, “I trust there is no need for all this seriousness. Sextus, after all, has only just laid aside the garb of a stripling; certainly it is too much to be despairing of his success in life, only because he is unwilling, at a period so early, to enter upon a connection which, I am sure, you would be sorry to find him regarding in any other light than that of a permanent one. Is it possible that, if he really dislike Rubellia, you would wish to see him marry her—only to divorce her, without question, as soon as he should find it possible to do so without inconvenience?”

“Handsome, rich, noble, and almost as young as himself, why, in the name of all the gods, for what cause should he divorce Rubellia?”

“Sir,” said I, “he loves not Rubellia, nor will ever love her; and if you cause your son to marry this woman, look you well to it, that the unhappiness of both rest not on your head. Handsome, rich, noble, and young she may be; but I am sure she has neither such a heart nor such a mind as should belong to the wife of your Sextus. A luxurious woman is Rubellia, and I have seen her find luxury in the contemplation of blood. Wed not Rubellia to your son.”

“Peace, Valerius,” he answered; “what boyish nonsense is this? I *will* wed Rubellia to my son; and let him see to it that he tempts me not further with his disobedience.”

Licinius said these last words in a voice of so much earnestness, that I knew not well what answer to make to him; but just while I was hesitating, there came to the place where we were walking among the statues, one of the little boys that were about the house (I mean the children of the domestic slaves), who, making his obeisance to Licinius, said, “If it please my lord, the same senator that was here in the morning has returned with two others, and is waiting in the hall.”

“Oh! Pontius Mamurra again, I suppose,” quoth the orator, and so left me without saying another word; some other business, as it seemed, having immediately recurred to occupy his attention.

But I, for my part, when I heard the name of the visitor, began to understand somewhat of the channel through which my kinsman had been informed concerning what had passed at the suburban of Velius Capito.

CHAPTER XV.

I HAD no leisure, however, to reflect long upon this hint; for, on coming to my own apartment, I found Sextus waiting there for me, who said, immediately on my entrance, “Come, Valerius, I have been looking for you

all over the house, and I was just about to set off without you. My father has been looking on me this morning with such an aspect of displeasure as I never before witnessed in him, and I know, that if I defer going to the painter, whom he has commanded to execute my likeness, he will be altogether enraged against me at supper-time. I know very well he means the ring, in which it is to be placed, for another present to Rubellia; but notwithstanding, what can I do? Any opposition to him in lesser matters would only tend to bring on some final explanation about the great affair itself, and that, whether it be weakness in me or not, I as yet have no courage to encounter. Come along, the man must be expecting me about this time, and there is no use in keeping him idle, since go I must; and as for you, I am sure you will accompany me, for I have much need of you to keep up my heart during so odious a business. Xerophrates, indeed," he continued, "has been desired to go along with me; but he will be no comfort, for I see plainly, from the drift of his harangues this morning, that he also is enlisted against me. My dear Valerius, I have nobody in the whole world I can trust to but Dromo and yourself."

He had scarcely said so, when we heard Xerophrates pacing up and down with solemn strides in the gallery; so I knew not how to excuse myself, although I was very anxious to have staid at home for another purpose, of which I shall speak to you anon. Young Sextus, meanwhile, had taken down my gown from the nail, and he threw it over my shoulders before I had time to say any thing; and, in a word, the whole three of us were soon on our way to the place of my young friend's ungrateful destination.

In order to arrive at this place, however, we had a considerable part of the city to move over; for I found that this painter was one of those who exercise their art during the public hours of the day in the baths of the Palatine, where, as you have heard, in the wide circuit of the princely residence, abundant accommodation is set forth for all such ingenious persons as choose to make use of it. We proceeded, therefore, along the edge of the

river, and by the west of the Capitol, following the line of that great Triumphal Way which has been witness of so many glorious pageants; for so, they told me, we should most easily ascend into the Cæsarian courts. But when we had come thither, we found, very unexpectedly, that the whole of the open space in front of the portico and stairs of Trajan was occupied by a detachment of the Prætorian cohorts, who were drawn up there in splendid array to receive some promised donative from the bounty of the prince; while the martial music, and the clamours of their mustering, had collected all around them enough of spectators to render the passage onward in some measure difficult. We also by this means were constrained to form part of their attendance, and stood there gazing patiently among the multitude, till such time as they should disperse. Neither was it, in truth, possible for me altogether to lament this interruption; for the sun shone brightly upon the crests and the spears, and the silver eagles glittered here and there resplendently above the heads of the warriors, and the horses of the tribunes pawed the ground proudly when the horns were sounding, and the deep silence along the armed line contrasted nobly with the hum and tumult of the admiring assemblage; and even the eyes of the stately Xerophrates caught some animation from the brilliancy of the spectacle before him; and the enamoured and perplexed Sextus himself, beating time on my shoulder to the notes of the trumpet, seemed to have forgotten for a moment all the anxieties of his situation.

Some horsemen, however, riding along to keep the ground open in front of the soldiery, compelled us to shift our places more to the eastward, where many chariots were drawn up, and in one of these I ere long discovered Rubellia sitting by herself. The lady looked paler by far than I had ever before seen her, and had not the air of being in the smallest degree occupied with what was passing. But I, for my part, did not think it necessary to take any notice of her being there to either of my companions, and was willing, indeed, to keep myself turned away from the place where she sat, in order to avoid any chance of being recognised by her. Yet there was some-

thing in the aspect of her countenance, and in the troubled air of her whole attitude, that in spite of myself prevented me from doing so, and, as it were by a sort of fascination, drew my eyes to the spot that I wished most to avoid. From time to time, therefore, I felt myself constrained to regard the melancholy lady; and I had not turned round often for that purpose before Sextus also perceived what it was that attracted my attention—so I discovered sufficiently, although he said not a word, from the fervent pressure with which his fingers suddenly began to lean upon my arm as I stood before him. And at that moment there drew near to the place where her chariot stood a certain little ugly old woman, with no covering upon her head but long coarse gray clusters of hair hanging matted and twisted all down upon her shoulders, who immediately lifted up a basket of trinkets she had on her arm, and presented it to Rubellia, as if to solicit her to purchase something out of it; but no sooner did Rubellia perceive the basket thrust into her chariot, than she started on her seat, and looking in the face of the old creature, manifested immediately many signs of no trivial emotion; for her colour, which, as I have told you, had that day quite departed from her, now returned with a sudden and strong flush into her cheeks, and her dim eyes recovered all their animation, and her lips trembled after such a fashion that it was evident she had something to say which could not possibly regard the gaudy ornaments that were offered to her view in the basket. Whatever it was, however, that she had to say, she did not occupy much time in saying it; for scarcely a minute had elapsed before the basket was lowered again, and the old woman, after whispering something into the ear of the lady, began to move away from her towards another part of the crowd, after which Rubellia sunk back again immediately into the corner of her chariot, and appeared to relapse into much of the same pensive abstraction from which the old woman's visit had disturbed her.

But many moments had not gone ere I heard a low voice croaking out, "Rings, rings,—amulets and rings!" among the crowd that stood immediately behind me; and,

looking over my shoulder, I perceived the same old woman with the long gray clusters of hair, already standing close beside us, and pushing forward between Xerophrastes and Sextus the same basket which had been thrust into the chariot of Rubellia. There was a certain wild and outlandish leer upon the tawny countenance of the woman that, I know not how, affected me with something that was neither fear nor curiosity, but a strange mixture of both; so that at one moment my impulse was to interpose some part of the bystanding multitude between me and her, and the next, I could scarcely help moving towards her more nearly than was necessary. But it seemed as if neither to me nor to Xerophrastes was she ambitious of vending her wares, for she took not the least notice of either of us, nor indeed of any others that were near her, except only the young Sextus, whom she began coaxing to buy of her, with all that flow of cunning and low adulation which comes so naturally from the lips of such itinerants.

“My noble youth,” quoth the hag, “my noble, lovely, beautiful young gentleman—my sweet Adonis, my charming lord, do now look into old Pona’s basket—poor old Ponula!—do take a look at Ponula’s rings and amulets—her amulets and rings. Here is one that I could have sold a hundred times for all that it is worth, but I was determined to keep it till I should see the prettiest young gentleman in Rome, and I never will go back to Naples without selling it, after this day; for this beautiful little amulet must be nobody’s but yours. You will break my heart, my lovely prince, if you don’t buy my beautiful little amulet.”

“And what,” said he, blushing and laughing, “may be the virtues of your amulet?”

“Virtues of my amulet!” she replied, twisting her old seamed lips into a faint and fawnish simper; “do you ask what are the virtues of my amulet? Of a surety you shall know them;” then laying her yellow hand upon his shoulder, till she had made him stoop down so that she might get close to his ear, and sinking her voice into a whisper, she began to pour out, with much mysterious volubility, all the story of its marvellous potencies: but what she said even I could not know, only I heard the

words, "Ethiopian, Ethiopian," and "Memnon, Memnon," and something about "not a pretty lady in Rome"—and a few more disjointed fragments, of which it was not possible for me to make any sense. But just as the woman was most earnest in her whisper, and Sextus, apparently at least, in listening to it, I found my gown plucked hastily from behind; and behold, there was Dromo, with a countenance quite tremulously agitated, and all over as white as a piece of dead parchment, pointing to his young master and the old hag, and beseeching me to separate them, by motions which were in nowise to be mistaken. How he had come thither, or what was the cause of all his anxiety, I had no time to conjecture, for before I could say a word, he began to bellow out,—“The horses, the horses—make room there for the horses;” and immediately those that stood near him began to move a little, and then, the cry being repeated, those that stood farther off mistaking the noise of their feet for that of the actual approach of some new squadron, there arose altogether a sort of rushing among the crowd; and in a twinkling the voice of Pona was heard grumbling and croaking at a distance from the place to which our party were borne by the current of its multitudes. Close, nevertheless, did the faithful Cretan stick to us; and no sooner was quiet in some measure restored, and the false alarm he had created at an end, than he whispered into my ear, “For the sake of all that is sacred, let not that foul hag speak another word to my young master—I will tell you more anon. Meantime, haste ye, haste ye. Make the best of your speed to the Palatine; it will be much easier for you to push your way thither than it was for me to come where you are.”

Nor was he satisfied with indicating all this by words alone, but pointing with his finger to a place where there really was some appearance of an opening, he continued, by every fervent gesture in his power, to impress on me the necessity of immediately obeying his directions; and how to account for this I know not, but indeed there was something in the earnestness of Dromo's manner which I found it quite impossible to resist; insomuch that even, I believe, without so much display of zeal, he might have

accomplished his purpose with me. At all events, the way needed only to be pointed out in order to its being followed by Sextus and Xerophrastes, who were already weary of the heat and the pressure of the multitude; so we were all soon in motion towards the region of which the Cretan had given us notice. It so happened, however, that in the same commotion which had removed us from one part of the crowd to another, the chariot of Rubellia also had changed its situation; for just as we had escaped, as we thought, from all the tumult, and were about to place our feet on the first step of that great and magnificent flight of stairs that leads up from the new way to the Augustan Towers, there came to us a lad of that lady's household, who told us his mistress was near at hand, and desirous, if it so pleased us, of our company. So invited, and being aware that we were in sight of Rubellia, what could be done but to follow her bidding? and we did so accordingly, in spite of all Dromo's warnings to me—nay, I say yet further, in spite of our own inclinations. We found the lady in her chariot, but not such as we had seen her before. On the contrary, whether or not the sight of Sextus had produced the change, the whole liveliness of her aspect seemed now to be completely restored to her, and she received us, as it appeared, with all her usual gayety of address. "Careless men," said she, as we drew near; "I suppose I might have sat here till the Greek Kalends, before any one of you would have observed me."

"Most noble lady," quoth Xerophrastes, "bear it not indignantly, that amid all the confusion of men and horses, and trumpets and shoutings, our attention was abstracted from that which was really most worthy of our notice; of a surety, my young friends deserve to be excused, since even I, who am not in the habit of being much troubled by such vanities, was myself so much bewildered that I scarcely knew my right hand from my left, in this human chaos. Pardon us, most noble Rubellia; we have been unwitting offenders."

"I believe it—I believe it," replied the lady, not once looking at the stoic. "But I did not call for you to hear useless apologies. What new sight is it that attracts you

to the Palatine? or is it only that you are desirous of exhibiting to Valerius the old established wonders of the place? In either case, I have half a mind to accompany you. In spite of all they tell us about the Golden House, I can scarcely think the Palatine can have shown more splendidly than it does now, even in the days of Nero."

"Indeed," said I, as we began to mount together the broad slabbed steps which rise up, tier above tier, in solid magnificence, from the portico that is on the street to that which hangs on the brow of the ascent, "Indeed, it is not easy for me to doubt that Rubellia is in the right." For now, on one side, were all the pillars and arches of the Forum stretched out below us, as in a picture; and on the other lay the stately sweep of the great Circus, topped with its obelisk; while right before, from above trees and temples, rose the gray cliffs of the Capitoline, with all their crown of domes and proud pinnacles glittering in the glow of the noontide. Imagine to yourselves the space between, all radiant with the arms and banners of those moving cohorts, and confess that my enthusiasm might have been pardoned, even had I been an old man, and less a stranger to spectacles of Roman magnificence. As it fell out, it was partaken by my companions; for even Xerophrates did not refrain from some ejaculations of delight. "Great Rome! Illustrious, imperial Rome!" said the stoic, "how great is thy sublimity!" And then, after a pause of a moment or two, he repeated, in a voice of much majesty, those fine verses from the Fury of Ajax:—

Oh! might I be where o'er the living deep
Lies the broad shadow of the Sounian cliff,
Waving with all its glorious garniture
Of rock-sprung foliage: from old Ocean's side,
That I might look on Athens once again!*

But I confess to you, that at the moment some of the hints which had reached me concerning the real country of his nativity recurring to my recollection, I could not

* Sop. Ajax. 1235.

γενοίμαν
'Ἰδ' ἔλαιον ἐπέσι Πόρτα, &c.

help very wickedly echoing his Greek quotation with another from Virgil, about the wide tracts *ploughed* by the Thracians*—of which impertinence, however, the sage, lost in his own thoughts, took not or seemed not to take any notice.

Neither, of a truth, was my admiration diminished when, having gained the top of that massive staircase, or rather, as I should say, that grandiform hill of marble, we passed at length beneath the sounding portal, the sole remnant of the original pile of Augustus, and found ourselves within the first of those great imperial quadrangles by which the whole summit of that once so variously and multitudinously peopled region is now occupied. The light and airy formation of the porticoes all around me—the gracefulness of the pillars—the splendour of the domes—the sublimity of the princely towers—and the universal profusion of elaborate elegance in all things;—the marble, the brass, the ivory, and the flaming gold, everywhere lavished on arch, metope, and architrave—all conspired for a moment to dazzle my sight, and I stood still to gaze without disturbance on the wide vision of magnificence with which it had pleased the masters of the world to be surrounded.

“Behold,” said Sextus, “where those two equestrian statues of bronze are placed over against each other, on the left-hand—I have heard my father say that they mark the sites of two houses, which, in the old time, before Augustus began to enclose the whole Palatine in his walls, were inhabited, the one by Cicero, the other by Clodius, his enemy; but now these are all the traces that remain of their mansions.”

“In faith,” replied Rubellia, “your brazen equestrians are grim-looking riders enough; but yet, I dare say, they don’t cast half such fierce looks on each other as those two predecessors of theirs whom you have mentioned. I should like to have seen the countenance of old Tully, the morning he went down the hill to deliver his harangue for Milo.”

“Nay,” said I, “I am very glad that Sextus has told

* Vide *Æneid* III.

Thracæ arant, &c.

me this ; for I shall alway, in reading those famous philippics in time to come, possess a new key to the bitterness of their phraseology, knowing, as I do, that the two lived just over the way from each other, and that the orator could every now and then, when his spirits were flagging, derive a new reinforcement of spleen from merely putting his head out of the window, and contemplating, if not the person, at least the habitation of his adversary."

"To hear you speak," quoth Rubellia, "one would think you were studying the art of making philippics yourself—I am afraid that, if it be so, my joining your party may prove to have been but an ill-judged thing for my own interests ; for, according to this theory, if any of you be preparing to abuse me, my presence will only serve to sharpen your weapons."

"Of a surety, however," interrupted the smiling Xerophrates, "my noble lady will admit, that, in that case, the converse also will hold good, and that if praise be in meditation, it will not be the feebler because the subject of the intended panegyric has passed before the eyes of the eulogist."

"Most courteous of men," replied the lady, "who will ever talk of the stiffness of the Porch, after the days of Xerophrates ? To-day and yesterday you have paid me as many compliments as might give a lesson to the gayest trifler about the imperial baths here. If all," she continued (gazing, as she spoke, with all her eyes upon Sextus), "if all were as profuse, I should be unable to sustain the weight of their civilities."

"Nay, O generous lady," quoth the sage again, "it must be remembered, that, as the poet has expressed it, there are two kinds of shame—there is the wicked shame and the good shame. Why should it be doubted that a modest Verecundity, not unsuitable to their age, has laid her finger on the lips of our young friends ? I swear by the Victrix of Ida, that your presence itself is that which occasions their silence ; bear it not ill—bear it not harshly—the young will learn—it is not every one that has seen Corinth."

"No, truly," answered the laughing lady ; "but I doubt whether they that have been so fortunate have ever seen

any thing half so fine as we are just going to show to our friend Valerius—let us go at once to the temple.”

So saying, she pointed to the solemn Doric columns which sustain the portico of the famous temple of Apollo Palatinus, whose shade lay far out upon the marble court before us, and passing between those brazen horsemen of which we had been speaking, we soon began to ascend the steps that lead up to the shrine. Nor can I tell you how delightful was the fragrant coolness which reigned beneath the influence of that massive canopy of marble, to us whose eyes had been so long tasked with supporting the meridian blaze of the Italian sun, reflected from so many shining towers and glowing edifices. We entered with slow steps within the vestibule of the temple, and stood there for some space, enjoying in silence the soft breath of air that played around the flowing fountains of the god. Then passing on, the airy hall of the interior itself received us; and I saw the statue of Phœbus presiding, like a pillar of tender light, over the surrounding darkness of the vaulted place; for, to the lofty shrine of the god of day no light of day had access, and there lay only a small creeping flame burning thin upon his altar; but a dim and sweet radiance, like that of the stars in autumn, was diffused all upon the statue, and the altar, and the warlike trophies suspended on the inner recesses, from the sacred tree of silver that stands in the centre,—amid the trembling enamelled leaves and drooping boughs of which hung many lamps, after the shape and fashion of pomegranates—and out of every pomegranate there flowed a separate gleam of that soft light, supplied mysteriously through the tall stem of the silver tree, from beneath the hollow floor of the temple.

Now there was no one there when we first came into the place; but I had not half-satisfied myself with contemplating its beauties, when there advanced from behind the statue of Apollo a very majestic woman, arrayed in long white garments, and having a fillet of laurel leaves twined above her veil, where, parting on her forehead, its folds began to fall downward towards her girdle. Venerable and stately was her mien, but haughty, rather than serene, the aspect of her countenance. Without once

looking towards us, or the place where we stood, she went up immediately to the altar, and began to busy herself in trimming the sacred fire, which, as I have said, exhibited only a lambent and fleeting flame upon its surface. But when, with many kneelings and other ceremonies, she had accomplished this solitary service, the priestess of Apollo at length turned herself again, as if to depart into the secret place from whence she had come forth; and it was then, that first, as it seemed, observing the presence of strangers, she stood still before the altar, and regarding us attentively, began to recognise the Lady Rubellia, whom, forthwith advancing, she saluted courteously, and invited to come with the rest of us into her privacy, behind the shrine of the god.

So saying, she herself led the way thither, Rubellia walking immediately behind her, and the rest of us in her train. Through several folding-doors did we pass, and along many narrow passages all inlaid, on roof, wall, and floor, with snow-white alabaster and rich mosaic work, until at length we came to a little airy chamber, where three young maidens were sitting with their embroidering cushions, while one, taller than the rest, whose back was placed towards us, so that we saw not her countenance, was kneeling on the floor, and touching, with slow and mournful fingers, the strings of a Dorian lyre. Hearing the sound of her music as we entered, we stood still in the door-way, and the priestess, willing apparently that our approach should remain unknown, advancing a step or two before us, said, "Sing on, my love, I have trimmed the flame; sing on, I shall now be able to listen to all your song; but remember, I pray you, that the precincts of Phœbus are not those of Pluto, and let not your chant be of such funereal solemnity. Sing some gay thing—we solitaries have no need of depressing numbers."

"Dear aunt," replied she that had been thus addressed, without, however, changing her attitude, "you must even bear with my numbers such as they are; for if you bid me sing only merry strains, I am afraid neither voice nor fingers may be able well to obey you."

These words were spoken in a low and melancholy voice; but guess with what interest I heard them, when I

perceived that they proceeded from no other lips than those of Athanasia herself. Sextus also, on hearing them, knew well enough who she was that spoke; but when he looked at me to signify this, I motioned to the youth that he should say nothing to disturb her in her singing.

"Then please yourself," said the priestess, laying her hand on Athanasia's shoulders; "but do sing, for I should fain have my maidens to hear something truly of your music."

With that Athanasia again applied her fingers to the chords of the lyre, and stooping over them, began to play some notes of prelude, less sorrowful than what we had at first heard.

"Ay, my dear girl," says the priestess, "there now you have the very secret of that old Delian chant. Heavens! how many lordly choirs have I heard singing to it in unison. There are a hundred hymns that may be sung to it—give us whichever of them pleases your fancy the best."

"I will try," replied the maiden, "to sing the words you have heard from me before. If I remember me aright, you liked them."

Then boldly at once, yet gently, did her voice rush into the current of that old strain that you have heard so often; but it was then that I myself for the first time heard it.

The moon, the moon is thine, O night,
Not altogether dark art thou;
Her trembling crescent sheds its light,
Trembling and pale, upon thine ancient brow.

The moon is thine, and round her orb
A thousand sweet stars minister,
Whose twinkling rays dark wells absorb,
And all the wide seas drink them far and near

They kiss the wide sea, and swift smiles
Of gladness o'er the waters creep;
Old hoary rocks rejoice, and isles,
And there is glory on the slumbering deep.

Afar—along the black hill's side,
Right blithe of heart the wanderers go,
While that soft radiance, far and wide,
Gleams on the winding streams and woods below.

And gayly for the fragile bark,
Through the green waves its path is shorn,
When all the murmurs of the dark
Cold sea lie calm'd beneath that gliding horn

Yet hail, ye glittering streaks, that lie
The eastern mountain-tops upon !
Hail ye, deep blushes of the sky,
That speak the coming of the bridegroom sun !

Hail to the healing beam of day,
That rouses every living thing !
The forest gulfs confess thy sway,
And upon freshening branches glad birds sing.

And loathsome forms, that crept unseen
Beneath the star-light faint and wan,
Cower in their brakes the thorns between,
Dreading that fervid eye, and its sure scan

Triumphant. Welcome life and light !
Sing, rocks and mountains, plain and sea ;
Fearful, though lovely, was the night :
Hail to more perfect beauty—hail to THEE !

“ Why stop you, Athanasia ?” said the priestess, finding that here she paused,—“ why do you rise up, and take your fingers from the lyre, before you sing out the chorus ?”

“ No more, dear aunt—excuse me—no more. I have already sung all that I can,” replied Athanasia.

“ Nay, then,” says she, “ if you be fatigued, sing not ; but join me, maidens, in the close—perhaps it rises too high for Athanasia.”

And with that the ancient lady herself, joined by the three damsels who had been embroidering, took up the strain, which, indeed, rose higher towards its end.

Hail to thee, Phœbus, son of Jove,
Glorious Apollo, lord of light,
Hail, lovely in thy Delian grove,
And terrible on Delphos' haunted height !

Hail to thee here beneath the dome,
Great Phœbus, of thy Latian shrine ;
All hail from Cesar and from Rome ;
Hail by thy dearest name, God Palatine !

But as they were singing the last verse of all, Rubellia also aided their melody with a rich strong gushing voice,

which rose far above all the others ; and it was then, for the first time, that the silent Athanasia turned round quickly towards the place where we were standing, and perceived, not without manifestation of alarm, by how many strangers her song had been overheard. On seeing who we were, however, she immediately saluted Sextus and myself with her usual modest courtesy. Nevertheless, I could see very well that she blushed more deeply than ever when she did so ; and, indeed, I think both my companion and myself blushed at the same moment ; for he could not see Athanasia without thinking of Sempromia ; while I, for my part, after all that had passed, was not likely to be the more composed, because I thought of no one but the maiden herself.

It seemed that the recollection of having seen me, and the strong suspicion of having been recognised by me over-against the Prætorian guard-house, had thrown a certain air of trouble over Athanasia's demeanour ; for, after the first glance, I in vain endeavoured to meet her eye ; while, on the contrary, to Sextus she directed both looks and words enough to provoke visibly some not altogether benign movements in the proud spirit of Rubellia. Such, at least, was my interpretation of the luxurious widow's aspect, and of the tone of impatience in which she, after a minute or two had passed, began to urge the propriety of our proceeding to the part of the imperial edifice in which the painter was expecting us.

The priestess of Apollo, hearing her say so, courteously offered to guide us beyond the precincts of the temple, and our whole party were again in motion forthwith ; but Athanasia remained behind with the three young damsels, and I, who walked last, saw her, ere the portal received me, preparing again to handle the lyre, with fingers visibly trembling, and a pale countenance, not, as I thought, unstained with some yet more distinct traces of keen emotion. The sight of her agitation fixed my footstep for a moment, and it was then that, on her casting a sudden glance round to the place where I stood, I perceived truly that I had not been mistaken, and that the tears were indeed gathered within her eyelids. It was no more, however, than one glance, for immediately she stooped again

when she saw who it was that lingered, and dashing her fingers along the chords of the instrument, appeared to be making an effort at least to bury her thoughts in its harmony. I stood for a moment, and then, ashamed of myself, and troubled with her troubles and with my own, I followed the rest into the great library which Augustus placed there beneath the protection of the Palatine Apollo. The priestess parted from us at its entrance, after pointing out a low and massive door of bronze on the right-hand, within which, as she told me, the remains of the Sibylline prophecies are preserved, unseen by profane eyes, watched over perpetually by the guardians of the place.

CHAPTER XVI.

BUT so much was I occupied with thinking on the particulars of Athanasia's behaviour, some of which I have just described to you, that, in truth, neither the closed receptacle of those precious relics of the Sibylline prophecies, nor even the opening view of the great Palatine library itself, was able at first to take hold on my attention. I had walked by the side of my young friend, and behind the stoic (who, I think, was expressing, in his pompous fashion, much admiration of the singing of Rubellia), along one or two of the great halls in which the library is contained, before the novelty of the objects surrounding me made any impression even on my eyes; and even after these were in some measure engaged, my mind still continued to dwell with sorrowful interest on the troubled aspect of the maiden, and on the sweet low notes of her uncompleted song. At length, however, the natural levity of youth, and the fervour of curiosity, attained the victory for the moment over my hidden sources of meditation, and I began to be present, not in body merely, in a place where there was so much that might well occupy and interest the mind. The far-

receding rows of yellow marble columns conducted my eyes into the interminable recesses of that wide range of stately chambers, in which the records of the thought and spirit of all past ages are piled up together; and gazing on the loaded shelves which everywhere ascended into the galleries above, I could not but be affected with many new emotions of wonder, and admiration, and reverence. The marble busts of poets and philosophers, which are ranged in front of the different compartments, seemed to preside, in the calm superiority of long-departed greatness, over the undying memorials of intellect and imagination behind them; and I perused the glorious names upon their pedestals, with many thoughts both concerning the majesty and the feebleness of man. Here it was the high filleted front of Homer that detained, for the first time, the contemplation of one in whose ears, even from earliest infancy, the melodious sublimity of the Mæonian verse had seized and possessed a resting-place of lofty delight. The large eyes of the divine old man seemed, even in sculpture, to be distinctly and visibly blind, while the dreaming serenity of the pale lips below, and the inexpressible sanctity of the towering forehead, revealed how the intense perception at once of the lovely and the great could compensate a thousand fold to the chosen prince of imagination for all the shut out visions of earthly beauty. There again appeared the large mild visage of Plato, with all the depth of meditative genius slumbering in its noble lineaments—while, close beside, the stern piercing glance of the imperious Stagyrte appeared, even in stone, to challenge rightful sway and domination. The beautiful face of Pindar instinct with the intoxication of rapture—the modest majesty of Sophocles—the sarcastic yet noble pride of Aristophanes—and I know not how many likenesses of how many illustrious compeers, in every walk of intellectual exertion, succeeded each other as we passed along—each in his own sphere, reigning by himself; yet all connected together by a certain common air of visible greatness, like so many successive princes, or glorious contemporary heroes of the same mighty empire.

From the main range of apartments, in which these

objects were placed, there diverged on either hand many lesser chambers, in which we saw studious persons engaged in perusing the works of the learned, each seated by himself, and having his eyes fixed attentively on the venerable parchment extended before him. Of these, some took no notice of us as we passed, nor even deigned to intimate by the smallest movement their perception that any one had entered upon the place of their retirement; but others there were with whom Xerophrastes exchanged, as he walked, lofty salutation, and one or two that even entered for a moment into conversation with him, both touching the cause of his visit and the nature of their own occupations. With one of these, indeed (he was an ancient Greek of singularly bitter aspect, and with a voice very harsh and unmusical), to such a length did the colloquy extend, that we began to think we should never be able to get our stoic away from him, till, as our fortune would have it, it became necessary for them to have a certain book for the purpose of reference, in order to decide a certain point, and then Xerophrastes began to make inquiries concerning one Parmeno, who, as I gathered, must needs be one of those intrusted with the care of the library.

"Ah! do you speak of Parmeno?" quoth the other. "I am afraid, if we must wait for him, we shall not be able to get that invaluable work either this day or tomorrow; for his young pupil the son of Fabricius is dead, and I suppose he will now change his quarters, and be no longer seen so often about these haunts of the Muses."

"Alas!" interrupted Sextus, "and is it even so? I met Fabricius in the Forum a few days ago, and he told me his son was ill; but little did I imagine my dear companion was so near his end. Is it indeed so? and is young Fabricius dead?"

"Even so," rejoined the other. "Rapid, in this instance, of a surety, have been the shears of Atropos! It is but a few moments ago since Agaso the painter passed this way; and he told me he had just been receiving orders to take the young man's likeness, as well as he could, from the corpse."

“If Agaso be so engaged,” replied Xerophrastes, “I am afraid we need not expect to find him to-day in his usual place. Perhaps we had better make inquiry for him at the dwelling of Fabricius.”

To this Sextus assented; or rather, being lost in reflection concerning the death of his friend, he suffered himself to be conducted by the rest of us, who followed the guidance of the stoic. Passing, therefore, through one or two more apartments, we issued forth, and drew near to the vestibule of Fabricius’s house, who, as they told me, was a noble Roman, having the chief superintendence of the whole library, and an intimate friend of Licinius; one whose domestic calamity could not fail to spread much affliction through a wide circle both of patrician kindred and of personal friends.

And when we came to the vestibule, we found already assembled there not a few of the young man’s relations; but Xerophrastes immediately said, “Behold Parmeno, he is the most afflicted of them all; and what wonder that it should be so?”

“It is, indeed, Parmeno,” replied Sextus. “Alas! the bier is already set forth; without doubt, the last rites are to be performed this evening.”

This Parmeno was a most sorrowful but respectable looking figure, seated close by the bier of the youth, whose education, as it appeared, had been committed to his charge. His head was involved in his cloak, so that only his eyes and nose could be seen, but these of themselves expressed a decorous and philosophical melancholy; and the folds of the cloak fell down over the rest of his figure in great order and dignity. On the pavement beside him was seen lying, half-unfolded, a book inscribed with the name of Heraclitus, which the philosopher appeared to have been reading. Now, when Xerophrastes approached, this mourner only stretched forth his hand towards him, and shook his head, but he did not say any thing, nor once look towards us; and indeed to have done so would have inevitably disturbed the august attitude in which he had placed himself. Xerophrastes, on his part, received the proffered hand, and shaking his head in response, said, “Yes, my Ionian friend, I may still bid thee hail and live;

but I must say farewell to the plant thou wast rearing. I must say farewell to the youthful promise of Fabricius."

On hearing these words, the other philosopher drew his mantle quite over his face, and leaned himself heavily against one of the fluted columns of the vestibule, for he seemed to be much shaken. In the mean time Sextus approached the bier, and contemplated his former companion as he lay there stretched out, and wreathed with melancholy garlands; and his countenance expressed as he did so a very afflicting mixture of sadness and astonishment. Neither, indeed, was it possible even for me, that had never before seen the young man, to behold the miserable spectacle without similar emotions; for his age, as it seemed, could not have been much different from my own, and in all things the pale features of his face were interesting, and their expression not less amiable than solemn.

"Alas!" said Sextus, "the last time I saw him, how differently did he appear! We rode out together with some others to Tiber, and spent all the day there; and as we returned by the moonlight, how joyous and merry was his conversation. Methinks I yet hear him laughing and speaking. We parted at the foot of the Capitoline, and never did I see him again till now."

"Oh fate of man!" quoth Xerophrates; "how uncertain is life, how certain death! Without doubt, young Fabricius had as little thought of dying as any of your company; and yet, see now, he is arrayed for the last time, and the juvenile gown, which he should so soon have laid aside for the manly, is destined to be consumed along with him, amid the blaze of the funeral pile."

"Alas! indeed," replied Sextus, "I am sure there is not one of all his acquaintances that will not mourn over him."

"A fine lad he was," cries one of the standers by; "a fine lad, and an excellent horseman. The Martian Field did not often behold such a rider in these degenerate days of Rome, and the Roman youth."

But while the rest were still contemplating the bier, Xerophrates, turning to his brother philosopher, said, "Tell me now, my learned friend, do you still, after this

mournful event, continue to reside with the elder Fabricius? Has that excellent man any more sons to be educated, or will he retain you only for the sake of the library, with which assuredly he will find few so conversant as yourself?"

To which Parmeno replied, "Your question, O Xerophrates, is a natural one, and shows that clear judgment concerning the affairs of men for which you have always been celebrated. No, my friend, the gray-haired Fabricius no longer requires my residence here; for he is about to retire into one of his villas on the Campanian shore, and to bury for ever his affliction in the privacy of his woods. We are about to part, not without mutual tears; and several patricians have already been applying to him for his influence with me, whom, although unworthy of so much research, they earnestly covet, and wish to engage as the instructor of their young men. I have been sitting here not unseen, beside this my former charge, and each is impatient to solicit me into his service."

"Your reputation I well know is high," replied Xerophrates, "and deservedly so; more particularly for that fine talent you have for giving metaphysical interpretations of mythology, and for explaining the obscure allegories of ancient poets. But for my own part, Parmeno, I find not so much delight in abstract ideas, nor in the passive contemplation of the universe; but incline rather to study, as heretofore, that part of philosophy which relates to action, and the morality of duty."

"Yes, worthy Xerophrates," returned he, with a most languid serenity; "and, so far as I understand, you sort well in this with the stirring disposition of your friend Licinius."

To which Xerophrates made answer, "My patron Licinius is fond of action, and I of the rules of action. He says, it is only in war, or in civil functions of a public nature, that a person can prove himself a man. The rest, he says, is visionary, and comes to nothing, or is a slumber of the mind in sensuality, without thought."

"Does he think, then," quoth Parmeno, with a sarcastic smile, "does Licinius think, then, there is no sensuality in perpetual action, and declamation, and noise? To me,

such things appear almost as trivial as the lazy enjoyments of Epicureans, besides being harsh and disagreeable, and not unfrequently ridiculous. But observe, O Xerophrates! that I speak these things as it were abstractly, and not by any means in disparagement of Licinius, your excellent patron and friend."

To which the stoic replied, in astonishment, "What is this you have said? Do you assert that action is sensual?"

Then Parmeno, lifting from the pavement the book which he had been reading, or appearing to read, said, "It is even so, most erudite Xerophrates. Indeed, I have always delighted in the most primitive and remote doctrines handed down from antiquity; and among others, in the riddles of this obscure Ephesian. Following the scope of his philosophy, I am led to believe, that so often as the mind impels, or is impelled by other causes, it begins to lose sight of pure knowledge, and becomes in danger of thinking that every thing is vain, light, and evanescent, except what is perceived by the senses. Heraclitus thinks, that love and hatred govern all things. Now, when the principle of discord prevails, it subjects all things to the dominion of action, and to the gross perceptions of sense. But when that of love is prevalent, it emancipates the struggling chaos of things from the yearning of compulsion, and from the darkness of sensual proximity; for, between things that struggle immediately against each other, light has no room to enter in and shine; and therefore it is, that when love gains the ascendancy, a new arrangement is produced—an arrangement that, if I may so express it, is more serene, transparent, orderly, and divine, and wherein things exist in safety from the danger of mutual destruction."

To which learned speech Xerophrates, after a preliminary cough, made answer, "My opinion coincides rather with that of Empedocles, the immortal Sicilian. He thinks that discord is the only separating and arranging principle which marks the boundaries between things, and enables them mutually to act and repel, in such a way as to preserve order."

"Nay, nay," interrupted Parmeno, his hands being by

this quite disentangled from his cloak, and his countenance considerably lighted up, "nay, nay, to such doctrine I never shall assent. From Empedocles—even from Xerophrastes, I must differ for ever on this head. The order of which you and the Sicilian speak is the order of darkness only, and of blind force,—a kind of order in which fierceness and cruelty always reign."

But Xerophrastes continued, "And I must confess, that I further concur with Empedocles in thinking, that love is a principle of which the predominance is more fit to turn order into a chaos, than to produce the effects you have described."

"Nay, speak not against love," quoth Parmeno, "speak not against love, nor believe that any respect is due to the dictates of Empedocles, who taught the worst that can be taught by any man—that is to say, the alternation of order and confusion succeeding each other throughout all time. To seek for truth in conceptions like these, is no better than to seek repose in the bosom of Ætna."

"In reference to that point," resumed Xerophrastes, "I agree with you in your disapprobation of Empedocles. But when you say, that love is the source of knowledge, you much astonish me; for I have always thought rather that its tendency is to bring confusion upon the mind."

"Once more," said Parmeno, "once more let me beseech you to say nothing against love. You are thinking of the love of particular objects. You speak of Cupid, and not of heavenly Eros, who, so far from enchaining, or tyrannizing over the mind, rather enables it to escape into the tranquil freedom of far-extended contemplation. But what is contemplation without the knowledge of permanent forms, on which the mind may find repose, and so keep itself from being perplexed by the shifting aspects of the many-coloured universe? And therefore it is, O Xerophrastes, that sometimes, laying aside Heraclitus, I study the ancient verses of the poet Xenophanes, who shows, by the nature of abstract forms, that a certain unity pervades all things. Xenophanes mused of old at Colophon, looking through the blue ether of my native Ionia. But why should I speak thus at length? Alas!

what is the occasion of our being here ! I perceive the approach of the poet who was to compose an inscription for the urn of my dear Fabricius. Yonder also is the architect, who comes with a design for the tomb. Oh ! day of wo, that I should sit in judgment concerning the epitaph and tomb of my ingenuous youth !”

“It is indeed true,” replied the solemn Xerophrates, “that even I, in the repercussions of our talk, had well-nigh forgotten all this sorrowful occasion ; but, perhaps, there is something after all not entirely inexcusable in our giving so much superiority to the affairs of philosophical discussion. Now, however, it is evident that we must suspend our colloquy ; and who, I beseech you, above all things, is he that now draws near to the place of this mournful assembly, holding a horse in his hand. Methinks I have seen that face before.”

“That you have indeed, master,” quoth he that had come up, “that you have ; and no longer ago than yesterday neither, if you will be pleased to give yourself the trouble of recollecting me. My name is Aspar, I am well known in every feedery* in Rome, and they that know me best will give every assurance concerning my superiority to any thing in the semblance of a trick. If my excellent friend the noble centurion Sabinus were here, poor old Aspar would have no reason to complain of the want of a good word.”

“Good morrow to you, Aspar,” said Sextus, for he could not help remembering the attention which the Numidian had manifested at the amphitheatre ; “but what is it that brings you hither just at this moment ? And for what purpose have you brought your horse along with you ? for people of your sort do not in general ride on horseback in the courts of the Palatine.”

“Alas !” quoth Aspar, “and is it you, who seem to have been one of the contemporaries of that peerless youth—is it you that ask such a question as this ? I did not, in truth, imagine that there was any friend of young Fabricius who did not know his affection for little Sora. There is not such another filly within twenty miles of the

* Vivarium.

Capitol; but I brought her hither merely out of regard for the family, some of whom I thought might be very anxious to possess a pretty creature of which the dear boy had been so fond. As for myself, I should never bear to look on her again with pleasure, after knowing the sudden manner of his death. I wish to heaven the filly were fairly lodged in one of the paddocks of the Lord Fabricius himself."

"Lead the animal round into the court," quoth Parmeno, "and I doubt not care will be taken of her. Yonder comes one of the buffoons of the theatre; he, I doubt not, is here to disgrace, if he be permitted, this solemn scene, with ranting quotations from the tragic poets. Alas! alas! I cannot bear all this: there also advance the officiators from the temple of Libitina; they have their cypress boughs ready in their hands. O my learned friend, I cannot sustain these things; let me begone into the mansion."

And when he had said so, the admirer of Heraclitus picked up his favourite scroll, and gathering together the folds of his mantle, moved slowly into the house, and Xerophrates followed him with similar gestures: and Sextus and I also were about to take our departure; and he, having procured from one of the slaves of the house a myrtle garland, had already placed it upon the bier of the young Fabricius, as the last testimonial of his concern; when there drew near two young men, clad in long mantles of black, who also seemed to have been before acquainted with my friend, for, on seeing him, they immediately went up and began to exchange with him many expressions of grief and lamentation. But while they were speaking so together, Rubellia, who had been standing all this while a little apart, sent a boy to inform us that the painter we were in search of had at last made his appearance, and was anxious to proceed with his portrait. I drew Sextus away, therefore, and soon joined the lady and the artist; but as we were moving off thus, one of the bystanding slaves, an old gray-headed man, came up and whispered to us, "These two that you have been speaking with are to me the most disagreeable part of this preparation. You have heard their lamentation,

and seen their sweeping raiment of mourning; but they are nephews of Fabricius, and I think the chief subject of their reflection is, the probability that one or other of them must be adopted by my bereaved old master. Alas! alas! so goes all between Lucina and Libitina. There was never a birth nor a marriage that did not create some sorrow, nor a funeral procession that did not give rise to some joy. Your rhetoricians talk, but what avails it all? Slaves and masters are all alike subjected to the evils of the world, and of these death is both the last and the least."

Little Agaso, the painter, was an amusing character, and even in his exterior there was so much of the amusing, that I wish I had for a moment fingers like his, that I might give you the pleasure of surveying his portrait. Imagine, however, since that is all you can do, a smart dapper little bandy-legged man of Verona, dressed in a Grecian mantle, and endeavouring in every particular to look as much as possible like a Greek. Had Xerophrates not gone off with his brother of Ionia, I have no doubt this man would have made his presence a sufficient excuse for speaking nothing but Greek to us; but, even as it was, his conversation was interlarded with an abundant intermixture of the phraseology of that noble tongue. Nothing could be spoken of which Agaso did not think fit to illustrate, either by the narration of something he himself had seen or heard during his residence at Athens, or at least by some quotation from some of the Grecian poets, of whom it seemed to me that Menander and Anacreon were his foremost favourites. To judge from the square and somewhat ponderous formation of the man's features, Nature had not designed him for any of the most mercurial specimens of her workmanship; but he contrived, notwithstanding, by perpetual shrugging and grimacing, and, above all, by keeping his eyes and eyebrows continually in motion, to give himself an air of no inconsiderable life and vivacity.

Hopping before us with much alacrity, this little artist soon conducted our steps through seven, eight, or ten galleries, opening off each other, until at length, a certain curtain being withdrawn, which had covered the space

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between two pilasters, we found ourselves in a spacious and brilliant apartment, which, from the superior courteousness wherewith he bowed us into it, there could be no difficulty in perceiving to be the customary sphere of his own exertions. It was not altogether deserted nor solitary, even when we entered; but the removal of the intervening curtain soon attracted many more of the loungers of the baths, and ere poor Sextus was fairly fixed in the proper attitude before the table of the painter, the modest youth had the mortification to find himself surrounded with a very crowd of knowing and curious physiognomies. The presence of these, however, if it might have been gladly dispensed with by Sextus, appeared, most assuredly, to be quite the reverse of unwelcome to the master of the room. On the contrary, there arose between the little man, as he was preparing his brushes, and those who had come to survey him at his work, such a learned gabble of mutual compliments, remarks, and disquisitions, that it seemed to me as if he would have been quite disappointed, had he not been favoured with their admiring attendance.

The walls all around being covered with different specimens of Agaso's workmanship, there was no want of subjects for every sort of conversation likely to interest his ears.

"How noble," cries one, "is that large portrait you have just been finishing of Rupilius! Heavens! with what felicity you have caught the august air of that dignified man! Methinks I see him just about to enter the Basilica, when he knows that some great cause is awaiting his decision. What solemnity in his aspect! what grandeur in the gown! How finely the purple of the laticlave is made to harmonize with the colouring of the cheeks and chin! What beautiful handling about the fingers with which he grasps his tablets! As for the head of the stylus, it is the very eye of the picture."

"Exquisite, indeed," quoth another of these knowing characters; "but who can look at it, or any thing else, in the same room, with this charming little jewel? Heavens! what a beauty! who can it be! for I never saw her either at the circus or the amphitheatre, or at any other

place of resort. What an inimitable picture of modesty and loveliness is this girl !”

The little painter heard this last piece of eulogy with an air of some little embarrassment, and at the same time looked very cunningly towards the person who had uttered it. But the Lady Rubellia tossed her head, as if indignantly, and whispered to me, “ Pretty she may be, though I can’t say that style of dressing her hair is at all adapted for such features ; but as for modesty, I should like to see what part of her face it is in which that is so visible. I asked Agaso, two or three days ago, who it was, and he told me it is a little Spanish girl, whom that august looking person, with the grand laticlave, and the purple cheeks and chin, and the glittering stylus, thought fit to bring with him from Spain, when he was relieved from the hard duties of the proprætorship,—which, without doubt, her agreeable society had enabled him to go through with better than that of his own wife would have done. I dare say, he takes good care she shall not be seen either at circus or amphitheatre ; and, indeed, I think it is sufficient impudence to show her likeness in this way, in the company of so many portraits of respectability. But there is no saying how far these enamoured old dotards will go. Impudent minx that it is, I think if the wife of this same Rupilius were to hear of its being here, she would do well to come and scratch its eyes out. I have no patience for such audacity.”

“ My dear lady,” quoth the painter, who overheard somewhat of what she was saying, “ my dear Lady Rubellia, for the sake of all that is sacred, don’t say a word about this to any one again ; wait at least till the canvass for the augurship be over, and then, if you will, you may say any thing about it you please. But just at present Rupilius would be very angry if any of these affairs were made more public than is necessary ; for there are always enough of people to exaggerate and misrepresent.”

“ Exaggerate, indeed !” replied the lady ; “ there is much room for exaggeration, forsooth. For my part, I think Rupilius ought to be ashamed of himself ; and at his time of life too.” Then sinking her voice into a note

almost inaudible, she added, "I think you said he was just the same age with my own uncle?"

"Yes," says the painter, "I think he must be about the same standing; and I think he went to Spain just about the period of your own marriage."

"Filthy old fellow," quoth she very quickly; "and this is what he has brought home with him! I have a great mind to tell his wife."

"Hush, hush," said Agaso; "if you do so, you will ruin me. Besides, this is the very day Rupilius spoke of bringing her to see his own portrait; and, indeed, I am sure that is the old senator's hem, in the adjoining gallery. They will be here in an instant. I rely on your prudence."

And no sooner had Agaso said so, than of a surety the portly original of the laticlaved portrait walked into the room, having his gown, and every part of his dress, arranged in all things after the same fashion represented in the picture; although in the living countenance it was easy to discover not a few deep lines and spots which had been cautiously omitted in the copy. By his side moved a short pousy woman, arrayed in the extremity of gaudy and costly attire, whose own naturally dark and swarthy complexion did not, in spite of all the arts of cosmeticism, harmonize very well with the bright golden ringlets of her Sicambrian peruke; while behind the pair came a thin damsel, whose scraggy lineaments exhibited a sort of faint shadow, or type, as it were, of the same visage, the rudiments of which had been so abundantly filled up in that of the broad and rubicund old magistrate her father.

"There, now," quoth Rubellia, perceiving their approach; "just see with what effrontery this ancient libertine struts into the room; and his wife and daughter, too, are along with him. Oh, dog-eyed audacity! And yet it is scarcely possible to observe the group without laughing."

But if she, or any of the rest of us, felt any inclination to smile on the very first appearance of the party, I leave you to judge how much this inclination must have been increased by what passed after they had begun to make their observations on the work which they had come to

examine. For the ex-proprætor himself, after saluting Agaso, stood still with an air of infinite dignity, in the midst of the apartment, while the fond daughter, rushing close up to his picture, could with difficulty affix any limits to her expressions of the satisfaction with which it inspired her. The little fat Metulla also (for so his wife was named) devoured its features at first with his eyes of rapture; but she ere long began to see and to say, that, after all, imperfect justice had been rendered to the manly charms of her lord.

“Oh Jupiter!” quoth the young damsel, “if papa were not here himself, I should expect the wood to speak to us, so perfectly does this resemble him! Look at the very ring upon his finger. It is the very ring he wears! One can see the very images that are engraved upon it; one can see the three Graces that papa always seals with. I never saw such a picture—when will it be brought home?”

“Hush, hush, now, Primula, my darling,” quoth the mother. “It is certainly an astonishing likeness; but I don’t understand what it is that makes painters, nowadays, paint people older than they are. I am sure your papa, girl, does not look near so old as in this picture. It may be like him hereafter; but he should have been represented much younger just now. And besides, it wants something of his expression. Don’t you think so now yourself, sir?” (turning to the painter.) “Don’t it strike yourself that you have given him too sombre a look? Rupilius has surely been looking very gloomily when he sat to you.”

On this the painter, leaving Sextus, advanced to the side of Metulla, and after a pause of some moments, spent in contemplating alternately his own work and the original, said, with a courteous simper, “How much am I indebted to you, most noble lady, for this visit, and these judicious remarks! Without doubt, you must be the best judge. But as for me, I only wish you had accompanied the senator when he was sitting to me, and then, without question, his countenance would have worn the look you desiderate; and I perhaps might have more easily succeeded in catching it, being aided by your suggestions. But ladies do not know how their lords look at times, when

they themselves are not present. I have painted the senator ; but I have missed—I perceive it too plainly—I have missed something of the man. I hope it may yet be amended.”

“ How modest he is !” ejaculated the flattered spouse ; “ how modest he is, with all his genius ! A single sitting will suffice, I am sure, to give it every thing it wants. We shall come,” added she, in a lower tone, “ we shall come some day when you are quite alone, and I will sit by you, and talk to Rupilius all the while ; and that will keep senate-meetings and edicts, and all that stuff, out of his head, and you shall paint him just when he has his own smile on his face.”

“ Delightful !” replied the artist ; “ how happy shall I be in having such an opportunity of improving both the picture and myself ! We must positively prevail on the senator to give us this one sitting more ; for, consider only, had the picture been for the Senate, or for Cesar, or for the Province, or any public place, it might have been well, perhaps, to leave it almost as it is ; but the case is very different in a domestic portrait. In regard to that, the usual domestic expression should, above all things, be sought for ; and the ideas of intelligent private friends should especially be consulted by the artist.”

“ Never ask his consent,” quoth Metulla, smiling upon her lord ; “ leave the whole matter to me. I have resolved, and that is enough. The picture is for me, and I am determined to have it done according to my own wishes. And besides, if he were to refuse me, I know how I should be certain to overcome him ; for he has asked me to sit to you myself, and you know if I were to persist in sitting with my gloomy face, as he has with his, he would be so much mortified that we should soon bring him to his right reason.”

“ *Your gloomy face, noble lady !*” replied the artist, strutting back a pace or two. “ I am afraid, if that is the charm by which alone he is to be softened, we must give up all our hopes. Which day of the Greek kalends shall I say my Lady Metulla is to sit with her gloomy face ?”

‘Ha ! ha ! ha !’ quoth Metulla ; “ you are such a wag. I protest I believe you will keep me laughing, in spite of

myself, all the time I am sitting. And pray now, what dress do you think I should wear? Prima says, I ought certainly to be in green; but I was thinking that perhaps a yellow byssine would suit me better. But I shall send over half a dozen robes, and then we can choose whichever seems to be the best. One thing only I am quite resolved upon, and that is, that I shall have my golden chain, with the little miniature of the proprætor—the senator, I mean—(he is no longer proprætor, you know)—at the end of it.”

“Nothing could be better—nothing could be in finer taste,” he made answer; “and if my lady should think of green, or blue, or purple, or any dark colour for the gown, the rings of the golden chain, and the setting of the miniature, would come in so beautifully, they would have the richest effect in the world. O! by all means, let us have the chain and the miniature.”

“And do, my dear mother,” interrupted Prima, “and do have on the sapphire tiara when you sit to Agaso; for, you know, everybody says you look better with it than any other head-dress.”

“We shall consult Agaso and your papa, my dear, and whatever they think fittest shall be the thing.”

“Or what would you think,” continued Prima, “of having your own hair simply, like this lady here?” (It was that of the Spanish girl she meant.) “What a pretty face! Well, if I were to be painted, I should like to be dressed exactly like this.”

“A smart little girl, indeed,” quoth the mother. “I think I should know that face. I am sure I have met with that young lady somewhere—though where or when I have not the least idea. Is she a Roman lady, Agaso?”

“No, not a Roman lady,” answered the artist; “nor do I think my lady can ever have met with her. But perhaps my Lord Rupilius may, for she is a Spaniard.”

Agaso, on saying so, turned with a smile of indescribable cunning to the senator; but he, scarcely appearing to look at the picture, answered with great gravity, “I think I have seen the countenance before; and perhaps it was in my province. The face is certainly a pretty one: but nothing so very extraordinary.”

"No, no," echoed Metulla; "nothing so very extraordinary. The girl might be a beauty in Spain; but I am sure she would be nothing extraordinary in Rome."

"Well, now," said Prima, "I am no judge; but I do think her very handsome, and I am sure she must be noble, although a provincial, for she has not the least vulgarity in her look."

"No, not exactly vulgarity—far from it," quoth Metulla; "but yet how one misses the air of the capital. They may say what they like," added she, drawing herself up; "but there is no such thing as a really urbane air to be got out of Rome."

"Was my lady Metulla ever in Greece?" said the painter, bowing low as he spoke.

"No, indeed," quoth she, with a titter, "no, indeed. Greece may be Greece, but Rome's Rome. Rome's enough for me; I have no curiosity to see Greece, I assure you."

"Good heavens, now!" interrupted the daughter, "I, mamma, am surprised to hear you say so. I should so like to be in Greece. There are so many pretty things to be seen in Greece—they make all the prettiest rings and bracelets in Greece, don't they?"

The question was addressed to Agaso, who, bowing again, but looking a little grave, said, "In Greece, or by those who have been in Greece, certainly. There is nothing to be done in any of the arts without having seen Greece. But it was of the ladies of Greece that we were speaking."

"And what think you of the ladies of Greece?" quoth Metulla, returning to the charge. "I hope you will not say that they are superior to those of Rome? I have a notion they don't pay for what they have so well, however."

"Let it be admitted," answered the smiling Agaso; "how should poor Greece equal imperial Rome in such points as these? But I cannot give up my old friends the Greeks, notwithstanding—and more particularly the Greek ladies. They are beautiful graceful creatures; that every one who has seen them must admit."

"Graceful indeed!" quoth Metulla. "I believe, if the

truth were known, they are no better than they should be."

"And yet, I must own," continued the artist, with another bow to Metulla, "that they do want some things which the Roman ladies have. There is a certain dignity, as it were—a certain noble tranquillity, that I never saw anywhere but in Rome."J

To which last speech Metulla vouchsafed no answer; but I saw that it had produced the intended effect; for, while she was hearing it, a soft flutter of satisfaction appeared to pass over her chubby cheeks, and the unsuspecting matron became visibly lost in a maze of complacent meditations on its close. The pause in that conversation allowed me to overhear something of what was passing in another part of the room, where some other picture appeared to be exciting among another set of observers a scarcely inferior measure of curiosity. On going up to them, I perceived that it was a sketch, in chalk only, of the head and shoulders of an old white-bearded man, which was occupying their attention; and when I had gained an opportunity of more nearly surveying it, I recognised without difficulty, and not, as you will believe, without interest, the features of the same Thraso who died on the preceding day at the Flavian Amphitheatre. The greater number of those who were looking on it seemed also to have been present at his death; for I heard pointed out by them with exactness the parts in which the resemblance had been most successfully taken. The beauty of the old man's lineaments, and the serenity of his aspect, they all admired; and while they were loud in praising these, Agaso himself also joined them, saying, "Oh, so you have found out my old Christian. How did you get hold of him? for I meant it not to be seen till I had lain on a little of the colour. But is it not a fine study? is it not a noble head? I think I shall introduce it in the picture I am painting for Pliny. The subject is the sacrifice of Iphigenia—don't you think it would do gloriously for the head of one of the priests?"

"A priest!" quoth one of the loungers; "I was afraid you were going to make it serve for the head of the victim. It is only taking away the beard, and paint-

ing the hair black, and a few more trivial changes such as that ; and poets and painters can do far more wonderful things than turning age into youth. Your ugly old infidel might really make a very fine Iphigenia."

"Ha ! ha ! Curio," replied the artist, "you must always have your joke, Curio ; but seriously, do you not admire the old head ? I went to the amphitheatre rather late, without expecting any thing particular ; but, you know, a painter never goes anywhere without his tablets, and when I saw the man come in, it immediately struck me that he might be turned to some account. I made several little sketches of him, for it was a long time ere it was over ; and this is from the one I took just after he had made his oration to Trajan. His hands and feet were singularly fine, I thought. Here," said he, turning over the leaves of his tablets, "here you have him in a variety of shapes ! here, this now is the knee—the muscles showed powerfully when he knelt on one knee ; there again you have his fingers as they were folded on his breast—not much flesh, but the line very good, and the veins well expressed. I think one of the priests might stand in that attitude very properly, just at the moment when Agamemnon is supposed to be about to utter the final word."

"Well," replied another, "for my part, I think the resignation of the Christian must have been rather a different sort of thing from that of Agamemnon's priests."

"Priest indeed !" interrupted Metulla, who by this time had been able to bear herself away from her ex-proprætor's likeness ; "do you talk of making a priest out of a Christian ? I wonder you are not afraid of such a blasphemous thought. For me, if I had a picture of an atheist in my house, I should expect the roof to fall in. And yet here, where you have temples on every side of you, and the whole Capitoline within view, you speak of turning this old infidel into one of Agamemnon's priests ! Jupiter and Apollo preserve us ! to make a priest out of a Christian !"

"Poh, poh !" quoth the critic who had been speaking before ; "these wicked artists have no thought about such things as these. I think we may consider ourselves as

very lucky in not having heard him proposing to turn the old fellow into a god. I have heard of such things. But I believe I should say nothing about that, for I once sat for a god myself; and although I am not quite so bad as a Christian, I really think I was unworthy of such an honour."

"You are very modest, indeed, sir," replied the lady, with a countenance of some little indignation; "and if one may take the liberty to ask such a question, what god was it that had the honour to have you set for his likeness?"

"Why—Janus—I think it was Janus," answered Curio; "yes, and now I remember me, Agaso here had the impudence to paint his own likeness for the other face of the deity. I believe the representation was pretty generally admired."

"Yes, by two at least in the city," replied the little fat lady, very tartly.

"You are forgetting the young ladies," returned the placid Curio. "So many of them fell in love with it, that Agaso and I were weary of it. There was no peace till the picture of Janus was shut up—ha! ha!"

"I really don't approve of this conversation," quoth Metulla, "and I hope few that are here approve of it any more than myself. Come, come, Prima, my love, it is high time to be going. This is no place for us, when such talk is permitted."

So saying, this pious female walked away, escorted by her husband and her daughter. She and Prima kissed their hands, as if to bid good-by to the picture of the old senator, as they passed it, and the whole party were soon at such a distance that Curio and some of the company thought it safe to indulge in a laugh at their expense. But of all the laughers, there was not one that laughed more heartily than Rubellia herself.

"Cunning old rogue!" quoth she; "I was much inclined to betray him once or twice; but, in spite of myself, I can scarcely help taking part with him, now that I have seen this creature, whom he has the misery to call wife. Who, in the name of Hermes—who is she? and

how does a man of his rank happen to have burdened himself with such a bundle of disgrace?"

"Good Jove!" says Curio, "is it possible that there is any one ignorant of the history of Rupilius, and his celebrated marriage? I thought the whole story had been as public as the Pantheon."

"I have heard his name," replied she, "and that oftentimes; but I never was told any thing in particular either about him or his history."

"Why, after all," was Curio's answer, "there is nothing so very particular, I believe, either to be told or to be heard. The father of this Rupilius was a considerable favourite about the court of Claudius; and if Narcissus had lived, might have risen to the first honours of the state; but he fell gradually into neglect after the death of that great freedman, and I believe was at last forbid to come to the Palatine by Nero; though I know not whether, as was the case with Vespasian, that punishment was inflicted on him for not sufficiently applauding the singing emperor's voice. However, the man was humbled in his spirit, and having squandered away the best part of his patrimony during the days of his dancing attendance on Narcissus, he was fain to make up his purse again by sending his son down to the dock-yards; and the young Rupilius married, in short, this Metulla, the charming daughter and sole heiress of a certain ancient Ligurian, whose person was well known in the markets, and his name familiar to all frequenters of courts of justice. In the course of the many strange revolutions that have taken place, it is no great wonder that the husband of Metulla should have been sent as proprætor into Spain; neither, being sent thither, is it very wonderful that he should have left Metulla behind him. In short, I see nothing wonderful about the matter. Such things happen in Rome every day, and nobody stares at them. I was just thinking of taking a walk by the river-side some day soon, and seeing whether it may not be possible to pick up some other little Metulla for myself."

But about this time the great bell rung in the tower above the baths, and Curio and the greater part of the young loungers that were about Agaso soon dispersed

themselves ; some to fence or wrestle—others to play in the tennis-court—others to ride in the Hippodrome, in preparation for the taking of the bath ; insomuch that the painter, being left alone with Sextus, Rubellia, and myself, had at length leisure to proceed more diligently with his portrait of the youth. Much did the lady and the painter discourse, and many merry things were said by them both ; but all they said could not entirely remove the embarrassment fixed on the countenance of Sextus ; nor, of a truth, did he in any sort present himself with much advantage before the eyes of the artist. Rubellia, nevertheless, sat over-against him, with looks of no severe criticism ; and I think gazed on him at least as attentively as the painter.

I doubt not she would have remained to the end of the sitting, had not one of her household come with a message to her, which, as it seemed, rendered necessary her departure. It struck me that the messenger answered very well to Dromo's description of the fat Calabrian with whom he and Boto had been drinking ; but of this I said nothing to Sextus.

It was very near the hour of supper before we were dismissed, and we found Licinius already about to enter the eating-chamber when we reached home.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE orator received us both with less coldness than I could have expected, after the conversation he had held with me in the morning ; but I suppose it was his knowledge that the intervening hours had been spent in Rubellia's company, at the Augustan Library,* which had, in some measure, softened his feelings of jealousy

* The original library had been destroyed in the conflagration of Nero ; and the establishment suffered again in the time of Domitian. But it had been diligently restored, as far as possible, by Nerva and Trajan.

towards his son ; and perhaps he had given me credit for advice and interference, to the merit of which I had, in fact, no claim. Howbeit, it was easy to see that his mind was still far from being perfectly at rest, and that, in spite of the effort he made to occupy himself and his company with indifferent topics of conversation, he could never entirely disengage his own thoughts from those domestic concerns which had produced an impression so serious on spirits naturally, as you have heard, above all others buoyant and elastic.

But he remained not long at table after supper was concluded, being summoned to discourse in private with a client, who had that day arrived in Rome from some remote district of Italy ; so that Sextus and I were left at leisure to spend the remainder of the evening as it might please ourselves ; for, as to Xerophrastes, he had not as yet made his appearance, and we took it for granted he had remained at the sorrowful mansion of Fabricius, for the purpose of consoling, with philosophical discourses, his bereaved brother of Ionia. We retired, therefore, into the apartment of my young friend, where, if either books, or musical instruments, or wooden swords for fencing, had been gifted with any power of amusement, we could have had no reason to complain of tedium. But although each of these methods was resorted to in turn, they were all very much in vain.

“ Poor Sextus could not read a page in any of his favourite poets, without coming upon some verse which made him throw down the scroll to ruminate on the charms of his Sempronia. When he took up his lute, his fingers seemed spontaneously to evoke only the most melancholy of sounds ; and ere long, those trembling fingers were sure to wander from the melody, while tears were gathered in his eyes, or coursed each other, slow and large, down his guileless cheeks. It was only in the more violent exercise of the foil that he succeeded in banishing from his thoughts the troubles of his situation ; but both of us, having contended till we were breathless, were soon compelled to sit down, and then the unhappy boy’s exhausted body seemed to communicate a new infusion of debility to his harassed mind. When I looked on him

sitting in the corner, the tears dropping ever and anon on his folded hands, and the purple glow of the sitting sun gleaming on the disordered ringlets of his glossy hair, I could not help feeling all my soul dissolved with pity within me; and if I did not entirely forget my own situation in the contemplation of his, I am sure my sympathy was not the less sincere, because I had both love and perplexities of my own.

We sat over-against each other for the most part in silence (for I soon found that I could not say any thing capable of effectually interesting him), until the shades of evening had quite darkened the chamber, and then we walked together, not less silently, in the adjoining open gallery, until the moon had arisen from above the tall poplars around the Pantheon and Baths of Agrippa, and diffused her radiance over all the beautiful gardens and noble edifices that lay beneath us, down to the brink of the river. Lassitude of spirit then, if not in expectation of sleep, rendered Sextus desirous of retiring to his couch; so, having exhorted the youth to wrestle with his grief, and to call hope to his aid, I at length left him to himself. But as for me, I had as yet no feeling of weariness, and, besides, I remembered the promise I had made to Dromo in the morning; I therefore had my lamp lighted, and set myself to read in my chamber, hoping thereby at least to sooth my mind, and so prepare myself better either for quiet slumber, or for taking a part in any thing that might tend to the benefit of my friend.

I was very much surprised, indeed, that the Cretan had not as yet come to me, and made inquiry concerning him of Boto; but hearing from him that the man was absent from the house, and that no one knew what had become of him, I thought from this there was the more likelihood of his being engaged in some scheme, the result of which I should by-and-by learn from his own lips.

I dismissed my Briton, therefore, and, as I have said, prepared me to read by my watchlight, and while I was considering what I should read, I remembered the scroll I had received from Thraso, which forthwith I took from the place in which I had locked it up on the morning of

the preceding day. There fell from out of it, as I unfolded it, a letter sealed, but without any superscription. This I of course considered as meant only for the eye of Athanasia ; so I kissed the parchment her fingers were destined to touch, and before I began to read, restored it to the receptacle from which it had been taken.

Now some of you, my young friends, that now listen to me, have already heard me speak, on another occasion, of the impression which that night's reading made upon my mind, and been told, from my own lips, what book it was that was contained in the scroll of Thraso ; the rest of you will judge for yourselves with what astonishment it was that I, who had at the best expected to unfold some obscure treatise of Asiatic lore, some semi-barbarous exposition of mystical riddles, found myself engaged in the perusal of a plain and perspicuous narrative of facts, written evidently by a man of accomplishment and learning, and in Greek, of which the most elegant penman of these times could have had no occasion to be ashamed. In a word, it was the Gospel of the holy physician St. Luke, which had been put into my hands ; and at this day I am still grateful that this was the first of the Christian books which I had an opportunity of seeing ; for such had been my education, that I am afraid others, not less worthy of the true faith, might have repelled me by the peculiarities of their composition, as well as by the acquaintance with many things, to me then entirely unknown, which they take for granted in the style of their commencement. Here, however, there was enough only of mystery the more effectually to stimulate my curiosity, while the eagerness with which I engaged myself in its gratification was abundantly repaid from the beginning, both by the beauty of the simple narrative itself, and the sublimity of the conceptions embodied and evolved in its course.

Considering the book which I was reading as one merely of human origin and invention, I could not help regarding it with such admiration, that it appeared to me above all things wonderful I had never seen it mentioned by any of the writers of the age, or heard it spoken of by any of those who, in my presence since I came to

Rome, had talked concerning the faith and doctrines of the persecuted Christians. But this was not all—at least, said I to myself, there is something here which deserves to be inquired into and examined. Of things such as these, if told falsely, it must needs have been—nay, it must still be easy to prove the falsehood. It is impossible that, in the days of Tiberius, any such events should have occurred in Palestine, without being more or less submitted to the inspection of Roman eyes. This is no wild tale, handed down from the dark ages of a barbarous race. Here I have a Roman centurion,* described as being among the witnesses of this man's miraculous power, and as acknowledging his belief in the divinity of his benevolence. Here, at least, must have been one spectator without prejudices, otherwise than against the potency of this Prophet of Nazareth. Of a surety the legends of Rome herself contain many tales which demand a much greater measure of indulgence; since the wonders they narrate appear to have been oftentimes attended with no beneficial consequences, either to individuals or to the state; whereas here the occasion appears always to have been such as might justify the interference of supernatural might. The power of this person seems to have been exerted only for good; and his precepts are full of such godlike loftiness as neither Socrates, nor Plato, nor any of those Greek sages who bowed in reverence to the hoary wisdom of Egypt and India, would have disdained to admire.

Such, I think, were some of the thoughts that followed each other in my mind, while I was reading the first part of this Sacred Volume. The doubts, suspicions, and distrusts with which they were mingled—the under current of reluctance with which I felt myself all along contending—were such as you may more easily imagine than I can describe.

As the narrative went on, however, you will have no difficulty in supposing that my attention became more and more closely riveted, and that, occupied with the

* St. Luke, chap. vii. ver. 1.

strange events and sublime scenes it unfolds—and agitated by turns with the pity, the wonder, the terror, and the admiration that matchless story must ever awaken, either in believing or hesitating minds—I had forgotten, for the time, every thing beyond the page of the volume on which my finger was fixed. I had read so till the oil of my lamp was wellnigh exhausted, and my eyes already began to feel strained, by reason of the feebleness and uncertainty of its light. Nevertheless, so thoroughly was I still occupied, that the door of my chamber was opened without my perceiving it. It was only the rustling of Dromo's cloak against the edge of my chair that made me aware my privacy was disturbed; and I turned round to the Cretan with a start as sudden as that of one roused by a rude hand from the strong slumber of midnight.

The face of the man was greatly flushed, and he seemed to be much out of breath; but in spite of these symptoms of recent fatigue, I soon perceived that he had not come thither with any thought or purpose of repose.

On the contrary, his hands seemed to be busied in tightening his girdle, even before he was able to speak, and the first words he uttered were, "Come along—come along, sir—this is no time for study. We must be quick, indeed, if we mean to do any service to-night. I have acquaintance with some of the soldiers at the Capene Gate, and they will let us pass through; but they are relieved at the next watch, and then we shall have no chance."

"And why," said I, hastily thrusting the scroll into my bosom, "why, Dromo, or for what purpose, should we desire to pass through the Capene Gate at the dead hour of night?"

"Come along," said he; "in brief, there is no time for explanation. It is simply because it is the dead hour of night that we must pass through the gate; for it would do nobody any good to pass through at any other time. Heaven knows, and so do my weary limbs, that I have been through it more than once already since the moon rose; but this is no occasion either for explanation or complaint. Come along, in a word, for the sake of all that is holy—or abandon Sextus to his fate."

VOL. I.—R

Thus adjured, I could not oppose any obstacle to the zeal of this active Cretan. So, wrapping myself from head to foot in my mantle, I glided down the staircase behind him, and stole, with quick but cautious steps, through the hall. The chained porter was lying asleep on a bundle of skins across the threshold ; but Dromo had already found means to have the door opened, so he leaped lightly over the man, and I imitated his agility.

The Cretan then locked the gate on the outside, by means of a key which he carried in his bosom, and in a twinkling began to move onward at a pace not much inferior, I think, to that of a well-trotting pony. The refreshing current of the stirred air excited me as much as the infection of his eagerness ; so I also moved rapidly, and without asking any further question ; satisfied, in short, to follow, like a well-trained soldier, the guidance of the leader to whose command I had submitted myself.

Nor could I easily have found a better. But instead of conducting me, as I expected, along some of the wide and stately windings of the great streets I had already traversed, this cunning varlet (who seemed, indeed, to move as if he had a natural aversion to every open place) threaded one obscure lane after another, keeping always, where the moonlight had any access, to the dark side of the way ; insomuch that a person better skilled than myself might well have been somewhat puzzled ; and as for me, I had not the least conception whither I was going. Close, however, did I adhere to him ; and, in truth, it was no wonder if I suffered less than he did from the race ; for Dromo was both much older and, though but a little fellow, much heavier than me, and besides, according to his own account of the matter, this was not the first race he had encountered that night. Howbeit, we both continued to go on, without much slackening the pace at which we had commenced, and reached the Capene Port, which, as you know, is on the south side of the city, not many bow-shots from the Anio, before I could have imagined it possible to traverse so great a space. I comprehended well enough, from certain gestures exhibited at crossings and turnings, that the obscure path of the Cretan had been partly selected for the purpose of avoiding any interviews with the watchers of the night ; but I

have no doubt its shortness also had, on the whole, recommended it. At least, I am sure I must have taken double the time to perform the journey, had I either followed the line of the Sacred Way, or gone by the river-side, on the west of the Aventine.

Before coming close up to the gate, Dromo told me to wait for him a single moment, and stepped down into a low cellar, in which a light was burning; but he staid not long there, and when he returned to me, I observed that his style of walking was a good deal more clumsy than usual, which, indeed, was not much to be wondered at, considering that he had now to carry, not only himself, but two huge skins of wine, intended, as I at once suspected, for the purpose of facilitating our passage through the gate of the city at that very questionable hour. I told him my suspicion in a whisper; but he made no answer, except by handing to me one of his burdens, which I should have thought it very unfair to refuse. So laden, therefore, we crept on as well as we could to the portal, beneath the shadow of which two lusty and well-sinewed Prætorians were pacing to and fro very majestically, their armour as they moved ringing audibly upon them amid the silence of the night.

Of that silence, however, my Cretan seemed to have much more reverence than could be expected from shields or cuirasses. Slowly did he make his approach to one of those moving statues, and with gestures of respect did he place his jolly burden at his feet. The Prætorian halted in silence, on observing this method of salutation. In silence did he stoop and lift it, and with as little noise as possible did he apply his lips to take cognizance of its contents. The result of that cautious inquiry was, as it appeared, not unsatisfactory; yet the other skin, which I, imitating in all things the gestures of Dromo, had placed at the foot of the companion guard, was subjected to a scrutiny equally exact, before the postern was opened to us. Silently did the well-oiled key and bolt and hinges turn, and very silently stooping did we step beneath the lintel of the Capene Gate, which as silently was again made fast as soon as we had fairly got through it. Immediately on passing, however, we must needs stop for a *little moment to draw our breath; and it was then that,*

hearing distinctly through wood and iron these two respectable warriors smacking their lips at the close of every draught, poor Dromo could not refrain from expressing his regret that, having been so generous to them, he had left nothing at all to himself. But I soon relieved him from this unpleasant train of reflection, by giving him a few pieces of coin, and desiring him, if he knew of any place of equal convenience on that side the gate, to bring forth with a small cupful for ourselves, that we might enter with the better spirit on whatever should yet remain before us of our journey. A very plentiful cup, you may believe, was very speedily produced, and almost as speedily exhausted; after which we resumed our progress, though at a rate much more moderate.

An dwelling thus more leisurely, the Cretan did not now refuse to answer the questions I had put to him before with so little success. On the contrary, whether it was that the wine I had given him opened his heart, or that he had some private objections to moving in silence between the lofty towers and other funereal monuments that, after you have passed the stream of the Anio, throw their gloomy shadows across all that part of the Appian Way—(for, as to this point, I am not, indeed, prepared to speak with any certainty)—the man was now apparently quite as much disposed to be communicative as hitherto he had been otherwise.

“A busy day indeed,” quoth he, “and a bustling one has this been with me; and yet I think the worst is still to come of it.”

“And where,” said I, “have you been all day, my good Dromo? for, indeed, both Sextus and I were wondering what could have become of you.”

“Become of *me!*” he replied; “and I assure you, I, on my side, have been wondering more than once what would have become of *him*, had he not happened to have my assistance in this affair, which, between ourselves, is one of the most delicate I was ever any way engaged in. Well, had I been working as hard for the lady Rubellia as I have been against her—and had I succeeded on that side of the affair, as I yet have good hope I shall on this—I say nothing, but I don’t think, from all I can hear of the widow, I should have had to complain of the want of

some very handsome recompense. But that is not what I am thinking about. I am for Sextus, and all I do is for the sake of Sextus—I should scorn to lend my aid to a lady to assist her in getting a husband who does not like her. I say, I should scorn to do such a thing as that, although I were to have one of Rubellia's own diamond bracelets for my pains."

"Dear Dromo," I made answer, "I have not the smallest doubt of your fidelity, nor yet of your disinterestedness; but I trust, if every thing goes well, you will find all your exertions shall not have been in vain, even as regarding your own interest. If things turn out as we could wish with Sextus, do not entertain the smallest doubt he will take care to reward you to the utmost of your expectation."

"My expectation!" quoth he; "I promise you that is no great affair. Be so good as to look over the wall there, for I, for my part, have looked already, and tell me what you see."

"I see," said I, leaning over the parapet, "I see nothing but a dog gnawing a bone by the side of a bush here."

"Well," replied Dromo; "and is not that robbing the bush? Is not that a very wicked robbery?"

"Robbing the bush, Dromo! what is your meaning?" said I.

"Why, don't you perceive," was his answer, "that if that poor slave's carcass had been allowed to lie where his master left it, it would have fattened the bush? and don't you think it a very brutal robbery of which the vultures and the dogs have been guilty, in robbing the poor bush of what that kind and grateful master intended for it? There is no law in Rome, if such things go unpunished."

So saying, he lifted a large stone from the way, and leaning over the wall beside me, he smote the ravenous animal fiercely upon the loins, as it was stooping there, gnarling and gnawing. The dog on this set up a piteous noise, and ran away yelping among the long grass. But Dromo laughed when he perceived that his aim had been successful, and pursued the creature with an angry hiss;

saying, "Take that, you base cur, and I only wish it had been given to him whose cruel conduct allowed you to taste such a banquet;" then turning to me with a more quiet voice, he proceeded, "They say, in the old time the Esquiline itself used to be full of such horrible sights as these; but it was given to some great man by one of the Cesars,* and now there is not such a pretty place, no, not about all the city. But when the dogs and the vultures were driven from the Esquiline, they came to this quarter, where the wretches they feed on have, at least, the consolation of being devoured in the neighbourhood of many a noble funeral pile. But I tell you," added he, in a lower note, "I tell you, Master Valerius, I fancy some other sorts of animals were obliged to leave the Esquiline about that time, of whom I am more afraid than I am either of beasts or of birds—behold, sir, we must turn off here; a little to the left is the place we must go to."

"I follow you," said I, "good Dromo, like a most exemplary spaniel—you leave me never an inch behind you."

"Come," said he again, "let us move cheerily along. Here, look ye, is the cemetery of a truly noble Roman; for I saw the embers of a recent fire over-against its entrance a few hours ago, and they told me he had been burning one of his poor people, and I saw the little urn in which the ashes were to be placed. Well, if you great men knew the truth of the matter, a master never seems so respectable—I mean to say, his sarcophagus never does—as when the walls around him are filled with comfortable little niches, and every little niche contains the ashes of one or more of the faithful servants of the family. A nobleman's urn never looks like itself when it stands gaping in the midst of an empty mausoleum."

I could scarcely help smiling at the particular zeal with which Dromo appeared to have studied this subject in all its bearings; but neither, I must freely confess it, could I avoid sympathizing, in some measure, with most of the feelings he expressed. I rated him, however, very roundly, for entertaining any suspicions of the kindness of young Sextus, and compelled him to acknowledge besides that

* Augustus gave the Esquiline to Mæcenas, that the poor might cease to make use of it in their funeral rites. He then covered it with those famous gardens to which Horace frequently alludes.

no person in Rome took better care of his slaves, living and dead, than Licinius. But all this availed me nothing, for Dromo had many strange whims in his head ; and I found it was quite in vain to introduce any subject in that region of tombs, other than that of the unworthy treatment to which defunct bondsmen are too often exposed by their masters. I extracted from him, however, a fact of which I had no previous conception ; namely, that the corpses, not of slaves only, but of poor freedmen, are frequently left in that proud and heartless region, to whiten the polluted ground with as many of their bones as the fierce dogs that prowl about the skirts of the imperial city, and fowl birds, lured from the mountains by the scent of corruption, may choose to spare.

At length, however, Dromo became quite silent, and walked—not before but beside me—through a bleaker part of the field. As we advanced, he stood still every now and then for a moment, as if to listen ; but whatever he might have heard, or expected to hear, I perceived nothing, except here and there the howl of a dog, or the lazy hooting of the night-owl, from the top of some of the old cypresses that rose between us and the moon. The scene, however, to confess the truth, was sufficiently dreary without any more accompaniments than these. For though the moon was high in heaven, there was much wind in the air ; and a thousand gray clouds, that seemed to be travelling at full speed between the Alps and the Apennine, followed each other over the face of the bright planet, and dimmed ever and anon the lustre of its beauty. And the wind whistled when the moon was obscured, and sighed very piteously ; and then when the cloud passed away, and the clear moon shone out again, there was such a screeching among the owls, that I could not help thinking the moon was glad to hurry away into the bosom of the gray drifting clouds—so abominable was the salutation of those obscene fowls of the night.

At last Dromo seemed to catch the sound he had been expecting ; for he started suddenly, and then laying his finger on his lip, moved forward with long cautious steps to the parapet along which we were walking.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I CREEPT down to the low wall at his bidding, and, looking over it, perceived that the ground sunk very deeply on the other side; but just at that moment the moon passed behind a thick veil of clouds, so that I could not distinctly see any thing below. It seemed, however, as if the eyes of the Cretan were better than mine, for as he knelt by my side, he seized my wrist with an eager and tremulous gripe, and continued to gaze downward into the hollow, with an earnestness the cause of which I could by no means understand.

At length the cloud rolled away, and the moonbeams falling brightly on the surface beneath, discovered to my view what it was that had so effectually riveted the eyes of the slave.

The ground there was more desolate of aspect than any part of that which we had traversed—stony and hard, with here and there tufts of withered fern, and a few straggling bushes of thorn, growing out of the ungenial soil. And immediately below the wall over which we were leaning two human figures were visible,—wild uncouth figures, even more desolate than the place in which they appeared. The one of them was sitting on the ground, wrapped in a dark cloak, which entirely concealed the countenance, and even the sex, of the wearer. The other was a half-naked boy, holding in a string a little new-shorn lamb, which with one of his hands he continually stroked and caressed; but his eyes seemed to be fixed steadfastly upon the sitting figure, as if waiting for some signal or command.

Nor was it long before that sitting figure arose, and throwing away the cloak, displayed the gray tangled tresses of an old woman, and two strong bony arms, one of which was stretched forth with an impatient gesture towards the stripling, while the other was pointed upward to the visible moon.

“Strike,” said she, “silly boy—now strike, and strike deeply, and beware lest any of the blood tinge your feet or your hands!”

Low and dismal was the note in which these words

were uttered ; but I heard them as distinctly as if they had been thundered, and I recognised at once the voice of the same old woman who had attracted my notice in the morning, at the foot of the Palatine.

The boy, hearing the words of Pona, drew forth instantly a knife from his bosom, whose glittering blade was forthwith buried at one blow in the throat of the yearling, and it was then first that I perceived a small ditch dug between the boy and the woman, into which, the lamb's throat being held over it, the blood of the innocent creature was made to drop from the fatal wound it had received. So surely had the blow been given that not one faint bleat escaped from the slaughtered animal, and so deeply that the blood flowed in a strong stream, dashing audibly upon the bottom of the receiving trench. And while it was yet dropping so, the old woman, muttering to herself a sort of chant, of which I could understand nothing, showered from her girdle or lap into the trench I know not what of bones, or short sticks, mingled with leaves and roots, which afterward she seemed to be stirring about in the blood, with one of the tall strong stems of the fern that grew there ; and then flinging the bloody fern-stem itself into the ditch, she raised her chant higher, and I heard words such as these, wild and broken, like the note in which they were sung—

“ Bleeds not here in place forlorn,
The spotless yearling newly shorn ?
Lies not here within the trench,
Moistened with the yearling's gore,
Brittle bone
Of hoary crone,
With the strong bone of lusty wench,
Crumbling, crumbling ever more ?
Queen of Heaven, from out thy cloud,
Look while the owl is hooting loud,
That wandering ghost and shivering sprite,
May fear to mock my charm to-night.

Now the bird that sings for thee
Sings from the topmost cypress-tree ;
Drearly now the screech-owl hoots,
Well she knows that we have torn
The blessed hemlock by the roots.
Hark her cry ;
The dark leaves lie
In the blood of the new-shorn.—

Bone, and root, and yearling's blood
Curdle round the wounded sod.—
Look, Hecate, while the night-bird screams,
Wake for us the world of dreams."

And whether it were from the hideous croaking of the voice in which these strange words were sung, or from the squalidness of the scene and the persons before me, or from some infection of the terror with which Dromo was sensibly inspired by what he saw and heard, this indeed I know not; but it is certain that I did not hear out this haggard creature's chant without some feelings, I shall not say of fear, yet, without question, of a very unpleasing nature. The wildness of the gestures of the old woman was such, that I could not doubt she had herself some faith in the efficacy of the foul and cruel charms to which she had resorted; nor could I see her stirring that trench of innocent blood without remembering, with an instinctive horror, the still more ruthless charms, whose practice the poets of Italy have ascribed to such hoary enchantresses. The dreariness of the midnight wind, too, as it whistled along the bare and steril soil around us, and the perpetual variations in the light, by reason of the careering of those innumerable clouds, and the remembrance of the funereal purposes for which, as it seemed, all this region was set apart—the whole of this together produced, I know not how, a certain pressure upon my spirits, and I confess to you I felt, as I was kneeling there by the side of the Cretan, as if I owed him no great thanks for having brought me that night beyond the Capene Gate. Here, however, I was, and there was no escaping without seeing the thing out. I therefore nerved myself as well as I could, and, returning the pressure of Dromo's hand, continued to keep my eye fixed upon the mysterious group below me.

"It seemed as if the goddess to whom the witch's song had been addressed did not listen to it with any very favourable ears; for the outward sign at least, for which it had petitioned, was so far from being granted, that in the conclusion of the chant, the clouds gathered themselves over the face of the planet more thickly than ever, while, instead of any atoning gifts of revelation, the wind howled only more loudly than before among the tombs and the grass,

and the half-scared owl sent up a feebler and more uncertain hooting from her melancholy roost. In spite of all this, notwithstanding, the old woman continued, so far as we could see, in the same attitude of expectation with which she had concluded her song, and the poor stripling her attendant still held the wellnigh drained throat of his murdered lamb above the abominable trench. By degrees, however, the patience of both seemed to be exhausted ; for there arose between them an angry altercation, which showed that each was willing to throw upon the other the failure of the common incantation.

“Infernal brat of Hades !” quoth the witch, “look ye, if you have not stained your filthy hands, and if the thirsty shadows be not incensed, because you have deprived them of some of the sweet blood which they love !”

“Curse not me, mother,” replied the boy—“but curse yourself, if you will ; for anybody might have known that the beautiful moon would rather never shine any more than shine upon such a wicked woman as you. Did you think, in truth, that the blood of a stolen lamb would ever propitiate Hecate ? I am but a boy, and yet I told you better.”

“Imp of Alecto !” quoth she ; “execrable spawn of all the Furies ! Hold thy peace, foul thing, or I will try whether no other blood may make the charm work better !”

“Beware, beware !” quoth the boy, leaping backwards—“beware what you do ! Remember, I am no longer so weak that I must bear all your blows.”

And, as he said so, there was just a gleam of light enough to show me that he brandished above his head the bloody knife with which he had slaughtered the victim at the witch’s bidding.

“A curse now upon thee !” continued the witch, stamping her foot furiously, without, however, over-stepping the trench that separated them—“a foul curse upon thee ! and a foul curse, since I am bid to say so, upon the womb that bare thee ! And I would curse the loins that begat thee also ; but that were needless, for the sea is deep, and the strong hounds of Father Ocean will keep what they have fanged.”

“Ha, ha ! mad mother,” quoth the boy (and I know

not whether I ever heard any sound so hideous as that laugh of his), "say you so, mad mother of mine? and so also will the strong hounds of old Mother Earth."

And at that moment the moon shone out again once more from among the lurid clouds, and I saw that two of those lean dogs, such as I had observed before in that region, had come close up to the woman, and were already beginning to lap the blood from out of the trench before her eyes. And then it seemed as if all the wrath she had before manifested were but as nothing; for instead of doing any thing to scare them from their feast, she sat down beside them, and wrapping her long cloak once more around her, began to curse in her madness the very power to which her prayers had been addressed; and the low steady tone in which she now poured forth her imprecations appeared to me a thousand times more fearful than the previous loudness of her angry screaming.

"Ay," said she, "look forth now from thy cloud,—look forth now, beautiful moon, and listen, if thou hast hearing as well as light, to the foul tongues that are lapping the blood of thy sacrifice! So be it with all the blood that is ever henceforth shed for thee! So fare it with all that ever put trust in thee, false, accursed Hecate; for though thou ridest high in the blue heaven, yet hell is thy birth-place, and hell holds no demon falsier than thee, beautiful, accursed, execrable Moon! A curse upon thy false, smiling face! May the steam of the hot blood they are drinking arise up and blot thee out for ever from the face of the sky! Set quickly in darkness, false, harlot Moon, and console thee in Tartarus with the ghost of thine Endymion!"

And she also concluded her cursing with laughter as full of scorn and rage as that of her boy had been of savage triumph and delight. And then she arose again from the ground, and stooping over the trench, began to caress with her hands the lean dogs that had by this time wellnigh lapped up all the blood.

"Ha, ha! pretty pets of mine," quoth she, in a fondling tone, "would it not have been very hard to deprive you of your feast! Bones enow, I warrant me, have ye picked already, since the Sun, whose light ye hate, went down, and the Moon, that is so dear to us all, began

to shine among the tombs of these proud Romans ; and why should ye not have wine, and the strongest and richest of wine too, to wash down your banquet withal ? Drink on, pretty creatures, and quaff deeply, and then ye shall have sweet slumbers in some lordly cemetery, which it were foul shame to leave for the habitation of the dead alone. Sweet slumbers shall ye have, in spite of all the haughty Manes that may shudder at your presence ; and ye shall rub your crimsoned chops upon the finest urn of them all, and the brightest of their eternal lamps shall keep watch over your heavy slumbers. Drink on, sweet lips, and drink deeply ; and leave not a single drop behind you ; and be sure you salute yon high-sailing, chaste, proud Dian, with a thankful howl, ere you creep to your resting-place." So saying, she turned once more to the boy, who stood shivering over-against her. And, " what," quoth she (again resuming her angry note), " what is this, foul pest ? and why is it that thou darest to stand by there with that idiot face of thine, while I am cherishing my darlings ? Have at him, pretty dogs, have at him ! Tear him life and limb, and see whether his blood be not the sweeter of the two."

And then, with hissing and grinding of her teeth, and furious clapping of her bony hands, she strove, as it seemed, to the uttermost to excite the obscene creatures against the boy ; and they, crouching with their bellies on the ground, and wagging their tails, began in truth to howl upon him terribly, while he, knife in hand, seemed to fear and to prepare him for their onset.

But when one of them did crouch nearer, and appeared to be really on the point of springing upon the lad, I could no longer refrain from calling out ; and, " Stop," said I, " cruel woman, for there are eyes that you think not of to take note of your wickedness. Stop, and call off your bloody dogs ; and stand upon your guard, boy, and be of good courage." And, at the same time, I hurled down one of the great loose stones that were on the top of the wall, which rolled on and bounded into the ditch beside them ; and the dogs, hearing the sound of the stone, immediately crept away yelping, and the old woman, huddling her cloak over her head, began to run

swiftly away from us, along the wall over which we were leaning. The boy only stood still for a moment, and looked upward towards the place where we were, and then he also fled along the shade of the wall, but in the opposite direction from that in which Pona was running.

And Dromo, whose teeth were chattering in his head, said to me, in a very piteous whisper, but not till all of them were quite out of sight, "Heaven and earth preserve us! was ever such madness as yours, to scare the witch from the place of her incantation, and to hurl a stone into the consecrated trench! Alas! for you and for me, sir—and, most of all, alas for Sextus—for I fear me after this we shall have no luck in counteracting the designs of Rubellia."

"Rubellia!" was my answer—"what! can you possibly imagine Rubellia to have any thing to do with this madness?"

"Imagine!" quoth he; "in good sooth, I like to hear you talking about imaginations, after what we have witnessed. Do you need to be told, that if things had gone well with that bloody woman and her foul ditch, we should never have been able to preserve Sextus from her clutches?"

"By the rod of Hermes, good Dromo!" said I, "this will never do. I shall believe much on your credit, but not things quite so extravagant as this."

To which Dromo made no reply, save a long, incredulous, and, I think, contemptuous whistle, which seemed to reach the ears of every owl between us and the Appian Way; with such a hooting and screeching did they echo its note from every funereal tower and tall cypress around us. And Dromo, when he heard that doleful concert, seemed to have all his dread redoubled within him, for he shook from head to foot in the uncertain moonlight, and I thought I could almost hear his heart knocking against his ribs, while I held his arm in mine; until, at last, he seemed to make one violent effort, and springing on his feet, said, "Come, Master Valerius, let us behave after all like men" (I smiled when he said so); "let us behave like men, and quit us bravely!

The hour has not yet come, if my Calabrian friend is to be trusted, at which the lady was to visit Pona in her dwelling. It is but daring a little more. If she has seen and known us already, then nothing can endanger us further; and if she hath not, we may escape again as well as this once."

"Well spoken," said I, "most shrewd Dromo, and like yourself; but what is it that you would have us do?"

"The first thing," he replied, "is what has already been too long delayed."

And in so saying, the Cretan produced from under his cloak a long fictitious beard, which he immediately proceeded to fix upon his own face with a string. A thin tall cap of black cloth was next brought forth, which he fastened in like manner around his brows, and a little piece of chalk, with which he once or twice rubbed over his black bushy eyebrows, completed a disguise, beneath which I should certainly have sought in vain to discover any trace of the natural countenance of Dromo. In short, after a few changes in the folding of his cloak, there stood before me a figure so venerably mysterious, that had I met it there unawares at midnight, and in the neighbourhood of so many tombs, I am sure, although of no superstitious temper, I could not have regarded it without very considerable awe and apprehension.

"Come now, good master," quoth he, "you are taller than I, pluck me a branch from the nearest tree, and I think you shall confess I make a very tolerable sooth-sayer."

In this it was easy to gratify him; for there was an old willow just a few yards off, and its boughs were so dry with age that I soon abstracted a very proper wand for him. After receiving which, he stood for a moment leaning on it in a very dignified fashion, as if to rehearse an attitude worthy of his new vocation; and then said, "Well, sir, I think if the Lady Rubellia comes now, we shall be tolerably prepared for her. But I have no disguise for you; therefore, the moment you hear a foot-step, be sure you wrap your face in your gown, and stand behind me, for so shall you best consult both your own concealment and the dignity of this Assyrian. There is

no other way by which she can come from the Suburra, therefore we might stay very well where we are ; but I think it might be still better to await her coming where there are either tombs or larger trees to cast a shade over our equipage, in case the moon should take it into her head to be more kind to us than she was to Pona, and perhaps shine out with an unseasonable brightness."

"By all means," said I, "most venerable man ; and besides, the wind is rather chilly, therefore I shall be well pleased to have shelter as well as shade."

"You shall have both," quoth he, "and that without any very troublesome journey ; for there is a thick grove of pines only a little way on. I believe there is a very grand tomb in the midst of them, in case you should prefer to sit under it ; but I, for my part, shall be quite satisfied with the black shadows of the trees themselves. By-the-by," he continued, after some little pause, "it is odd enough that it should be so ; but I believe it is the very place where all that race of the Sempronii to which a certain young damsel belongs have been burnt and buried ever since Rome was a city. You cannot see their tomb yet ; but that is only from the thickness of the trees, some of which are, I suppose, even older than itself. Now I remember me, it was just there that they set up two winters ago the funeral pile of old Caius—I mean the father of the Lady Athanasia, whom you saw at Capito's villa. They are a very noble race, and although none of the richest nowadays, there is not a prouder in Rome. I saw the procession at that old man's funeral myself, and I think the images of his ancestors that they carried before him would have reached half-way from hence to the Great Road. Grim, dusty figures I trow they were ; but I doubt not there had been many a haughty captain among them when they were alive."



