

Cleopatra — Volume 04 eBook

Cleopatra — Volume 04 by Georg Ebers

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Contents

Cleopatra — Volume 04 eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	4
Page 1.....	5
Page 2.....	7
Page 3.....	9
Page 4.....	11
Page 5.....	12
Page 6.....	14
Page 7.....	16
Page 8.....	17
Page 9.....	19
Page 10.....	20
Page 11.....	22
Page 12.....	24
Page 13.....	25
Page 14.....	26
Page 15.....	28
Page 16.....	30
Page 17.....	32
Page 18.....	34
Page 19.....	36
Page 20.....	37
Page 21.....	38
Page 22.....	39

Page 23.....	40
Page 24.....	41
Page 25.....	43
Page 26.....	45
Page 27.....	46
Page 28.....	47
Page 29.....	49
Page 30.....	51
Page 31.....	53
Page 32.....	54
Page 33.....	56
Page 34.....	58
Page 35.....	60
Page 36.....	62
Page 37.....	63
Page 38.....	65

Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
CHAPTER IX.		1
CHAPTER X.		10
CHAPTER XI.		20
ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:		33
Information about Project Gutenberg		33
(one page)		
(Three Pages)		35

Page 1

CHAPTER IX.

Gorgias went to his work without delay. When the twin statues were only waiting to be erected in front of the Theatre of Dionysus, Dion sought him. Some impulse urged him to talk to his old friend before leaving the city with his betrothed bride. Since they parted the latter had accomplished the impossible; for the building of the wall on the Choma, ordered by Antony, was commenced, the restoration of the little palace at the point, and many other things connected with the decoration of the triumphal arches, were arranged. His able and alert foreman found it difficult to follow him as he dictated order after order in his writing-tablet.

The conversation with his friend was not a long one, for Dion had promised Barine and her mother to accompany them to the country. Notwithstanding the betrothal, they were to start that very day; for Caesarion had called upon Barine twice that morning. She had not received him, but the unfortunate youth's conduct induced her to hasten the preparations for her departure.

To avoid attracting attention, they were to use Archibius's large travelling chariot and Nile boat, although Dion's were no less comfortable.

The marriage was to take place in the "abode of peace." The young Alexandrian's own ship, which was to convey the newly wedded pair to Alexandria, bore the name of Peitho, the goddess of persuasion, for Dion liked to be reminded of his oratorical powers in the council. Henceforward it would be called the Barine, and was to receive many an embellishment.

Dion confided to his friend what he had learned in relation to the fate of the Queen and the fleet, and, notwithstanding the urgency of the claims upon Gorgias's time, he lingered to discuss the future destiny of the city and her threatened liberty; for these things lay nearest to his heart.

"Fortunately," cried Dion, "I followed my inclination; now it seems to me that duty commands every true man to make his own house a nursery for the cultivation of the sentiments which he inherited from his forefathers and which must not die, so long as there are Macedonian citizens in Alexandria. We must submit if the superior might of Rome renders Egypt a province of the republic, but we can preserve to our city and her council the lion's share of their freedom. Whatever may be the development of affairs, we are and shall remain the source whence Rome draws the largest share of the knowledge which enriches her brain."

"And the art which adorns her rude life," replied Gorgias. "If she is free to crush us without pity, she will fare, I think, like the maiden who raises her foot to trample on a

beautiful, rare flower, and then withdraws it because it would be a crime to destroy so exquisite a work of the Creator.”

“And what does the flower owe to your maiden,” cried Dion, “or our city to Rome? Let us meet her claims with dignified resolution, then I think we shall not have the worst evils to fear.”

Page 2

"Let us hope so. But, my friend, keep your eyes open for other than Roman foes. Now that it will become known that you do not love her, beware of Iras. There is something about her which reminds me of the jackal. Jealousy!—I believe she would be capable of the worst—"

"Yet," Dion interrupted, "Charmian will soften whatever injury Iras plans to do me, and, though I cannot rely much upon my uncle, Archibius is above both and favours us and our marriage."

Gorgias uttered a sigh of relief, and exclaimed, "Then on to happiness!"

"And you must also begin to provide for yours," replied Dion warmly. "Forbid your heart to continue this wandering, nomad life. The tent which the wind blows down is not fit for the architect's permanent residence. Build yourself a fine house, which will defy storms, as you built my palace. I shall not grudge it, and have already said, the times demand it."

"I will remember the advice," replied Gorgias. "But six eyes are again bent upon me for direction. There are so many important things to be done while we waste the hours in building triumphal arches for the defeated—trophies for an overthrow. But your uncle has just issued orders to complete the work in the most magnificent style. The ways of destiny and the great are dark; may the brightest sunshine illumine yours! A prosperous journey! We shall hear, of course, when you celebrate the wedding, and if I can I shall join you in the Hymenaeus. Lucky fellow that you are! Now I'm summoned from over yonder! May Castor and Pollux, and all the gods favourable to travel, Aphrodite, and all the Loves attend your trip to Irenia, and protect you in the realm of Eros and Hymen!"

With these words the warm-hearted man clasped his friend to his breast for the first time. Dion cordially responded, and at last shook his hard right hand with the exclamation:

"Farewell, then, till we meet in Irenia on the wedding day, you dear, faithful fellow."

Then he entered the chariot which stood waiting, and Gorgias gazed after him thoughtfully. The hyacinthine purple cloak which Dion wore that day had not vanished from his sight when a loud crashing, rattling, and roaring arose behind him. A hastily erected scaffold, which was to support the pulleys for raising the statues, had collapsed. The damage could be easily repaired, but the accident aroused a troubled feeling in the architect's mind. He was a child of his time, a period when duty commanded the prudent man to heed omens. Experience also taught him that when such a thing happened in his work something unpleasant was apt to occur within the circle of his friends. The veil of the future concealed what might be in store for the beloved couple; but he resolved to keep his eyes open on Dion's behalf and to request Archibius to do the same.

The pressure of work, however, soon silenced the sense of uneasiness. The damage was speedily repaired, and later Gorgias, sometimes with one, sometimes with another tablet or roll of *Ms.* in his hand, issued the most varied orders.

Page 3

Gradually the light of this dismal day faded. Ere the night, which threatened to bring rain and storm, closed in, he again rode on his mule to the Bruchium to overlook the progress of the work in the various buildings and give additional directions, for the labour was to be continued during the night.

The north wind was now blowing so violently from the sea that it was difficult to keep the torches and lamps lighted. The gale drove the drops of rain into his face, and a glance northward showed him masses of black clouds beyond the harbour and the lighthouse. This indicated a bad night, and again the boding sense of coming misfortune stole over him. Yet he set to work swiftly and prudently, helping with his own hands when occasion required.

Night closed in. Not a star was visible in the sky, and the air, chilled by the north wind, grew so cold that Gorgias at last permitted his body slave to wrap his cloak around him. While drawing the hood over his head, he gazed at a procession of litters and men moving towards Lochias.

Perhaps the Queen's children were returning home from some expedition. But probably they were rather private citizens on their way to some festival celebrating the victory; for every one now believed in a great battle and a successful issue of the war. This was proved by the shouts and cheers of the people, who, spite of the storm, were still moving to and fro near the harbour.

The last of the torch-bearers had just passed Gorgias, and he had told himself that a train of litters belonging to the royal family would not move through the darkness so faintly lighted, when a single man, bearing in his hand a lantern, whose flickering rays shone on his wrinkled face, approached rapidly from the opposite direction. It was old Phryx, Didymus's house slave, with whom the architect had become acquainted, while the aged scholar was composing the inscription for the Odeum which Gorgias had erected. The aged servant had brought him many alterations of his master's first sketch, and Gorgias had reminded him of it the previous day.

The workmen by whom the statues had been raised to the pedestal, amid the bright glare of torches, to the accompaniment of a regular chant, had just dropped the ropes, windlasses, and levers, when the architect recognized the slave.

What did the old man want at so late an hour on this dark night? The fall of the scaffold again returned to his mind.

Was the slave seeking for a member of the family? Did Helena need assistance? He stopped the gray-haired man, who answered his question with a heavy sigh, followed by the maxim, "Misfortunes come in pairs, like oxen." Then he continued: "Yesterday there was great anxiety. Today, when there was so much rejoicing on account of Barine, I

thought directly, 'Sorrow follows joy, and the second misfortune won't be spared us.'
And so it proved."

Page 4

Gorgias anxiously begged him to relate what had happened, and the old man, drawing nearer, whispered that the pupil and assistant of Didymus— young Philotas of Amphissa, a student, and, moreover, a courteous young man of excellent family—had gone to a banquet to which Antyllus, the son of Antony, had invited several of his classmates. This had already happened several times, and he, Phryx, had warned him, for, when the lowly associate with the lofty, the lowly rarely escape kicks and blows. The young fellow, who usually had behaved no worse than the other Ephebi, had always returned from such festivities with a flushed face and unsteady steps, but to-night he had not even reached his room in the upper story. He had darted into the house as though pursued by the watch, and, while trying to rush up the stairs—it was really only a ladder—he had made a misstep and fell. He, Phryx, did not believe that he was hurt, for none of his limbs ached, even when they were pulled and stretched, and Dionysus kindly protected drunkards; but some demon must have taken possession of him, for he howled and groaned continually, and would answer no questions. True, he was aware, from the festivals of Dionysus, that the young man was one of those who, when intoxicated, weep and lament; but this time something unusual must have occurred, for in the first place his handsome face was coloured black and looked hideous, since his tears had washed away the soot in many places, and then he talked nothing but a confused jargon. It was a pity.

When an attempt was made, with the help of the garden slave, to carry him to his room, he dealt blows and kicks like a lunatic. Didymus now also believed that he was possessed by demons, as often happens to those who, in falling, strike their heads against the ground, and thus wake the demons in the earth. Well, yes, they might be demons, but only those of wine. The student was just “crazy drunk,” as people say. But the old gentleman was very fond of his pupil, and had ordered him, Pliryx, to go to Olympus, who, ever since he could remember, had been the family physician.

“The Queen’s leech?” asked Gorgias, disapprovingly, and when the slave assented, the architect exclaimed in a positive tone: “It is not right to force the old man out of doors in such a north wind. Age is not specially considerate to age. Now that the statues stand yonder, I can leave my post for half an hour and will go with you. I don’t think a leech is needed to drive out these demons.”

“True, my lord, true!” cried the slave, “but Olympus is our friend. He visits few patients, but he will come to our house in any weather. He has litters, chariots, and splendid mules. The Queen gives him whatever is best and most comfortable. He is skilful, and perhaps can render speedy help. People must use what they have.”

“Only where it is necessary,” replied the architect. “There are my two mules; follow me on the second. If I don’t drive out the demons, you will have plenty of time to trot after Olympus.”

Page 5

This proposal pleased the old slave, and a short time after Gorgias entered the venerable philosopher's tablinum.

Helena welcomed him like an intimate friend. Whenever he appeared she thought the peril was half over. Didymus, too, greeted him warmly, and conducted him to the little room where the youth possessed by demons lay on a divan.

He was still groaning and whimpering. Tears were streaming down his cheeks, and, whenever any member of the household approached, he pushed him away.

When Gorgias held his hands and sternly ordered him to confess what wrong he had done, he sobbed out that he was the most ungrateful wretch on earth. His baseness would ruin his kind parents, himself, and all his friends.

Then he accused himself of having caused the destruction of Didymus's granddaughter. He would not have gone to Antyllus again had not his recent generosity bound him to him, but now he must atone-ay, atone. Then, as if completely crushed, he continued to mumble the word, "atone!" and for a time nothing more could be won from him.

Didymus, however, had the key to the last sentence. A few weeks before, Philotas and several other pupils of the rhetorician whose lectures in the museum he attended had been invited to breakfast with Antyllus. When the young student loudly admired the beautiful gold and silver beakers in which the wine was served, the reckless host cried: "They are yours; take them with you." When the guests departed the cup-bearer asked Philotas, who had been far from taking the gift seriously, to receive his property. Antyllus had intended to bestow the goblets; but he advised the youth to let him pay their value in money, for among them were several ancient pieces of most artistic workmanship, which Antony, the extravagant young fellow's father, might perhaps be unwilling to lose.

Thereupon several rolls of gold solidi were paid to the astonished student—and they had been of little real benefit, since they had made it possible for him to keep pace with his wealthy and aristocratic classmates and share many of their extravagances. Yet he had not ceased to fulfil his duty to Didymus.

Though he sometimes turned night into day, he gave no serious cause for reproof. Small youthful errors were willingly pardoned; for he was a good-looking, merry young fellow, who knew how to make himself agreeable to the entire household, even to the women.

What had befallen the poor youth that day? Didymus was filled with compassion for him, and, though he gladly welcomed Gorgias, he gave him to understand that the leech's absence vexed him.



But, during a long bachelor career in Alexandria, a city ever gracious to the gifts of Bacchus, Gorgias had become familiar with attacks like those of Philotas and their treatment, and after several jars of water had been brought and he had been left alone a short time with the sufferer, the philosopher secretly rejoiced that he had not summoned the grey-haired leech into the stormy night for Gorgias led forth his pupil with dripping hair, it is true, but in a state of rapid convalescence.

Page 6

The youth's handsome face was freed from soot, but his eyes were bent in confusion on the ground, and he sometimes pressed his hand upon his aching brow. It needed all the old philosopher's skill in persuasion to induce him to speak, and Philotas, before he began, begged Helena to leave the room.

He intended to adhere strictly to the truth, though he feared that the reckless deed into which he had suffered himself to be drawn might have a fatal effect upon his future life.

Besides, he hoped to obtain wise counsel from the architect, to whom he owed his speedy recovery, and whose grave, kindly manner inspired him with confidence; and, moreover, he was so greatly indebted to Didymus that duty required him to make a frank confession—yet he dared not acknowledge one of the principal motives of his foolish act.

The plot into which he had been led was directed against Barine, whom he had long imagined he loved with all the fervour of his twenty years. But, just before he went to the fatal banquet, he had heard that the young beauty was betrothed to Dion. This had wounded him deeply; for in many a quiet hour it had seemed possible to win her for himself and lead her as his wife to his home in Amphissa. He was very little younger than she, and if his parents once saw her, they could not fail to approve his choice. And the people in Amphissa! They would have gazed at Barine as if she were a goddess.

And now this fine gentleman had come to crush his fairest hopes. No word of love had ever been exchanged between him and Barine, but how kindly she had always looked at him, how willingly she had accepted trivial services! Now she was lost. At first this had merely saddened him, but after he had drunk the wine, and Antyllus, Antony's son, in the presence of the revellers, over whom Caesarion presided as "symposiarch"—[Director of a banquet.]—had accused Barine of capturing hearts by magic spells, he had arrived at the conviction that he, too, had been shamefully allured and betrayed.

He had served for a toy, he said to himself, unless she had really loved him and merely preferred Dion on account of his wealth. In any case, he felt justified in cherishing resentment against Barine, and with the number of goblets which he drained his jealous rage increased.

When urged to join in the escapade which now burdened his conscience he consented with a burning brain in order to punish her for the wrong which, in his heated imagination, she had done him.

All this he withheld from the older men and merely briefly described the splendid banquet which Caesarion, pallid and listless as ever, had directed, and Antyllus especially had enlivened with the most reckless mirth.

The “King of kings” and Antony’s son had escaped from their tutors on the pretext of a hunting excursion, and the chief huntsman had not grudged them the pleasure—only they were obliged to promise him that they would be ready to set out for the desert early the next morning.

Page 7

When, after the banquet, the mixing-vessels were brought out and the beakers were filled more rapidly, Antyllus whispered several times to Caesarion and then turned the conversation upon Barine, the fairest of the fair, destined by the immortals for the greatest and highest of mankind. This was the “King of kings,” Caesarion, and he also claimed the favour of the gods for himself. But everybody knew that Aphrodite deemed herself greater than the highest of kings, and therefore Barine ventured to close her doors upon their august symposiarch in a manner which could not fail to be unendurable, not only to him but to all the youth of Alexandria. Whoever boasted of being one of the Ephebi might well clench his fist with indignation, when he heard that the insolent beauty kept young men at a distance because she considered only the older ones worthy of her notice. This must not be! The Ephebi of Alexandria must make her feel the power of youth. This was the more urgently demanded, because Caesarion would thereby be led to the goal of his wishes.

Barine was going into the country that very evening. Insulted Eros himself was smoothing their way. He commanded them to attack the arrogant fair one’s carriage and lead her to him who sought her in the name of youth, in order to show her that the hearts of the Ephebi, whom she disdainfully rejected, glowed more ardently than those of the older men on whom she bestowed her favours.

Here Gorgias interrupted the speaker with a loud cry of indignation, but old Didymus’s eyes seemed to be fairly starting from their sockets as he hoarsely shouted an impatient:

“Go on!”

And Philotas, now completely sobered, described with increasing animation the wonderful change that had taken place in the quiet Caesarion, as if some magic spell had been at work; for scarcely had the revellers greeted Antyllus’s words with shouts of joy, declaring themselves ready to avenge insulted youth upon Barine, than the “King of kings” suddenly sprang from the cushions on which he had listlessly reclined, and with flashing eyes shouted that whoever called himself his friend must aid him in the attack.

Here he was urged to still greater haste by another impatient “Go on!” from his master, and hurriedly continued his story, describing how they had blackened their faces and armed themselves with Antyllus’s swords and lances. As the sun was setting they went in a covered boat through the Agathodamon Canal to Lake Mareotis. Everything must have been arranged in advance; for they landed precisely at the right hour.

As, during the trip, they had kept up their courage by swallowing the most fiery wine, Philotas had staggered on shore with difficulty and then been dragged forward by the others. After this he knew nothing more, except that he had rushed with the rest upon a large harmamaxa,—[A closed Asiatic travelling-carriage with four wheels]—and in so doing fell. When he rose from the earth all was over.

Page 8

As if in a dream he saw Scythians and other guardians of the peace seize Antyllus, while Caesarion was struggling on the ground with another man. If he was not mistaken it was Dion, Barine's betrothed husband.

These communications were interrupted by many exclamations of impatience and wrath; but now Didymus, fairly frantic with alarm, cried:

"And the child—Barine?"

But when Philotas's sole reply to this question was a silent shake of the head, indignation conquered the old philosopher, and clutching his pupil's chiton with both hands, he shook him violently, exclaiming furiously:

"You don't know, scoundrel? Instead of defending her who should be dear to you as a child of this household, you joined the rascally scorners of morality and law as the accomplice of this waylayer in purple!"

Here the architect soothed the enraged old man with expostulations, and the assertion that everything must now yield to the necessity of searching for Barine and Dion. He did not know which way to turn, in the amount of labour pressing upon him, but he would have a hasty talk with the foreman and then try to find his friend.

"And I," cried the old man, "must go at once to the unfortunate child.—My cloak, Phryx, my sandals!"

In spite of Gorgias's counsel to remember his age and the inclement weather, he cried angrily:

"I am going, I say! If the tempest hurls me to the earth, and the bolts of Zeus strike me, so be it. One misfortune more or less matters little in a life which has been a chain of heavy blows of Fate. I buried three sons in the prime of manhood, and two have been slain in battle. Barine, the joy of my heart, I myself, fool that I was, bound to the scoundrel who blasted her joyous existence; and now that I believed she would be protected from trouble and misconstruction by the side of a worthy husband, these infamous rascals, whose birth protects them from vengeance, have wounded, perhaps killed her betrothed lover. They trample in the dust her fair name and my white hair!—Phryx, my hat and staff."

The storm had long been raging around the house, which stood close by the sea, and the sailcloth awning which was stretched over the impluvium noisily rattled the metal rings that confined it. Now so violent a gust swept from room to room that two of the flames in the three-branched lamp went out. The door of the house had been opened, and drenched with rain, a hood drawn over his black head, Barine's Nubian doorkeeper crossed the threshold.

He presented a pitiable spectacle and at first could find no answer to the greetings and questions of the men, who had been joined by Helena, her grandmother leaning on her arm; his rapid walk against the fury of the storm had fairly taken away his breath.

He had little, however, to tell. Barine merely sent a message to her relatives that, no matter what tales rumour might bring, she and her mother were unhurt. Dion had received a wound in the shoulder, but it was not serious. Her grandparents need have no anxiety; the attack had completely failed.

Page 9

Doris, who was deaf, had listened vainly, holding her hand to her ear, to catch this report; and Didymus now told his granddaughter as much as he deemed it advisable for her to know, that she might communicate it to her grandmother, who understood the movements of her lips.

The old man was rejoiced to learn that his granddaughter had escaped so great a peril uninjured, yet he was still burdened by sore anxiety. The architect, too, feared the worst, but by dint of assuring him that he would return at once with full details when he had ascertained the fate of Dion and his betrothed bride, he finally persuaded the old man to give up the night walk through the tempest.

Philotas, with tears in his eyes, begged them to accept his services as messenger or for any other purpose; but Didymus ordered him to go to bed. An opportunity would be found to enable him to atone for the offence so recklessly committed.

The scholar's peaceful home was deprived of its nocturnal repose, and when Gorgias had gone and Didymus had refused Helena's request to have the aged porter take her to her sister, the old man remained alone with his wife in the tablinum.

She had been told nothing except that thieves had attacked her granddaughter, Barine, and slightly wounded her lover; but her own heart and the manner of the husband, at whose side she had grown grey, showed that many things were being concealed. She longed to know the story more fully, but it was difficult for Didymus to talk a long time in a loud tone, so she silenced her desire to learn the whole truth. But, in order to await the architect's report, they did not go to rest.

Didymus had sunk into an armchair, and Doris sat near at her spindle, but without drawing any threads from her distaff. When she heard her husband sigh and saw him bury his face in his hands, she limped nearer to him, difficult as it was for her to move, and stroked his head, now nearly bald, with her hand. Then she uttered soothing words, and, as the anxious, troubled expression did not yet pass from his wrinkled face, she reminded him in faltering yet tender tones how often they had thought they must despair, and yet everything had resulted well.

"Ah! husband," she added, "I know full well that the clouds hanging over us are very black, and I cannot even see them clearly, because you show them at such a distance. Yet I feel that they threaten us with sore tribulation. But, after all, what harm can they do us, if we only keep close together, we two old people and the children of the children whom Hades rent from us? We need only to grow old to perceive that life has a head with many faces. The ugly one of to-day can last no longer than you can keep that deeply furrowed brow. But you need not coerce yourself for my sake, husband. Let it be so. I need merely close my eyes to see how smooth and beautiful it was in youth, and how pleasant it will look when better days say, 'Here we are!'"

Page 10

Didymus, with a mournful smile, kissed her grey hair and shouted into her left ear, which was a little less deaf than the other:

“How young you are still, wife!”

CHAPTER X.

The tempest swept howling from the north across the island of Pharos, and the shallows of Diabathra in the great harbour of Alexandria. The water, usually so placid, rose in high waves, and the beacon on the lighthouse of Sastratus sent the rent abundance of its flames with hostile impetuosity towards the city. The fires in the pitch-pans and the torches on the shore sometimes seemed on the point of being extinguished, at others burst with a doubly brilliant blaze through the smoke which obscured them.

The royal harbour, a fine basin which surrounded in the form of a semicircle the southern part of the Lochias and a portion of the northern shore of the Bruchium, was brightly illuminated every night; but this evening there seemed to be an unusual movement among the lights on its western shore, the private anchorage of the royal fleet.

Was it the storm that stirred them? No. How could the wind have set one torch in the place of another, and moved lights or lanterns in a direction opposite to its violent course? Only a few persons, however, perceived this; for, though joyous anticipation or anxious fears urged many thither, who would venture upon the quay on such a tempestuous night? Besides, no one would have found admittance to the royal port, which was closed on all sides. Even the mole which, towards the west, served as the string to the bow of land surrounding it, had but a single opening and—as every one knew—that was closed by a chain in the same way as the main entrance to the harbour between the Pharos and Alveus Steganus.

About two hours before midnight, spite of the increasing fury of the tempest, the singular movement of the lights diminished, but rarely had the hearts of those for whom they burned throbbed so anxiously. These were the dignitaries and court officials who stood nearest to Cleopatra—about twenty men and a single woman, Iras. Mardion and she had summoned them because the Queen's letter permitted those to whom she had given authority to offer her a quiet reception. After a long consultation they had not invited the commanders of the little Roman garrison left behind. It was doubtful whether those whom they expected would return that night, and the Roman soldiers who were loyal to Antony had gone with him to the war.

The hall in the centre of the private roadstead of the royal harbour, where they had assembled, was furnished with regal magnificence; for it was a favourite resort of the Queen. The spacious apartment lacked no requisite of comfort, and most of those who

were waiting used the well-cushioned couches, while others, harassed by mental anxiety, paced to and fro.

As the room had remained unused for months, bats had made nests there, and now that it was lighted, dazzled by the glare of the lamps and candles, they darted to and fro above the heads of the assembly. Iras had ordered the commander of the Mellakes, or youths, a body-guard composed of the sons of aristocratic Macedonian families, to expel the troublesome creatures, and it diverted the thoughts of these devoted soldiers of the Queen to strike at them with their swords.

Page 11

Others preferred to watch this futile battle rather than give themselves up to the anxiety which filled their minds. The Regent was gazing mutely at the ground; Iras, pale and absent-minded, was listening to Zeno's statements; and Archibius had gone out of doors, and, unheeding the storm, was looking across the tossing waves of the harbour for the expected ships.

In a wooden shed, whose roof was supported by gaily painted pillars, through which the wind whistled, the servants, from the porters to the litter-bearers, had gathered in groups under the flickering light of the lanterns. The Greeks sat on wooden stools, the Egyptians upon mats on the floor. The largest circle contained the parties who attended to the Queen's luggage and the upper servants, among whom were several maids.

They had been told that the Queen was expected that night, because it was possible that the strong north wind would bear her ship home with unexpected speed after the victory. But they were better informed: palaces have chinks in doors and curtains, and are pervaded by a very peculiar echo which bears even a whisper distinctly from ear to ear.

The body-slave of the commander-in-chief Seleukus was the principal spokesman. His master had reached Alexandria but a few hours ago from the frontier fortress of Pelusium, which he commanded. A mysterious order from Lucilius, Antony's most faithful friend, brought from Taenarum by a swift galley, had summoned him hither.

The freedman Beryllus, a loquacious Sicilian, who, as an actor, had seen better days ere pirates robbed him of his liberty, had heard many new things, and his hearers listened eagerly; for ships coming from the north, which touched at Pelusium, had confirmed and completed the evil tidings that had penetrated the Sebasteum.

According to his story, he was as well informed as if he had been an eye-witness of the naval battle; for he had been present during his master's conversation with many ship-captains and messengers from Greece. He even assumed the air of a loyal, strictly silent servant, who would only venture to confirm and deny what the Alexandrians had already learned. Yet his knowledge consisted merely of a confused medley of false and true occurrences. While the Egyptian fleet had been defeated at Actium, and Antony, flying with Cleopatra, had gone first to Taenarum at the end of the Peloponnesian coast, he asserted that the army and fleet had met on the Peloponnesian coast and Octavianus was pursuing Antony, who had turned towards Athens, while Cleopatra was on her way to Alexandria.

His "trustworthy intelligence" had been patched together from a few words caught from Seleukus at table, or while receiving and dismissing messengers. In other matters his information was more accurate.

While for several days the harbour of Alexandria had been closed, vessels were permitted to enter Pelusium, and all captains of newly arrived ships and caravans were compelled to report to Beryllus's master, the commandant of the important frontier fortress.

Page 12

He had quitted Pelusium the night before. The strong wind had driven the trireme before it so swiftly that it was difficult for even the sea gulls to follow. It was easy for the listeners to believe this; for the storm outside howled louder and louder, whistling through the open hall where the servants had gathered. Most of the lamps and torches had been blown out, the pitch-pans only sent forth still blacker clouds of smoke, lit by red and yellow flames, and the closed lanterns alone continued to diffuse a flickering light. So the wide space, dim with smoke, was illumined only by a dull, varying glimmer.

One of the porters had furnished wine to shorten the hours of waiting; but it could only be drunk in secret, so there were no goblets. The jars wandered from mouth to mouth, and every sip was welcome, for the wind blew keenly, and besides, the smoke irritated their throats.

The freedman, Beryllus, was often interrupted by paroxysms of coughing, especially from the women, while relating the evil omens which were told to his master in Pelusium. Each was well authenticated and surpassed its predecessor in significance.

Here one of Iras's maids interrupted him to tell the story of the swallows on the "Antonius," Cleopatra's admiral galley. He could scarcely report from Pelusium an omen of darker presage.

But Beryllus gazed at her with a pitying smile, which so roused the expectations of the others that the overseer of the litter and baggage porters, who were talking loudly together, hoarsely shouted, "Silence!"

Soon no sound was heard in the open space save the shrill whistling of the wind, a word of command to the harbour-guards, and the freedman's voice, which he lowered to increase the charm of the mysterious events he was describing.

He began with the most fulsome praise of Cleopatra and Antony, reminding his hearers that the Imperator was a descendant of Herakles. The Alexandrians especially were aware that their Queen and Antony claimed and desired to be called "The new Isis" and "The new Dionysus." But every one who beheld the Roman must admit that in face and figure he resembled a god far more than a man.

The Imperator had appeared as Dionysus, especially to the Athenians. In the proscenium of the theatre in that city was a huge bas-relief of the Battle of the Giants, the famous work of an ancient sculptor—he, Beryllus, had seen it—and from amid the numerous figures in this piece of sculpture the tempest had torn but a single one—which? Dionysus, the god as whose mortal image Antony had once caroused in a vine-clad arbour in the presence of the Athenians. The storm to-night was at the utmost like the breath of a child, compared with the hurricane which could wrest from the hard marble the form of Dionysus. But Nature gathers all her forces when she desires to announce to short-sighted mortals the approach of events which are to shake the world.

Page 13

The last words were quoted from his master who had studied in Athens. They had escaped from his burdened soul when he heard of another portent, of which a ship from Ostia had brought tidings. The flourishing city Pisaura—

Here, however, he was interrupted, for several of those present had learned, weeks before, that this place had sunk in the sea, but merely pitied the unfortunate inhabitants.

Beryllus quietly permitted them to free themselves from the suspicion that people in Alexandria had had tidings of so remarkable an event later than those in Pelusium, and at first answered their query what this had to do with the war merely by a shrug of the shoulders; but when the overseer of the porters also put the question, he went on “The omen made a specially deep impression upon our minds, for we know what Pisaura is, or rather how it came into existence. The hapless city which dark Hades engulfed really belonged to Antony, for in the days of its prosperity he was its founder.”

He measured the group with a defiant glance, and there was no lack of evidences of horror; nay, one of the maid-servants shrieked aloud, for the storm had just snatched a torch from the iron rings in the wall and hurled it on the floor close beside the listener.

Suspense seemed to have reached its height. Yet it was evident that Beryllus had not yet drawn his last arrow from the quiver.

The maid-servant, whose scream had startled the others, had regained her composure and seemed eager to hear some other new and terrible omen, for, with a beseeching glance, she begged the freedman not to withhold the knew.

He pointed to the drops of perspiration which, spite of the wind sweeping through the hall, covered her brow: “You must use your handkerchief. Merely listening to my tale will dampen your skin. Stone statues are made of harder material, but a soul dwells within them too. Their natures may be harsher or more gentle; they bring us woe or heal heavy sorrows, according to their mood. Every one learns this who raises his hands to them in prayer. One of these statues stands in Alba. It represents Mark Antony, in whose honour it was erected by the city. And it foresaw what menaced the man whose stone double it is. Ay, open your ears! About four days ago a ship’s captain came to my master and in my presence this man reported—he grew as pale as ashes while he spoke—what he himself had witnessed. Drops of perspiration had oozed from the statue of Antony in Alba. Horror seized all the citizens; men and women came to wipe the brow and cheeks of the statue, but the drops of perspiration did not cease to drip, and this continued several days and nights. The stone image had felt what was impending over the living Mark Antony. It was a horrible spectacle, the man said.”

Here the speaker paused, and the group of listeners started, for the clang of a gong was heard outside, and the next instant all were on their feet hastening to their posts.

Page 14

The officials in the magnificent hall had also risen. Here the silence had been interrupted only by low whispers. The colour had faded from most of the grave, anxious faces, and their timid glances shunned one another.

Archibius had first perceived, by the flames of the Pharos, the red glimmer which announced the approach of the royal galley. It had not been expected so early, but was already passing the islands into the great harbour. It was probably the Antonius, the ship on which the old swallows had pecked the young ones to death.

Though the waves were running high, even in the sheltered harbour, they scarcely rocked the massive vessel. An experienced pilot must have steered it past the shallows and cliffs on the eastern side of the roadstead, for instead of passing around the island of Antirrhodus as usual, it kept between the island and the Lochias, steering straight towards the entrance into the little royal harbour. The pitch-pans on both sides had been filled with fresh resin and tow to light the way. The watchers on the shore could now see its outlines distinctly.

It was the Antonius, and yet it was not.

Zeno, the Keeper of the Seal, who was standing beside Iras, wrapped his cloak closer around his shivering limbs, pointed to it, and whispered,

“Like a woman who leaves her parents’ house in the rich array of a bride, and returns to it an impoverished widow.”

Iras drew herself up, and with cutting harshness replied, “Like the sun veiled by mists, but which will soon shine forth again more radiantly than ever.”

“Spoken from the depths of my soul,” said the old courtier eagerly, “so far as the Queen is concerned. Of course, I did not allude to her Majesty, but to the ship. You were ill when it left the harbour, garlanded with flowers and adorned with purple sails. And now! Even this flickering light shows the wounds and rents. I am the last person whom you need tell that our sun Cleopatra will soon regain its old radiance, but at present it is very chilly and cold here by the water’s edge in this stormy air; and when I think of our first moment of meeting—

“Would it were over!” murmured Iras, wrapping herself closer in her cloak. Then she drew back shivering, for the rattle of the heavy chain, which was drawn aside from the opening of the harbour, echoed with an uncanny sound through the silence of the night. A mountain seemed to weigh upon the watchers’ breasts, for the wooden monster which now entered the little harbour moved forward as slowly and silently as a spectral ship. It seemed as if life were extinct on the huge galley usually swarming with a numerous crew; as if a vessel were about to cast anchor whose sailors had fallen victims to the plague. Nothing was heard save an occasional word of command, and the signal

whistles of the fluteplayer who directed the rowers. A few lanterns burned with a wavering light on the vast length of her decks. The brilliant illumination which usually shone through the darkness would have attracted the attention of the Alexandrians.

Page 15

Now it was close to the landing. The group on shore watched every inch of its majestic progress with breathless suspense, but when the first rope was flung to the slaves on shore several men in Greek robes pressed forward hurriedly among the courtiers.

They had come with a message, whose importance would permit no delay, to the Regent Mardion, who stood between Zeno and Iras, gazing gloomily at the ground with a frowning brow. He was pondering over the words in which to address the Queen, and within a few minutes the ship would have made her landing, and Cleopatra might cross the bridge. To disturb him at that moment was an undertaking few who knew the irritable, uncertain temper of the eunuch would care to risk. But the tall Macedonian, who for a short time attracted the eyes of most of the spectators from the galley, ventured to do so. It was the captain of the nightwatch, the aristocratic commander of the police force of the city.

"Only a word, my lord," he whispered to the Regent, "though the time may be inopportune."

"As inopportune as possible," replied the eunuch with repellent harshness.

"We will say as inopportune as the degree of haste necessary for its decision. The King Caesarion, with Antyllus and several companions, attacked a woman. Blackened faces. A fight. Caesarion and the woman's companion—an aristocrat, member of the Council—slightly wounded. Lictors interfered just in time. The young gentlemen were arrested. At first they refused to give their names—"

"Caesarion slightly, really only slightly wounded?" asked the eunuch with eager haste.

"Really and positively. Olympus was summoned at once. A knock on the head. The man who was attacked flung him on the pavement in the struggle."

"Dion, the son of Eumenes, is the man," interrupted Iras, whose quick ear had caught the officer's report. "The woman is Barine, the daughter of the artist Leonax."

"Then you know already?" asked the Macedonian in surprise.

"So it seems," answered Mardion, gazing into the girl's face with a significant glance. Then, turning to her rather than to the Macedonian, he added, "I think we will have the young rascals set free and brought to Lochias with as little publicity as possible."

"To the palace?" asked the Macedonian.

"Of course," replied Iras firmly. "Each to his own apartments, where they must remain until further orders."

“Everything else must be deferred until after the reception,” added the eunuch, and the Macedonian, with a slight, haughty nod, drew back.

“Another misfortune,” sighed the eunuch.

“A boyish prank,” Iras answered quickly, “but even a still greater misfortune is less than nothing so long as we are not conscious of it. This unpleasant occurrence must be concealed for the present from the Queen. Up to this time it is a vexation, nothing more—and it can and must remain so; for we have it in our power to uproot the poisonous tree whence it emanates.”

Page 16

"You look as if no one could better perform the task," the Regent interrupted, with a side glance at the galley, "so you shall have the commission. It is the last one I shall give, during the Queen's absence, in her name."

"I shall not fail," she answered firmly.

When Iras again looked towards the landing-place she saw Archibius standing alone, with his eyes fixed upon the ground. Impulse prompted her to tell her uncle what had happened; but at the first step she paused, and her thin lips uttered a firm "No."

Her friend had become a stone in her path. If necessary, she would find means to thrust him also aside, spite of his sister Charmian and the old tie which united him to Cleopatra. He had grown weak, Charmian had always been so.

She would have had time enough now to consider what step to take first, had not her heart ached so sorely.

After the huge galley lay moored, several minutes elapsed ere two pastophori of the goddess Isis, who guarded the goblet of Nektanebus, taken from the temple treasures and borne along in a painted chest, stepped upon the bridge, followed by Cleopatra's first chamberlain, who in a low tone announced the approach of the Queen and commanded the waiting groups to make way. A double line of torch-bearers had been stationed from the landing to the gate leading into the Bruchium, and the other on the north, which was the entrance to the palaces on the Lochias, since it was not known where Cleopatra would desire to go. The chamberlain, however, said that she would spend the night at Lochias, where the children lived, and ordered all the flickering, smoking torches, save a few, to be extinguished.

Mardion, the Keeper of the Seal, Archibius, and Iras were standing by the bridge a little in advance of the others, when voices were heard on the ship, and the Queen appeared, preceded by several lantern-bearers and followed by a numerous train of court officials, pages, maids, and female slaves. Cleopatra's little hand rested on Charmian's arm, as, with a haughty carriage of the head, she moved towards the shore. A thick veil covered her face, and a large, dark cloak concealed her figure. How elastic her step was still! how proud yet graceful was the gesture with which she waved a greeting to Mardion and Zeno.

Extending her hand to raise Iras, who had sunk prostrate before her, she kissed her on the forehead, whispering, "The children?"

"All is well with them," replied the girl.

Then the returning sovereign greeted the others with a gracious gesture, but vouchsafed a word to no one until the eunuch stepped before her to deliver his address

of welcome. She motioned him aside with a curt “Later”; and when Zeno held open the door of the litter, she said in a stifled tone: “I will walk. After the rocking of the galley in this tempest, I feel reluctant to enter the litter. There are many things to be considered

Page 17

to-day. An idea came to me on the way home. Summon the captain of the harbour and his chief counsellors, the heads of the war office, the superintendent of the fortifications on land and water, especially the Aristarch and Gorgias—I want to see them. Time presses. They must be here in two hours—no, in an hour and a half. I wish to examine all their plans and charts of the eastern frontier, especially the river channels and canals in the Delta.”

Then she turned to Archibius, who had approached the litter, laid her hand upon his arm, and though her veil prevented him from seeing her sparkling eyes, he felt them shining deep into his heart, as the voice whose melody had often enthralled his soul cried, “We will take it as a favourable omen that it is again you who lead me to this palace in a time of trouble.”

His overflowing heart found expression in the warm reply, “Whenever it may be, forever and ever this arm and this life are yours!” And the Queen answered in a tone of earnest belief, “I know it.”

Then, with her hand still resting on his arm, she moved forward; but when he began to ask whether she really had cause to speak of a time of trouble, she cut him short with the entreaty “Not now. Let us say nothing. It is worse than bad—as evil as possible. Yet no. Few are permitted, in an hour of trouble, to lean on the arm of a faithful friend.”

The words were accompanied with a light pressure of her little hand, and it seemed as if his old heart was growing young.

He dared not speak, for her wish was law; but while moving silently at her side, first along the shore, then through the gate, and finally over the marble flagstones which led to the palace portal, it seemed as if he beheld, instead of the veiled head of the hapless Queen, the soft, light-brown locks which floated around the face of a happy child. Before his mental vision rose the little mistress of the garden of Epicurus. He saw the sparkle of her large blue eyes, which never ceased to question, yet appeared to contain the mystery of the world. He fancied he heard once more the silvery cadence of her voice and the bewitching magic of her pure, childlike laughter, and it was hard to remember what she had become.

Snatched away from the present, yet conscious that Fate had granted him a great boon in this sorrowful hour, he moved on at her side and led her through the main entrance, the spacious inner court-yard of the palace. At the rear was the great door opening into the Queen’s apartments, before which Mardion, Iras, and their companions had already stationed themselves. At the left was a smaller one leading into the wing occupied by the children.

Archibius was about to conduct Cleopatra across the lighted court-yard, but she motioned towards the children's rooms, and he understood her.

At the threshold her hand fell from his arm, and when he bowed as if to retire, she said kindly: "There is Charmian. You both deserve to accompany me to the spot where childhood is dreaming and peace of mind and painlessness have their abode. But respect for the Queen has prevented the brother and sister from greeting each other after so long a separation. Do so now! Then, follow me."

Page 18

While speaking, she hastened with the swift step of youth into the atrium and up the staircase which led to the sleeping-rooms of the princes and princesses.

Archibius and Charmian obeyed her bidding; the brother clasped his sister affectionately in his arms, and in hurried tones, with tears streaming from her eyes, she informed him that to her all seemed lost.

Antony had behaved in a manner for which no words of condemnation or regret were adequate. Probably he would follow Cleopatra; the fleet, and perhaps the army also, were destroyed. Her fate lay in the hands of Octavianus.

Then she preceded him towards the staircase, where Iras was standing with a tall Syrian, who bore a striking resemblance to Philostratus, Barine's former husband. It was his brother Alexas, the trusted favourite of Mark Antony. His place should now have been with him, and Archibius asked his sister with a hasty look how this man chanced to be in the Queen's train.

"His skill in reading the stars," was the reply. "His flattering tongue. He is a parasite of the worst kind, but he tells her many things, he diverts her, and she tolerates him near her person."

As soon as Iras saw the direction in which Cleopatra had turned, she had hastened after her to accompany her to the children. The Syrian Alexas had stopped her to express his joy in meeting her again. Even before the outbreak of the war he had devoted himself zealously to her, and he now plainly showed that during the long period of separation his feelings had by no means cooled. Like his brother, he had a head too small for his body, but his well-formed features were animated by a pair of eyes sparkling with a keen, covetous expression.

Iras, too, seemed glad to welcome the favourite, but ere the brother and sister reached the staircase she left him to embrace Charmian, her aunt and companion, with the affection of a daughter.

They found the Queen in the anteroom of the children's apartments. Euphronion, their tutor, had awaited her there, and hurriedly gave, in the most rapturous terms, his report of them and the wonderful gifts which became more and more apparent in each, now as a heritage from their mother, now from their father.

Cleopatra had interrupted the torrent of his enthusiastic speech with many a question, meanwhile endeavouring to loose the veil wound about her head; but the little hands, unaccustomed to the task, failed. Iras noticed it from the stairs and, hastening up the last steps, skilfully released her from the long web of lace.



The Queen acknowledged the service by a gracious nod, but when the chief eunuch opened the door leading into the children's rooms, she called joyously to the brother and sister, "Come!" The tutor, who was obliged to leave the charge of his pupils' sleeping apartments to the eunuchs and nurses, drew back, but Iras felt it a bitter affront to be excluded from this visit. Her cheeks flushed and paled; her thin lips were more firmly compressed, and she gazed intently at the basket of fruit in the mosaic floor at her feet as if she were counting the cherries that filled it. But she suddenly pushed the little curls back from her forehead, darted swiftly down the stairs, and called to Alexas just as he was about to leave the atrium.

Page 19

The Syrian hastened towards her, extolling the good fortune that made his sun rise for him a second time that night, but she cut him short with the words; "Cease this foolish love-making. It would be far better for us both to become allies in serious, bitter earnest. I am ready."

"So am I!" cried the Syrian rapturously, pressing his hand upon his heart.

Meanwhile Cleopatra had entered the chamber where the children lay sleeping. Deep silence pervaded the lofty hall hung with bright-hued carpets, and softly lighted by three lamps with rose-colored globes. An arch, supported by pillars of Libyan marble, divided the wide space. In the first, near a window closely muffled with draperies, stood two ivory beds, surmounted with crowns of gold and silver set with pearls and turquoises. Around the edge, carved by the hands of a great artist, ran a line of happy children dancing to the songs of birds in blossoming bushes.

The couches were separated by a heavy curtain which the eunuchs had raised at the approach of the Queen. Cleopatra could now see them all at a single glance, and the picture was indeed one of exquisite charm; for on these beautiful couches slept the twins, the ten-year-old children of Cleopatra and Antony—Antonius Helios and Cleopatra Selene. The girl was pink and white, fair and wonderfully lovely; the boy no less beautiful, but with ebon-black hair, like his father. Both curly heads were turned towards the side, and rested on a dimpled hand pressed upon the silken pillow.

Upon a third bed, beyond the arch, was Alexander, the youngest prince, a lovely boy of six, the Queen's darling.

After gazing a long while at the twins, and pressing a light kiss upon cheeks flushed with slumber, she turned to the youngest child and sank beside his couch as if forced to bend the knee before some apparition which Heaven had vouchsafed to her. Tears streamed from her eyes as, drawing the child carefully towards her, she kissed his mouth, eyes, and cheeks, and then laid him gently back upon the pillows. The boy, however, did not instantly relapse into slumber, but threw his little plump arms around his mother's neck, murmuring incomprehensible words. She joyously submitted to his caresses, till sleep again overpowered him, and his little hands fell back upon the bed.

She lingered a short time longer, with her brow resting on the ivory of the couch, praying for this child and his brother and sister. When she rose again her cheeks were wet with tears, and she pressed her hand upon her breast. Then, beckoning to Charmian and Archibius, she motioned towards Alexander and the twins, saying, as she saw tears glittering in the eyes of both: "I know you have lost this happiness for my sake. For each one of these children a great empire would not be too high a price; for them all—What does earth contain that I would not bestow? Yet what can I still call my own?"

Page 20

Her smiling face clouded as she asked the question. The vision of the lost battle again rose before her mind. Her own power was lost, forfeited, and with it the independence of the native land which she loved. Rome was already stretching out her hand to add it to the others as a new province. But this should not be! Her twin children yonder, sleeping beneath crowns, must wear them! And the boy slumbering on the pillows? How many kingdoms Antony had bestowed! What remained for her to give?

Again she bent to the child. A beautiful dream must have hovered over him, for he was smiling in his sleep. A flood of maternal love welled up in her agitated heart, and, as she saw the companions of her childhood also gazing tenderly at the little sleeper, she remembered the days of her own youth, and the quiet happiness which she had enjoyed in her garden of Epicurus.

Power and splendour had begun for her beyond its confines, but the greater the heights of worldly grandeur she attained, the more distant, the more irrecoverable became the consciousness of the happiness which she had once gratefully enjoyed, and for which she had never ceased to long. And as she now gazed once more at the peaceful, smiling face, whence all pain and anxiety seemed worlds away, and all the love which her heart contained appeared to be pouring towards him, the question arose in her mind whether this boy, for whom she possessed no crown, might not be the only happy mortal of them all—happy in the sense of the master. Deeply moved by this thought, she turned to Archibius and Charmian, exclaiming in a subdued tone, in order not to rouse the sleeper: “Whatever destiny may await us, I commend this child to your special love and care. If Fate denies him the lustre of the crown and the elation of power, teach him to enjoy that other happiness, which— how long ago it is!—your father unfolded to his mother.”

Archibius kissed her robe, and Charmian her hands; but Cleopatra, drawing a long breath, said: “The mother has already taken too much time from the Queen. I have ordered the news of my arrival to be kept from Caesarion. This was well. The most important matters will be settled before our meeting. Everything relating to me and to the state must be decided within an hour. But, first, I am something more than mother and Queen. The woman also asserts her claim. I will find time for you, my friend, tomorrow!—To my chamber first, Charmian. But you need rest still more than I. Go with your brother. Send Iras to me. She will be glad to use her skilful fingers again in her mistress’s service.”

CHAPTER XI.

The Queen had left her bath. Iras had arranged the still abundant waves of her hair, now dark-brown in hue, and robed her magnificently to receive the dignitaries whom, spite of the late hour of the night, she expected.

Page 21

How wonderfully she had retained her beauty! It seemed as if Time had not ventured to touch this masterpiece of feminine loveliness; yet the Greek's keen eye detected here and there some token of the vanishing spell of youth. She loved her mistress, yet her inmost soul rejoiced whenever she detected in her the same changes which began to appear in herself, the woman of seven-and-twenty, so many years her sovereign's junior. She would gladly have given Cleopatra everything at her command, yet she felt as if she must praise Nature for an act of justice, when she perceived that even her royal favourite was not wholly relieved from the law which applied to all.

"Cease your flattery," said Cleopatra, smiling mournfully. "They say that the works of the Pharaohs here on the Nile flout Time. The inexorable destroyer is less willing to permit this from the Queen of Egypt. These are grey hairs, and they came from this head, however eagerly you may deny it. Whose save my own are these lines around the corners of the eyes and on the brow? What say you to the tooth which my lips do not hide so kindly as you assert? It was injured the night before the luckless battle. My dear, faithful, skilful Olympus, the prince of leeches, is the only one who can conceal such things. But it would not do to take the old man to the war, and Glaucus is far less adroit. How I missed Olympus during those fatal hours! I seemed a monster even to myself, and he—Antony's eye is only too keen for such matters. What is the love of men? A blackened tooth may prove its destruction. An aspect obnoxious to the gaze will pour water on the fiercest fire. What hours I experienced, Iras! Many a glance from him seemed an insult, and, besides, my heart was filled with torturing anxiety.

"Something had evidently come between us! I felt it. The trouble began soon after he left Alexandria. It gnawed my soul like a worm, and now that I am here again I must see clearly. He will follow me in a few days, I know. Pinarius Scarpus, with his untouched legions, is in Paraetium, whither he went. At Taenarum he resolved to retire from the world which he, on whom it had bestowed so much that is great, hates because he has given it cause for many a shake of the head. But the old spirit woke again, and if Fortune, usually so faithful, still aids him, a large force will soon join the new African army. The Asiatic princes— But the ruler of the state must be silent. I entered this room to give the woman her just rights, and the woman shall have them. He will soon be here. He cannot live without me. It is not alone the beaker of Nektanebus which draws him after me!"

"When the greatest of the great, Julius Caesar, sued for your love in Alexandria, and Antony on the Cydnus, you did not possess the goblet," observed Iras. "It is two years since Anubis permitted you to borrow the masterpiece from the temple treasures, and within a few days you will be obliged to restore it. That a mysterious spell emanates from the cup is certain, but one still more powerful dwells in the magic of your own nature."

Page 22

"Would that it might assert itself to-day!" cried the Queen. "At any rate the power of the beaker impelled Antony to do many things. I am not vain enough to believe that it was love, that it was solely the spell of my own personality which drew him to me in that disastrous hour. That battle, that incomprehensible, disgraceful battle! You were ill, and could not see our fleet when it set sail; but even experienced spectators said that handsomer, larger vessels were never beheld. I was right in insisting that the decision of the conflict should be left to them. I was entitled to call them mine. Had we conquered, what a proud delight it would have been to say, 'The weapons which you gave to the man you loved gained him the sovereignty of the world!' Besides, the stars had assured me that good fortune would attend us on the sea. They had given the same message to Anubis here and to Alexas upon Antony's galley. I also trusted the spell of the goblet, which had already compelled Antony to do many things he opposed. So I succeeded in having the decision of the conflict left to the fleet, but the prediction was false, false, false!—how utterly, was to be proved only too soon.

"If I had only been told in time what I learned later! After the defeat people were more loquacious. That one remark of a veteran commander of the foot-soldiers would probably have sufficed to open my eyes. He had asked Mark Antony why he fixed his hopes on miserable wood, exclaiming, 'Let the Phoenician's and Egyptians war on the water, but leave us the land where we are accustomed, with our feet firmly set upon the earth, to fight, conquer, or die!' This alone, I am sure, would have changed my resolve in a happy hour. But it was kept from me.

"The conflict began. Our troops had lost patience. The left wing of the fleet advanced. At first I watched the battle eagerly, with a throbbing heart. How proudly the huge galleys moved forward! Everything was going admirably. Antony had made an address, assuring the warriors that, even without soldiers, our ships would destroy the foe by their mere height and size. What orator can so carry his hearers with him! I, too, was still fearless. Who cherishes anxiety when confidently expecting victory? When he went on board his own ship, after bidding me farewell far less cordially than usual, I became more troubled. I thought it was evident that his love was waning. What had I become since we left Alexandria, and Olympus no longer attended me! Matters could not continue in this way. I would leave the direction of the war to him, and vanish from his eyes. After he had looked into the beaker of Nektanebus, he yielded to my will, but often with indignation. The unconcealed, ineffaceable lines, and the years, the cruel years!"

"What thoughts are these?" cried Iras. "Let me take oath, my sovereign mistress, that as you stand before me—"

Page 23

“Thanks to this toilet-table and the new compounds of Olympus in these boxes! At that time, I tell you, I was fairly startled at the sight of my own face. Trouble does not enhance beauty, and what condemnation the Romans had heaped on the woman who meddled with war, the craft of man! I had answers for them, but I would not endure it longer. I had previously determined to hold aloof from the battle on land; but even at the commencement of the conflict, spite of its favourable promise, I longed to leave Antony and return to the children. They do not heed the colour of their mother’s hair, nor her wrinkles; and he, when he had looked for and called me in vain, would feel for the first time what he possessed in me, would miss me, and with the longing the old love would awaken with fresh ardour. As soon as the fleet had gained the victory I would have the prow of my galley turned southward and, without a farewell, exclaiming only, ‘We will meet in Alexandria!’ set sail for Egypt.

“I summoned Alexas, who had remained with me, and ordered him to give me a signal as soon as the battle was decided in our favour. I remained on deck. Then I saw the ships of the foe describing a wide circle. The nauarch told me that Agrippa was trying to surround us. This roused a feeling of discomfort. I began to repent having meddled with men’s work.

“Antony looked across at me from his galley. I waved my hand to point out the peril, but instead of eagerly and lovingly answering the greeting, as of yore, he turned his back, and in a short time after the wildest uproar arose around me. One ship became entangled with another, planks and poles shattered with a loud crash. Shouts, the cries and moans of the combatants and the wounded, mingled with the thunder of the stones hurled by the catapults, and the sharp notes of the signals which sounded like calls for help. Two soldiers, stricken by arrows, fell beside me. It was horrible! Yet my courage remained steadfast, even when a squadron—it was commanded by Aruntius—pressed upon the fleet. I saw another line of galleys steering directly towards us, and a Roman vessel assailed by one of mine—I had named her the Selene—turn on her side and sink. This pleased me and seemed like the first presage of victory. I again ordered Alexas to have the ship’s prow turned as soon as the result of the battle was decided. Ere I had ceased speaking, Jason, the steward—you know him—appeared with refreshments. I took the beaker, but, ere I could raise it to my lips, he fell to the deck with a cloven skull, mingling his blood with the spilled juice of the grape. My blood seemed fairly to freeze in my veins, and Alexas, trembling and deadly pale, asked, ‘Do you command us to quit the battle?’

Page 24

“Every fibre of my being urged me to give the order, but I controlled myself, and asked the nauarch, who was standing on the bridge before me, ‘Are we gaining the advantage?’ The reply was a positive ‘Yes.’ I thought the fitting time had come, and called to him to steer the galley southward. But the man did not seem to understand. Meanwhile the noise of the conflict had grown louder and louder. So, in spite of Charmian, who besought me not to interfere in the battle, I sent Alexas to the commander on the bridge, and while he talked with the grey-bearded seaman, who wrathfully answered I know not what, I glanced at the nearest ship—I no longer knew whether it was friend or foe—and as I saw the rows of restless oars moving in countless numbers to and fro, it seemed as if every ship had become a huge spider, and the long wooden handles of the oars were its legs and feet. Each of these monsters appeared to be seeking to snare me in a horrible net, and when the nauarch came to beseech me to wait, I imperiously commanded him to obey my orders.

“The luckless man bowed, and performed his Queen’s behest. The giant was turned, and forced a passage through the maze.

“I breathed more freely.

“What had threatened me like the legs of huge spiders became oars once more. Alexas led me under a roof, where no missiles could reach me. My desire was fulfilled. I had escaped Antony’s eyes, and we were going towards Alexandria and my children. When I at last looked around I saw that my other ships were following. I had not given this order, and was terribly startled. When I sought Alexas, he had vanished. The centurion whom I sent to order the nauarch to give the signal to the other ships to return to the battle, reported that the captain’s dead body has just been borne away, but that the command should be given. How this was done I do not know, but it produced no effect, and no one noticed the anxious waving of my handkerchief.

“We had left Antony’s galley—he was standing on the bridge—far behind.

“I had waved my hand as we passed close by, and he hurried down to bend far over the bulwark and shout to me. I can still see his hands raised to his bearded lips. I did not understand what he said, and only pointed southward and in spirit wished him victory and that this separation might tend to the welfare of our love. But he shook his head, pressed his hand despairingly to his brow, and waved his arms as though to give me a sign, but the Antonias swept far ahead of his ship and steered straight towards the south.

“I breathed more freely, in the pleasant consciousness of escaping a two-fold danger. Had I remained long before Antony’s eyes, looking as I did then, it might—

“Wretched blunder of a wretched woman, I say now. But at that time I could not suspect what a terrible doom I had brought down in that hour upon ourselves, my children,

perhaps the whole world; so I remained under the thrall of these petty fears and thoughts until wounded men were carried past me. The sight distressed me; you know how sensitive I am, and with what difficulty I endure and witness suffering.

Page 25

“Charmian led me to the cabin. There I first realized what I had done. I had hoped to aid in crushing the hated foe, and now perhaps it was I who had built for him the bridge to victory, to sovereignty, to our destruction. Pursued by such thoughts, as if by the Furies, I paced restlessly to and fro.

“Suddenly I heard a loud noise on deck. A crashing blow seemed to shake the huge ship. We were pursued! A Roman galley had boarded mine! This was my thought as I grasped the dagger Antony had given me.

“But Charmian came back with tidings which seemed scarcely less terrible than the baseless fear. I had angrily commanded her to leave me because she had urged me to revoke the command to turn back. Now, deadly pale, she announced that Mark Antony had left his galley, followed me in a little five-oared boat, and come on board our ship.

“My blood froze in my veins.

“He had come, I imagined, to force me to return to the battle and, drawing a long breath, my defiant pride urged me to show him that I was the Queen and would obey only my own will, while my heart impelled me to sink at his feet and beseech him, without heeding me, to issue any order which promised to secure a victory.

“But he did not come.

“I sent Charmian up again. Antony had been unable to continue the conflict when parted from me. Now he sat in front of the cabin with his head resting on his hands, staring at the planks of the deck like one distraught. He, he—Antony! The bravest horseman, the terror of the foe, let his arms fall like a shepherd-boy whose sheep are stolen by the wolves. Mark Antony, the hero who had braved a thousand dangers, had flung down his sword. Why, why? Because a woman had yielded to idle fears, obeyed the yearning of a mother’s heart, and fled? Of all human weaknesses, not one had been more alien than cowardice to the man whose recklessness had led him to many an unprecedented venture. And now? No, a thousand times no! Fire and water would unite sooner than Mark Antony and cowardice! He had been under the coercive power of a demon; a mysterious spell had forced him—”

“The mightiest power, love,” interrupted Iras with enthusiastic warmth— “a love as great and overmastering as ever subjugated the soul of man.”

“Ay, love,” repeated Cleopatra, in a hollow tone. Then her lips curled with a faint tinge of derision, and her voice expressed the very bitterness of doubt, as she continued: “Had it been merely the love which makes two mortals one, transfers the heart of one to the other, it might perchance have borne my timorous soul into the hero’s breast! But no. Violent tempests had raged before the battle. It had not been possible always to appear before him in the guise in which we would fain be seen by those whom we love.

“Even now, when your skilful hands have served me—there is the mirror— the image it reflects—seems to me like a carefully preserved wreck—”

Page 26

"O my royal mistress," cried Iras, raising her hands beseechingly, "must I again declare that neither the grey hairs which are again brown, nor the few lines which Olympus will soon render invisible, nor whatever else perhaps disturbs you in the image you behold reflected, impairs your beauty? Unclouded and secure of victory, the spell of your godlike nature—"

"Cease, cease!" interrupted Cleopatra. "I know what I know. No mortal can escape the great eternal laws of Nature. As surely as birth commences life, everything that exists moves onward to destruction and decay."

"Yet the gods," Iras persisted, "give to their works different degrees of existence. The waterlily blooms but a single day, yet how full of vigour is the sycamore in the garden of the Paneum, which has flourished a thousand years! Not a petal in the blossoms of your youth has faded, and is it conceivable that there is even the slightest diminution in the love of him who cast away all that man holds dearest because he could not endure to part, even for days or weeks, from the woman whom he worshipped?"

"Would that he had done so!" cried Cleopatra mournfully. "But are you so sure that it was love which made him follow me? I am of a different opinion. True love does not paralyze, but doubles the high qualities of man. I learned this when Caesar was prisoned by a greatly superior force within this very palace, his ships burned, his supply of water cut off. In him also, in Antony, I was permitted to witness this magnificent spectacle twenty—what do I say?—a hundred times, so long as he loved me with all the ardour of his fiery soul. But what happened at Actium? That shameful flight of the cooing dove after his mate, at which generations yet unborn will point in mockery! He who does not see more deeply will attribute to the foolish madness of love this wretched forgetfulness of duty, honour, fame, the present and the future; but I, Iras—and this is the thought which whitens one hair after another, which will speedily destroy the remnant of your mistress's former beauty by the exhaustion of sleepless nights—I know better. It was not love which drew Antony after me, not love that trampled in the dust the radiant image of reckless courage, not love that constrained the demigod to follow the pitiful track of a fugitive woman."

Here her voice fell, and seizing the girl's wrist with a painful pressure, she drew her closer to her side and whispered:

"The goblet of Nektanebus is connected with it. Ay, tremble! The powers that emanate from the glittering wonder are as terrible as they are unnatural. The magic spell exerted by the beaker has transformed the heroic son of Herakles, the more than mortal, into the whimpering coward, the crushed, broken nonentity I found upon the galley's deck. You are silent? Your nimble tongue finds no reply. How could you have forgotten that you aided me to win the wager which forced Antony

Page 27

to gaze into the beaker before I filled it for him? How grateful I was to Anubis when he finally consented to trust to my care this marvel of the temple treasures, when the first trial succeeded, and Antony, at my bidding, placed the magnificent wreath which he wore upon the bald brow of that crabbed old follower of Aristoteles, Diomedes, whom he detested in his inmost soul! It was scarcely a year ago, and you know how rarely at first I used the power of the terrible vessel. The man whom I loved obeyed my slightest glance, without its aid. But later—before the battle—I felt how gladly he would have sent me, who might ruin all, back to Egypt. Besides, I felt—I have already said so—that something had come between us. Yet, often as he was on the point of sacrificing me to the importunate Romans, I need only bid him gaze into the beaker, and exclaim 'You will not send me hence. We belong together. Whither one goes, the other will follow!' and he besought me not to leave him. The very morning before the battle I gave him the drinking cup, urging him, whatever might happen, never, never to leave me. And he obeyed this time also, though the person to whom a magic spell bound him was a fleeing woman. It is terrible. And yet, have I a right to execrate the thrall of the beaker? Scarcely! For without the Magian's glittering vessel—a secret voice in my soul has whispered the warning a thousand times during the sleepless nights—he would have taken another on the galley. And I believe I know this other—I mean the woman whose singing enthralled my heart too at the Adonis festival just before our departure. I noticed the look with which his eyes sought hers. Now I know that it was not merely my old deceitful foe, jealousy, which warned me against her. Alexas, the most faithful of his friends, also confirmed what I merely feared—ah! and he told me other things which the stars had revealed to him. Besides, he knows the siren, for she was the wife of his own brother. To protect his honour, he cast off the coquettish Circe."

"Barine!" fell in resolute tones from the lips of Iras.

"So you know her?" asked Cleopatra, eagerly. The girl raised her clasped hands beseechingly to the Queen, exclaiming:

"I know this woman only too well, and how my heart rages against her! O my mistress, that I, too, should aid in darkening this hour! Yet it must be said. That Antony visited the singer, and even took his son there more than once, is known throughout the city. Yet that is not the worst. A Barine entering into rivalry with you! It would be too ridiculous. But what bounds can be set to the insatiate greed of these women? No rank, no age is sacred. It was dull in the absence of the court and the army. There were no men who seemed worth the trouble of catching, so she cast her net for boys, and the one most closely snared was the King Caesarion."

"Caesarion!" exclaimed Cleopatra, her pale cheeks flushing. "And his tutor Rhodon? My strict commands?"

Page 28

"Antyllus secretly presented him to her," replied Iras. "But I kept my eyes open. The boy clung to the singer with insensate passion. The only expedient was to remove her from the city. Archibius aided me."

"Then I shall be spared sending her away."

"Nay, that must still be done; for, on the journey to the country Caesarion, with several comrades, attacked her."

"And the reckless deed was successful?"

"No, my royal mistress. I wish it had been. A love-sick fool who accompanied her drew his sword in her defence, raised his hand against the son of Caesar, and wounded him. Calm yourself, I beseech you, I conjure you—the wound is slight. The boy's mad passion makes me far more anxious."

The Queen's pouting scarlet lips closed so firmly that her mouth lost the winning charm which was peculiar to it, and she answered in a firm, resolute tone: "It is the mother's place to protect the son against the temptress. Alexas is right. Her star stands in the path of mine. A woman like this casts a deep shadow on her Queen's course. I will defend myself. It is she who has placed herself between us; she has won Antony. But no! Why should I blind myself? Time and the charms he steals from women are far more powerful than twenty such little temptresses. Then, there are the circumstances which prevented my concealing the defects that wounded the eyes of this most spoiled of all spoiled mortals. All these things aided the singer. I feel it. In her pursuit of men she had at her command all the means which aid us women to conceal what is unlovely and enhance what is beautiful in a lover's eyes, while I was at a disadvantage, lacking your aid and the long-tested skill of Olympus. The divinity on the ship, amid the raging of the storm, was forced more than once to appear before the worshipper ungarlanded, without ornament for the head, or incense."

"But though she used all the combined arts of Aphrodite and Isis, she could not vie with you, my royal mistress!" cried Iras. "How little is required to delude the senses of one scarcely more than a child!"

"Poor boy!" sighed the Queen, gently. "Had he not been wounded, and were it not so hard to resign what we love, I should rejoice that he, too, understands how to plan and act. Perhaps—O Iras, would that it might be so!—now that the gate is burst open, the brain and energy of the great Caesar will enter his living image. As the Egyptians call Horus 'the avenger of his father,' perhaps he may become his mother's defender and avenger. If Caesar's spirit wakes within him, he will wrest from the dissembler Octavianus the heritage of which the nephew robbed the son. You swear that the wound is but a slight one?"

“The physicians have said so.”

“Well, then we will hope so. Let him enter the conflict of life. We will afford him ample opportunity to test his powers. No foolish passion shall prevent the convalescent youth from following his father upward along the pathway of fame. But send for the woman who ensnared him, the audacious charmer whose aspirations mount to those I hold dearest. We will see how she appears beside me!”

Page 29

"These are grievous times," said Iras, who saw in amazement the Queen's eyes sparkle with the confident light of victory. "Grant your foot its right. Let it crush her! Monsters enough, on whom you cannot set your foot, throng your path. Hence to Hades, in these days of conflict, with all who can be quickly removed!"

"Murder?" asked Cleopatra, her noble brow contracting in a frown.

"If it must be, ay," replied Iras, sharply. "If possible, banishment to an island, an oasis. If necessity requires, to the mines with the siren!"

"If necessity requires?" repeated the Queen. "I think that means, if it proves that she has deserved the harshest punishment."

"She has brought it upon herself by every hour of my sovereign's life clouded through her wiles. In the mines the desire to set snares for husbands and sons soon vanishes."

"And people languish in the most terrible torture till death ends their suffering," added Cleopatra, in a tone of grave reproof. "No, girl, this victory is too easy. I will not send even my foe to death without a hearing, especially at this time, which teaches me what it is to await the verdict of one who is more powerful. This woman who, as it were, summons me to battle, shall have her wish. I am curious to see the singer again, and to learn the means by which she has succeeded in chaining to her triumphal car so many captives, from boys up to the most exacting men."

"What do you intend, my royal mistress?" cried Iras in horror.

"I intend," said Cleopatra imperiously, "to see the daughter of Leonax, the granddaughter of Didymus, two men whom I hold in high esteem, ere I decide her destiny. I wish to behold, test, and judge my rival, heart and mind, ere I condemn her. I will engage in the conflict to which she challenged the loving wife and mother! But—this is my right—I will compel her to show herself to me as Antony so often saw me during the past few weeks, unaided and unimproved by the arts which we both have at command."

Then, without paying any further heed to her attendant, she went to a window, and, after a swift glance at the sky, added quietly: "The first hour after midnight is drawing to a close. The council will begin immediately. The matter to be under discussion is a venture which might save much from the wreck. The council will last two hours, perchance only one. The singer can wait. "Where does she live?"

"In the house which belonged to her father, the artist Leonax, in the garden of the Paneum," replied Iras hoarsely. "But, O my Queen, if ever my opinion had the slightest weight with you—"

“I desire no counsel now, but demand the fulfilment of my orders!” cried Cleopatra resolutely. “As soon as those whom I expect are here—”

Page 30

The Queen was interrupted by a chamberlain, who announced the arrival of the men whom she had summoned, and Cleopatra bade him tell them that she was on her way to the council chamber. Then she turned again to Iras and in rapid words commanded her to go at once in a closed carriage, accompanied by a reliable person, to Barine's house. She must be brought to the palace without the least delay—Iras would understand—even if it should be necessary to rouse her from her sleep. "I wish to see her as if a storm had forced her suddenly upon the deck of a ship," she said in conclusion.

Then snatching a small tablet from the dressing-table, she scrawled upon the wax with a rapid hand: "Cleopatra, the Queen, desires to see Barine, the daughter of Leonax, without delay. She must obey any command of Iras, Cleopatra's messenger, and her companion."

Then, closing the diptychon, she handed it to her attendant, asking:

"Whom will you take?"

She answered without hesitation, "Alexas."

"Very well," answered Cleopatra. "Do not allow her a moment for preparations, whatever they may be. But do not forget—I command you— that she is a woman."

With these words she turned to follow the chamberlain, but Iras hurried after her to adjust the diadem upon her head and arrange some of the folds of her robe.

Cleopatra submitted, saying kindly, "Something else, I see, is weighing on your heart."

"O my mistress!" cried the girl. "After these tempests of the soul, these harassing months, you are turning night into day and assuming fresh labours and anxieties. If the leech Olympus—"

"It must be," interrupted Cleopatra kindly. "The last two weeks seemed like a single long and gloomy night, during which I sometimes left my couch for a few hours. One who seeks to drag what is dearest from the river does not consider whether the cold bath is agreeable. If we succumb, it does not matter whether we are well or ill; if, on the contrary, we succeed in gathering another army and saving Egypt, let it cost health and life. The minutes I intend to grant to the woman will be thrown into the bargain. Whatever may come, I shall be ready to meet my fate. I am at one of life's great turning points. At such a time we fulfil our obligations and demands, both great and small."

A few minutes later Cleopatra entered the throne-room and saluted the men whom she had roused from their slumber in order to lay before them a bold plan which, in the lowest depths of misfortune, her yearning to offer fresh resistance to the victorious foe had caused her vigorous, restless mind to evoke.

When, many years before, the boy with whom, according to her father's will, she shared the throne, and his guardian Pothinus, had compelled her to fly from Alexandria, she had found in the eastern frontier of the Delta, on the isthmus which united Egypt to Asia, the remains of the canal which the energetic Pharaohs of former times had constructed to connect the Mediterranean with the Red Sea.

Page 31

Even at that period she had deemed this ruinous work worthy of notice, had questioned the AEnites who dwelt there about the remains, and even visited some of them herself during the leisure hours of waiting.

From this survey it had seemed possible, by a great expenditure of labour, to again render navigable the canal which the Pharaohs had used to reach both seas in the same galleys, and by which, less than five hundred years before, Darius, the founder of the Persian Empire, had brought his fleet to his support.

With the tireless desire for knowledge characteristic of her, Cleopatra had sought information concerning all these matters, and in quiet hours had more than once pondered over plans for again uniting the Grecian and Arabian seas.

Clearly, plainly, fully, with more thorough knowledge of many details than even the superintendent of the water works, she explained her design to the assembled professionals. If it proved practicable, the rescued ships of the fleet, with others lying in the roadstead of Alexandria, could be conveyed across the isthmus into the Red Sea, and thus saved to Egypt and withdrawn from the foe. Supported by this force, many things might be attempted, resistance might be considerably prolonged, and the time thus gained used in gathering fresh aid and allies.

If the opportunity to make an attack arrived, a powerful fleet would be at her disposal, for which smaller ships also should now be built at Klysma, on the basis of the experience gained at Actium. The men who had been robbed of their night's rest listened in amazement to the melodious words of this woman who, in the deepest disaster, had devised a plan of escape so daring in its grandeur, and understood how to explain it better than any one of their number could have done. They followed every sentence with the keenest attention, and Cleopatra's language grew more impassioned, gained greater power and depth, the more plainly she perceived the unfeigned, enthusiastic admiration paid her by her listeners.

Even the oldest and most experienced men did not consider the surprising proposal utterly impossible and impracticable. Some, among them Gorgias, who during the restoration of the Serapeum had helped his father on the eastern frontier of the Delta, and thus became familiar with the neighbourhood of Heroonopolis, feared the difficulties which an elevation of the earth in the centre of the isthmus would place in the way of the enterprise. Yet, why should an undertaking which was successful in the days of Sesostri appear unattainable?

The shortness of the time at their disposal was a still greater source of anxiety, and to this was added the information that one hundred and twenty thousand workmen had perished during the restoration of the canal which Pharaoh Necho nearly completed. The water way was not finished at that period, because an oracle had asserted that it would benefit only the foreigners, the Phoenicians.

Page 32

All these points were duly considered, but could not shake the opinion that, under specially favourable conditions, the Queen's plan would be practicable; though, to execute it, obstacles mountain-high were to be conquered. All the labourers in the fields, who had not been pressed into the army, must be summoned to the work.

Not an hour's delay was permitted. Where there was no water to bear the ships, an attempt must be made to convey them across the land. There was no lack of means. The mechanics who had understood how to move the obelisks and colossi from the cataract to Alexandria, could here again find opportunity to test their brains and former skill.

Never had Cleopatra's kindling spirit roused more eager, nay, more passionate sympathy, in any counsellors gathered around her than during this nocturnal meeting, and when at last she paused, the loud acclamations of excited men greeted her. The Queen's return, and the tidings of the lost battle which she had communicated, were to be kept secret.

Gorgias had been appointed one of the directors of the enterprise, and the intellect, voice, and winning charm of Cleopatra had so enraptured him that he already fancied he saw the commencement of a new love which would be fatal to his regard for Helena.

It was foolish to raise his wishes so high, but he told himself that he had never beheld a woman more to be desired. Yet he cherished a very warm memory of the philosopher's grand-daughter, and lamented that he would scarcely find it possible to bid her farewell.

Zeno, the Keeper of the Seal, Dion's uncle, had questioned him about his nephew in a very mysterious manner as soon as he entered the council chamber, and received the reply that the wound in the shoulder, which Caesarion had dealt with a short Roman sword, though severe, was—so the physicians assured them—not fatal.

This seemed to satisfy Zeno, and ere Gorgias could urge him to extend a protecting hand over his nephew, he excused himself and, with a message to the wounded man, turned his back upon him.

The courtier had not yet learned what view the Queen would take of this unfortunate affair, and besides, he was overloaded with business. The new enterprise required the issue of a large number of documents conferring authority, which all passed through his hands.

Cleopatra addressed a few kind, encouraging words to each one of the experts who had been entrusted with the execution of her plan. Gorgias, too, was permitted to kiss her robe, which stirred his blood afresh. He would fain have flung himself at the feet of this marvellous woman and, with his services, place his life at her disposal. And Cleopatra noticed the enthusiastic ardour of his glance.

He, too, had been mentioned in the list of Barine's admirers. There must be something unusual about this woman! But could she have fired a body of grave men in behalf of a great, almost impossible deed, roused them to such enthusiastic admiration as she, the vanquished, menaced Queen? Certainly not.

Page 33

She felt in the right mood to confront Barine as judge and rival.

In the midst of the deepest misery she had spent one happy hour. She had again felt, with joyous pride, that her intellect, fresh and unclouded, would be capable of outstripping the best powers, and in truth she needed no magic goblet to win hearts.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Aspect obnoxious to the gaze will pour water on the fire Everything that exists moves onward to destruction and decay Trouble does not enhance beauty

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In answer to various questions we have received on this:

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Page 35

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Page 38

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