The Emperor — Volume 01 eBook

The Emperor — Volume 01 by Georg Ebers

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PREFACE.

It is now fourteen years since I planned the story related in these volumes, the outcome of a series of lectures which I had occasion to deliver on the period of the Roman dominion in Egypt. But the pleasures of inventive composition were forced to give way to scientific labors, and when I was once more at leisure to try my wings with increase of power I felt more strongly urged to other flights. Thus it came to pass that I did I not take the time of Hadrian for the background of a tale till after I had dealt with the still later period of the early monastic move in “Homo Sum.” Since finishing that romance my old wish to depict, in the form of a story, the most important epoch of the history of that venerable nation to which I have devoted nearly a quarter century of my life, has found its fulfilment. I have endeavored to give a picture of the splendor of the Pharaonic times in “Uarda,” of the subjection of Egypt to the new Empire of the Persians in “An Egyptian Princess,” of the Hellenic period under the Lagides in “The Sisters,” of the Roman dominion and the early growth of Christianity in “The Emperor,” and of the anchorite spirit—in the deserts and rocks of the Sinaitic Peninsula—in “Homo Sum.” Thus the present work is the last of which the scene will be laid in Egypt. This series of romances will not only have introduced the reader to a knowledge of the history of manners and culture in Egypt, but will have facilitated his comprehension of certain dominant ideas which stirred the mind of the Ancients. How far I may have succeeded in rendering the color of the times I have described and in producing pictures that realize the truth, I myself cannot venture to judge; for since even present facts are differently reflected in different minds, this must be still more emphatically the case with things long since past and half-forgotten. Again and again, when historical investigation has refused to afford me the means of resuscitating some remotely ancient scene, I have been obliged to take counsel of imagination and remember the saying that ‘the Poet must be a retrospective Seer,’ and could allow my fancy to spread her wings, while I remained her lord and knew the limits up to which I might permit her to soar. I considered it my lawful privilege to paint much that was pure invention, but nothing that was not possible at the period I was representing. A due regard for such possibility has always set the bounds to fancy’s flight; wherever existing authorities have allowed me to be exact and faithful I have always been so, and the most distinguished of my fellow-professors in Germany, England, France and Holland, have more than once borne witness to this. But, as I need hardly point out, poetical and historical truth are not the same thing; for historical truth must remain, as far as possible, unbiassed by the subjective feeling of the writer, while poetical truth can only find expression through the medium of the artist’s fancy.

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As in my last two romances, so in “The Emperor,” I have added no notes: I do this in the pleasant conviction of having won the confidence of my readers by my historical and other labors. Nothing has encouraged me to fresh imaginative works so much as the fact that through these romances the branch of learning that I profess has enlisted many disciples whose names are now mentioned with respect among Egyptologists. Every one who is familiar with the history of Hadrian’s time will easily discern by trifling traits from what author or from which inscription or monument the minor details have been derived, and I do not care to interrupt the course of the narrative and so spoil the pleasure of the larger class of readers. It would be a happiness to me to believe that this tale deserves to be called a real work of art, and, as such, its first function should be to charm and elevate the mind. Those who at the same time enrich their knowledge by its study ought not to detect the fact that they are learning.

Those who are learned in the history of Alexandria under the Romans may wonder that I should have made no mention of the Therapeutai on Lake Mareotis. I had originally meant to devote a chapter to them, but Luca’s recent investigations led me to decide on leaving it unwritten. I have given years of study to the early youth of Christianity, particularly in Egypt, and it affords me particular satisfaction to help others to realize how, in Hadrian’s time, the pure teaching of the Saviour, as yet little sullied by the contributions of human minds, conquered—and could not fail to conquer—the hearts of men. Side by side with the triumphant Faith I have set that noble blossom of Greek life and culture—Art which in later ages, Christianity absorbed in order to dress herself in her beautiful forms. The statues and bust of Antinous which remain to us of that epoch, show that the drooping tree was still destined to put forth new leaves under Hadrian’s rule.

The romantic traits which I have attributed to the character of my hero, who travelled throughout the world, climbing mountains to rejoice in the splendor of he rising sun, are authentic. One of the most difficult tasks I have ever set myself was to construct from the abundant but essentially contradictory accounts of Hadian a human figure in which I could myself at all believe; still, how gladly I set to work to do so! There was much to be considered in working out this narraive, but the story itself has flowed straight from the ieart of the writer; I can only hope it may find its way to that of the reader.

Leipzig, November, 1880.

GeorgEbers.

THE EMPEROR.

CHAPTER I.

The morning twilight had dawned into day, and the sun had risen on the first of December of the year of our Lord 129, but was still veiled by milk-white mists which rose from the sea, and it was cold.

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Kasius, a mountain of moderate elevation, stands on a tongue of land that projects from the coast between the south of Palestine and Egypt. It is washed on the north by the sea which, on this day, is not gleaming, as is its wont, in translucent ultramarine; its more distant depths slowly surge in blue-black waves, while those nearer to shore are of quite a different hue, and meet their sisters that lie nearer to the horizon in a dull greenish-grey, as dusty plains join darker lava beds. The northeasterly wind, which had risen as the sun rose, now blew more keenly, wreaths of white foam rode on the crests of the waves, though these did not beat wildly and stormily on the mountain-foot, but rolled heavily to the shore in humped ridges, endlessly long, as if they were of molten lead. Still the clear bright spray splashed up when the gulls dipped their pinions in the water as they floated above it, hither and thither, restless and uttering shrill little cries, as though driven by terror.

Three men were walking slowly along the causeway which led from the top of the hill down into the valley, but it was only the eldest, who walked in front of the other two, who gave any heed to the sky, the sea, the gulls, and the barren plain that lay silent at his feet. He stopped, and as soon as he did so, the others followed his example. The landscape below him seemed to rivet his gaze, and it justified the disapproval with which he gently shook his head, which was somewhat sunk into his beard. A narrow strip of desert stretched westward before him as far as the eye could reach, dividing two levels of water. Along this natural dyke a caravan was passing, and the elastic feet of the camels fell noiselessly on the road they trod. The leader, wrapped in his white mantle, seemed asleep, and the camel-drivers to be dreaming; the dull-colored eagles by the road-side did not stir at their approach. To the right of the stretch of flat coast along which the road ran from Syria to Egypt, lay the gloomy sea, overhung by grey clouds; to the left lay the desert, a strange and mysterious feature in the landscape, of which the eye could not see the end, either to the east or to the west, and which looked here like a stretch of snow, there like standing water, and again like a thicket of rushes.

The eldest of our travellers gazed constantly towards heaven or into the distance; the second, a slave who carried rugs and cloaks on his broad shoulders, never took his eyes off his master; and the third, a young, free-man, looked wearily and dreamily down the road.

A broad path, leading to a stately temple, crossed that which led from the summit of the mountain to the coast, and the bearded pedestrian turned up it; but he followed it only for a few steps, then he turned his head with a dissatisfied air, muttered a few unintelligible words into his beard, turned round and hastily retraced his steps to the narrow way, down which he went towards the valley. His young companion followed him without raising his head or interrupting his reverie, as if he were his shadow, but the slave lifted his cropped fair head and a stolen smile crossed his lips as on the left hand side of the Kasius road he caught sight of a black kid, and close beside it an old woman who, at the approach of the three men covered her wrinkled face in alarm with her dark blue veil.

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“That is the reason then!” said the slave to himself with a nod, and blowing a kiss into the air to a black-haired girl who crouched at the old woman’s feet. But she, for whom the greeting was intended, did not observe this mute courtship, for her eyes followed the travellers, and especially the young man, as if spellbound. As soon as the three were far enough off not to hear her, the girl asked with a shiver, as if some desert-spectre had passed by-and in a low voice “Grandmother, who was that?”

The old woman raised her veil, laid her hand on her grandchild’s mouth, and whispered:

“It was he.”

“The Emperor?”

The old woman answered with a significant nod, but the girl squeezed herself up, against her grandmother, with vehement curiosity stretching out her dusky head to see better, and asked softly: “The young one?”

“Silly child! the one in front with a grey beard.”

“He? Oh, I wish the young one was the Emperor!”

It was in fact Hadrian, the Roman Emperor, who walked on in silence before his escort, and it seemed as though his advent had given life to the desert, for as he approached the reed-swamp, the kites flew up in the air, and from behind a sand-hill on the edge of the broader road which Hadrian had avoided, came two men in priestly robes. They both belonged to the temple of Baal of Kariotis, a small structure of solid stone, which faced the sea, and which the Emperor had yesterday visited.

“Do you think he has lost his way?” said one to the other, in the Phoenician tongue.

“Hardly,” was the answer. “Master said that he could always find a road again by which he had once gone, even in the dark.”

“And yet he is gazing more at the clouds than at the road.”

“Still, he promised us yesterday.”

“He promised nothing for certain,” interrupted the other.

“Indeed he did; at parting he called out—and I heard him distinctly: ‘Perhaps I shall return and consult your oracle.’”

“Perhaps.”

“I think he said ‘probably.’”

“Who knows whether some sign he has seen up in the sky may not have turned him back; he is going to the camp by the sea.”

“But the banquet is standing ready for him in our great hall.”

“He will find what he needs down there. Come, it is a wretched morning, and I am being frozen.”

“Wait a little longer-look there.”

“What?”

“He does not even wear a hat to cover his grey hair.”

“He has never yet been seen to travel with anything on his head.”

“And his grey cloak is not very imperial looking.”

“He always wears the purple at a banquet.”

“Do you know who his walk and appearance remind me of?”

“Who?”

“Of our late high-priest, Abibaal; he used to walk in that ponderous, meditative way, and wear a beard like the Emperor’s.”

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“Yes, yes—and had the same piercing grey eye.”

“He too used often to gaze up at the sky. They have both the same broad forehead, too; but Abibaal’s nose was more aquiline, and his hair curled less closely.”

“And our governor’s mouth was grave and dignified, while Hadrian’s lips twitch and curl at all he says and hears, as if he were laughing at it all.”

“Look, he is speaking now to his favorite—Antonius I think they call the pretty boy.”

“Antinous, not Antonius. He picked him up in Bithynia, they say.”

“He is a beautiful youth.”

“Incomparably beautiful! What a figure and what a face! Still, I cannot wish that he were my son.”

“The Emperor’s favorite!”

“For that very reason. Why, he looks already as if he had tried every pleasure, and could never know any farther enjoyment.”

……

On a little level close to the sea-shore, and sheltered by crumbling cliffs from the east wind, stood a number of tents. Between them fires were burning, round which were gathered groups of Roman soldiers and imperial servants. Half-naked boys, the children of the fishermen and camel-drivers who dwelt in this wilderness, were running busily hither and thither, feeding the flames with dry stems of sea-grass and dead desert-shrubs; but though the blaze flew high, the smoke did not rise; but driven here and there by the squalls of wind, swirled about close to the ground in little clouds, like a flock of scattered sheep. It seemed as though it feared to rise in the grey, damp, uninviting atmosphere. The largest of the tents, in front of which Roman sentinels paced up and down, two and two, on guard, was wide open on the side towards the sea. The slaves who came out of the broad door-way with trays on their cropped heads-loaded with gold and silver vessels, plates, wine-jars, goblets, and the remains of a meal had to hold them tightly with both hands that they might not be blown over.

The inside of the tent was absolutely unadorned. The Emperor lay on a couch near the right wall, which was blown in and bulged by the wind; his bloodless lips were tightly set, his arms crossed over his breast, and his eyes half closed. But he was not asleep, for he often opened his mouth and smacked his lips, as if tasting the flavor of some viand. From time to time he raised his eyelids—long, finely wrinkled, and blue-veined—turning

his eyes up to heaven or rolling them to one side and then downwards towards the middle of the tent. There, on the skin of a huge bear trimmed with blue cloth, lay Hadrian's favorite Antinous. His beautiful head rested on that of the beast, which had been slain by his sovereign, and its skull and skin skilfully preserved, his right leg, supported on his left knee, he flourished freely in the air, and his hands were caressing the Emperor's bloodhound, which had laid its sage-looking head on the boy's broad, bare breast, and now and then tried to lick his soft lips to show its affection. But this the youth would not allow; he playfully held the beast's muzzle close with his hands or wrapped its head in the end of his mantle, which had slipped back from his shoulders.

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The dog seemed to enjoy the game, but once when Antinous had drawn the cloak more tightly round its head and it strove in vain to be free from the cloth that impeded its breathing, it set up a loud howl, and this doleful cry made the Emperor change his attitude and cast a glance of displeasure at the boy lying on the bear-skin, but only a glance, not a word of blame. And soon the expression, even of his eyes, changed, and he fixed them on the lads's figure with a gaze of loving contemplation, as though it were some noble work of art that he could never tire of admiring. And truly the Immortals had moulded this child of man to such a type; every muscle of that throat, that chest, those arms and legs was a marvel of softness and of power; no human countenance could be more regularly chiselled. Antinous observing that his master's attention had been attracted to his play with the dog, let the animal go and turned his large, but not very brilliant, eyes on the Emperor.

"What are you doing here?" asked Hadrian kindly.

"Nothing," said the boy.

"No one can do nothing. Even if we fancy we have succeeded in doing nothing we still continue to think that we are unoccupied, and to think is a good deal."

"But I cannot even think."

Every one can think; besides you were not doing nothing, for you were playing."

"Yes, with the dog." With these words Antinous stretched out his legs on the ground, pushed away the dog, and raised his curly head on both hands.

"Are you tired?" asked the Emperor.

"Yes."

"We both kept watch for an equal portion of the night, and I, who am so much older, feel quite wide awake."

"It was only yesterday that you were saying that old soldiers were the best for night-watches."

The Emperor nodded, and then said:

"At your age while we are awake we live three times as fast as at mine, and so we need to sleep twice as long. You have every right to be tired. To be sure it was not till three hours after midnight that we climbed the mountain, and how often a supper party is not over before that."

"It was very cold and uncomfortable up there."

“Not till after the sun had risen.”

“Ah! before that you did not notice it, for till then you were busy thinking of the stars.”

“And you only of yourself—very true.”

“I was thinking of your health too when that cold wind rose before Helios appeared.”

“I was obliged to await his rising.”

“And can you discern future events by the way and manner of the rising of the sun?”

Hadrian looked in surprise at the speaker, shook his head in negation, looked up at the top of the tent, and after a long pause said, in abrupt sentences, with frequent interruptions:

“Day is the present merely, and the future is evolved out of darkness; the corn grows from the clods of the field; the rain falls from the darkest clouds; a new generation is born of the mother’s womb; the limbs recover their vigor in sleep. And what is begotten of the darkness of death—who can tell?”

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When, after saying this, the Emperor had remained for some time silent, the youth asked him:

“But if the sunrise teaches you nothing concerning the future why should you so often break your night’s rest and climb the mountain to see it?”

“Why? Why?” repeated Hadrian, slowly and meditatively, stroking his grizzled beard; then he went on as if speaking to himself:

“That is a question which reason fails to answer, before which my lips find no words; and, if I had them at my command, who among the rabble would understand me? Such questions can best be answered by means of parables. Those who take part in life are actors, and the world is their stage. He who wants to look tall on it wears the cothurnus, and is not a mountain the highest vantage ground that a man can find for the sole of his foot? Kasius there is but a hill, but I have stood on greater giants than he, and seen the clouds rise below me, like Jupiter on Olympus.”

“But you need climb no mountains to feel yourself a god,” cried Antinous; “the godlike is your title—you command and the world must obey. With a mountain beneath his feet a man is nearer to heaven no doubt than he is on the plain.”

“Well?”

“I dare not say what came into my mind.”

“Speak out.”

“I knew a little girl who when I took her on my shoulder would stretch out her arms and exclaim, ‘I am so tall!’ She fancied that she was taller than I then, and yet was only little Panthea.”

“But in her own conception of herself, it was she who was tall, and that decides the issue, for to each of us a thing is only that which it seems to us. It is true they call me godlike, but I feel every day, and a hundred times a day, the limitations of the power and nature of man, and I cannot get beyond them. On the top of a mountain I cease to feel them; there I feel as if I were great, for nothing is higher than my head, far or near. And when, as I stand there, the night vanishes before my eyes, when the splendor of the young sun brings the world into new life for me, by restoring to my consciousness all that just before had been engulfed in gloom, then a deeper breath swells my breast, and my lungs fill with the purer and lighter air of the heights. Up there, alone and in silence, no hint can reach me of the turmoil below, and I feel myself one with the great aspect of nature spread before me. The surges of the sea come and go, the tree-tops in the forest bow and rise, fog and mist roll away and part asunder hither and thither, and up there I feel myself so merged with the creation that surrounds me that often it even

seems as though it were my own breath that gives it life. Like the storks and the swallows, I yearn for the distant land, and where should the human eye be more likely to be permitted, at least in fancy, to discern the remote goal than from the summit of a mountain?

“The limitless distance which the spirit craves for seems there to assume a form tangible to the senses, and the eye detects its border line. My whole being feels not merely elevated, but expanded, and that vague longing which comes over me as soon as I mix once more in the turmoil of life, and when the cares of state demand my strength, vanishes. But you cannot understand it, boy. These are things which no other mortal can share with me.”

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“And it is only to me that you do not scorn to reveal them!” cried Antinous, who had turned round to face the Emperor, and who with wide eyes had not lost one word.

“You?” said Hadrian, and a smile, not absolutely free from mockery, parted his lips. “From you I should no more have a secret than from the Cupid by Praxiteles, in my study at Rome.”

The blood mounted to the lad’s cheeks and dyed them flaming crimson. The Emperor observed this and said kindly:

“You are more to me than the statue, for the marble cannot blush. In the time of the Athenians Beauty governed life, but in you I can see that the gods are pleased to give it a bodily existence, even in our own days, and to look at you reconciles me to the discords of existence. It does me good. But how should I expect to find that you understand me; your brow was never made to be furrowed by thought; or did you really understand one word of all I said?”

Antinous propped himself on his left arm, and lifting his right hand, he said emphatically:

“Yes.”

“And which,” asked Hadrian.

“I know what longing is.”

“For what?”

“For many things.”

“Tell me one.”

“Some enjoyment that is not followed by depression. I do not know of one.”

“That is a desire you share with all the youth of Rome, only they are apt to postpone the reaction. Well, and what next?”

“I cannot tell you.”

“What prevents your speaking openly to me?”

“You, yourself did.”

“I?”

“Yes, you; for you forbid me to speak of my home, my mother, and my people.”

The Emperor's brow darkened, and he answered sternly:

"I am your father and your whole soul should be given to me."

"It is all yours," answered the youth, falling back on to the bear-skin, and drawing the pallima closely over his shoulders, for a gust blew coldly in at the side of the tent, through which Phlegon, the Emperor's private secretary, now entered and approached his master. He was followed by a slave with several sealed rolls under his arms.

"Will it be agreeable to you, Caesar, to consider the despatches and letters that have just arrived?" asked the official, whose carefully-arranged hair had been tossed by the sea-breeze.

"Yes, and then we can make a note of what I was able to observe in the heavens last night. Have you the tablets ready?"

"I left them in the tent set up especially for the work, Caesar."

"The storm has become very violent."

"It seems to blow from the north and east both at once, and the sea is very rough. The Empress will have a bad voyage."

"When did she set out?"

"The anchor was weighed towards midnight. The vessel which is to fetch her to Alexandria is a fine ship, but rolls from side to side in a very unpleasant manner."

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Hadrian laughed loudly and sharply at this, and said:

“That will turn her heart and her stomach upside down. I wish I were there to see—but no, by all the gods, no! for she will certainly forget to paint this morning; and who will construct that edifice of hair if all her ladies share her fate. We will stay here to-day, for if I meet her soon after she has reached Alexandria she will be undiluted gall and vinegar.”

With these words Hadrian rose from his couch, and waving his hand to Antinous, went out of the tent with his secretary.

A third person standing at the back of the tent had heard the Emperor’s conversation with his favorite; this was Mastor, a Sarmatian of the race of the Taryges. He was a slave, and no more worthy of heed than the dog which had followed Hadrian, or than the pillows on which the Emperor had been reclining. The man, who was handsome and well grown, stood for some time twisting the ends of his long red moustache, and stroking his round, closely-cropped head with his bands; then he drew the open chiton together over his broad breast, which seemed to gleam from the remarkable whiteness of the skin. He never took his eyes off Antinous, who had turned over, and covering his face with his hands had buried them in the bear’s hairy mane.

Mastor had something he wanted to say to him, but he dared not address him for the young favorite’s demeanor could not be reckoned on. Often he was ready to listen to him and talk with him as a friend, but often, too, he repulsed him more sharply than the haughtiest upstart would repel the meanest of his servants. At last the slave took courage and called the lad by his name, for it seemed less hard to submit to a scolding than to smother the utterance of a strong, warm feeling, unimportant as it might be, which was formed in words in his mind. Antinous raised his head a little on his hands and asked:

“What is it?”

“I only wanted to tell you,” replied the Sarmatian, “that I know who the little girl was that you so often took upon your shoulders. It was your little sister, was it not, of whom you were speaking to me lately?”

The lad nodded assent, and then once more buried his head in his hands, and his shoulders heaved so violently that it would seem that he was weeping.—Mastor remained silent for a few minutes, then he went up to Antinous and said:

“You know I have a son and a little daughter at home, and I am always glad to hear about little girls. We are alone and if it will relieve your heart.”

“Let me alone, I have told you a dozen times already about my mother and little Parthea,” replied Antinous, trying to look composed.

“Then do so confidently for the thirteenth,” said the slave. “In the camp and in the kitchen I can talk about my people as much as I like. But you—tell me, what do you call the little dog that Panthea made a scarlet cloak for?”

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“We called it Kallista,” cried Antinous wiping his eyes with the back of his hand. “My father would not allow it but we persuaded my mother. I was her favorite, and when I put my arms round her and looked at her imploringly she always said ‘yes’ to anything I asked her.”

A bright light shone in the boy’s weary eyes; he had remembered a whole wealth of joys which left no depression behind them.

CHAPTER II.

One of the palaces built in Alexandria by the Ptolemaic kings stood on the peninsula called Lochias which stretched out into the blue sea like a finger pointing northwards; it formed the eastern boundary of the great harbor. Here there was never any lack of vessels but to-day they were particularly numerous, and the quay-road paved with smooth blocks of stone, which led from the palatial quarter of the town—the Bruchiom as it was called—which was bathed by the sea, to the spit of land was so crowded with curious citizens on foot and in vehicles, that all conveyances were obliged to stop in their progress before they had reached the private harbor reserved for the Emperor’s vessels.

But there was something out of the common to be seen at the landing-place, for there lying under the shelter of the high mole were the splendid triremes, galleys, long boats and barges which had brought Hadrian’s wife and the suite of the imperial couple to Alexandria. A very large vessel with a particularly high cabin on the after deck and having the head of a she-wolf on the lofty and boldly-carved prow excited the utmost attention. It was carved entirely in cedar wood, richly decorated with bronze and ivory, and named the Sabina. A young Alexandrian pointed to the name written in gold letters on the stern, nudging his companion and saying with a laugh:

“Sabina has a wolf’s head then!”

“A peacock’s would suit her better. Did you see her on her way to the Caesareum?” replied the other.

“Alas! I did,” said the first speaker, but he said no more perceiving, close behind him, a Roman lictor who bore over his left shoulder his fasces, a bundle of elmrods skilfully tied together, and who, with a wand in his right-hand and the assistance of his comrades, was endeavoring to part the crowd and make room for the chariot of his master, Titianus, the imperial prefect, which came slowly in the rear. This high official had overheard the citizens’ heedless words, and turning to the man who stood beside him, while with a light fling he threw the end of his toga into fresh folds, he said:

“An extraordinary people! I cannot feel annoyed with them, and yet I would rather walk from here to Canopus on the edge of a knife than on that of an Alexandrian’s tongue.”

“Did you hear what the stout man was saying about Verus?”

“The lictor wanted to take him up, but nothing is to be done with them by violence. If they had to pay only a sesterce for every venomous word, I tell you Pontius, the city would be impoverished and our treasury would soon be fuller than that of Gyges at Sardis.”

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“Let them keep their money,” cried the other, the chief architect of the city, a man of about thirty years of age with highly-arched brows and eager piercing eyes; and grasping the roll he held in his hand with a strong grip, he continued:

“They know how to work, and sweat is bitter. While they are busy they help each other, in idleness they bite each other, like unbroken horses harnessed to the same pole. The wolf is a fine brute, but if you break out his teeth he becomes a mangy hound.”

“You speak after my own heart,” cried the prefect. “But here we are, eternal gods! I never imagined anything so bad as this. From a distance it always looked handsome enough!”

Titianus and the architect descended from the chariot, the former desired a lictor to call the steward of the palace, and then he and his companion inspected first the door which led into it. It looked fine enough with its double columns which supported a lofty pediment, but, all the same, it did not present a particularly pleasing aspect, for the stucco had, in several places, fallen from the walls, the capitals of the marble columns were lamentably injured and the tall doors, overlaid with metal, hung askew on their hinges. Pontius inspected every portion of the door-way with a keen eye and then, with the prefect, went into the first court of the palace, in which, in the time of the Ptolemies, the tents had stood for ambassadors, secretaries, and the officers in waiting on the king. There they met with an unexpected hindrance, for across the paved court-yard, where the grass grew in tufts, and tall thistles were in bloom, a number of ropes were stretched aslant from the little house in which dwelt the gate-keeper; and on these ropes were hung newly-washed garments of every size and shape.

“A pretty residence for an Emperor,” sighed Titianus, shrugging his shoulders, but stopping the lictor, who had raised his fasces to cut the ropes.

“It is not so bad as it looks,” said the architect positively. “Gate-keeper! hi, gate-keeper! Where is the lazy fellow hiding himself?”

While he called out and the lictor hurried forward into the interior of the palace, Pontius went towards the gate-keeper’s lodge, and having made his way in a stooping attitude through the damp clothes, there he stood still. Ever since he had come in at the gate annoyance and vexation had been stamped on his countenance, but now his large mouth spread into a smile, and he called to the prefect in an undertone:

“Titianus, just take the trouble to come here.”

The elderly dignitary, whose tall figure exceeded that of the architect in height by a full head, did not find it quite so easy to pass under the ropes with his head bent down; but he did it with good humor, and while carefully avoiding pulling down the wet linen, he called out:

“I am beginning to feel some respect for children’s shirts; one can at any rate get through them without breaking one’s spine. Oh! this is delicious—quite delicious!”

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This exclamation was caused by the sight which the architect had invited the prefect to come and enjoy, and which was certainly droll enough. The front of the gate-keeper's house was quite grown over with ivy which framed the door and window in its long runners. Amidst the greenery hung numbers of cages with starlings, blackbirds, and smaller singing-birds. The wide door of the little house stood open, giving a view into a tolerably spacious and gaily-painted room. In the background stood a clay model of an Apollo of admirable workmanship; above, and near this, the wall was hung with lutes and lyres of various size and form.

In the middle of the room, and near the open door, was a table, on which stood a large wicker cage containing several nests of young goldfinches, and with green food twined among the osiers. There were, too, a large wine-jar and an ivory goblet decorated with fine carving. Close to the drinking-vessels, on the stone top of the table, rested the arm of an elderly woman who had fallen asleep in the arm-chair in which she sat. Notwithstanding the faint grey moustache that marked her upper-lip and the pronounced ruddiness of her fore head and cheeks, she looked pleasant and kind. She must have been dreaming of something that pleased her, for the expression of her lips and of her eyes-one being half open and the other closely shut-gave her a look of contentment. In her lap slept a large grey cat, and by its side—as though discord never could enter this bright little abode which exhaled no savor of poverty, but, on the contrary, a peculiar and fragrant scent—lay a small shaggy dog, whose snowy whiteness of coat could only be due to the most constant care. Two other dogs, like this one, lay stretched on the floor at the old lady's feet, and seemed no less soundly asleep.

As the prefect came up, the architect pointed to this study of still-life, and said in a whisper:

"If we had a painter here it would make a lovely little picture."

"Incomparable," answered Titianus, "only the vivid scarlet on the dame's cheeks seems to me suspicious, considering the ample proportions of the wine-jar at her elbow."

"But did you ever see a calmer, kindlier, or more contented countenance?"

"Baucis must have slept like that when Philemon allowed himself leave of absence for once! or did that devoted spouse always remain at home?"

"Apparently he did. Now, peace is at an end." The approach of the two friends had waked one of the little dogs. He gave tongue, and his companion immediately jumped up and barked as if for a wager. The old woman's pet sprang out of her lap, but neither his mistress nor the cat let themselves be disturbed by the noise, and slept on.

"A watcher among a thousand!" said the architect, laughing.

“And this phalanx of dogs which guard the palace of a Caesar,” added Titianus, “might be vanquished with a blow. Take heed, the worthy matron is about to wake.”

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The dame had in fact been disturbed by the barking. She sat up a little, lifted her hands, and then, half singing, half muttering a few words, she sank back again in her chair.

“This is delicious!” cried the prefect.

“Begone dull care” she sang in her sleep.

“How may this rare specimen of humanity look when she is awake?”

“I should be sorry to drive the old lady out of her nest!” said the architect unrolling his scroll.

“You shall touch nothing in the little house,” cried the prefect eagerly. “I know Hadrian; he delights in such queer things and queer people, and I will wager he will make friends with the old woman in his own way. Here at last comes the steward of this palace.”

The prefect was not mistaken; the hasty step he had heard was that of the official they awaited. At some little distance they could already hear the man, panting as he hurried up, and as he came, before Titianus could prevent him, he had snatched down the cords that were stretched across the court and flung all the washing on the ground. As soon as the curtain had thus dropped which had divided him from the Emperor’s representative and his companion, he bowed to the former as low as the rotund dimensions of his person would allow; but his hasty arrival, the effort of strength he had made, and his astonishment at the appearance of the most powerful personage in the Nile Province in the building entrusted to his care, so utterly took away his breath—of which he at all times was but “scant”—that he was unable even to stammer out a suitable greeting. Titianus gave him a little time, and then, after expressing his regret at the sad plight of the washing, now strewn upon the ground, and mentioning to the steward the name and position of his friend Pontius, he briefly explained to him that the Emperor wished to take up his abode in the palace now in his charge; that he—Titianus—was cognizant of the bad condition in which it then was, and had come to take council with him and the architect as to what could be done in the course of a few days to make the dilapidated residence habitable for Hadrian, and to repair, at any rate, the more conspicuous damage. He then desired the steward to lead him through the rooms.

“Directly—at once,” answered the Greek, who had attained his present ponderous dimensions through many years of rest: “I will hasten to fetch the keys.” And as he went, puffing and panting, he re-arranged with his short, fat fingers the still abundant hair on the right side of his head. Pontius looked after him.

“Call him back, Titianus,” said he. “We disturbed him in the midst of curling his hair; only one side was done when the lictor called him away, and I will wager my own head that he will have the other side frizzled before he comes back. I know your true Greek!”

“Well, let him,” answered Titianus. “If you have taken his measure rightly he will not be able to give his attention without reserve to our questions till the other half of his hair is curled. I know, too, how to deal with a Hellene.”

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“Better than I, I perceive,” said the architect in a tone of conviction. “A statesman is used to deal with men as we do with lifeless materials. Did you see the fat fellow turn pale when you said that it would be but a few days before the Emperor would make his entry here? Things must look well in the old house there. Every hour is precious, and we have lingered here too long.”

The prefect nodded agreement and followed the architect into the inner court of the palace. How grand and well-proportioned was the plan of this immense building through which the steward Keraunus, who returned with his fine curls complete all round, now led the Romans. It stood on an artificial hill in the midst of the peninsula of Lochias, and from many a window and many a balcony there were lovely prospects of the streets and open squares, the houses, palaces and public buildings of the metropolis, and of the harbor, swarming with ships. The outlook from Lochias was rich, gay and varied to the south and west, but east and north from the platform of the palace of the Ptolemies, the gaze fell on the never-wearying prospect of the eternal sea, limited only by the vault of heaven. When Hadrian had sent a special messenger from Mount Kasius to desire his prefect Titianus to have this particular building prepared for his reception, he knew full well what advantages its position offered; it was the part of his officials to restore order in the interior of the palace, which had remained uninhabited from the time of Cleopatra’s downfall. He gave them for the purpose eight, or perhaps nine, days—little more than a week. And in what a condition did Titianus and Pontius find this now dilapidated and plundered scene of former magnificence—the sweat pouring from their foreheads with their exertions as they inspected and sketched, questioned and made notes of it all.

The pillars and steps in the interior were tolerably well preserved, but the rain had poured in through the open roofs of the banqueting and reception-lulls, the fine mosaic pavements had started here and there, and in other places a perfect little meadow had grown in the midst of a hall, or an arcade; for Octavianus Augustus, Tiberius, Vespasian, Titus and a whole series of prefects, had already carefully removed the finest of the mosaics from the famous palace of the Ptolemies, and carried them to Rome or to the provinces, to decorate their town houses or country villas. In the same way the best of the statues were gone, with which a few centuries previously the art-loving Lagides had decorated this residence—besides which they had another, still larger, on the Bruchiom.

In the midst of a vast marbled hall stood an elegantly-wrought fountain, connected with the fine aqueduct of the city. A draught of air rushed through this hall, and in stormy weather switched the water all over the floor, now robbed of its mosaics, and covered, wherever the foot could tread, with a thin, dark green, damp and slippery coating of mossy plants and slime. It was here that Keraunus leaned breathless against the wall, and, wiping his brow, panted rather than said: “At last, this is the end!”

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The words sounded as if he meant his own end and not that of their excursion through the palace, and it seemed like a mockery of the man himself when Pontius unhesitatingly replied with decision:

“Good, then we can begin our re-examination here, at once.”

Keraunus did not contradict him, but, as he remembered the number of stairs to be climbed over again, he looked as if sentence of death had been passed upon him.

“Is it necessary that I should remain with you during the rest of your labors, which must be principally directed to details?” asked the prefect of the architect.

“No,” answered Pontius, “provided you will take the trouble to look at once at my plan, so as to inform yourself on the whole of what I propose, and to give me full powers to dispose of men and means in each case as it arises.”

“That is granted,” said Titianus. “I know that Pontius will not demand a man or a sesterce more or less than is needed for the purpose.”

The architect bowed in silence and Titianus went on.

“But above all things, do you think you can accomplish your task in eight days and nine nights?”

“Possibly, at a pinch; and if I could only have four days more at my disposal, most probably.”

“Then all that is needed is to delay Hadrian’s arrival by four days and nights.”

“Send some interesting people—say the astronomer Ptolemaeus, and Favorinus, the sophist, who await him here—to meet him at Pelusium. They will find some way of detaining him there.”

“Not a bad idea! We will see. But who can reckon on the Empress’s moods? At any rate, consider that you have only eight days to dispose of.”

“Good.”

“Where do you hope to be able to lodge Hadrian?”

“Well, a very small portion of the old building is, strictly speaking, fit to use.”

“Of that, I regret to say, I have fully convinced myself,” said the prefect emphatically, and turning to the steward, he went on in a tone less of stern reproof than of regret.

“It seems to me, Keraunus, that it would have been your duty to inform me earlier of the ruinous condition of the building.”

“I have already lodged a complaint,” replied the man, “but I was told in answer to my report that there were no means to apply to the purpose.”

“I know nothing of these things,” cried Titianus.

“When did you forward your petition to the prefect’s office?”

“Under your predecessor, Haterius Nepos.”

“Indeed,” said the prefect with a drawl.

“So long ago. Then, in your place, I should have repeated my application every year, without any reference to the appointment of a new prefect. However, we have now no time for talking. During the Emperor’s residence here, I shall very likely send one of my subordinates to assist you!”

Titianus turned his back on the steward, and asked the architect:

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“Well, my good Pontius, what part of the palace have you your eye upon?”

“The inner halls and rooms are in the best repair.”

“But they are the last that can be thought of,” cried Titianus. “The Emperor is satisfied with everything in camp, but where fresh air and a distant prospect are to be had, he must have them.”

“Then let us choose the western suite; hold the plan my worthy friend.”

The steward slid as he was desired, the architect took his pencil and made a vigorous line in the air above the left side of the sketch, saying:

“This is the west front of the palace which you see from the harbor. From the south you first come into the lofty peristyle, which may be used as an antechamber; it is surrounded with rooms for the slaves and body-guard. The next smaller sitting-rooms by the side of the main corridor we may assign to the officers and scribes, in this spacious hypaethral hall—the one with the Muses—Hadrian may give audience and the guests may assemble there whom he may admit to eat at his table in this broad peristyle. The smaller and well-preserved rooms, along this long passage leading to the steward’s house, will do for the pages, secretaries and other attendants on Caesar’s person, and this long saloon, lined with fine porphyry and green marble, and adorned with the beautiful frieze in bronze will, I fancy, please Hadrian as a study and private sitting-room.”

“Admirable!” cried Titianus, “I should like to show your plan to the Empress.”

“In that case, instead of eight days I must have as many weeks,” said Pontius coolly.

“That is true,” answered the prefect laughing. “But tell me, Keraunus, how comes it that the doors are wanting to all the best rooms?”

“They were of fine thyra wood, and they were wanted in Rome.”

“I must have seen one or another of them there,” muttered the prefect.

“Your cabinet-workers will have a busy time, Pontius.”

“Nay, the hanging-makers may be glad; wherever we can we will close the door-ways with heavy curtains.”

“And what will you do with this damp abode of fogs, which, if I mistake not, must adjoin the dining-hall?”

“We will turn it into a garden filled with ornamental foliage.”

“That is quite admissable—and the broken statues?”

“We will get rid of the worst.”

The Apollo and the nine Muses stand in the room you intend for an audience-hall—do they not?”

“Yes.”

“They are in fairly good condition, I think.”

“Urania is wanting entirely,” said the steward, who was still holding the plan out in front of him.

“And what became of her?” asked Titianus, not without excitement.

“Your predecessor, the prefect Haterius Nepos, took a particular fancy to it and carried it with him to Rome.”

“Why Urania of all others?” cried Titianus angrily. She, above all, ought not to be missing from the hall of audience of Caesar the pontiff of heaven! What is to be done?”

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“It will be difficult to find an Urania ready-made as tall as her sisters, and we have no time to search one out, a new one must be made.”

“In eight days?”

“And eight nights.”

“But my good friend, only to get the marble—”

“Who thinks of marble? Papias will make us one of straw, rags and gypsum—I know his magic hand—and in order that the others may not be too unlike their new-born sister they shall be whitewashed.”

“Capital—but why choose Papias when we have Harmodius?”

“Harmodius takes art in earnest, and we should have the Emperor here before he had completed his sketches. Papias works with thirty assistants at anything that is ordered of him, so long as it brings him money. His last things certainly amaze me, particularly the Hygyeia for Dositheus the Jew, and the bust of Plutarch put up in the Caesareum. they are full of grace and power. But who can distinguish what is his work and what that of his scholars? Enough, he knows how things should be done; and if a good sum is to be got by it he will hew you out a whole sea-fight in marble in five days.”

“Then give Papias the commission but the hapless mutilated pavements-what will you do with them?”

“Gypsum and paint must mend them,” said Pontius, “and where that will not do, we must lay carpets on the floor in the Eastern fashion. Merciful night! how dark it is growing; give me the plan Keraunus and provide us with torches and lamps for to-day, and the next following ones must have twenty-four hours apiece, full measure. I must ask you for half a dozen trustworthy slaves Titianus; I shall want them for messengers. What are you standing there for man? Lights, I said. You have had half a lifetime to rest in, and when Caesar is gone you will have as many more years for the same laudable purpose—”

As he spoke the steward had silently gone off, but the architect did not spare him the end of the sentence; he shouted after him:

“Unless by that time you are smothered in your own fat. Is it Nile-mud or blood that runs in that huge mortal’s veins?”

“I am sure I do not care,” said the prefect, “so long as the glorious fire that flows in yours only holds out till the work is done. Do not allow yourself to be overworked at first, nor require the impossible of your strength, for Rome and the world still expect great things of you. I can now write in perfect security to the Emperor that all will be ready for him in

Lochias, and as a farewell speech, I can only say, it is folly to be discouraged if only Pontius is at hand to support and assist me."

CHAPTER III.

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The prefect ordered the lictors, who were awaiting him with his chariot, to hasten to his house, and to conduct to Pontius several most worthy slaves, familiar with Alexandria—-some of whom he named—and at the same time to send the architect a good couch with pillows and coverlets, and to despatch a good meal and fine wine to the old palace at Lochias. Then he mounted his chariot and drove through the Bruchiom along the shore to the great edifice known as the Caesareum. He got on but slowly, for the nearer he approached his destination the denser was the crowd of inquisitive citizens, who stood closely packed round the vast circumference of the building. Quite from a distance the prefect could see a bright light; it rose to heaven from the large pans of pitch which were placed on the towers on each side of the tall gate of the Caesareum which faced the sea. To the right and left of this gate stood a tall obelisk, and on each of these, men were lighting lamps which had been attached to the sides and placed on the top, on the previous day.

“In honor of Sabina,” said the prefect to himself. “All that this Pontius does is thoroughly done, and there is no more complete sinecure than the supervision of his arrangements.”

Fully persuaded of this he did not think it necessary to go up to the illuminated door-way which led into the temple erected by Octavian in honor of Julius Caesar; on the contrary, he directed the charioteer to stop at a door built in the Egyptian style, which faced the garden of the palace of the Ptolemies, and which led to the imperial residence that had been built by the Alexandrians for Tiberius, and had been greatly extended and beautified under the later Caesars. A sacred grove divided it from the temple of Caesar, with which it communicated by a covered colonnade. Before this door there were several chariots and horses, and a whole host of slaves, black and white, were in attendance with their masters’ litters. Here lictors kept back the sight-seeking crowd, officers were lounging against the pillars, and the Roman guard were just assembling with a clatter of arms, to the sound of a trumpet within the door, to await their dismissal.

Everything gave way respectfully before the chariot of the prefect, and as Titianus walked through the illuminated arcades of the Caesareum, passing by the masterpieces of statuary placed there, and the rows of pictures—and reached the halls in which the library of the palace was kept, he could not help thinking of all the care and trouble which with the assistance of Pontius, he had for months devoted to rendering this palace which had not been used since Titus had set out for Judaea, fit quarters for Hadrian’s reception. The Empress now lived in the rooms intended for her husband, and decorated with the choicest works of art, and Titianus reflected with regret that, after Sabina had once become aware of their presence there, it would be quite impossible to transfer them to Lochias. At the door of the splendid room which he had intended for Hadrian he was met by Sabina’s chamberlain who undertook to conduct him at once into the presence of his mistress.

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The roof of the hall in which the prefect found the Empress, in summer was open to the sky; but at this season was suitably covered in by a movable copper roof, partly to keep off the rain of the Alexandrian winter, and partly too because, even in the warmer season Sabina was wont to complain of cold; but beneath it a wide opening allowed the air free entrance and exit. As Titianus entered the room a comfortable warmth and subtle perfume met his senses; the warmth was produced by stoves of a peculiar form standing in the middle of the room; one of these represented Vulcan's forge. Brightly glowing charcoal lay in front of the bellows which were worked by an automaton, at short regular intervals, while the god and his assistants modelled in brass, stood round the genial fire with tongs and hammers. The other stove was a large silver bird's-nest, in which likewise charcoal was burning. Above the glowing fuel a phoenix, also in brass, and in the likeness of an eagle, seemed striving to soar heavenwards. Besides these a number of lamps lighted the saloon, which in truth looked too large for the number of people assembled in it, and which was lavishly furnished with gracefully-formed seats, couches, and tables, vases of flowers and statues.

The prefect and Pontius had intended a quite different room to serve for smaller assemblies, and had fitted it up suitably for the purpose, but the Empress had preferred the great hall to the smaller room. The venerable and nobly-born statesman was filled with vexation, nay, with an embarrassment that made him feel estranged, when he had to glance round the room to find the persons in it, collected, as they were, into small knots. He could hear nothing but hushed voices; here an unintelligible murmur and there a suppressed laugh, but from no one a frank speech or full utterance. For a moment he felt as if he had found admittance to the abode of whispering calumny, and yet he knew why here no one dared to speak out or above a murmur. Loud voices hurt the Empress, and a clear voice was a misery to her, and yet few men possessed so loud and penetrating a chest voice as her husband, who was not wont to lay restraint upon himself for any human being, not even for his wife.

Sabina sat on a large divan, more like a couch than a chair; her feet were buried in the shaggy fell of a buffalo, and her knees and ankles wrapped round with down-cushions covered with silk. Her head she held very upright, and it was difficult to imagine how her slender throat could support it, loaded as it was with strings of pearls and precious stones which were braided in the tall structure of her reddish-gold hair, that was arranged in long cylindrical curls pinned closely side by side. The Empress's thin face looked particularly small under the mass of natural and artificial adornment which towered above her brow. Beautiful she could never have been, even in her youth, but her features were regular,

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and the prefect confessed to himself as he looked at Sabina's face, marked as it was with minute wrinkles and touched up with red and white, that the sculptor who a few years previously had been commissioned to represent her as 'Venus Victrix' might very well have given the goddess a certain amount of resemblance to the imperial model. If only her eyes, which were absolutely bereft of lashes, had not been quite so small and keen—in spite of the dark lines painted round them—and if only the sinews in her throat had not stood out quite so conspicuously from the flesh which formerly had covered them!

With a deep bow Titianus took the Empress's right hand, covered with rings; but she withdrew it quickly from that of her husband's friend and relative, as if she feared that the carefully-cherished limb—useless as it was for any practical purpose, a mere toy among hands—might suffer some injury, and wrapped it and her arm in her upper-robe. But she returned the prefect's friendly greeting with all the warmth at her command. Though formerly at Rome she had been accustomed to see Titianus every day at her house, this was their first meeting in Alexandria; for the previous day, exhausted by the sufferings of her sea-voyage, she had been carried in a closed litter to the Caesareum, and this morning she had declined to receive his visit, as her whole time was given up to her physicians, bathing-women, and coiffeurs.

"How can you survive in this country?" she said in a low but harsh voice, which always made the hearer feel that it was that of a dull, fractious, childless woman. "At noon the sun burns you up, and in the evening it is so cold—so intolerably cold!' As she spoke she drew her robe closer round her, but Titianus, pointing to the stoves in the middle of the hall, said:

"I hoped we had succeeded in cutting the bowstrings of the Egyptian winter, and it is but a feeble weapon."

"Still young, still imaginative, still a poet!" said the Empress wearily. "I saw your wife a couple of hours since. Africa seems to suit her less well; I was shocked to see Julia, the handsome matron, so altered. She does not look well."

"Years are the foe of beauty."

"Frequently they are, but true beauty often resists their attacks."

"You are yourself the living proof of your assertion."

"That is as much as to say that I am growing old."

"Nay—only that you know the secret of remaining beautiful."

“You are a poet!” murmured the Empress with a twitch of her thin under-lip.

“Affairs of state do not favor the Muses.”

“But I call any man a poet who sees things more beautiful than they are, or who gives them finer names than they deserve—a poet, a dreamer, a flatterer—for it comes to that.”

“Ah! modesty can always find words to repel even well-merited admiration.”

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“Why this foolish bandying of words?” sighed Sabina, flinging herself back in her chair. “You have been to school under the hair-splitting logicians in the Museum here, and I have not. Over there sits Favorinus, the sophist; I dare say he is proving to Ptolemaeus that the stars are mere specks of blood in our eyes, which we choose to believe are in the sky. Florus, the historian, is taking note of this weighty discussion; Pancrates, the poet, is celebrating the great thoughts of the philosopher. As to what part the philologist there can find to take in this important event you know better than I. What is the man’s name?”

“Apollonius.”

“Hadrian has nick-named him ‘the obscure.’ The more difficult it is to understand the discourses of these gentlemen the more highly are they esteemed.”

“One must dive to obtain what lies at the bottom of the water—all that floats on the surface is borne by the waves, a plaything for children. Apollonius is a very learned man.”

“Then my husband ought to leave him among his disciples and his books. It was his wish that I should invite these people to my table. Florus and Pancrates I like—not the others.”

“I can easily relieve you of the company of Favorinus and Ptolemaeus; send them to meet the Emperor.”

“To what end?”

“To entertain him.”

“He has his plaything with him,” said Sabina, and her thin lips curled with an expression of bitter contempt.

“His artistic eye delights in the beauty of Antinous, which is celebrated, but which it has not yet been my privilege to see.”

“And you are very anxious to see this marvel?”

“I cannot deny it.”

“And yet you want to postpone your meeting with Caesar?” said Sabina, and a keen glance of inquiry and distrust twinkled in her little eyes.

“Why do you want to delay my husband’s arrival?”

“Need I tell you,” said Titianus eagerly, “how greatly I shall rejoice to see once more my sovereign, the companion of my youth, the greatest and wisest of men, after a separation of four years? What would I not give if he were here already! And yet I would rather that he should arrive in fourteen days than in eight.”

“What reason can you have?”

“A mounted messenger brought me a letter to-day in which the Emperor tells me that he proposes to inhabit the old palace at Lochias, and not the Caesareum.”

At these words Sabina’s forehead clouded, her gaze, dark and blank, was fixed on her lap, and biting her under-lip, she muttered:

“Because I am here.”

Titianus made as though he had not heard these words, and continued in an easy tone:

“There he has a wide outlook into the distance, which is what he has loved from his youth up. But the old building is much dilapidated, and though I have already begun to exert all the forces at my command, with the assistance of our admirable architect, Pontius, to restore a portion of it at any rate, and make it a habitable and not too uncomfortable residence, the time is too short to do anything thoroughly worthy—”

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“I wish to see my husband here, and the sooner the better,” interrupted the Empress with decision. Then she turned towards the row of pillars which stood by the right-hand wall of the hall, and which were at some distance from her couch, calling out “Verus.” But her voice was so weak that it did not reach the person addressed, so turning to the prefect, she said: “I beg of you to call Verus to me, the praetor Lucius Aurelius Verus.” Titianus immediately obeyed.

As he entered the hall he had already exchanged friendly greetings with the man to whom the Empress wished to speak. He now did not succeed in attracting his attention till he stood close at his elbow, for he formed the centre of a small group of men and women who were hanging on his words. What he was saying in a subdued voice must have been extraordinarily diverting, for it could be seen that his hearers were making the greatest efforts to keep their suppressed laughter from breaking out into a shout that would shake the very hall, a noise the Empress detested. When the prefect came up to Verus, a young girl, whose pretty head was crowned by a perfect thicket of little ringlets, was just laying her hand on his arm and saying:

“Nay-that is too much; if you go on like this, for the future whenever you speak I shall stop my ears with my hands, as sure as my name is Balbilla.”

“And as sure as you are descended from King Antiochus,” added Verus bowing.

“Always the same,” laughed the prefect, nodding to the audacious jester.

“Sabina wants to speak to you.”

“Directly, directly,” said Verus. “My story is a true one, and you all ought to be grateful to me for having released you from that tedious philologer who has now button-holed my witty friend Favorinus. I like your Alexandria, Titianus; still it is not a great capital like Rome. The people have not yet learned not to be astonished; they are perpetually in amazement. When I go out driving—”

“Your runners ought to fly before you with roses in their hair and wings on their shoulders like Cupids.”

“In honor of the Alexandrian ladies?”

“As if the Roman ladies in Rome, and the fair Greeks at Athens,” interrupted Balbilla.

“The praetor’s runners go faster than Parthian horses,” cried the Empress’s chamberlain. “He has named them after the winds.”

“As they deserve,” added Verus “Come, Titianus.” He laid his hand in a confidential manner on the arm of the prefect, to whom he was related; and as they went towards Sabina he whispered in his ear:

“I can keep her waiting as if I were the Emperor.”

Favorinus who had been engaged in talk with Ptolemaeus, the astronomer, Apollonius, and the philosopher and poet Pancrates in another part of the hall, looked after the two men and said:

“A handsome couple. One the personification of imperial and dignified Rome; the other with his Hermes-like figure.”

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“The other”—interrupted the philologist with stern displeasure, “the other is the very incarnation of the haughtiness, the luxury pushed to insanity, and the infamous depravity of the metropolis. That dissipated ladies-man.”

“I will not defend his character,” said Favorinus in his pleasant voice, and with an elegance in his pronunciation of Greek which delighted even the grammarian. “His ways and doings are disgraceful; still you must allow that his manners are tinged with the charm of Hellenic beauty, that the Charites kissed him at his birth, and though, by the stern laws of virtue we must condemn him, he deserves to be crowned with praise and garlands from the point of view of the feeling for beauty.”

“Oh! for the artist who wants a model he is a choice morsel.”

“The Athenian judges acquitted Phryne because she was beautiful.”

“They did wrong.”

“Hardly in the eyes of the gods, whose fairest works must deserve our respect.”

“Still poison may be kept in the most beautiful vessels.”

“And yet body and soul always to a certain extent correspond.”

“And can you dare to call the handsome Verus the admirable Verus?”

“No, but the reckless Lucius Aurelius Verus is at the same time the gayest and pleasantest of all the Romans, free alike from spite or carefulness, he troubles himself with no doctrines of virtue, and as when a thing pleases him, he desires to possess it, he endeavors to give pleasure to every one else.”

“He has wasted his pains so far as I am concerned.”

“I do as he wishes.”

The last words both of the philologer and the sophist were spoken somewhat louder than was usual in the presence of the Empress. Sabina, who had just told the praetor which residence her husband had decided on inhabiting, drew up her shoulders and pinched her lips as if in pain, while Verus turned a face of indignation—a face which was manly in spite of all the delicacy and regularity of the features—on the two speakers, and his fine bright eyes caught the hostile glance of Apollonius.

An intimation of aversion to his person was one of the things which to him were past endurance; he hastily passed his hand through his blue-black hair, which was only slightly grizzled at the temples and flowed uncurled, but in soft waving locks round his

head, and said, not heeding Sabina's question as to his opinion of her husband's latest instructions:

"He is a repulsive fellow, that wrangling logician; he has an evil eye that threatens mischief to us all, and his trumpet voice cannot hurt you more than it does me. Must we endure him at table with us every day?"

"So Hadrian desires."

"Then I shall start for Rome," said Verus decidedly. "My wife wants to be back with her children, and as praetor, it is more fitting that I should stay by the Tiber than by the Nile."

The words were spoken as lightly as though they were nothing more than a proposition to go to supper, but they seemed to agitate the Empress deeply, for her head, which had seemed almost a fixture during her conversation with Titianus, now shook so violently that the pearls and jewels rattled in the erection of curls. There she sat for some seconds staring into her lap.

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Verus stooped to pick up a gem that had fallen from her hair, and as he did so she said hastily:

“You are right. Apollonius is intolerable. Let us send him to meet my husband.”

“Then I will remain,” answered Verus, as pleased as a wilful boy who has got his own way.

“Fickle as the wind,” murmured Sabina, threatening him with her finger. “Show me the stone—it is one of the largest and finest; you may keep it.”

When an hour later, Verus quitted the hall with the prefect, Titianus said:

“You have done me a service cousin, without knowing it. Now can you contrive that Ptolemaeus and Favorinus shall go with Apollonius to meet the Emperor at Pelusium?”

“Nothing easier” was the answer.

And the same evening the prefect’s steward conveyed to Pontius the information that he might count on having probably fourteen days for his work, instead of eight or nine only.

CHAPTER IV.

In the Caesareum, where the Empress dwelt, the lights were extinguished one after another; but in the palace of Lochias they grew more numerous and brighter. In festal illuminations of the harbor pitch cressets on the roof, and long rows of lamps that accumulated architectonic features of the noble structure, were always kindled; but inside it, no blaze so brilliant had ever lighted it within the memory of man. The harbor watchmen at first gazed anxiously up at Lochias, for they feared that a fire must have broken out in the old palace; they were soon reassured however, by one of the prefect’s lictors, who brought them a command to keep open the harbor gates that night, and every night till the Emperor should have arrived, to all who might wish to proceed from Lochias to the city, or from the city to the peninsula, under the orders of Pontius the architect. And till long past midnight not a quarter of an hour passed in which the people whom the architect had summoned to his aid were not knocking at the harbor gates, which, though not locked were all guarded. The little house belonging to the gate-keeper was also brightly lighted up; the birds and cats belonging to the old woman whom the prefect and his companions had found slumbering by her wine-jar, were now fast asleep, but the little dogs still flew loudly yelping into the yard each time a new-comer entered by the open gate.

“Come, Aglaia, what will folks think of you? Thalia, my beauty, behave like a good dog; come here, Euphrosyne, and don’t be so silly!” cried the old lady in a voice which was both pleasant and peremptory, as she stood-wide awake now-behind her table, folding

together the dried clothes. The little barking beasts who were thus endowed with the names of the three Graces did not trouble themselves much about her affectionate admonitions; to their sorrow, for it happened more than once to each of them, when they had got under the feet of some new-comer, to creep, whining and howling, into the house again to seek consolation from their mistress, who would pick up the sufferer and soothe it with kisses and coaxing.

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The old lady was no longer alone, for in the background, on a long and narrow couch which stood in front of the statue of Apollo, lay a tall, lean man, wearing a red chiton. A little lamp hanging from the ceiling threw a dull light on him and on the lute he was playing. To the faint sound of the instrument, which was rather a large one, and which he had propped on the pillow by his side, he was singing, or rather murmuring a long ditty. Twice, thrice, four times he repeated it in the same way. Now and again he suddenly let his voice sound more loudly—and though his hair was quite grey his voice was not unpleasing—and sang a few phrases full of expression and with artistic delivery; and then, when the dogs barked too vehemently, he would spring up, and with his lute in his left-hand and a long pliable rattan in his right, he would rush into the court-yard, shout the names of the dogs, and raise his cane as if he would kill them; but he always took care not to hit them, only to beat on the pavement near them. When, returning from such an excursion, he stretched himself again on his couch, the old woman, pointing to the hanging-lamp which the impatient creature often knocked with his head, would call out, “Euphorion, mind the oil.”

And he each time answered with the same threatening gesture and the same glare in his black eyes:

“The little brutes!”

The singer had been diligently practising his musical exercises for about an hour, when the dogs rushed into the court-yard, not barking this time, but yelping loudly with joy. The old woman laid aside the washing and listened, but the tall man said:

“As many birds come flying before the Emperor as gulls before a storm. If only they would leave us in peace—”

“Hark, that is Pollux; I know by the dogs,” said the woman, hastening as fast as she could over the threshold and out to meet him. But the expected visitor was already at the door. He picked up the three four-footed Graces who leaped round him, one after the other by the skin of the neck, and gave each a tap on its nose. Then, seeing the old woman, he took her head between his hands, and kissed her forehead, saying, “Good-evening, little Mother,” and shook hands with the singer, adding, “How are you, great, big Father?”

“You are as big as I am,” replied the man thus addressed, and he drew the younger man towards him, and laid one of his broad hands on his own grey head and the other on that of his first-born, with its wealth of brown hair.

“As if we were cast in the same mould,” cried the youth; and in fact he was very like his father—like, no doubt, as a noble hunter is like a worn-out hack—as marble is like limestone—as a cedar is like a fir-tree. Both were remarkably tall, had thick hair, dark eyes, and strongly aquiline noses, exactly of the same shape; but the cheerful

brightness which irradiated the countenance of the youth had certainly not been inherited from the lute-player, but from the little woman who looked up into his face and patted his arm.

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But whence did he derive the powerful, but indescribable something which gave nobility to his head, and of which it was impossible to say whether it lay in his eye, or in the lofty brow, arched so differently to that of either parent?

“I knew you would come,” cried his mother. “This afternoon I dreamed it, and I can prove that I expected you, for there, on the brazier, stands the stewed cabbage and sausage waiting for you.”

“I cannot stay now,” replied Pollux. “Really, I cannot, though your kind looks would persuade me, and the sausage winks at me out of the cabbage-pan. My master, Papias, is gone on ahead, and in the palace there we are to work wonders in less time than it generally takes to consider which end the work should be begun at.”

“Then I will carry the cabbage into the palace for you,” said Doris, standing on tip-toe to hold a sausage to the lips of her tall son. Pollux bit off a large mouthful and said, as he munched it:

“Excellent! I only wish that the thing I am to construct up there may turn out as good a statue as this savory cylinder—now fast disappearing —was a superior and admirable sausage.”

“Have another?” said Doris.

“No mother; and you must not bring the cabbage either. Up to midnight not a minute must be lost, and if I then leave off for a little while you must by that time be dreaming of all sorts of pleasant things.”

“I will carry you the cabbage then,” said his father, “for I shall not be in bed so early at any rate. The hymn to Sabina, composed by Mesomedes, is to be performed with the chorus, as soon as the Empress visits the theatre, and I am to lead the upper part of the old men, who grow young again at the sight of her. The rehearsal is fixed for to-morrow, and I know nothing about it yet. Old music, note for note, is ready and safe in my throat, but new things—new things!”

“It is according to circumstances,” said Pollux, laughing.

“If only they would perform your father’s Satyr-play, or his Theseus!” cried Doris.

“Only wait a little, I will recommend him to Caesar as soon as he is proud to call me his friend, as the Phidias of the age. Then, when he asks me ‘Who is the happy man who begot you?’ I will answer: It is Euphorion, the divine poet and singer; and my mother, too, is a worthy matron, the gate-keeper of your palace, Doris, the enchantress, who turns dingy clothes into snow-white linen.”

These last words the young artist sang in a fine and powerful voice to a mode invented by his father.

“If only you had been a singer!” exclaimed Euphorion.

“Then I should have enjoyed the prospect,” retorted Pollux, “of spending the evening of my life as your successor in this little abode.”

“And now for wretched pay, you plant the laurels with which Papias crowns himself!” answered the old man shrugging his shoulders.

“His hour is coming, too,” cried Doris, “his merit will be recognized; I saw him in my dreams, with a great garland on his curly head!”

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“Patience, father-patience,” said the young man, grasping his father’s hand. “I am young and strong, and do all I can. Here, behind this forehead, good ideas are seething; what I have succeeded in carrying out by myself, has at any rate brought credit and fame to others, although it is all far from resembling the ideal of beauty that here—here—I seem to see far away and behind a cloud; still I feel that if, in a moment of kindness, Fortune will but shed a few fresh drops of dew on it all I shall, at any rate, turn out something better than the mere ill-paid right-hand of Papias, who, without me does not know what he ought to do, or how to do it.”

“Only keep your eyes open and work hard,” cried Doris.

“It is of no use without luck,” muttered the singer, shrugging his shoulders.

The young artist bid his parents good-night, and was about to leave, but his mother detained him to show him the young goldfinches, hatched only the day before. Pollux obeyed her wish, not merely to please her, but because he liked to watch the gay little bird that sat warming and sheltering her nestlings. Close to the cage stood the huge wine-jar and his mother’s cup, decorated by his own hand. His eye fell on these, and he pushed them aside in silence. Then, taking courage, he said, laughing: “The Emperor will often pass by here, mother; give up celebrating your Dionysiac festival. How would it do if you filled the jar with one-fourth wine and three-fourths water? It does not taste badly.”

“Spoiling good gifts,” replied his mother.

“One-fourth wine-to please me,” Pollux entreated, taking his mother by the shoulders and kissing her forehead.

“To please you, you great boy!” said Doris, as her eyes filled with tears. “Why for you, if I must, I would drink nothing but wretched water. Euphorion you may finish what is left in the jar presently.”

…….

Pontius had already begun his labors, at first with aid only of his assistants who had followed him on foot. Measuring, estimating, sending short notes and writing figures, names and suggestions on the plan, and on his folding wax-tablets, he was not idle for an instant, though frequently interrupted by the appointed superintendents of the workshops and manufactures in Lochias, whose co-operation he required. They only came at this late hour because they were called upon by the prefect’s orders.

Papias, the sculptor, introduced himself among the latest, though Pontius had written to him with his own hand that he had to communicate to him a very remunerative and

particularly pressing commission for the Emperor, which might, perhaps, be taken in hand that very night. The matter in question was a statue of Urania, which must be completed in eight days by the same method which Papias had introduced at the last festival of Adonis, and to the scale which he, Pontius, indicated, in the palace of Lochias itself. With regard to several works of restoration which had to be carried out with equal rapidity, and as to the price to be paid, they could agree at the same time and place.

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The sculptor was a man of foresight and did not appear on the scene alone but with his best assistant, Pollux, the son of the worthy couple at the gate, and several slaves who dragged after him sundry trunks and carts loaded with tools, boards, clay, gypsum and other raw materials of his art. On the road to Lochias he had informed the young sculptor of the business in hand, and had told him in a condescending tone that he would be permitted to try his skill in reconstructing the Urania. At the gate he had permitted Pollux to greet his parents, and had gone alone into the palace to open his bargain with the architect without the presence of witnesses.

The young artist perfectly understood his master. He knew that he would be expected to carry out the statue of Urania, while his task-master, after making some trifling alterations in the completed work, would declare that it was his own. Pollux had for two years been obliged, more than once, to put up with similar treatment; and now, as usual, he submitted to this dishonest manoeuvre because, under his master there was plenty to do, and the delight of work was to him the greatest he could have.

Papias, to whom he had gone early as an apprentice and to whom he owed the knowledge he possessed, was no miser, still Pollux needed money, not for himself alone but because he had taken on himself the charge of a widowed sister and her children as if they were his own family. He was always glad to take some comfort into the narrow home of his parents, who were poor, and to maintain his younger brother Teuker—who had devoted himself to the same art—during the years of his apprenticeship. Again and again he had thought of telling his master that he should start on his own footing and earn laurels for himself, but what then would become of those who relied on his help, if he gave up his regular earnings and if he got no commissions when there were so many unknown beginners eager for them? Of what avail were all his ability and the most honest good-will if no opportunity offered for his executing his work in noble materials? With his own means he certainly was in no position to do so.

While he was talking to his parents Papias had opened his transactions with the architect. Pontius explained to the sculptor what was required and Papias listened attentively; he never interrupted the speaker, but only stroked his face from time to time, as if to make it smoother than it was already, though it was shaved with peculiar care and formed and colored like a warm mask; meanwhile draping the front of his rich blue toga, which he wore in the fashion of a Roman senator, into fresh folds.

But when Pontius showed him, at the end of the rooms destined for the Emperor, the last of the statues to be restored, and which needed a new grin, Papias said decisively:

“It cannot be done.”

“That is a rash verdict,” replied the architect. “Do you not know the proverb, which, being such a good one, is said to have been first uttered by more than one sage: ’That

it shows more ill-judgment to pronounce a thing impossible than to boast that we can achieve a task however much it may seem to transcend our powers.’”

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Papias smiled and looked down at his gold-embroidered shoes as he said:

“It is more difficult to us sculptors to imagine ourselves waging Titanic warfare against the impossible, than it is to you who work with enormous masses. I do not yet see the means which would give me courage to begin the attack.”

“I will tell you,” replied Pontius quickly and decidedly. “On your side good-will, plenty of assistants and night-watchers; on ours, the Caesar’s approval and plenty of gold.”

After this the transaction came to a prompt and favorable issue, and the architect could but express his entire approbation, in most cases, of the sculptor’s judicious and well-considered suggestions.

“Now I must go home,” concluded Papias. “My assistants will proceed at once with the necessary preparations. The work must be carried on behind screens, so that no one may disturb us or hinder us with remarks.”

Half an hour later a scaffolding was already erected in the middle of the hall where the Urania was to stand.

It was concealed from; public gaze by thick linen stretched on tall wooden frames, and behind these screens Pollux was busied in framing a small model in wax, while his master had returned home to make arrangements for the labors of the following day.

It wanted only an hour of midnight, and still the supper sent to the palace for the architect by the prefect remained untouched. Pontius was hungry enough, but before attacking the meal that a slave had set out on a marble table—the roast meat which looked so inviting, the orange-red crayfish, the golden-brown pasty and the many-hued fruits—he conceived it his duty to inspect the rooms to be restored. It was needful to see whether the slaves who had been set, in the first place to clean out all the rooms, were being intelligently directed by the men set over them, whether they were doing their duty and had all that they required; they had got some hours to work, then they were to rest and to begin again at sunrise, reinforced by other laborers both slave and free.

More and better lighting was universally demanded, and when, in the hall of the Muses, the men who were cleaning the pavement and scraping the columns loudly clamored for torches and lamps, a young man’s head peered over the screen which shut in the place reserved for the restoration of the Urania, and a lamentable voice cried out:

“My Muse, with her celestial sphere, is the guardian of star-gazers and is happiest in the dark—but not till she is finished. To form her we must have light and more light—and when it is lighter here the voice of the people down there, which does not sound very

delightful up in this hollow space, will diminish somewhat also. Give light, then, O, men! Light for my goddess, and for your scrubbers and scourers."

Pontius looked up smiling at Pollux, who had uttered this appeal, and answered:

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Your cry of distress is fully justified, my friend. But do you really believe in the power of light to diminish noise?"

"At any rate," replied Pollux, "where it is absent, that is to say in the dark, every noise seems redoubled."

"That is true, but there are other reasons for that," answered the architect. "To-morrow in an interval of work we will discuss these matters. Now I will go to provide you with lamps and lights."

"Urania, the protectress of the fine arts, will be beholden to you," cried Pollux as the architect went away.

Pontius meanwhile sought his chief foreman to ask him whether he had delivered his orders to Keraunus, the palace-steward, to come to him, and to put the cressets and lamps commonly used for the external illuminations, at the service of his workmen.

"Three times," was the answer "have I been myself to the man, but each time he puffed himself out like a frog and answered me not a word, but only sent me into a little room with his daughter—whom you must see, for she is charming—and a miserable black slave, and there I found these few wretched lamps that are now burning."

"Did you order him to come to me?"

"Three hours ago, and again a second time, when you were talking with Papias."

The architect turned his back upon the foreman in angry haste, unrolled the plan of the palace, quickly found upon it the abode of the recalcitrant steward, seized a small red-clay lamp that was standing near him, and being quite accustomed to guide himself by a plan, went straight through the rooms, which were not a few, and by a long corridor from the hall of the Muses, to the lodging of the negligent official. An unclosed door led him into a dark ante-chamber followed by another room, and finally into a large, well-furnished apartment. All these door-ways, into what seemed to be at once the dining and sitting-room of the steward, were bereft of doors, and could only be closed by stuff curtains, just now drawn wide open. Pontius could therefore look in, unhindered and unperceived, at the table on which a three-branched bronze lamp was standing between a dish and some plates. The stout man was sitting with his rubicund moon-face towards the architect, who, indignant as he was, would have gone straight up to him with swift decision, if, before entering the second room, a low but pitiful sob had not fallen on his ear.

The sob proceeded from a slight young girl who came forward from a door beyond the sitting-room, and who now placed a platter with a loaf on the table by the steward.

“Come, do not cry, Selene,” said the steward, breaking the bread slowly and with an evident desire to soothe his child.

“How can I help crying,” said the girl. “But tomorrow morning let me buy a piece of meat for you; the physician forbade you to eat bread.”

“Man must be filled,” replied the fat man, “and meat is dear. I have nine mouths to fill, not counting the slaves. And where am I to get the money to fill us all with meat?”

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“We need none, but for you it is necessary.”

“It is of no use, child. The butcher will not trust us any more, the other creditors press us, and at the end of the month we shall have just ten drachmae left us.”

The girl turned pale, and asked in anxiety:

“But, father, it was only to-day that you showed me the three gold pieces which you said had been given you as a present out of the money distributed on the arrival of the Empress.”

The steward absently rolled a piece of bread-crumb between his fingers and said:

“I spent that on this fibula with an incised onyx—and as cheap as dirt, I can tell you. If Caesar comes he must see who and what I am; and if I die any one will give you twice as much for it as I paid. I tell you the Empress’s money was well laid out on the thing.” Selene made no answer, but she sighed deeply, and her eye glanced at a quantity of useless things which her father had acquired and brought home because they were cheap, while she and her seven sisters wanted the most necessary things.

“Father,” the girl began again after a short silence, “I ought not to go on about it, but even if it vexes you, I must—the architect, who is settling all the work out there, has sent for you twice already.”

“Be silent!” shouted the fat man, striking his hand on the table. “Who is this Pontius, and who am I!”

“You are of a noble Macedonian family, related perhaps even to the Ptolemies; you have your seat in the Council of the Citizens—but do, this time, be condescending and kind. The man has his hands full, he is tired out.”

“Nor have I been able to sit still the whole day, and what is fitting, is fitting. I am Keraunus the son of Ptolemy, whose father came into Egypt with Alexander the Great, and helped to found this city, and every one knows it. Our possessions were diminished; but it is for that very reason that I insist on our illustrious blood being recognized. Pontius sends to command the presence of Keraunus! If it were not infuriating it would be laughable—for who is this man, who? I have told you his father was a freedman of the former prefect Claudius Balbillus, and by the favor of the Roman his father rose and grew rich. He is the descendant of slaves, and you expect that I shall be his obedient humble servant, whenever he chooses to call me?”

But father, my dear father, it is not the son of Ptolemy, but the palace-steward that he desires shall go to hire.”

“Mere chop-logic!—you have nothing to say, not a step do I take to go to him.”

The girl clasped her hands over her face, and sobbed loudly and pitifully. Keraunus started up and cried out, beside himself.

“By great Serapis. I can bear this no longer. What are you whimpering about?”

The girl plucked up courage and going up to the indignant man she said, though more than once interrupted by tears.

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“You must go father—indeed you must. I spoke to the foreman, and he told me coolly and decidedly that the architect was placed here in Caesar’s name, and that if you do not obey him you will at once be superseded in your office. And if that were to happen, if that— O father, father, only think of blind Helios and poor Berenice! Arsinoe and I could earn our bread, but the little ones—the little ones.”

With these words the girl fell on her knees lifting her hands in entreaty to her obstinate parent. The blood had mounted to the man’s face and eyes, and pressing his hand to his purple forehead he sank back in his chair as if stricken with apoplexy. His daughter sprang up and offered him the cup full of wine and water which was standing on the table; but Keraunus pushed it aside with his hands, and panted out, while he struggled for breath:

“Supersede me—in my place—turn me out of this palace! Why there, in that ebony trunk, lies the rescript of Euergetes which confers the stewardship of this residence on my ancestor Philip, and as a hereditary dignity in his family. Now Philip’s wife had the honor of being the king’s mistress—or, as some say, his daughter. There lies the document, drawn up in red and black ink on yellow papyrus and ratified with the seal and signature of Euergetes the Second. All the princes of the Lagides have confirmed it, all the Roman prefects have respected it, and now—now.”

“But father” said the girl interrupting her father, and wringing her hands in despair, “you still hold the place and if you will only give in.”

“Give in, give in,” shrieked the corpulent steward shaking his fat hands above his blood-shot face. “I will give in—I will not bring you all to misery—for my children’s sake I will allow myself to be ill-treated and down-trodden, I will go—I will go directly. Like the pelican I will feed my children with my heart’s blood. But you ought to know what it costs me, to humiliate myself thus; it is intolerable to me, and my heart is breaking—for the architect, the architect has trampled upon me as if I were his servant; he wished—I heard him with these ears—he shrieked after me a villanous hope that I might be smothered in my own fat—and the physician has told me I may die of apoplexy! Leave me, leave me. I know those Romans are capable of anything. Well—here I am; fetch me my saffron-colored pallium, that I wear in the council, fetch me my gold fillet for my head. I will deck myself like a beast for sacrifice, and I will show him—”

Not a word of this harangue had escaped the ears of the architect who had been at first indignant and then moved to laughter, and withal it had touched his heart. A sluggish and torpid character was repugnant to his vigorous nature, and the deliberate and indifferent demeanor of the stout steward, on an occasion which had prompted him and all concerned to act as quickly and energetically as possible, had

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brought words to his lips which he now wished that he had never spoken. It is true that the steward's false pride had roused his indignation, and who can listen calmly to any comment on a stain on his birth? But the appeal of this miserable father's daughter had gone to his heart. He pitied the fatuous simpleton whom, with a turn of his hand, he could reduce to beggary, and who had evidently been far more deeply hurt by his words than Pontius had been by what he had overheard, and so he followed the kindly impulse of a noble nature to spare the unfortunate.

He rapped loudly with his knuckles on the inside of the door-post of the ante-room, coughed loudly, and then said, bowing deeply to the steward on the threshold of the sitting-room:

"Noble Keraunus—I have come, as beseems me, to pay you my respests. Excuse the lateness of the hour, but you can scarcely imagine how busy I have been since we parted."

Keraunus had at first started at the late visitor, then he stared at him in consternation. He now went towards him, stretched out both hands as if suddenly relieved of a nightmare, and a bright expression of such warm and sincere satisfaction overspread his countenance that Pontius wondered how he could have failed to observe what a well-cut face this fat original had.

"Take a seat at our humble table," said Keraunus. "Go Selene and call the slaves. Perhaps there is yet a pheasant in the house, a roast fowl or something of the kind—but the hour, it is true, is late."

"I am deeply obliged to you," replied the architect, smiling. "My supper is waiting for me in the hall of the Muses, and I must return to my work-people. I should be grateful to you if you would accompany me. We must consult together as to the lighting of the rooms, and such matters are best discussed over a succulent roast and a flask of wine."

"I am quite at your service," said Keraunus with a bow.

"I will go on ahead," said the architect, "but first will you have the goodness to give all that you have in the way of cressets, lights and lamps to the slaves, who, in a few minutes, shall await your orders at your door."

When Pontius had departed, Selene exclaimed with a deep sigh

"Oh! what a fright I have had! I will go now and find the lamps. How terribly it might have ended."

“It is well that he should have come,” murmured Keraunus. “Considering his birth and origin, the architect is certainly a well-bred man.”

ETEXT EDITOR’S BOOKMARKS:

Facts are differently reflected in different minds
Have not yet learned not to be astonished
Ill-judgment to pronounce a thing impossible
Years are the foe of beauty

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