

The Emperor — Volume 06 eBook

The Emperor — Volume 06 by Georg Ebers

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CHAPTER I.

Dame Hannah had watched by Selene till sunrise and indefatigably cooled both her injured foot and the wound in her head. The old physician was not dissatisfied with the condition of his patient, but ordered the widow to lie down for a time and to leave the care of her for a few hours to her young friend. When Mary was alone with the sick girl and had laid the fresh cold handkerchief in its place, Selene turned her face towards her and said:

“Then you were at Lochias yesterday. Tell me how you found them all there. Who guided you to our lodgings and did you see my little brother and sisters?”

“You are not yet quite free of fever, and I do not know how much I ought to talk to you—but I would with all my heart.”

The words were spoken kindly and there was a deep loving light in the eyes of the deformed girl as she said them. Selene excited not merely her sympathy and pity, but her admiration too, for she was so beautiful, so totally different from herself, and in every little service she rendered her, she felt like some despised beggar whom a prince might have permitted to wait upon him. Her hump had never seemed to her so bent, nor her brown skin so ugly at any other time as it did to-day, when side by side with this symmetrical and delicate girlish form, rounded to such tender contours.

But Mary felt not the smallest movement of envy. She only felt happy to help Selene, to serve her, to be allowed to gaze at her although she was a heathen. During the night too, she had prayed fervently that the Lord might graciously draw to himself this lovely, gentle creature, that He might permit her to recover, and fill her soul with the same love for the Saviour that gave joy to her own. More than once she had longed to kiss her, but she dared not, for it seemed to her as though the sick girl were made of finer stuff than she herself.

Selene felt tired, very tired, and as the pain diminished, a comfortable sense stole over her of peace and respite in the silent and loving homeliness of her surroundings; a feeling that was new and very soothing, though it was interrupted, now and again, by her anxiety for those at home. Dame Hannah's presence did her good, for she fancied she recognized in her voice something that had been peculiar to her mother's, when she had played with her and pressed her with special affection to her heart.

In the papyrus factory, at the gumming-table, the sight of the little hunchback had disgusted Selene, but here she observed what good eyes she had, and how kind a voice, and the care with which Mary lifted the compress from her foot—as softly, as if in her own hands she felt the pain that Selene was suffering—and then laid another on the broken ankle, aroused her gratitude. Her sister Arsinoe was a vain and thorough



Alexandrian girl, and she had nicknamed the poor thing after the ugliest of the Hellenes who had besieged Troy. "Dame Thersites," and Selene herself had often repeated it. Now she forgot the insulting name altogether, and met the objections of her nurse by saying:



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“The fever cannot be much now; if you tell me something I shall not think so constantly of this atrocious pain. I am longing to be at home. Did you see the children?”

“No, Selene. I went no farther than the entrance of your dwelling, and the kind gate-keeper’s wife told me at once that I should find neither your father nor your sister, and that your slave-woman was gone out to buy cakes for the children.”

“To buy them!” exclaimed Selene in astonishment. “The old woman told me too that the way to your apartments led through several rooms in which slaves were at work, and that her son, who happened to be with her, should accompany me, and so he did, but the door was locked, and he told me I might entrust his mother with my commission. I did so, for she looked as if she were both judicious and kind.”

“That she is.”

“And she is very fond of you, for when I told her of your sufferings the bright tears rolled down her cheeks, and she praised you as warmly, and was as much troubled as if you had been her own daughter.”

“You said nothing about our working in the factory?” asked Selene anxiously.

“Certainly not, you had desired me not to mention it. I was to say everything that was kind to you from the old lady.”

For several minutes the two girls were silent, then Selene asked:

“Did the gate-keeper’s son who accompanied you also hear of the disaster that had befallen me?”

“Yes, on the way to your rooms he was full of fun and jokes, but when I told him that you had gone out with your damaged foot and now could not get home again, and were being treated by the leech, he was very angry and used blasphemous language.”

“Can you remember what he said?”

“Not perfectly, but one thing I still recollect. He accused his gods of having created a beautiful work only to spoil it, nay he abused them” Mary looked down as she spoke, as if she were repeating something ill to tell, but Selene colored slightly with pleasure, and exclaimed eagerly, as if to outdo the sculptor in abuse:

“He is quite right, the powers above act in such a way—”

“That is not right,” said the deformed girl reprovingly.



“What?” asked the patient. “Here you live quietly to yourselves in perfect peace and love. Many a word that I heard dame Hannah say has stuck in my mind, and I can see for myself that you act as kindly as you speak. The gods no doubt are good to you!”

“God is for each and all.”

“What!” exclaimed Selene with flashing eyes. “For those whose every pleasure they destroy? For the home of eight children whom they rob of their mother? For the poor whom they daily threaten to deprive of their bread-winner?”

“For them too, there is a merciful God,” interrupted dame Hannah who had just come into the room. “I will lead you to the loving Father in Heaven who cares for us all as if we were His children; but not now—you must rest and neither talk nor hear of anything that can excite your fevered blood. Now I will rearrange the pillow under your head. Mary will wet a fresh compress and then you must try to sleep.”



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"I cannot," replied Selene, while Hannah shook her pillows and arranged them carefully. "Tell me about your God who loves us."

"By-and-bye, dear child. Seek Him and you will find Him, for of all His children He loves them best who suffer."

"Those who suffer?" asked Selene, in surprise. "What has a God in his Olympian joys to do with those who suffer?"

"Be quiet, child," interrupted Hannah, patting the sick girl with a soothing hand, "you soon will learn how God takes care of you and that Another loves you."

"Another," muttered Selene, and her cheeks turned crimson.

She thought at once of Pollux, and asked herself why the story of her sufferings should have moved him so deeply if he were not in love with her. Then she began to seek some colorable ground for what she had heard as she went past the screen behind which he had been working. He had never told her plainly that he loved her. Why should he, an artist and a bright, high spirited young fellow, not be allowed to jest with a pretty girl, even if his heart belonged to another. No, she was not indifferent to him: that she had felt that night when she had stood as his model, and now—as she thought—I could guess, nay, feel sure of, from Mary's story.

The longer she thought of him, the more she began to long to see him whom she had loved so dearly even as a child. Her heart had never yet beat for any other man, but since she had met Pollux again in the hall of the Muses, his image had filled her whole soul, and what she now felt must be love—could be nothing else. Half awake, but half asleep, she pictured him to herself, entering this quiet room, sitting down by the head of her couch, and looking with his kind eyes into hers. Ah! and how could she help it—she sat up and opened her arms to him.

"Be still, my child, he still," said Hannah. "It is not good for you to move about so much."

Selene opened her eyes, but only to close them again and to dream for some time longer till she was startled from her rest by loud voices in the garden. Hannah left the room, and her voice presently mingled with those of the other persons outside, and when she returned her cheeks were flushed and she could not find fitting words in which to tell her patient what she had to say.

"A very big man, in the most outrageous dress," she said at last, "wanted to be let in; when the gatekeeper refused, he forced his way in. He asked for you."

"For me," said Selene, blushing.



“Yes, my child, he brought a large and beautiful nosegay of flowers, and said ‘your friend at Lochias sends you his greeting.’”

“My friend at Lochias?” murmured thoughtfully Selene to herself. Then her eyes sparkled with gladness, and she asked quickly:

You said the man who brought the flowers was very tall.”

“He was.”

“Oh please, dame Hannah, let me see the flowers?” cried Selene, trying to raise herself.



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“Have you a lover, child?” asked the widow.

“A lover?—no, but there is a young man with whom we always used to play when we were quite little—an artist, a kind, good man—and the nosegay must be from him.”

Hannah looked with sympathy at the girl, and signing to Mary she said:

“The nosegay is a very large one. You may see it, but it must not remain in the room; the smell of so many flowers might do you harm.”

Mary rose from her seat at the head of the bed, and whispered to the sick girl:

“Is that the tall gate-keeper’s son?” Selene nodded, smiling, and as the women went away she changed her position from lying on one side, stretched herself out on her back, pressed her hand to her heart, and looked upwards with a deep sigh. There was a singing in her ears, and flashes of colored light seemed to dance before her closed eyes. She drew her breath with difficulty, but still it seemed as though the air she drew in was full of the perfume of flowers.

Hannah and Mary carried in the enormous bunch of flowers. Selene’s eyes shone more brightly, and she clasped her hands in admiration. Then she made them show her the lovely, richly-tinted and fragrant gift, first on one side and then on the other, buried her face in the flowers, and secretly kissed the delicate petals of a lovely, half-opened rosebud. She felt as if intoxicated, and the bright tears flowed in slow succession down her cheeks. Mary was the first to detect the brooch stuck into the ribbons that tied the stems of the flowers. She unfastened it and showed it to Selene, who hastily took it out of her hand. Blushing deeper and deeper, she fixed her eyes on the intaglio carved on the stone of the love god sharpening his arrows. She felt her pain no more pain, she felt quite well, and at the same time glad, proud, too happy. Dame Hannah noted her excitement with much anxiety; she nodded to Mary and said:

“Now my daughter, this must do; we will place the flowers outside the window so that you may see them.”

“Already,” said Selene, in a regretful tone, and she broke off a few violets and roses from the crowded mass. When she was alone again, she laid the flowers down and once more tenderly contemplated the figures on the handsome gem. It had no doubt been engraved by Teuker, the brother of Pollux. How fine the carving was, how significant the choice of the subject represented! Only the heavy gold setting disturbed the poor child, who for so many years had had to stint and contrive with her money. She said to herself that it was wrong of the young fellow, who, besides being poor, had to support his sister, to rush into such an outlay for her. But his gift gave her none the less pleasure, out of her own possessions nothing would have seemed too precious to give him. She would teach him to be saving by-and-bye.



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The women presently returned after they had with much trouble set up the nosegay outside the window, and they renewed the wet handkerchief without speaking. She did not in the least want to talk, she was listening with so much pleasure to the fair promises which her fancy was making, and wherever she turned her eyes they fell on something she could love, The flowers on her bed, the brooch in her hand, the nosegay outside the window, and never dreaming that another—not the man she loved—could have sent it to her, another for whom she cared even less than for the Christians who walked up and down in Paulina's garden, under her window. There she lay, full of sweet contentment and secure of a love that had never been hers—of possessing the heart of a man who never once thought of her, but who, only a few hours since, had rushed off with her sister, intoxicated with joy and delight. Poor Selene!

And her next dreams were of untroubled happiness, but the minutes flew after each other, each bringing her nearer to waking—and what a waking!

Her father had not come, as he had intended, to see her before going to the prefect's house with Arsinoe. His desire to conduct his daughter to Julia in a dress worthy of her prospects had detained him a long time, and even then he had not succeeded in his object. All the weavers, and the shops were closed, for every workman, whether slave or free, was taking part in the festivities, and when the hour fixed by the prefect drew near, his daughter was still sitting in her litter, in her simple white dress and her modest peplum, bound with blue ribbon, which looked even more insignificant by day than in the evening.

The nosegay which had been given to Arsinoe by Verus gave her much pleasure, for a girl is always pleased with beautiful flowers—nay, they have something in common. As she and her father approached the prefect's house Arsinoe grew frightened, and her father could not conceal his vexation at being obliged to take her to the lady Julia in so modest a garb. Nor was his gloomy humor at all enlivened when he was left to wait in the anteroom while Julia and the wife of Verus, aided by Balbilla chose for his daughter the finest colored and costliest stuffs of the softest wool, silk, and delicate bombyx tissue. This sort of occupation has this peculiarity, that the longer time it takes the more assistance is needed, and the steward had to submit to wait fully two hours in the prefect's anteroom, which gradually grew fuller and fuller of clients and visitors. At last Arsinoe came back all glowing and full of the beautiful things that were to be prepared for her.

Her father rose slowly from his easy seat, and as she hastened towards him the door opened, and through it came Plutarch, freshly wreathed, freshly decked with flowers which were fastened to the breast-folds of his gallium, and lifted into the room by his two human crutches. Every one rose as he came in, and when Keraunus saw that the chief lawyer of the city, a man of ancient family, bowed before him, he did likewise. Plutarch's eyesight was stronger than his legs were, and where a pretty woman was to be seen, it

was always very keen. He perceived Arsinoe as soon as he had crossed the threshold and waved both hands towards her, as if she were an old and favorite acquaintance.



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The sweet child had quite bewitched him; in his younger days he would have given anything and everything to win her favor; now he was satisfied to make his favor pleasing to her; he touched her playfully two or three times on the arm and said gaily:

“Well pretty Roxana, has dame Julia done well with the dresses?”

“Oh! they have chosen such pretty, such really lovely things!” exclaimed the girl.”

“Have they?” said Plutarch, to conceal by speech the fact that he was meditating on some subject; “Have they? and why should they not?”

Arsinoe’s washed dress had caught the old man’s eye, and remembering that Gabinius the curiosity-dealer had that very morning been to him to enquire whether Arsinoe were not in fact one of his work-girls, and to repeat his statement that her father was a beggarly toady, full of haughty airs, whose curiosities, of which he contemptuously mentioned a few, were worth nothing, Plutarch was hastily asking himself how he could best defend his pretty protege against the envious tongues of her rivals; for many spiteful speeches of theirs had already come to his ears.

“Whatever the noble Julia undertakes is always admirably done,” he said aloud, and he added in a whisper: “The day after to-morrow when the goldsmiths have opened their workshops again, I will see what I can find for you. I am falling in a heap, hold me up higher Antaeus and Atlas. So.—Yes, my child you look even better from up here than from a lower level. Is the stout man standing behind you your father?”

“Yes.”

“Have you no mother?”

“She is dead.”

“Oh!” said Plutarch in a tone of regret. Then turning to the steward he said:

“Accept my congratulations on having such a daughter Keraunus. I hear too that you have to supply a mother’s place to her.”

“Alas sir! she is very like my poor wife, since her death I live a joyless life.”

“But I hear that you take pleasure in collecting rare and beautiful objects. This is a taste we have in common. Are you inclined to part with the cup that belonged to my namesake Plutarch? It must be a fine piece of work from what Gabinius tells me.”

“That it is,” replied the steward proudly. “It was a gift to the philosopher from Trajan; beautifully carved in ivory. I cannot bear to part with such a gem but,” and as he spoke



he lowered his voice. "I am under obligations to you, you have taken charge of my daughter's outfit and to offer you some return I will—"

"That is quite out of the question," interrupted Plutarch, who knew men, and who saw from the steward's pompous pretentiousness that the dealer had done him no injustice in describing him as overbearing. "You are doing me an honor by allowing me to contribute what I can towards decorating our Roxana. I beg you to send me the cup, and whatever price you put upon it, I, of course, shall pay, that is quite understood."

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Keraunus had a brief internal conflict with himself. If he had not so sorely needed money, if he had not so keenly desired to see a young and comely slave walking behind him, he would have adhered to his purpose of presenting the cup to Plutarch; as it was he cleared his throat, looked at the ground, and said with an embarrassed manner and without a trace of his former confidence:

“I remain your debtor, and it seems you do not wish this business to be mixed up with other matters. Well then, I had two thousand drachmae for a sword that belonged to Antony.”

“Then certainly,” interrupted Plutarch, “the cup, the gift of Trajan, must be worth double, particularly to me who am related to the illustrious owner. May I offer you four thousand drachmae for your precious possession?”

“I am anxious to oblige you, and so I say yes,” replied the steward with much dignity, and he squeezed Arsinoe’s little finger, for she was standing close to him. Her hand had for some time been touching his in token of warning that he should adhere to his first intention of making the cup a present to Plutarch.

As the pair, so unlike each other, quitted the anteroom, Plutarch looked after them with a meaning smile and thought to himself: “That is well done. How little pleasure I generally have from my riches! How often when I see a sturdy porter I would willingly change places with him! But to-day I am glad to have as much money as I could wish. Sweet child! She must have a new dress of course for the sake of appearance, but really her beauty did not suffer from the washed-out rag of a dress. And she belongs to me, for I have seen her at the factory among the workwomen, of that I am certain.”

Keraunus had gone out with his daughter and once outside the prefect’s house, he could not help chuckling aloud, while he patted his daughter on the shoulder, and whispered to her:

“I told you so child! we shall be rich yet, we shall rise in life again and need not be behind the other citizens in any thing.”

“Yes, father, but it is just because you believe that, that you ought to have given the cup to the old man.”

“No,” replied Keraunus, “business is business, but by and bye I will repay him tenfold for all he does for you now, by giving him my painting by Apelles. And Julia shall have the pair of sandal-straps set with cut-gems that came off a sandal of Cleopatra’s.”

Arsinoe looked down, for she knew what these treasures were worth, and said:

“We can consider all that later.”



Then she and her father got into the litters that had been waiting for them, and without which Keraunus thought he could no longer exist, and they were carried to the garden of Pudeus' widow.

Their visit came to interrupt Selene's blissful dreams. Keraunus behaved with icy coldness to dame Hannah, for it afforded him a certain satisfaction to make a display of contempt for every thing Christian. When he expressed his regret that Selene should have been obliged to remain in her house, the widow replied:



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“She is better here than in the street, at any rate.” And when Keraunus went on to say that he would take nothing as a gift and would pay her for her care of his daughter, Hannah answered:

“We are happy to do all we can for your child, and Another will reward us.”

“That I certainly forbid,” exclaimed the steward wrathfully.

“We do not understand each other,” said the Christian pleasantly. “I do not allude to any mortal being, and the reward we work for is not gold and possessions, but the happy consciousness of having mitigated the sufferings of a fellow-creature.”

Keraunus shrugged his shoulders, and after desiring Selene to ask the physician when she might be taken home, he went away.

“I will not leave you here an instant longer than is necessary,” he said as urgently as though she were in some infected house; he kissed her forehead, bowed to Hannah as loftily as though he had just bestowed an alms upon her, and departed, without listening to Selene’s assurances that she was extremely happy and comfortable with the widow.

The ground had long burnt under his feet, and the money in his pocket, he was now possessed of ample means to acquire a good new slave, perhaps, if he threw old Sebek into the bargain, they might even suffice to procure him a handsome Greek, who might teach the children to read and write. He could direct his first attention to the external appearance of the new member of his household, if he were a scholar as well, he would feel justified in the high price he expected to be obliged to pay for him.

As Keraunus approached the slave-market he said, not without some conscious emotion at his own paternal devotion:

“All for the credit of the house, all, and only, for the children.”

Arsinoe carried out her intention of staying with Selene; her father was to fetch her on his way home. After he was gone, Hannah and Mary left the two sisters together, for they supposed that they must wish to discuss a variety of things without the presence of strangers.

As soon as the girls were alone Arsinoe began: “Your cheeks are rosy, Selene, and you look cheerful—ah! and I, I am so happy—so happy!”

“Because you are to fill the part of Roxana?”

“That is very nice too, and who would have thought only yesterday morning that we should be so rich today. We hardly know what to do with all the money.”



“We?”

“Yes, for father has sold two objects out of his collection for six thousand drachmae.”

“Oh!” cried Selene clasping her hands, “then we can pay our most pressing debts.”

“To be sure, but that is not nearly all.”

“No?”

“Where shall I begin? Ah! Selene, my heart is so full. I am tired, and yet I could dance and sing and shout all day and all the night through till to-morrow. When I think how happy I am, my head turns, and I feel as if I must use all my self-control to keep myself from turning giddy. You do not know yet how you feel when the arrow of Eros has pierced you. Ah! I love Pollux so much, and he loves me too.”

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At these words all the color fled from Selene's cheeks, and her pale lips brought out the words:

"Pollux? The son of Euphorion, Pollux the sculptor?"

"Yes, our dear, kind, tall Pollux!" cried Arsinoe. "Now prick up your ears, and you shall hear how it all came to pass. Last night on our way to see you he confessed how much he loved me, and now you must advise me how to win over my father to our side, and very soon too. By-and-bye he will of course say yes, for Pollux can do anything he wants, and some day he will be a great man, as great as Papias, and Aristaeus, and Kealkes all put together. His youthful trick with that silly caricature—but how pale you are, Selene!"

"It is nothing—nothing at all—a pain—go on," said Selene.

"Dame Hannah begged me not to let you talk much."

"Only tell me everything; I will be quiet."

"Well, you have seen the lovely head of mother that he made," Arsinoe went on. "Standing by that we saw each other and talked for the first time after long years, and I felt directly that there was not a dearer man than he in the whole world, wide as it is. And he fell in love too with a stupid little thing like me. Yesterday evening he came here with me; and then as I went home, taking his arm in the dark through the streets, then—Oh, Selene, it was splendid, delightful! You cannot imagine!—Does your foot hurt you very much, poor dear? Your eyes are full of tears."

"Go on, tell me all, go on."

And Arsinoe did as she was desired, sparing the poor girl nothing that could widen and deepen the wound in her soul. Full of rapturous memories she described the place in the streets where Pollux had first kissed her. The shrubs in the garden where she had flung herself into his arms, her blissful walk in the moonlight, and all the crowd assembled for the festival, and finally how, possessed by the god, they had together joined the procession, and danced through the streets. She described, with tears in her eyes, how painful their parting had been, and laughed again, as she told how an ivy leaf in her hair had nearly betrayed everything to her father. So she talked and talked, and there was something that intoxicated her in her own words.

How they were affecting Selene she did not observe. How could she know that it was her narrative and no other suffering which made her sister's lips quiver so sorrowfully? Then, when she went on to speak of the splendid garments which Julia was having made for her, the suffering girl listened with only half an ear, but her attention revived



when she heard how much old Plutarch had offered for the ivory cup, and that her father proposed to exchange their old slave for a more active one.

“Our good black mouse-catching old stork looks shabby enough it is true,” said Arsinoe, “still I am very sorry he should go away. If you had been at home, perhaps father would have waited to consider.”



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Selene laughed drily, and her lips curled scornfully as she said:

“That is the way! go on! two days before you are turned out of house and home you ride in a chariot and pair!”

“You always see the worst side,” said Arsinoe with annoyance. “I tell you it will all turn out far better and nicer and more happily than we expect. As soon as we are a little richer we will buy back the old man, and keep him and feed him till he dies.”

Selene shrugged her shoulders, and her sister jumped up from her seat with her eyes full of tears. She had been so happy in telling how happy she was that she firmly believed that her story must bring brightness into the gloom of the sick girl’s soul, like sunshine after a dark night; and Selene had nothing to give her but scornful words and looks. If a friend refuses to share in joys it is hardly less wounding than if he were to abandon us in trouble.

“How you always contrive to embitter my happiness!” cried Arsinoe. “I know very well that nothing that I can do can ever be right in your eyes; still, we are sisters, and you need not set your teeth and grudge your words, and shrug your shoulders when I tell you of things which, even a stranger, if I were to confide them to her, would rejoice over with me. You are so cold and heartless! I dare say you will betray me to my father—”

But Arsinoe did not finish her sentence, for Selene looked up at her with a mixture of suffering and alarm, and said:

“I cannot be glad—I am in too much pain.” As she spoke the tears ran down her cheeks and as soon as Arsinoe saw them she felt a return of pity for the sick girl, bent over and kissed her cheeks once, twice, thrice; but Selene pushed her aside and murmured piteously:

“Leave me—pray leave me; go away, I can bear it no longer.” She turned her face to the wall, sobbing aloud. Arsinoe attempted once more to show her some marks of affection, but her sister pushed her away still more decidedly, crying out loudly, as if in desperation: “I shall die if you do not leave me alone.”

And the happier girl, whose best offerings were thus disdained by her only female friend, went weeping away to await her father’s return outside the door of the widow’s house.

When Hannah went to lay fresh handkerchiefs on Selene’s wounds she saw that she had been crying, but she did not enquire into the reason of her tears. Towards evening the widow explained to her patient that she must leave her alone for half an hour, for that she and Mary were going out to pray to their God with their brethren and sisters, and they would pray for her also.



“Leave me, only leave me,” said Selene, “as it is, so it is—there are no gods.”

“Gods?” replied Hannah. “No. But there is one good and loving Father in Heaven, and you soon shall learn to know him.”

“I know him, well!” muttered the sick girl with keen irony.



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No sooner was she alone than she sat up in bed, and flung the flowers, which had been lying on it, far from her across the room, twisted the pin of the brooch till it was broken, and did not stir a finger to save the gold setting and engraved stone when they fell between the bed and wall of the room. Then she lay staring at the ceiling, and did not stir again. It was now quite dark. The lilies and honeysuckle in the great nosegay outside the window began to smell more strongly, and their perfume forced itself inexorably on her senses, rendered painfully acute by fever. She perceived it at every breath she drew, and not for a minute would it let her forget her wrecked happiness, and the wretchedness of her heart, till the heavy sweetness of the flowers became more unendurable than the most pungent odor, and she drew the coverlet over her head to escape this new torment; but she soon cast it off again, for she thought she should be suffocated under it. An intolerable restlessness took possession of her, while the pain in her injured foot throbbed madly, the cut in her head seemed to burn, and her temples beat with an agonizing headache that contracted the muscles of her eyes. Every nerve in her body, every thought of her brain was a separate torture, and at the same time she felt herself without a stay, without protection, and wholly abandoned to some cruel influence, which tossed and tore her soul as the storm tosses the crowns of the palm-trees.

Without tears, incapable of lying still and yet punished for the slightest movement by some fresh pain, racked in every joint, not strong enough in her bewilderment to carry through a single connected thought, and yet firmly convinced that the perfume she was forced to inhale at every breath was poisoning her—destroying her—driving her mad—she lifted her damaged foot out of bed, dragged the other after it, and sat up on her couch regardless of the pain she felt, and the warnings of the physician. Her long hair fell dishevelled over her face, her arms, and her hands, in which she held her aching head; and in this new attitude the excitement of her brain and heart took fresh development.

She sat gazing at the floor with a freezing gaze, and bitter enmity towards her sister, hatred towards Pollux, contempt for her father's miserable weakness, and her own utter blindness, rang wild changes in her soul. Outside all lay in peaceful calm, and from the house in which Paulina lived the evening breeze now and again bore the pure tones of a pious hymn upon her ear. Selene never heeded it, but as the same air wafted the scent of the flowers in her face even stronger than before, she clutched her hair in her fingers and pulled it so violently that she actually groaned with the pain she gave herself.

The question as to whether her hair was less abundant and beautiful than her sister's suddenly occurred to her, and like a flash in the darkness the wish shot through her soul that she could fling Arsinoe to the ground by the hair, with the hand which was now hurting herself.



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That perfume! that horrible perfume!

She could bear it no longer. She stood up on her uninjured foot, and with very short steps she dragged herself half crying to the window, and flung the nosegay with the great jar of burnt clay down on to the ground. The vessel was broken.—It had cost poor Hannah many hardly-saved pieces not long since. Selene stood on one foot, leaning, to recover herself, against the right-hand post of the window-opening, and there she could hear more distinctly than from her couch, the voice of the waves as they broke on the stone quay just behind dame Hannah's little house. The child of the Lochias was familiar with their tones, but the clashing and gurgling of the cool, moist element against the stones had never affected her before as they did now. Her fevered blood was on fire, her foot was burning, her head was hot, and hatred seemed to consume her soul as in a slow fire; she felt as if every wave that broke upon the seawall was calling out to her: "I am cool, I am moist, I can extinguish the flame that is consuming you. I can refresh and revive you."

What had the world to offer her but new torment and new misery? But the sea—the blue dark sea was wide, and cold, and deep, and its waves promised her in insidious tones to relieve her at once of the rage of her fever, and of the burden of her life. Selene did not pause, did not reflect; she remembered neither the children whom she had so long cared for as a mother, nor her father, whose comfort and support she was—vague voices in her brain seemed to be whispering to her that the world was evil and cruel, and the abode of all the torment and care that gnawed at her heart. She felt as if she had been plunged to the temples in a pool of fire, and, like some poor wretch whose garments have been caught by the flames, she had an instinct to fly to the water, at the bottom of which she might hope to find the fulfilment of her utmost longing, sweet cold death, in which all is forgotten.

Groaning and tottering she pushed her way through the door into the garden and hobbled down to the sea, grasping her temples in her hands.

CHAPTER II.

The Alexandrians were a stiff-necked generation. Only some phenomenal sight far transcending their every-day experience could avail to make them turn their heads to stare at it, but just now there was something to look at, at every moment and in every street of the city. To-day too each one thought only of himself and of his own pleasure. Some particularly pretty, tall, or well-dressed figure would give rise to a smile or an exclamation of approval, but before one sight had been thoroughly enjoyed the inquisitive eye was seeking a fresh one.

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Thus it happened that no one paid any special attention to Hadrian and his companions who allowed themselves to be unresistingly carried along the streets by the current of the crowd; and yet each one of them was, in his way, a remarkable object. Hadrian was dressed as Silenus, Pollux as a faun. Both wore masks and the disguise of the younger man was as well suited to his pliant and vigorous figure as that of the elder to his powerful stately person. Antinous followed his master, dressed as Eros. He wore a crimson mantle and was crowned with roses, while the silver quiver on his shoulder and the bow in his hand clearly symbolized the god he was intended to represent. He too wore a mask, but his figure attracted many gazers, and many a greeting of “Long live the god of love” or “Be gracious to me oh! son of Aphrodite” was spoken as he passed.

Pollux had obtained all the things requisite for these disguises from the store of drapery belonging to his master. Papias had been out, but the young man did not deem it necessary to ask his consent, for he and the other assistants had often used the things for similar purposes with his full permission. Only as he took the quiver intended for Antinous, Pollux hesitated a little for it was of solid silver and had been given to his master by the wife of a wealthy cone-dealer, whom he had represented in marble as Artemis equipped for the chase.

“The Roman’s handsome companion,” thought the young artist as he placed the costly object in with the others in a basket, which a squinting apprentice was to carry behind him—“The Roman’s handsome companion must be made a splendid Eros—and before sunrise the useless thing will be hanging on its hook again.”

Indeed Pollux had not much time to admire the splendid appearance of the god of love he had so richly adorned, for the Roman architect was possessed by such thirst for knowledge and such inexhaustible curiosity as to the minutest details that even Pollux who was born in Alexandria, and had grown up there with his eyes very wide open, was often unable to answer his indefatigable questioning.

The grey-bearded master wanted to see every thing and to be informed on every subject. Not content with making acquaintance with the main streets and squares the public sites and buildings, he peeped into the handsomest of the private houses and asked the names, rank and fortunes of the owners. The decided way in which he told Pollux the way he wished to be conducted proved to the artist that he was thoroughly familiar with the plan of the city. And when the sagacious and enlightened man expressed his approval, nay his admiration of the broad clean streets of the town, the handsome open places, and particularly handsome buildings which abounded on all sides, the young Alexandrian who was proud of his city was delighted.

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First Hadrian made him lead him along the seashore by the Bruchiom to the temple of Poseidon, where he performed some devotions, then he looked into the garden of the palace and the courts of the adjoining museum. The Caesareum with its Egyptian gateway excited his admiration no less than the theatre, surrounded with pillared arcades in stories, and decorated with numerous statues. From thence deviating to the left they once more approached the sea to visit the great Emporium, to see the forest of masts of Eunostus, and the finely-constructed quays. They left the viaduct known as the Heptastadion to their right and the harbor of Kibotus, swarming with small merchant craft, did not detain them long.

Here they turned backs on the sea following a street which led inland through the quarter called Khakotis inhabited only by native Egyptians, and here the Roman found much to see that was noteworthy. First he and his companions met a procession of the priests who serve the gods of the Nile valley, carrying reliquaries and sacred vessels, with images of the gods and sacred animals, and tending towards the Serapeum which towered high above the streets in the vicinity. Hadrian did not visit the temple, but he inspected the chariots which carried people along an inclined road which led up the hill on which was the sanctuary, and watched devotees on foot who mounted by an endless flight of steps constructed on purpose; these grew wider towards the top, terminating in a platform where four mighty pillars bore up a boldly-curved cupola. Nothing looked down upon the temple-building which with its halls, galleries and rooms rose behind this huge canopy.

The priests with their white robes, the meagre, half-naked Egyptians with their pleated aprons and headcloths, the images of beasts and the wonderfully-painted houses in this quarter of the city, particularly attracted Hadrian's attention and made him ask many questions, not all of which could Pollux answer.

Their walk which now took them farther and farther from the sea extended to the extreme south of the town and the shores of lake Mareotis. Nile boats and vessels of every form and size lay at anchor in this deep and sheltered inland sea; here the sculptor pointed out to Hadrian the canal through which goods were conveyed to the marine fleet which had been brought down the river to Alexandria. And he pointed out to the Roman the handsome country-houses and well-tended vineyards on the shores of the lake.

"The bodies in this city ought to thrive," said Hadrian meditatively. "For here are two stomachs and two mouths by which they absorb nourishment; the sea, I mean, and this lake."

"And the harbors in each," added Pollux.

"Just so; but now it is time we should turn about," replied Hadrian, and the party soon took a road leading eastward; they walked without pause through the quiet streets

inhabited by the Christians, and finally through the Jews' quarter. In the heart of this quarter many houses were shut up, and there were no signs to be seen of the gay doings which crowded on the sense and fancy in the heathen part of the town, for the stricter among the Hebrews held sternly aloof, from the holiday festivities in which most of their nation and creed who dwelt among the Greeks, took part.



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For a third time Hadrian and his companions crossed the Canopic way which formed the main artery of the city and divided it into the northern and southern halves, for he wished to look down from the hill of the Paneum on the combined effect as a whole of all that he had seen in detail. The carefully-kept gardens which surrounded this elevation swarmed with men, and the spiral path which led to the top was crowded with women and children, who came here to see the most splendid spectacle of the whole day, which closed with performances in all the theatres in the town. Before the Emperor and his escort could reach the Paneum itself the crowd suddenly packed more closely and began exclaiming among themselves, "Here they come!" "They are early to-day!" "Here they are!"

Lictors with their fasces over their shoulders were clearing the broad roadway, which led from the prefect's on the Bruchiom to the Paneum, with their staves and paying no heed to the mocking and witty speeches addressed to them by the mob wherever they appeared. One woman, as she was driven back by a Roman guardian of the peace, cried scornfully, "Give me your rods for my children and do not use them on unoffending citizens."

"There is an axe hidden among the faggots," added an Egyptian letter-writer in a warning voice.

"Bring it here," cried a butcher. "I can use it to slaughter my beasts." The Romans as they heard these bandied words felt the blood mounting to their faces, but the prefect, who knew his Alexandrians well, had counselled them to be deaf; to see everything but to hear nothing. Now there appeared a cohort of the Twelfth Legion, who were quartered in garrison in Egypt, in their richest arms and holiday uniforms. Behind them came two files of particularly tall lictors wearing wreaths, and they were followed by several hundred wild beasts, leopards and panthers, giraffes, gazelles, antelopes, and deer, all led by dark-colored Egyptians. Then came a richly-dressed and much bewreathed Dionysian chorus with the sound of tambourines and lyres, double flutes and triangles, and finally, drawn by ten elephants and twenty white horses, a large ship, resting on wheels and gilt from stem to stern, representing the vessel in which the Tyrrhenian pirates were said to have carried off the young Dionysus when they had seen the black-haired hero on the shore in his purple garments. But the miscreants—so the myth went on to say— were not allowed long to rejoice in their violence, for hardly had the ship reached the open sea when the fetters dropped from the god, vines entwined the sails in sudden luxuriance, tendrils encumbered the oars and rudder, heavy grapes clustered round the ropes, and ivy clung to the mast and shrouded the seats and sides of the vessel. Dionysus is equally powerful on sea and on land; in the pirates' ship he assumed the form of a lion, and the pirates, filled with terror, flung themselves into the sea, and in the form of dolphins followed their lost bark.



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All this Titianus had caused to be represented just as the Homeric hymns described it, out of slight materials, but richly and elegantly decorated, in order to provide a feast for the eyes of the Alexandrians, with the intention of riding in it himself, with his wife and the most illustrious of the Romans who formed the Empress' suite, to enjoy all the Holiday doings in the chief streets of the city. Young and old, great and small, men and women, Greeks, Romans, Jews, Egyptians, foreigners dark and fair, with smooth hair or crisp wool, crowded with equal eagerness to the edge of the roadway to see the gorgeous boat.

Hadrian, far more anxious to see the show than his younger but less excitable favorite, pushed into the front rank, and as Antinous was trying to follow him, a Greek boy, whom he had shoved aside, snatched his mask from his face, threw himself on the ground, and slipped nimbly off with his booty. When Hadrian looked round for the Bithyman, the ship-in which the prefect was standing between the images of the Emperor and Empress, while Julia, Balbilla, and her companion, and other Roman lords and ladies were sitting in it—had come quite near to them. His sharp eye had recognized them all, and fearing that the lad's uncovered face would betray them he cried out:

“Turn round and get into the crowd again.” The favorite immediately obeyed, and only too glad to escape from the crowd, which was a thing he detested, he sat down on a bench close to the Paneum, and looked dreamily at the ground while he thought of Selene and the nosegay he had sent her, neither seeing nor hearing anything of what was going on around him.

When the gaudy ship left the gardens of the Paneum and turned into the Canopic way, the crowd pursued it in a dense mass, hallooing and shouting. Like a torrent suddenly swelled by a storm it rushed on, surging and growing at each moment, and carrying with it even those who tried to resist its force. Thus even Hadrian and Pollux were forced to follow in its wake, and it was not till they found themselves in the broad Canopic way that they were able to come to a stand-still. The broad roadway of this famous street was bordered on each side by a long vista of colonnade, and it extended from one end of the city to the other. There were hundreds of the Corinthian columns which supported the roof that covered the footway, and near to one of these the Emperor and Pollux succeeded at last in effecting a halt and taking breath.

Hadrian's first thought was for his favorite, and being averse to venturing himself once more to mix with the crowd, he begged the sculptor to go and seek him and conduct him safely.

“Will you wait for me here?” asked Pollux.

“I have known a pleasanter halting place,” sighed the Emperor.

“So have I,” answered the artist. “But that tall door there, wreathed round with boughs of poplar and ivy, leads into a cook-shop where the gods themselves might be content to find themselves.”



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“Then I will wait there.”

“But I warn you to eat as much as you can, for the Olympian table’ as kept by Lykortas, the Corinthian, is the dearest eating-house in the whole city. None but the richest are his guests.”

“Very good,” laughed Hadrian. “Only find my assistant a new mask and bring him back to me. It will not ruin me quite, even if I pay for a supper for all three of us, and on a holiday one expects to spend something.”

“I hope you may not live to repent,” retorted Pollux. “But a long fellow like me is a good trencherman, and can do his part with the wine-jar.”

“Only show me what you can do,” cried Hadrian after him as Pollux hurried off. “I owe you a supper at any rate, for that cabbage stew of your mother’s.”

While Pollux went to seek the Bithyman in the vicinity of the Paneum, the Emperor entered the eating house, which the skill of the cook had made the most frequented and fashionable in Alexandria. The place in which most of the customers of the house dined, consisted of a large open hall, surrounded by arcades which were roofed in on three of its sides and closed by a wall on its fourth; in these arcades stood couches, on which the guests reclined singly, or in couples, or in larger groups, and ordered the dishes and liquors which the serving slaves, pretty boys with curling hair and hand some dresses, placed before them on low tables. Here all was noise and bustle; at one table an epicure devoted himself silently to the enjoyment of some carefully-prepared delicacy, at another a large circle of men seemed to be talking more eagerly than they either eat or drank, and from several of the smaller rooms behind the wall at the back of the hall came sounds of music and song, and the bold laughter of men and women.

The Emperor asked for a private room, but they were all occupied, and he was requested to wait a little while, for that one of the adjoining. rooms would very soon be vacant. He had taken off his mask, and though he was not particularly afraid of being recognized in his disguise he chose a couch that was screened by a broad pillar in one of the arcades at the inner side of the court, and which, now that evening was beginning to fall was already in obscurity. There he ordered, first some wine and then some oysters to begin, with; while he was eating these he called one of the superintendents and discussed with him the details of the supper he wished presently to be served to himself and his two guests. During this conversation the bustling host came to make his bow to his new customer, and seeing that he had to do with a man fully conversant with all the pleasures of the table, he remained to attend on him, and entered with special zeal into Hadrian’s various requirements.

There was, too, plenty to be seen in the court, which roused the curiosity of the most inquisitive and enquiring man of his time. In the large space enclosed by the arcades,



and under the eyes of the guests, on gridirons and hearths, over spits and in ovens the various dishes were prepared which were served up by the slaves. The cooks prepared their savory messes on large, clean tables, and the scene of their labors, which, though enclosed by cords was open to public gaze was surrounded by a small market, where however only the choicest of wares were displayed.



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Here in tempting array was every variety of vegetable reared on Greek or Egyptian soil; here speckless fruits of every size and hue were set out, and there ready baked, shining, golden-brown pasties were displayed. Those containing meat, fish or the mussels of Canopus were prepared in Alexandria itself, but others containing fruit or the leaves of flowers were brought from Arsinoe on the shores of Lake Moeris, for in that neighborhood the cultivation of fruit and horticulture generally were pursued with the greatest success. Meat of all sorts lay or hung in suitable places; there were juicy hams from Cyrene, Italian sausages and uncooked joints of various slaughtered beasts. By them lay or hung game and poultry in select abundance, and a large part of the court was taken up by a tank in which the choicest of the scaly tribes of the Nile, and of the lakes of Northern Egypt, were swimming about as well as the Muraena and other fish of Italian breed. Alexandrian crabs and the mussels, oysters, and cray-fish of Canopus and Klysmia were kept alive in buckets or jars. The smoked meats of Mendes and the neighborhood of Lake Moeris hung on metal pegs, and in a covered but well-aired room, sheltered from the sun lay freshly-imported fish from the Mediterranean and Red Sea. Every guest at the 'Olympian table' was allowed here to select the meat, fruit, asparagus, fish, or pasty which he desired to have cooked for him. The host, Lykortas, pointed out to Hadrian an old gentleman who was busy in the court that was so prettily decorated with still-life, engaged in choosing the raw materials of a banquet he wished to give some friends in the evening of this very day.

"It is all very nice and extremely good," said Hadrian, "but the gnats and flies which are attracted by all those good things are unendurable, and the strong smell of food spoils my appetite."

"It is better in the side-rooms," said the host. "In the one kept for you the company is now preparing to depart. In behind here the sophists Demetrius and Pancrates are entertaining a few great men from Rome, rhetoricians or philosophers or something of the kind. Now they are bringing in the fine lamps and they have been sitting and talking at that table ever since breakfast. There come the guests out of the side room. Will you take it?"

"Yes," said Hadrian. "And when a tall young man comes to ask for the architect Claudius Venato, from Rome, bring him in to me."

"An architect then, and not a sophist or a rhetorician," said mine host, looking keenly at the Emperor.

"Silenus,—a philosopher!"

"Oh the two vociferous friends there go about even on other days naked and with ragged cloaks thrown over their lean shoulders. To-day they are feeding at the expense of rich Josephus."



“Josephus! he must be a Jew and yet he is making a large hole in the ham.”

“There would be more swine in Cyrene if there were no Jews; they are Greeks like ourselves, and eat everything that is good.”



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Hadrian went into the vacant room, lay down on a couch that stood by the wall, and urged the slaves who were busied in removing the dishes and vessels used by his predecessors, and which were swarming with flies. As soon as he was alone he listened to the conversation which was being carried on between Favorinus, Florus, and their Greek guests. He knew the two first very well, and not a word of what they were saying escaped his keen ear.

Favorinus was praising the Alexandrians in a loud voice, but in flowing and elegantly-accented Greek. He was a native of Arelas—[Arles]—in Gaul, but no Hellene of them all could pour forth a purer flow of the language of Demosthenes than he. The self-reliant, keen, and vivacious natives of the African metropolis were far more to his taste than the Athenians; these dwelt only in, and for, the past; the Alexandrians rejoiced in the present. Here an independent spirit still survived, while on the shores of the Ilissus there were none but servile souls who made a merchandise of learning, as the Alexandrians did of the products of Africa and the treasures of India. Once when he had fallen into disgrace with Hadrian, the Athenians had thrown down his statue, and the favor or disfavor of the powerful weighed with him more than intellectual greatness, valuable labors, and true merit.

Florus agreed with Favorinus on the whole, and declared that Rome must be freed from the intellectual influence of Athens; but Favorinus did not admit this; he opined that it was very difficult for any one who had left youth behind him, to learn anything new, thus referring, with light irony, to the famous work in which Florus had attempted to divide the history of Rome into four periods, corresponding to the ages of man, but had left out old age, and had treated only of childhood, youth, and manhood. Favorinus reproached him with overestimating the versatility of the Roman genius, like his friend Fronto, and underrating the Hellenic intellect.

Florus answered the Gaulish orator in a deep voice, and with such a grand flow of words, that the listening Emperor would have enjoyed expressing his approbation, and could not help considering the question as to how many cups of wine his usually placid fellow-countryman might have taken since breakfast to be so excited. When Florus tried to prove that under Hadrian's rule Rome had risen to the highest stage of its manhood, his friend, Demetrius, of Alexandria, interrupted him, and begged him to tell him something about the Emperor's person. Florus willingly acceded to this request, and sketched a brilliant picture of the administrative talent, the learning, and the capability of the Emperor.

"There is only one thing," he cried eagerly, "that I cannot approve of; he is too little at Rome, which is now the core and centre of the world. He must need see every thing for himself, and he is always wandering restlessly through the provinces. I should not care to change with him!"



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“You have expressed the same ideas in verse,” said Favorinus.

“Oh! a jest at supper-time. So long as I am in Alexandria and waiting on Caesar I can make myself very comfortable every day at the ‘Olympian table’ of this admirable cook.”

“But how runs your poem?” asked Pancrates.

“I have forgotten it, and it deserved no better fate,” replied Florus.

“But I,” laughed the Gaul, “I remember the beginning. The first lines, I think, ran thus:

“Let others envy Caesar’s lot;
To wander through Britannia’s dales
And be snowed up in Scythian vales
Is Caesar’s taste—I’d rather not?”

As he heard these words Hadrian struck his fist into the palm of his left hand, and while the feasters were hazarding guesses as to why he was so long in coming to Alexandria, he took out the folding tablet he was in the habit of carrying in his money-bag, and hastily wrote the following lines on the wax face of it:

‘Let others envy Florus’ lot;
To wander through the shops for drink,
Or, into foolish dreaming sink
In a cook-shop, where sticky flies
Buzz round him till he shuts his eyes
Is Florus’ taste—I’d rather not?’

[From verses by Hadrian and Florus, preserved in Spartianus.]

Hardly had he ended the lines, muttering them to himself with much relish as he wrote, when the waiter showed in Pollux. The sculptor had failed to find Antinous, and suggested that the young man had probably gone home; he also begged that he might not be detained long at supper, for he had met his master Papias, who had been extremely annoyed by his long absence. Hadrian was no longer satisfied with the artist’s society, for the conversation in the next room was to him far more attractive than that of the worthy young fellow. He himself was anxious to quit the meal soon, for he felt restless and uneasy. Antinous could no doubt easily find his way to Lochias, but recollections of the evil omens he had observed in the heavens last night flitted across his soul like bats through a festal hall, marring the pleasure on which he again tried to concentrate it, in order to enjoy his hours of liberty.

Even Pollux was not so light-hearted as before. His long walk had made him hungry, and he addressed himself so vigorously to the excellent dishes which rapidly followed each other by his entertainer’s orders, and emptied the cup with such unflinching



diligence, that the Emperor was astonished: but the more he had to think about, the less did he talk.

Pollux, to be sure, had had his answer ready for his master, and without considering how easy it would have been to part from him in kindness, he had shortly and roundly quitted his service. Now indeed he stood on his own feet, and he was longing to tell Arsinoe and his parents of what he had done.

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During the course of the meal his mother's advice recurred to his mind: to do his best to win the favor and good will of the architect whose guest he was; but he set it aside, for he was accustomed to owe all he gained to his own exertions, and though he still keenly felt in Hadrian the superiority of a powerful mind, their expedition through the city had not brought him any nearer to the Roman. Some insurmountable barrier stood fixed between himself and this restless, inquisitive man, who required so many answers that no one else had time to ask a question, and who when he was silent looked so absorbed and unapproachable that no one would have ventured to disturb him. The bold young artist had, however, tried now and again to break through the fence, but each time, he had at once been seized with a feeling, of which he could not rid himself, that he had done something awkward and unbecoming. He felt in his intercourse with the architect as a noble dog might feel that sported with a lion, and such sport could come to no good. Thus, for various reasons, host and guest were well content when the last dish was removed. Before Pollux left the room the Emperor gave him the tablets with the verses and begged him, with a meaning smile, to desire the gate-keeper at the Caesareum to give them to Annaeus Florus the Roman. He once more urgently charged the sculptor to look about for his young friend and, if he should find him at Lochias, to tell him that he, Claudius Venator, would return home ere long. Then the artist went his way.

Hadrian still sat a long time listening to the talk close by; but after waiting for above an hour to hear some fresh mention made of himself, he paid his reckoning and went out into the Canopic way, now brilliantly lighted. There he mingled with the revellers, and walked slowly onward, seeking suspiciously and anxiously for his vanished favorite.

CHAPTER III.

Antinous, searching for his master, had wandered about in the crowd. Whenever he saw any figures of exceptional stature he followed them, but each time only to discover that he had entered on a false track. Long and persistent effort was not in his nature, so as soon as he began to get tired, he gave up the search and sat down again on a stone bench in the garden of the Paneum.

Two cynic philosophers, with unkempt hair, tangled beards, and ragged cloaks flung over their shivering bodies, sat down by him and fell into loud and contemptuous abuse of the deference shown, 'in these days,' to external things and vulgar joys, and of the wretched sensualists who regarded pleasure and splendor, rather than virtue, as the aim and end of existence. In order to be heard by the by-standers they spoke in loud tones, and the elder of the two, flourished his knotted stick as viciously, as though he had to defend himself against an attack. Antinous felt much disgusted by the hideous appearance, the coarse manners, and shrill voices of these persons, and when he rose—as the cynics' diatribe seemed especially directed against him—they scoffed at him as he went, mocking at his costume and his oiled and perfumed hair. The Bithynian made

no reply to this abuse. It was odious to him, but he thought it might perhaps have amused Caesar.

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He wandered on without thinking; the street in which he presently found himself must no doubt lead to the sea, and if he could once find himself on the shore he could not fail to make his way to Lochias. By the time it was growing dark he was once more standing outside the little gate-house, and there he learnt from Doris that the Roman and her son had not yet returned.

What was he to do alone in the vast empty palace? Were not the very slaves free to-day? Why should not he too for once enjoy life independently and in his own way? Full of the pleasant sense of being his own master and at liberty to walk in a road of his own choosing, he went onwards, and when he presently passed by the stall of a flower-seller, he began once more to think eagerly of Selene and the nosegay, which must long since have reached her hands.

He had heard from Pollux in the morning that the steward's daughter was being tended by Christians in a little house not far from the sea-shore; indeed the sculptor himself had been quite excited as he told Antinous that he himself had peeped into the lighted room and had seen her. 'A glorious creature' he had called her, and had said that she had never looked more beautiful than in a recumbent attitude on her bed.

Antinous recalled all this and determined to venture on an attempt to see again the maiden whose image filled his heart and brain.

It was now dark and the same light which had allowed of the sculptor's seeing Selene's features might this evening reveal them to him also. Full of passion and excitement, he got into the first litter he met with. The swarthy bearers were far too slow for his longing, and more than once he flung to them as much money as they were wont to earn in a week, to urge them to a brisker pace. At last he reached his destination; but seeing that several men and women robed in white, were going into the garden, he desired the bearers to carry him farther. Close to a dark narrow lane which bounded the widow's garden-plot on the east and led directly to the sea, he desired them to stop, got out of the litter and bid the slaves wait for him. At the garden door he still found two men dressed in white, and one of the cynic philosophers who had sat by him on the bench near the Paneum. He paced impatiently up and down, waiting till these people should have disappeared, and thus passing again and again under the light of the torches that were stuck up by the gate.

The dry cynic's prominent eyes were everywhere at once, and as soon as he perceived the peripatetic Bithynian he flung up his arm, exclaiming, as he pointed to him with a long, lean, stiff forefinger—half to the Christians with whom he had been talking and half to the lad himself:

"What does he want. That fop! that over-dressed minion! I know the fellow; with his smooth face and the silver quiver on his shoulder he believes he is Eros in person. Be off with you, you house-rat. The women and girls in here know how to protect



themselves against the sort who parade the streets in rose-colored draperies. Take yourself off, or you will make acquaintance with the noble Paulina's slaves and clogs. Hi! gate-keeper, here! keep an eye on this fellow."



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Antinous made no answer, but slowly went back to his litter.

“To-morrow perhaps, if I cannot manage it tonight,” he thought to himself as he went; and he never thought of any other means of attaining his end, much as he longed for it. A hindrance that came in his way ceased to be a hindrance as soon as he had left it behind him, and after this reflection he acted on this occasion as on many former ones. The litter was no longer standing where he had left it; the bearers had carried it into the lane leading to the sea, for the only little abode which stood on the eastern side of it belonged to a fisherman whose wife sold thin potatoes of Pelusium beer.

Antinous went down the green alley overarched with boughs of fig, to call the negroes who were sitting in the dull light of a smoky oil-lamp. Here it was dark, but at the end of the alley the sea shone and sparkled in the moonlight; the splashing of the waves tempted him onwards and he loitered clown to the stone-bound shore. There he spied a boat dancing on the water between two piles and it came into his head that it might be possible to see the house where Selene was sleeping, from the sea.

He undid the rope which secured the boat without any difficulty; he seated himself in it, laid aside the quiver and bow, pushed off with one of the oars that lay at the bottom of the boat and pulled with steady strokes towards the long path of light where the moon touched the crest of each dancing wavelet with unresting tremulous flecks of silver.

There lay the widow's garden. In that small white house must the fair pale Selene be sleeping, but though he rowed hither and thither, backwards and forwards, he could not succeed in discovering the window of which Pollux had spoken. Might it not be possible to find a spot where he could disembark and then make his way into the garden? He could see two little boats, but they lay in a narrow walled canal and this was closed by an iron railing. Beyond, was a terrace projecting into the sea, and surrounded by an elegant balustrade of little columns, but it rose straight out of the sea on smooth high walls. But there—what was that gleaming under the two palm-trees which, springing from the same root, had grown together tall and slender—was not that a flight of marble steps leading down to the sea?

Antinous dipped his right oar in the waves with a practised hand to alter the head of the boat and was in the act of pulling his hand up to make his stroke against the pressure of the waves—but he did not complete the movement, nay he counteracted the stroke by a dexterous reverse action; a strange vision arrested his attention. On the terrace, which lay full in the bright moonlight, there appeared a white-robed figure with long floating hair.

How strangely it moved! It went now to one side and now to the other, then again it stood still and clasped its head in its hands. Antinous shuddered, he could not help thinking of the Daimons of which Hadrian so often spoke. They were said to be of half-divine and half-human nature, and sometimes appeared in the guise of mortals.



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Or was Selene dead and was the white figure her wandering shade? Antinous clutched the handles of the oars, now merely floating on the water, and bending forward gazed fixedly and with bated breath at the mysterious being which had now reached the balustrade of the terrace, now—he saw quite plainly—covered its face with both hands, leaned far over the parapet, and now as a star falls through the sky on a clear night, as a fruit drops from the tree in autumn, the white form of the girl dropped from the terrace. A loud cry of anguish broke the silence of the night which veiled the world, and almost at the same instant the water splashed and gurgled up, and the moonbeams, cold and bright as ever, were mirrored in the thousand drops that flew up from its surface.

Was this Antinous, the indolent dreamer, who so promptly plunged his oars in the water, pulled a powerful stroke, and then, when in a few seconds after her fall, the form of the drowning girl came to the surface again quite close to the boat, flung aside the oar that was in his way? Leaning far over the edge of the boat he seized the floating garment of the drowning creature—it was a woman, no Daimon nor shade—and drew her towards him. He succeeded in raising her high out of the waves, but when he tried to pull her fairly out of her watery bed, the weight, all on one side of the boat, was too great; it turned over and Antinous was in the sea.

The Bithyman was a good swimmer. Before the white form could sink a second time he had caught at it once more with his right hand and taking care that her head should not again touch the surface of the water, he swam with his left arm and legs towards the spot where he remembered he had seen the flight of steps. As soon as his feet felt the ground he lifted the girl in both arms and a groan of relief broke from his lips as he saw the marble steps close below him. He went up them without hesitation, and then, with a swift elastic step, carried his dripping and senseless burden to the terrace where he had observed that there were benches. The wide floor of the sea-terrace, paved with smooth flags of marble, was brightly lighted by the broad moonshine, and the whiteness of the stone reflected and seemed to increase the light. There stood the benches which Antinous had seen from afar.

He laid his burden on the first he came to, and a thrill of thankful joy warmed his shivering body when the rescued woman uttered a low cry of pain which told him that he had not toiled in vain. He gently slipped his arm between the hard elbow of the marble seat and her head, to give it a somewhat softer resting-place. Her abundant hair fell in clammy tresses, covering her face like a thick but fine veil; he parted it to the right and left and then—then he sank on his knees by her side as if a sudden bolt had fallen from the blue sky above them; for the features were hers, Selene's, and the pale girl before whom he was kneeling was she herself, the woman he loved.



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Almost beside himself and trembling in every limb, he drew her closer to him and put his ear against her mouth to listen whether he had not deceived himself, whether she had not indeed fallen a victim to the waves or whether some warm breath were passing the portals of her lips.

Yes she breathed! she was alive! Full of thankful ecstasy he pressed his cheek to hers. Oh! how cold she was, icy, cold as death!

The torch of life was flickering, but he would not—could not—must not let it die out: and with all the care, rapidity and decision of the most capable man, he once more raised her, lifted her in both arms as if she were a child, and carried her straight to the house whose white walls he could see gleaming among the shrubs behind the terrace. The little lamp was still burning in dame Hannah's room, which Selene had so lately quitted; in front of the window through which the dim light came to mingle with the moonbeams, lay the flowers whose perfume had so troubled the suffering girl, and with them Hannah's clay jar, all still strewn on the ground.

Was this nosegay his gift? Very likely.

But the lamp-lighted room into which he now looked could be none other than the sick-room, which he recognized from the sculptor's account. The house-door was open and even that of the room in which he had seen the bed was unfastened; he pushed it open with his foot, entered the room, and laid Selene on the vacant couch.

There she lay as if dead; and as he looked at her immovable features, hallowed to solemnity by sorrow and suffering, his heart was touched with an ineffable solicitude, sympathy and pity; and, as a brother might bend over a sleeping sister, he bent over Selene and kissed her forehead. She moved, opened her eyes, gazed into his face—but her glance was so full of horror, so vague, glassy and bewildered, that he drew back with a shudder, and with hands uplifted could only stammer out: "Oh! Selene, Selene! do you not know me?" and as he spoke he looked anxiously in the face of the rescued girl; but she seemed not to hear him and nothing moved but her eyes which slowly followed his every movement.

"Selene!" he cried again, and seizing her inanimate hand which hung down, he pressed it passionately to his lips.

Then she gave a loud cry, a violent shiver shook her in every limb, she turned aside with sighs and groans, and at the same instant the door was opened, the little deformed girl entered the room and gave a shrill scream of terror as she saw Antinous standing by the side of her friend.

The lad himself started and, like a thief who has been caught in the act, he fled out into the night, through the garden, and as far as the gate which led into the street without



being stopped by any one. Here the gate-keeper met him, but he threw him aside with a powerful fling, and while the old man—who had grown gray in his office—caught hold of his wet chiton he tore the door open and ran on, dragging his pursuer with him for some paces. Then he flew down the street with long steps as if he were racing in the Gymnasium, and soon he felt that his pursuer, in whose hand he had left a piece of his garment, had given up the chase.



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The gate-keeper's outcry had mingled with the pious hymns of the assembled Christians in Paulina's villa, and some of them had hurried out to help capture the disturber of the peace. But the young Bithynian was swifter than they and might consider himself perfectly safe when once he had succeeded in mixing with a festal procession. Half-willingly and half-perforce, he followed the drunken throng which was making its way from the heart of the city towards the lake, where, on a lonely spot on the shore to the east of Nikropolis, they were to celebrate certain nocturnal mysteries. The goal of the singing, shouting, howling mob with whom Antinous was carried along, was between Alexandria and Canopus and far enough from Lochias; thus it fell out that it was long past midnight when Hadrian's favorite, dirty, out of breath, and his clothes torn, at last appeared in the presence of his master.

CHAPTER IV.

Hadrian had expected Antinous many hours since, and the impatience and vexation which had been long seething in him were reflected plainly enough in his sternly-bent brow and the threatening fire of his eye.

"Where have you been?" he imperiously asked.

"I could not find you, so I took a boat and went out on the lake."

"That is false."

Antinous did not answer, but merely shrugged his shoulders.

"Alone?" asked the Emperor more gently. "Alone."

"And for what purpose?"

"I was gazing at the stars."

"You!"

"And may I not, for once, tread in your footsteps?"

"Why not indeed? The lights of heaven shine for the foolish as well as for the wise. Even asses must be born under a good or an evil star. One donkey serves a hungry grammarian and feeds on used-up papyrus, while another enters the service of Caesar and is fattened up, and finds time to go star-gazing at night. What a state you are in."

"The boat upset and I fell into the water." Hadrian was startled, and observing his favorite's tangled hair in which the night wind had dried the salt water, and his torn chiton, he anxiously exclaimed:



“Go this instant and let Mastor dry you and anoint you. He too came back with a bruised hand and red eyes. Everything is upside down this accursed evening. You look like a slave that has been hunted by clogs. Drink a few cups of wine and then lie down.”

“I obey your orders, great Caesar.”

“So formal? The donkey simile vexed you.”

“You used always to have a kind word for me.”

“Yes, yes, and I shall have them again, I shall have them again. Only not to-night—go to bed.”

Antinous left him, but the Emperor paced his room, up and down with long steps, his arms crossed over his breast and his eyes fixed on the ground. His superstitious soul had been deeply disturbed by a series of evil signs which he had not only seen the previous night in the sky, but had also met on his way to Lochias, and which seemed to be beginning to be fulfilled already.



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He had left the eating house in an evil humor, the bad omens made him anxious, and though on his arrival at home he had done one or two things which he already regretted, this had certainly not been due to any adverse Daimons but to the brooding gloom of his clouded mind. Eternal circumstances, it is true, had led to his being witness to an attack made by the mob on the house of a wealthy Israelite, and it was attributable to a vexatious accident that at this juncture, he should have met Verus, who had observed and recognized him. Yes, the Spirits of evil were abroad this day, but his subsequent experiences and deeds upon reaching Lochias, would certainly not have taken place on any more fortunate day, or, to be more exact, if he had been in a calmer frame of mind; he himself alone was in fault, he alone, and no spiteful accident, nor malicious and tricky Daimon. Hadrian, to be sure, attributed to these sprites all that he had done, and so considered it irremediable; an excellent way, no doubt, of exonerating oneself from a burdensome duty, or from repairing some injustice, but conscience is a register in which a mysterious hand inexorably enters every one of our deeds, and in which all that we do is ruthlessly called by its true name. We often succeed, it is true, in effacing the record for a longer or a shorter period, but often, again, the letters on the page shine with an uncanny light, and force the inward eye to see them and to heed them.

On this particular night Hadrian felt himself compelled to read the catalogue of his actions and among them he found many a sanguinary crime, many a petty action unworthy of a far meaner soul than he; still the record commemorated many duties strictly fulfilled, much honest work, an unceasing struggle towards high aims, and an unwearied effort to feel his way intellectually, to the most remote and exalted limits possible to the human mind and comprehension.

In this hour Hadrian thought of none but his evil deeds, and vowed to the gods—whom he mocked at with his philosophical friends, and to whom he nevertheless addressed himself whenever he felt the insufficiency of his own strength and means—to build a temple here, to offer a sacrifice there, in order to expiate old crimes and divert their malice. He felt like a great man must who is threatened with the disfavor of his superiors, and who hopes to propitiate them with gifts. The haughty Roman quailed at the thought of unknown dangers, but he was far from feeling the wholesome pangs of repentance.

Hardly an hour since he had forgotten himself and had disgracefully abused his power over a weaker creature, and now he was vexed at having behaved so and not otherwise; but it never entered his head to humiliate his pride or, by offering some compensation to the offended party, tacitly to confess the injustice he had committed. Often he deeply felt his human weakness, but he was quite capable of believing in the sacredness of his imperial person, and this he always found most easy when he had trodden under foot some one who had been rash enough to insult him, or not to acknowledge his superiority. And was it not on the contemners of the gods that their heaviest punishments fell?



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To-day the terrestrial Jupiter had again crushed into the earth with his thunderbolts, an overbold mortal, and this time the son of the worthy gate-keeper was his victim. The sculptor certainly had been so unlucky as to touch Hadrian in his most sensitive spot, but a cordially benevolent feeling is not easily converted into a relentless opposition if we are not ourselves—as was the case with the Emperor—accustomed to jump from one mood to the other, are not conscious—as he was—of having it in our power directly to express our good-will or our aversion in action.

The sculptor's capacities had commanded the Emperor's esteem, his fresh and independent nature had at first suited and attracted him, but even during the walk together through the streets, the young man's uncompromising manner of treating him as an equal had become unpleasing to him. In his workshop he saw in Pollux only the artist, and delighted in his original and dashing powers; but out of it, and among men of a commoner stamp, from whom he was accustomed to meet with deference, the young man's speech and demeanor seemed unbecoming, bold, and hard to be endured. In the eating-house the huge eater and drinker, who laughingly pressed him to do his part, so as not to make a present to the landlord, had filled Hadrian with repulsion. And after this, when Hadrian had returned to Lochias, out of humor and rendered apprehensive by evil omens, and even then had not found his favorite, he impatiently paced up and down the hall of the Muses and would not deign to offer a greeting to the sculptor, who was noisily occupied behind his screens.

Pollux had passed quite as bad an evening as the Emperor. When, in his desire to see Arsinoe once more, he penetrated to the door of the steward's apartment, Keraunus had stopped his way, and sent him about his business with insulting words. In the hall of the Muses he had met his master, and had had a quarrel with him, for Papias, to whom he repeated his notice to quit, had grown angry, and had desired him then and there to sort out his own tools, and to return those that belonged to him, his master, and for the future to keep himself as far as possible from Papias' house, and from the works in progress at Locluas. On this, hard words had passed on both sides, and when Papias had left the palace and Pollux went to seek Pontius the architect, in order to discuss his future plans with him, he learnt that he too had quitted Lochias a short time before, and would not return till the following morning.

After brief reflection he determined to obey the orders of Papias and to pack his own tools together. Without paying any heed to Hadrian's presence he began to toss some of the hammers, chisels, and wooden modelling tools into one box, and others into another, doing it as recklessly as though he were minded to punish the unconscious tools as adverse creatures who had turned against him.



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At last his eye fell on Hadrian's bust of Balbilla. The hideous caricature at which he had laughed only yesterday, made him angry now, and after gazing at it thoughtfully for a few minutes his blood boiled up furiously, he hastily pulled a lath out of the partition and struck at the monstrosity with such fury that the dry clay flew in pieces, and the fragments were strewed far and wide about the workshop. The wild noise behind the sculptor's screen made the Emperor pause in his walk to see what the artist was doing; he looked on at the work of destruction, unobserved by Pollux, and as he looked the blood mounted to his head; he knit his brows in anger, a blue vein in his forehead swelled and stood out, and ominous lines appeared above his brow. The great master of state-craft could more easily have borne to hear himself condemned as a ruler than to see his work of art despised. A man who is sure of having done some thing great can smile at blame, but he, who is not confident in himself has reason to dread it, and is easily drawn into hating the critic who utters it. Hadrian was trembling with fury, he doubled his first as he lifted it in Pollux's face, and going close up to him asked in a threatening tone:

"What do you mean by that?"

The sculptor glanced round at the Emperor and answered, raising his stick for another blow:

"I am demolishing this caricature for it enrages me."

"Come here," shouted Hadrian, and clutching the girdle which confined the artist's chiton, in his strong sinewy hand, he dragged the startled sculptor in front of his Urania wrenched the lath out of his hand, struck the bust of the scarcely-finished statue off the body, exclaiming as he did so, in a voice that mimicked Pollux:

"I am demolishing this bungler's work for it enrages me!"

The artist's arms fell by his side; astonished and infuriated he stared at the destroyer of his handiwork, and cried out:

"Madman! this is enough. One blow more and you will feel the weight of my fists."

Hadrian laughed aloud, a cold hard laugh, flung the lath at Pollux's feet and said:

"Judgment against judgment—it is only fair."

"Fair?" shrieked Pollux, beside himself.

"Your wretched rubbish, which my squinting apprentice could have done as well as you, and this figure born in a moment of inspiration! Shame upon you! Once more, if you touch the Urania again I warn you, you shall learn—"



“Well, what?”

“That in Alexandria grey hairs are only respected so long as they deserve it.”

Hadrian folded his arms, stepped quite close up to Pollux, and said:

“Gently, fellow, if you value your life.”

Pollux stepped back before the imposing personage that stood before him, and, as it were scales, fell from his eyes. The marble statue of the Emperor in the Caesareum represented the sovereign in this same attitude. The architect, Claudius Venator, was none other than Hadrian.



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The young artist turned pale and said with bowed head, and in low voice as he turned to go:

“Right is always on the side of the strongest. Let me go. I am nothing but a poor artist—you are some thing very different. I know you now; you are Caesar.”

“I am Caesar,” snarled Hadrian, “and if you think more of yourself as an artist than of me, I will show you which of us two is the sparrow, and which the eagle.”

“You have the power to destroy, and I only desire—”

“The only person here who has a right to desire is myself,” cried the Emperor, “and I desire that you shall never enter this palace again, nor ever come within sight of me so long as I remain here. What to do with your kith and kin I will consider. Not another word! Away with you, I say, and thank the gods that I judge the misdeed of a miserable boy more mercifully than you dared to do in judging the work of a greater man than yourself, though you knew that he had done it in an idle hour with a few hasty touches. Be off, fellow; my slaves will finish destroying your image there, for it deserves no better fate, and because—what was it you said just now? I remember—and because it enrages me.”

A bitter laugh rang after the lad as he quitted the hall. At the entrance, which was perfectly dark, he found his master, Papias, who had not missed a word of what had passed between him and the Emperor. As Pollux went into his mother’s house he cried out:

“Oh mother, mother, what a morning, and what an evening. Happiness is only the threshold to misery.”

ETEXT EDITOR’S BOOKMARKS:

Happiness is only the threshold to misery
When a friend refuses to share in joys

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