

# Serapis — Volume 06 eBook

## Serapis — Volume 06 by Georg Ebers

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## CHAPTER XXV.

The spacious Hippodrome was filled with some thousands of spectators. At first many rows of seats had been left vacant, though usually on the eve of the great races, the people would set out soon after midnight and every place would be filled long before the games began; indeed the upper tiers of the tribune, which were built of wood and were free to all comers, with standing-room behind, were commonly so crowded early in the morning that the crush ended in a free fight.

On this occasion, the storm of the previous night, the anxiety caused by the conflict round the Serapeum, and the prevalent panic as to the approaching end of the world, kept great numbers away from their favorite diversion; but when the sky recovered its radiant blue, and when it became known that the statue of Serapis had escaped uninjured in the siege of his sanctuary—when Cynegius, the Imperial legate, and Evagrius, the city-prefect, had entered the theatre with much pomp, followed by several senators and ladies and gentlemen of rank—Christians, Heathen, and Jews—the most timid took courage; the games had been postponed for an hour, and before the first team was led into the arched shed whence the chariots started, the seats, though less densely packed than usual, were amply filled.

The number of chariots entered for competition was by no means smaller than on former occasions, for the heathen had strained every nerve to show their fellow-citizens of different creeds, and especially Caesar's representative, that, in spite of persecution and in defiance of Imperial edicts, they were still a power worthy of consideration. The Christians, on their part, did their utmost to outdo the idolaters on the same ground where, not long since, they had held quite the second place.

The Bishop's epigram: That Christianity had ceased to be the religion of the poor, was amply confirmed; the greater proportion of the places for senators, officials and rich citizens were occupied by its adherents, and the men and women who professed the Faith were by no means behind their heathen peers in magnificence of dress and jewels.

The horses, too, entered by the Christians could not fail to please the connoisseur, as they punctually made their appearance behind the starting-place, though he might have felt more confidence—and not without reason—in the heathen steeds, and more particularly in their drivers, each of whom had won on an average nine races out of ten.

The horses in the quadriga with which Marcus, the son of Mary, made his appearance in the arena had never before been driven in the Hippodrome. Demetrius, the owner's brother, had bred and trained them—four magnificent black Arabs—and they excited much interest among the knowing judges who were wont to collect and lounge about

the 'oppidum', as it was called, behind the 'carceres'—[The covered sheds or stalls in which the horses were brought



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to wait for the start.]—to inspect the racers, predict the winner, offer counsel to the drivers, and make bets. These perfect creatures were perhaps as fine as the famous team of golden bays belonging to Iphicrates, which so often had proved victorious; but the agitadores, or drivers, attracted even more interest than the horses. Marcus, though he knew how to handle the reins—he had already been seen in experimental races—could hardly hold his own against Hippias, the handsome young heathen, who, like most of the drivers in the arena, was an agitator by profession. A story was told of his having driven over a bridge which was not quite as wide as the outside edges of his chariot-wheels; and there were many witnesses to the feat he had performed of writing his mistress' name with his chariot-tracks in the sand of the Hippodrome.

The betting was freest and the wagers highest on Hippias and the team belonging to Iphicrates. Some few backed Marcus and his Arabs, but for smaller sums; and when they compared the tall but narrow-shouldered figure of the young Christian with the heroic breadth of Hippias' frame, and his delicate features, dreamy blue eyes and downy black moustache with the powerful Hermes-head of his rival, they were anxious about their money. If his brother now, the farmer Demetrius—who was standing by the horses' heads—or some well-known agitator had held the reins, it would have been a pleasure and a profit to back such horses. Marcus had been abroad, too, and men shrugged their shoulders over that, for it was not till the last few days that he had been seen exercising his horses in the Hippodrome.

Time was going on, and the Imperial envoy, who had been elected to preside as judge, at length took his place; Demetrius whispered a few last words of advice to his brother and went back into the arena. He had secured a good place on the stone podium and on the shady side, though there were several seats vacant among those belonging to his family; but he did not care to occupy one of these, preferring to keep out of the way of his step-mother, who had made her appearance with a senator and his wife to whom she was related. He had not seen her for two days; his promise to Karnis that he would try to find Dada, had kept him fully occupied, and he had done his best in all earnest to discover the girl.

The honest indignation with which this young creature had refused his splendid offers, in spite of the modest circumstances of her life, had roused his respect, and he had felt it an insult to himself and to his brother when Gorgo had spoken of her with contempt. For his part, he had never met with any one more fascinating; he could not cease dreaming of her, and the thought that she might be swallowed up in the foul mire of a great city made him miserable. His brother had the first claim on her and he would not dispute it; while he had sought her unweariedly in every resort of the young and gay—nay even



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in Canopus—he had only meant to place her in safety, as a treasure which runs a risk of being lost to the family, though, when at last its possession is secured, it becomes the property of the member who can prove the best right of ownership. But all his efforts had been in vain; and it was in an unhappy mood that he went at last to the Hippodrome. There the bitter hostility and party-feeling which he had everywhere observed during his present visit to his native city, were not less conspicuous than they had been in the streets. The competing chariots usually arrived at the amphitheatre in grand procession, but this had not been thought advisable in the prevailing excitement; they had driven into the oppidum singly and without any display; and the images of the gods, which in former days had always been placed on the spina before the games began, had long since fallen into disuse.

[The spina was the division down the middle of the arena. At each end of it were placed the metae or goals, at a distance from it of about 13 feet. The spina was originally constructed of wood, subsequently it was of stone, and its height was generally about 29 feet. The spina in the Circus of Caracalla was more than 900 feet long.]

All this was vexatious to Demetrius, and when he had taken his seat it was in no pleasant temper that he looked round at the ranks of spectators.

His step-mother was sitting on the stuffed bench covered with lion-skins which was reserved for the family. Her tunic and skirt displayed the color blue of the Christian charioteer, being made of bright blue and silver brocade of a beautiful pattern in which the cross, the fish, and the olive-branch were elegantly combined. Her black hair was closely and simply smoothed over her temples and she wore no garland, but a string of large grey pearls, from which hung a chaplet of sapphires and opals, lying on her forehead. A veil fell over the back of her head and she sat gazing into her lap as if she were absorbed in prayer; her hands were folded and held a cross. This placid and demure attitude she deemed becoming to a Christian matron and widow. Everyone might see that she had not come for worldly pleasure, but merely to be present at a triumph of her fellow-Christians—and especially her son—over the idolaters. Everything about her bore witness to the Faith, even the pattern on her dress and the shape of her ornaments; down to the embroidery on her silk gloves, in which a cross and an anchor were so designed as to form a Greek X, the initial letter of the name of Christ. Her ambition was to appear simple and superior to all worldly vanities; still, all she wore must be rich and costly, for she was here to do honor to her creed. She would have regarded it as a heathen abomination to wear wreaths of fresh and fragrant flowers, though for the money which that string of pearls had cost she might have decked the circus with garlands from end to end, or have fed a hundred poor for a twelvemonth. It seems so much easier to cheat the omniscient Creator of the Universe than our fellow-fools!



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So Dame Maria sat there in sour and virtuous dignity, looking like the Virgin Mary as painters and sculptors were at that time wont to represent her; and her farmer-son shuddered whenever his eye fell on his step-mother. It did him good, by contrast, to hear a hearty peal of laughter that came up from the lowest ranks of the podium. When he had discovered the spot from whence it proceeded he could hardly believe his eyes, for there sat the long-sought Dada, between an old man and a young woman, laughing as though something had just occurred to amuse her extremely. Demetrius stretched his limbs with a feeling of relief and satisfaction; then he rose, and seeing his city agent seated just behind the girl, he begged him to change places with him, as he thought it advisable not to lose sight of the game now it was caught; the old man was very ready to oblige him and went up to the other seat with a meaning smile.

For the first time since she could recollect anything Dada had spent a sleepless night. Whether the wind and thunder would have sufficed to keep her awake who can tell; but the thoughts that had whirled through her brain had been varied and exciting enough to rob her of sleep. Her own people who were fighting for Serapis—how were they faring; and Agne—what had become of her? Then her mind turned to the church, and the worthy old priest's sermon; to the races that she was to see—and the face and figure of the handsome young Christian rose vividly and irresistibly before her fancy. Of course—of course, she wished his horses to win; but it was strange enough that she, Karnis' niece, should be on the side of the Christians. Stranger still that she had entirely ceased to believe in all the abuse which, from her earliest childhood, she had heard heaped on the followers of the crucified Jew. It could only be that Karnis had never been able to forgive them for having ruined his theatre at Tauromenium, and so, perhaps, had never known them thoroughly.

She had enjoyed many a happy hour at the festivals of the old gods; and they were no doubt beautiful and festive divinities, or terrible when they were wroth; still, in the depths of her soul there had for some time lurked a vague, sweet longing which found no fulfilment in any heathen temple. She knew no name for it and would have found it hard to describe, but in the church, listening to the prayers and hymns and the old deacon's discourse, it had for the first time been stilled; she had felt then and there that, helpless and simple as she was, and even if she were to remain parted from her foster parents, she need never feel abandoned, but could rest and hope in a supreme, loving, and helpful power. And indeed she needed such a protector; she was so easily beguiled. Stephanion, a flute-player she had known in Rome, had wheedled everything she had a fancy for out of poor Dada, and when she had got into any mischief laid it all on Dada's shoulders. There must be something particularly helpless about her, for everyone, as a matter of course, took her in hand and treated her like a child, or said things that made her angry.

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In the Hippodrome, however, she forgot everything in the present pleasure, and was happy enough in finding herself in the lowest row of places, in the comfortable seats on the shady side, belonging to Posidonius, the wealthy Magian. This was quite different from her experience in Rome, where once, in the Circus Maximus, she had stood in the second tier of the wooden gallery and had been squeezed and pushed, while no one had taken any notice of her and she had only seen the races from a distance, looking down on the heads of the men and horses. Herse never would take her a second time, for, as they came out, they had been followed and spoken to by men, young and old; and after that her aunt had fancied she never could be safe, scenting danger at every turn, and would not allow her ever again to go out alone in the city.

This was altogether a much finer place, for here she was parted from the race-course only by a narrow watercourse which, as it happened, was bridged over just in front of her; the horses would pass close to her; and besides, it was pleasant to be seen and to feel conscious of a thousand flattering glances centered on herself.

Even the great Cynegius, Caesar's envoy and deputy, who had often noticed her on board ship, turned again and again to look at her. He was carried in on a golden litter by ten huge negroes, preceded by twelve lictors bearing fasces wreathed with laurel; and he took his seat, robed in purple and embroidery, on a magnificent throne in the middle of the tribune above the starting sheds; however, Dada troubled herself no more about the overdressed old man.

Her eyes were everywhere, and she made Medius or his daughter name everybody and explain everything. Demetrius was delighted with her eager enjoyment; presently, nudging the singer, she whispered to him with much satisfaction:

"Look how the people down below are craning their necks to look at us! My dress is so very pretty—I wonder where your friend Posidonius gets these lovely roses. There are above a hundred buds in this garland across my shoulders and down to my girdle, I counted them in the litter as I came along. It is a pity they should die so soon; I shall dry the leaves and make scent of them."

Demetrius could not resist the temptation; he leaned forward and said over her shoulder: "There are hardly enough for that."

At this unexpected address Dada looked round, and she blushed as she recognized Marcus' brother; he, however, hastened to assure her that he deeply regretted his audacious proposals of two days since, and the girl laughed, and said that he had come off worst, and that she might have sent him away a little more civilly perhaps; but the truth was she had been out of temper to begin with—any one would be cross that was treated as Dame Herse had treated her: hiding her shoes and leaving her a prisoner on the deck of a barge in the middle of a lake! Then she introduced him to Medius, and

finally enquired about Marcus and his horses, and whether he had any chance of winning the race.

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The countryman answered all her questions; and when, presently, a flower-girl came along the ranks of seats, selling wreaths of blue and red flowers and ribbands, Demetrius bought two lovely olive-wreaths to fling to the winner—his brother he hoped. Medius and his daughter wore red knots—the color of the Heathen, and Dada, following their example, had a similar bow on her shoulder; now, however, she accepted a blue ribband that Demetrius bought for her and pinned it in the place of the red one as being the color of Marcus, to the old singer's great annoyance. Demetrius laughed loudly in his deep bass tones, declaring that his brother was already most anxious to win, and that, when he saw her with these ribbands he would strain every nerve, in gratitude for her partisanship. He could assure her that Marcus thought of her constantly.

"I am glad of that," she said simply; and she added that it was the same with her, for she had been thinking all night of Marcus and his horses. Medius could not help remarking that Karnis and Herse would take it very ill that she should display the Christian color to-day of all days; to which she only replied that she was sorry for that, but that she liked blue better than red. The answer was so abrupt and short that it startled Demetrius, who had hitherto seen Dada gentle and pliant; and it struck him at once how deep an aversion the girl felt for her present protectors.

There was music, as usual, in the towers at either end of the row of carceres; but it was less stirring and cheerful than of yore, for flutes, and several of the heathen airs had been prohibited. Formerly, too, the Hippodrome had been a place where lovers could meet and where many a love-affair had been brought to a happy climax; but to-day none of the daughters of the more respectable families were allowed to quit the women's apartments in their own homes, for danger was in the air; the course of events in the Serapeum had kept many of the younger men from witnessing the races, and some mysterious influence seemed to weigh upon the gaiety and mirth of which the Hippodrome on a gala day was usually the headquarters.

Wild excitement, expectation strung to the highest pitch, and party-feeling, both for and against, had always, of course, been rife here; but to-day they were manifest in an acuter form—hatred had added its taint and lent virulence to every emotion. The heathen were oppressed and angered, their rights abridged and defied; they saw the Christians triumphant at every point, and hatred is a protean monster which rages most fiercely and most venomously when it has lurked in the foul career of envy.



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The Christians could hate, too, and they hated the idolaters who gloried with haughty self-sufficiency in their intellectual inheritance; the traditions of a brilliant past. They, who had been persecuted and contemned, now had the upper hand; they were in power, and the more insolently they treated their opponents, the more injustice they did them, and the less the victimized heathen were able to revenge themselves, the more bitterly did the Christians detest the party they contemned as superstitious idolaters. In their care for the soul—the spiritual and divine part—the Christians had hitherto neglected the graces of the body; thus the heathen had remained the undisputed masters of the palaestra and the hippodrome. In the gymnasium the Christian refused even to compete, for the exhibition of his naked body he regarded as an abomination; but on the race-course he had lately been willing to display his horses, and many times had disputed the crown with the hereditary victors, so that, even here, the heathen felt his time-honored and undisputed supremacy endangered. This was intolerable—this must be averted—the mere thought of being beaten on this ground roused the idolaters to wrath and malice. They displayed their color in wreaths of scarlet poppies, pomegranate flowers and red roses, with crimson ribbands and dresses; white and green, the colors formerly adopted by the competitors, were abandoned; for all the heathen were unanimous in combining their forces against the common foe. The ladies used red sun-shades and the very baskets, in which the refreshments were brought for the day, were painted red.

The widow Mary, on the other hand, and all the Christians were robed in blue from head to foot, their sandals being tied with blue ribbands; and Dada's blue shoulder-knot was in conspicuous contrast to her bright rose-colored dress.

The vendors of food who wandered round the circus had eggs dyed blue and red, cakes with sugared icing and refreshing drinks in jars of both colors. When a Christian and a Heathen found themselves seated side by side, each turned a shoulder to the other, or, if they were forced to sit face to face, eyed each other with a scowl.

Cynegius did all he could to postpone the races as long as possible; he was anxious to wait till the Comes had finished his task in the Serapeum, so that the troops might be free to act in any emergency that might arise before the contests in the Hippodrome were fairly ended. Time did not hang heavy on his hands for the vast multitude here assembled interested him greatly, though he had frequently been a spectator of similar festivities in Rome and Constantinople; but this crowd differed in many particulars from the populace of those cities. In the topmost tiers of free seats black and brown faces predominated greatly over white ones; in the cushioned and carpeted ranks of the stone podium—the lower portion of the amphitheatre—mingled with Greeks and Egyptians, sat thousands of splendidly dressed men and women with strongly-marked Semitic features: members of the wealthy Jewish community, whose venerable head, the Alabarch, a dignified patriarch in Greek dress, sat with the chief members of the senate, near the envoy's tribune.



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The Alexandrians were not a patient race and they were beginning to rebel against the delay, making no small noise and disturbance, when Cynegius rose and with his white handkerchief waved the signal for the races to begin. The number of spectators had gradually swelled from fifty to sixty and to eighty thousand; and no less than thirty-six chariots were waiting behind the carceres ready to start.

Four 'missus' or races were to be run. In each of the three first twelve chariots were to start, and in the fourth only the leaders in the three former ones were to compete. The winner of the olive-wreath and palmbranch in this final heat would bear the honors of the day; his party would be victorious and he would quit the Hippodrome in triumph.

Lots were now drawn in the oppidum to decide which shed each chariot was to start from, and in which naissus each was to run. It was Marcus' fate to start among the first lot, and, to the horror of those who had backed his chances, Hippias, the hero of the Hippodrome, was his rival, with the four famous bays.

Heathen priests poured libations to Poseidon, and Phoebus Apollo, the patron divinities of horses and of the Hippodrome—for sacrifices of blood were prohibited; while Christian presbyters and exorcists blessed the rival steeds in the name of the Bishop. A few monks had crept in, but they were turned out by the heathen with bitter jeers, as unbidden intruders.

Cynegius repeated his signal. The sound of the tuba rang through the air, and the first twelve chariots were led into the starting-sheds. A few minutes later a machine was set in motion by which a bronze eagle was made to rise with outspread wings high into the air, from an altar in front of the carceres; this was the signal for the chariots to come forth from their boxes. They took up their positions close behind a broad chalk line, traced on the ground with diagonal slope, so as to reduce the disadvantage of standing outermost and having a larger curve to cover.

Until this moment only the privileged possessors of the seats over the carceres had been able, by craning backwards, to see the horses and drivers; now the competitors were visible to the multitude which, at their first appearance, broke out into vociferous applause. The agitadores had to exert all their strength to hold in the startled and eager teams, and make them stand even for a few short minutes; then Cynegius signalled for the third time. A golden dolphin, which had been suspended from a beam, and on which the eye of every charioteer was fixed, dropped to the ground, a blast on the 'salpinx', or war-trumpet, was sounded, and forty-eight horses flew forth as though thrown forward by one impulsion.

The strength of four fine horses whirled each light, two-wheeled chariot over the hard causeway as though it were a toy. The down-pour of the previous night had laid the dust; the bright sunshine sparkled and danced in rapidly-changing flashes, mirrored in

the polished gilding of the bronze or the silver fittings of the elegantly-decorated, semicircular cars in which the drivers stood.

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Five blue and seven red competitors had drawn the first lots. The eye rested with pleasure on the sinewy figures whose bare feet seemed rooted to the boards they stood on, while their eyes were riveted on the goal they were striving to reach, though—as the eye of the archer sees arrow, bow and mark all at once—they never lost sight of the horses they were guiding. A close cap with floating ribbands confined their hair, and they wore a short sleeveless tunic, swathed round the body with wide bands, as if to brace their muscles and add to their strength. The reins were fastened around the hips so as to leave the hands free, not only to hold them but also to ply the whip and use the goad. Each charioteer had a knife in his girdle, to enable him to release himself, in case of accident, from a bond that might prove fatal.

Before long the bay team was leading alone. Behind were two Christian drivers, followed by three red chariots; Marcus was last of all, but it was easy to see that it was by choice and not by necessity that he was hanging back. He was holding in his fiery team with all his strength and weight—his body thrown back, his feet firmly set with his knees against the silver bar of the chariot, and his hands gripping the reins. In a few minutes he came flying past Dada and his brother, but he did not see them. He had not even caught sight of his own mother, while the professional charioteers had not failed to bow to Cynegius and nod to their friends. He could only keep his eyes and mind fixed on his horses and on the goal.

The multitude clapped, roared, shouted encouragement to their party, hissed and whistled when they were disappointed—venting their utmost indignation on Marcus as he came past behind the others; but he either heard them not or would not hear. Dada's heart beat so wildly that she thought it would burst. She could not sit still; she started to her feet and then flung herself back on her cushions, shouting some spurring words to Marcus in the flash of time when he might perhaps hear them. When he had passed, her head fell and she said sadly enough: "Poor fellow!—We have bought our wreaths for nothing after all, Demetrius!"

But Demetrius shook his head and smiled.

"Nay," he said, "the boy has iron sinews in that slight body. Look how he holds the horses in! He is saving their strength till they need it. Seven times, child, seven times he has to go round this great circus and past the 'nyssa'. You will see, he will catch up what he has lost, yet. Hippias, you see, is holding in his horses, too; it is his way of giving himself airs at starting. Now he is close to the 'nyssa'—the 'kampter'—the 'meta' they call it at Rome; the smaller the bend he can make round it the better for him, but it is risky work. There—you see!—They drive round from right to left and that throws most of the work on the lefthand beast; it has to turn almost in its own length. Aura,



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our first horse, is as supple as a panther and I trained her to do it, myself.—Now, look out there! that bronze figure of a rearing horse—the ‘Taraxippos’ they call it—is put there to frighten the horses, and Megaera, our third horse, is like a mad thing sometimes, though she can go like a stag; every time Marcus gets her quietly past the Taraxippos we are nearer to success.—Look, look,—the first chariot has got round the nyssa! It is Hippias! Yes, by Zeus, he has done it! He is a detestable braggart, but he knows his business!”

This was one of the decisive moments of the race. The crowd was silent; expectation was at the utmost pitch of tension, and Dada’s eyes were fixed spell-bound on the obelisk and on the quadrigas that whirled round the bourn.

Next to Hippias came a blue team, and close behind were three red ones. The Christian who had succeeded in reaching the nyssa second, boldly took his horses close round the obelisk, hoping to gain space and get past Hippias; but the left wheel of his chariot grazed the granite plinth, the light car was overset, and the horses of the red chariot, whose noses were almost on his shoulder, could not be pulled up short in time. They fell over the Christian’s team which rolled on the ground; the red chariot, too, turned over, and eight snorting beasts lay struggling in the sand.

The horses in the next chariot bolted as they were being driven past this mass of plunging and neighing confusion; they defied their driver’s impotent efforts and galloped across the course back into the caiceres.

The rest had time and space enough to beware of the wreck and to give it a wide berth, among them Marcus. The melee at the Meta had excited his steeds almost beyond control, and as they tore past the Taraxippos the third horse, Megaera, shied violently as Demetrius had predicted. She flung herself on one side, thrust her hind quarters under the pole, and kicked desperately, lifting the chariot quite off the ground; the young charioteer lost his footing and slipped. Dada covered her face with her hands, and his mother turned pale and knit her brows with apprehension. The youth was still standing; his feet were on the sand of the arena; but he had a firm grip on the right-hand spiral ornament that terminated the bar round the chariot. Many a heart stood still with anxiety, and shouts of triumph and mockery broke from the red party; but in less than half a minute, by an effort of strength and agility, he had his knees on the foot-board, and then, in the winking of an eye, he was on his feet in the chariot, had gathered up the reins and was rushing onward.

Meanwhile, however, Hippias had far outstripped all the rest, and as he flew past the carceres he checked his pace, snatched a cup from a lemonade-seller, tossed the contents down his throat with haughty audacity amid the plaudits of the crowd, and then dashed on again. A wide gap, indeed, still lay between him and Marcus.



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By the time the competitors again came round to the nyssa, the slaves in attendance had cleared away the broken chariots and led off the horses. A Christian still came next to Hippias followed by a red agitator; Marcus had gained on the others and was now fourth.

In the third round the chariot of the red driver in front of Marcus made too sharp a turn and ran up against the granite. The broken car was dragged on by the terrified beasts, and the charioteer with it, till, by the time they were stopped, he was a corpse. In the fifth circuit the Christian who till now had been second to Hippias shared the same fate, though he escaped with his life; and then Marcus drove past the starting-sheds next to Hippias.

Hippias had ceased to flout and dally. In spite of the delay that Marcus had experienced from the Taraxippos, the space that parted his bays from the black Arabs had sensibly diminished, round after round; and the interest of the race now centered entirely in him and the young Christian. Never before had so passionate and reckless a contest been fought out on this venerable race-course, and the throng of spectators were carried away by the almost frenzied rivalry of the two drivers. Not a creature in the upper tiers had been able to keep his seat; men and women alike had risen to their feet and were shouting and roaring to the competitors. The music in the towers might have ceased, so completely was it drowned by the tumult in the amphitheatre.

Only the ladies, in the best places above the starting-sheds, preserved their aristocratic calm; Still, when the seventh and decisive round was begun, even the widow Mary leaned forward a little and clasped her hands more tightly over the cross in her lap. Each time that Marcus had driven round the obelisk or past the Taraxippos, Dada had clutched her head with her hands and set her teeth in her lip; each time, as he happily steered clear of the fatal stone and whirled past the dreadful bronze statue, she had relaxed her grip and leaned back in her seat with a sigh of relief. Her sympathy made her one with Marcus; she felt as if his loss must be her death and his victory her personal triumph.

During the sixth circuit Hippias was still a long way ahead of the young Christian; the distance which lay between Marcus and the team of bays seemed to have become a fixed quantity, for, do what he could, he could not diminish it by a hand-breadth. The two agitators had now completely altered their tactics; instead of holding their horses in they urged them onward, leaning over the front of their chariots, speaking to the horses, shouting at them with hoarse, breathless cries, and flogging them unsparingly. Steamy sweat and lathering foam streaked the flanks of the desperate, laboring brutes, while clouds of dust were flung up from the dry, furrowed and trampled soil. The other chariots were left further and further behind those of Hippias and Marcus, and when, for the seventh and last time, these two were nearing the nyssa, the crowd for a moment held its breath, only to break out into louder and wilder cries, and then again to be

hushed. It seemed as though their exhausted lungs found renewed strength to shout with double energy when their excitement had kept them silent for a while.

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Dada spoke no more; pale and gasping, she sat with her eyes fixed on the tall obelisk and on the cloud of dust which, as the chariots neared the nyssa, seemed to grow denser. At about a hundred paces from the nyssa she saw, above the sandy curtain, the red cap of Hippias flash past, and then—close behind it—the blue cap worn by Marcus. Then a deafening, thundering roar from thousands of throats went up to heaven, while, round the obelisk—so close to it that not a horse, not a wheel could have found room between the plinth and the driver—the blue cap came forward out of the cloud, and, behind it now—no longer in front, though not more than a length behind—came the red cap of Hippias. When within a few feet of the nyssa, Marcus had overtaken his antagonist, had passed the point with a bold and perilously close turn, and had left the bays behind him.

Demetrius saw it all, as though his eye had power to pierce the dust-cloud, and now he, too, lost his phlegmatic calm. He threw up his arms as if in prayer and shouted, as though his brother could hear him:

“Well done, splendid boy! Now for the kentron—the goad—drive it in, send it home if they die for it! Give it them well!”

Dada, who could only guess what was happening, looked round at him, asking in tremulous tones: “Has he passed him? Is he gaining on him? Will he win?” But Demetrius did not answer; he only pointed to the foremost of the flying clouds on which the second was fast advancing, and cried in a frenzy of excitement:

“Death and Hades! The other is catching him up. The dog, the sneak! If only the boy would use his goad. Give it them, Marcus! Give it them, lad! Never give in now! Great Father Poseidon!—there—there!—no! I can hardly stand—Yes, he is still in front, and now—now—this must settle it! Thunder and lightning! They are close together again—may the dust choke him! No—it is all right; my Arabs are in front! All is well, keep it up, lad, well done! We have won!”

The horses were pulled up, the dust settled; Marcus, the Christian, had won the first missus. Cynegius held out the crown to the victor, who bowed to receive it. Then he waved his hand to his mother, who graciously waved hers in return, and he drove into the oppidurn and was lost to sight.

Hippias flung down his whip in a rage, but the triumphant shouts of the Christians drowned the music, the trumpet-blasts and the angry murmurs of the defeated heathen. Threatening fists were shaken in the air, while behind the carceres the drivers and owners of the red party scolded, squabbled and stormed; and Hippias, who by his audacious swagger had given away the race to their hated foe—to the Blues, the Christians—narrowly escaped being torn in pieces.



The tumult and excitement were unparalleled; but Dada saw and heard nothing. She sat in a blissful dream, gazing into her lap, while tears of joyful reaction rolled down her cheeks. Demetrius saw her tears and was glad; then, pointing out Mary to the girl, he informed her that she was the mother of Marcus. And he registered a secret vow that, cost what it might, he would bring his victorious brother and this sweet child together.



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The second and third missus, like the first, were marked by serious accidents; both, however, were won for the Red party. In the fourth, the decisive race, there were but three competitors: Marcus and the two heathen winners. Demetrius watched it with less anxiety; he knew that his Arabs were far superior to the Egyptian breed in staying power, and they also had the advantage of having had a longer rest. In fact, the final victory was adjudged to the young Christian.

Long before it was decided Dada had been impatiently fingering her wreaths, and could hardly wait any longer to fling them into Marcus' chariot. When it was all over she might perhaps have an opportunity of speaking to him; and she thought how delightful his voice was and what fine, kind eyes he had. If only he were to bid her be his, she would follow him whither and wherever he desired, whatever Karnis and Herse might say to the contrary. She thought no one could be so glad of his success as she was; she felt as if she belonged to him, had always belonged to him, and only some spiteful trick of Fate had come between them.

There was a fresh blast of trumpets; the victor, in obedience to a time-honored custom, was to drive round the arena at a foot-pace and show his brave team to the multitude. He came nearer and nearer, and Demetrius proposed that they should cross the little watercourse that parted the podium from the arena and follow the chariot, so as to give his brother the wreaths instead of flinging them to him. The girl colored and could say neither yes or no; but she rose, hung one of the olive-crowns on her arm with a happy, bashful smile, and handed the other to her new friend; then she followed him across the little bridge on to the race-course which, now that the games were over, was crowded with Christians.

The brothers exchanged pleased greetings from afar, but Marcus did not see Dada till she was close to him and stood, with a shy but radiant glance of intense delight, holding out the olive-wreath for his acceptance. He felt as though Heaven had wrought a miracle in his favor. Never before had he thought her half so lovely. She seemed to have grown since he had seen her last, to have gained a deeper and nobler expression; and he observed, too, the blue favors on her shoulder and among the roses that crowned her fair curls. Gladness and surprise prevented his speaking; but he took the garland she offered him and, seizing her hands, stammered out: "Thanks—thank you, Dada."

Their eyes met, and as he gazed into her face he forgot where he was, did not even wonder why his brother had suddenly turned away and, beginning some long-winded speech, had rushed after a man who hastily covered his head and tried to escape; he did not notice that thousands of eyes were fixed on him, and among them his mother's; he could merely repeat: "thanks" and "Dada"—the only words he could find. He would perhaps have gone on repeating them, but that he was interrupted; the 'porta libitinaria'—the gate through which the dead or injured were usually carried out, was thrown open, and a rabble of infuriated heathen rushed in, crying: "Serapis is fallen!

They have destroyed the image of Serapis! The Christians are ruining the sanctuaries of the gods!"



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A sudden panic seized the assembled multitude; the Reds rushed down from their places into the arena to hear the details and ask questions—ready to fight for the god or to fly for safety. In an instant the victor's chariot was surrounded by an angry mob; Dada clutched it for protection, and Marcus, without pausing to reflect—indeed hardly master of his own actions—turned and lifted her into it by his side; then, urging his horses forward, he forced a way through the crowd, past the caiceres. He glanced anxiously up at the seats but could nowhere see his mother, so he guided the exhausted beasts, steaming with sweat and dappled with foam, through the open gate and out of the circus. His stable-slaves had run after him; he released himself from the reins on his hips and flung them to the grooms. Then he helped Dada to leap from the car.

“Will you come with me?” he asked her simply; and the girl's reply was: “Wherever you bid me.”

At the news that Serapis was overthrown Dame Mary had started from her seat with eager haste that ill-became her dignity and, under the protection of the body-guard in attendance on Cynegius, had found her way to her litter.

In the Hippodrome the tumult rose to a riot; Reds and Blues rushed from the upper tiers, down the ranks of the podium and into the dusty race-course; falling on each other tooth and nail like wild beasts; and the bloody fray—no uncommon termination to the day, even in more peaceful times—lasted till the Imperial soldiery parted the unarmed combatants.

The Bishop was triumphant; his adherents had won the day at every point; nor was he sorry to learn that Olympius, Helladius, Ainmonius and many other spiritual leaders of the heathen world had succeeded in escaping. They might come back; they might preach and harangue as much as they chose: their power was broken. The Church had nothing now to fear from them, and their philosophy and learning would still and always be valuable in the mental training of her priests.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

The great Hippodrome of Alexandria was outside the Canopic gate, on the northern side of the road leading to Eleusis which to-day was crowded with passengers, all moving in the same direction. The tumult roused by the intelligence that Serapis was overthrown made all the more peaceful and peace-loving of the spectators hurry homewards; and as these, for the most part, were of the richer classes, who came and went in litters or chariots, their conveyances left but scanty space on the wide causeway for foot passengers, still, there they were, in considerable numbers, all wending their way towards the city, and the heathen who came rushing towards the Hippodrome behind

the first heralds of the disaster, had great difficulty in making their way against the stream.



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Marcus and Dada allowed themselves to be carried onward by the throng which was tending towards the city-walls and the Canopic gate. Phabis, Mary's old steward, whose duty it had been to help his young master to dress after the races were over, had snatched the agitator's cap from the youth's head and flung a cloak over his shoulders, hastily following him as he went off with the young girl by his side. The old man quite understood what was in the wind for he it was who had conducted Dame Herse to his mistress' presence. He had thought her a shrewd and kind-hearted woman, and it now struck him that she must certainly have been in the right when she accused Marcus of designs on her pretty niece. At the time he had refused to believe it, for he had never in his life detected his young master in any underhand or forbidden courses; but, after all, Marcus was his father's son, and, in his younger days, the old man had often and often had to risk his skin in Apelles' love-intrigues. And now it was the Son's turn—and if he were to take his fancy for that pretty chit as seriously as he did most things, if he got the notion into his head of marrying the little singer—what a storm there was brewing between him and his mother!

The old man did his best to keep up with Marcus who did not see or heed him, for his eyes and attention were centered on the fair companion who was clinging to his arm, while he tried to force a passage through the mob, towards the gate. Miracle on miracle seemed to him to have been wrought in his behalf; for Heaven had not only sent him Dada, but she was wearing blue ribbands; and when he asked her why, she had replied "For your sake, and because I like your Faith."

He was tired to death; but as soon as Dada had put her hand through his arm he lead felt refreshed as if by magic. His swollen and blistered hands, to be sure, were painful and his shoulders ached and winced from stiffness; but as she pressed his arm to her side and looked up gladly in his face—telling him how happy she was while he responded: "And how I love you!"—he felt himself in Heaven, and pain and discomfort were forgotten. The crush did not allow them to say more than a few words; but the things their eyes and lips could smile were sweeter and dearer than anything they had ever known before.

They had got through the gate and were in the Canopic way when Dada suddenly perceived that his lips were white, and felt the arm tremble on which her hand was lying. She asked him what ailed him; he made no reply, but put his hand to his head, so she led him aside into the public garden that lay to their right between the little Stadium and the Maeandrian circus. In this pretty spot, fresh with verdure and spring flowers, she soon found a bench shaded by a semicircular screen of dark-tufted tamarisk, and there she made him lie down. He yielded at once, and his pale face and fixed gaze showed her that he was in a fainting state. Indeed, he must be quite worn out by the terrible struggle of the race, and after it was over he had not given himself time to take a cup of drink or a scrap of food for refreshment. It was only too natural that his strength should fail him, so, without feeling at all alarmed but only very pitiful and anxious to

help, she ran back to a fruit-stall which they had passed at the entrance to the garden from the street.



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How glad she was that she still had the four drachmae which she had coaxed out of Karnis in the Xenodochium that evening; she could buy whatever she liked for her lover. When she went back-loaded with oranges, apples, hard-boiled eggs, bread and salt, in the skirt of her dress that she gathered up with one hand, and with a flask of wine and water, and a gourdbowl in the other—she found him still lying unconscious. However, when she had moistened his forehead and lips he opened his eyes, and then she peeled him an orange as daintily as she could and begged him to try it, and as she was herself very hungry she took a hearty share. She was enchanted at making him her guest, and at finding that he enjoyed the simple meal and soon was quite revived. In fact, in a few minutes he had altogether recovered his strength and consciousness of satisfaction; and as he lay back with Dada's hand in his, gazing happily and thankfully into her sweet eyes, a sense of peace, rest and bliss came over him such as he had never before known. He thought he had never tasted such delicious food, or such exquisite wine as the wretched Mareotic from the fruitstall. He took the apple she had begun eating out of her hand and bit it where her white teeth had been; he made her drink first out of the gourd-cup, and, as one of the three eggs she had brought with her was bad, they had quite a little battle for the last, till he finally gave way and eat it.

When they had finished Dada's purchases to the last mouthful she asked him, for the first time, where he meant to take her, and he said he intended placing her in the house of his former tutor, Eusebius, the deacon, where she would be a welcome guest and find her old companion Agne. Of this she was sincerely glad; and when, on hearing the title of Deacon, she questioned Marcus further, and identified Eusebius as the worthy old man whose discourse in the basilica had so deeply impressed her, she told Marcus how she had gone into the church, and how, from that hour, she had felt at peace. A quite new feeling had sprung up in her soul, and since then she had constantly longed to see him again and talk it all over with him:—The little she had learnt of Christian doctrine did her heart good and had given her comfort and courage. The world was so beautiful, and there were many more good men than bad. It was a pleasure to love one's neighbor, and as for forgiving a wrong—that she had never found difficult. It must be good to live on earth if everyone loved his neighbor as she loved him and he loved her; and life could not be a great hardship if in every trouble there was some one who was always ready to hear our cry and help us, out of pure beneficence.



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Her innocent talk was to Marcus the greatest marvel of this day of miracles. The soul which he had dreamed that he was called to save had, of its own accord, turned to walk in the path of salvation; he went on to tell her of the things which he felt to be most sublime and glorious in his creed, and at length he confessed that, though he had always loved his neighbor for Christ's sake, never till now had true and perfect love been revealed to him. No power on earth could now part him from her, and when she should have been baptized there would be no further difficulty; their love might last till, and beyond, death, through all the ages of eternity. And she listened to him, perfectly content; and said that she was his, wholly his, now, and for ever and ever.

There were to-day but few people in the garden which was usually full in the afternoon, of idlers, and of children with their nurses; but the disturbance in the streets had kept these at home, and the idlers had found more to attract them at the Hippodrome and in the crowded roads. This favored the lovers, who could sit hand in hand, looking into each other's eyes; and when old Phabis, who had lost sight of them long since, at length discovered them in the park, he could see from his lurking-place as he crept closer, that his young master, after glancing cautiously round, pressed a kiss on the little singer's hair, and then on her eyes and at last on her lips.

The hours flew fast between serious talk and delightful dalliance, and when they tore themselves away from their quiet retreat it was already dusk. They soon found themselves in the Canopic way, in the thick of the crowd which they were now occasionally obliged to meet, for those who were making homewards had long since dispersed, and thousands were still crowding to the Hippodrome where a brisk fight was still going on. As they passed his mother's house Marcus paused and, pointing it out to Dada, told her that the day was not far distant when he should bring her home hither. But the girl's face fell.

"Oh no!" she exclaimed, in a low voice. "Not here-not to this great palace in a street. Let us live in a little house, quite quietly, by ourselves. A house with a garden, and a seat in the shade. Your mother lives here!"

And then she blushed scarlet and looked down. He guessed, however, what was passing in her mind, and bid her only to have patience, for as soon as she was a baptized Christian Eusebius would intercede for her. And he spoke warmly of his mother's piety and virtues, and asked Dada if she had seen her at the races.



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“Yes,” she replied timidly; and when he went on to ask her if she had not thought Mary very handsome and dignified, she answered frankly: “Yes—very; but then she is so tall and grand-looking—she must wish for a daughter-in-law very different from a poor, forsaken orphan like me—a mere singer, looked down upon by every one! It is different with you; you are satisfied with me as I am, and you know that I love you. If I never find my uncle again I have no one on earth to care for me but you; but I want no other, for you are my one and only hope, and to live for you and with you is enough. Only you must never leave me or I shall die! But you never can, for you told me that my soul was dearer to you than your own life; and so long as I have you and your love I shall grow better and better every day; but if you ever let me be parted from you I shall be utterly lost. Yes, understand that once for all—ruined and lost, body and soul—I do not know what it is that terrifies me, but do let us go on, away from this house. Suppose your mother were to see us!”

He did as she wished and tried to soothe her, praising his mother’s virtues with the affectionate blindness of a son; but she only half listened to his eulogy, for, as they approached Rhacotis the throng grew denser, they had no opportunities for conversation, they could think of nothing but battling their way through the crowd; still, they were happy.

[The quarter of the city inhabited by the Egyptians. It was the old town close to which Alexander the Great built his splendid new city.]

They thus got to the street of the Sun—one of the main arteries of the city cutting the Canopic way at right angles—and they went down it towards the Gate of Helios in the south wall. The Serapeum lay to their right, several streets leading to it from the street of the Sun. To reach the house where Eusebius lived they ought to have turned down the street of the Acropolis, but a compact mass of frenzied creatures came storming down it from the Serapeum, and towards them. The sun was now fast setting over the City of the Dead on the western horizon. Marcus tried to get out of the middle of the road and place Dada in safety by the house at the corner, but in vain; the rabble that came crowding out of the side street was mad with excitement, and could think of nothing but the trophies it had snatched from the temple. Several dozen men, black and white alike—and among them some monks and even women, had harnessed themselves to an enormous truck, commonly used for the carriage of beams, columns, and heavy blocks of stone, on which they had erected a huge but shapeless mass of wood, the core, and all that remained, of the image of Serapis; this they were dragging through the streets.

“To the Hippodrome! Burn it! Down with the idols! Look at the divine form of Serapis! Behold the god!”

These were the cries that rent the air from a thousand throats, an ear-splitting accompaniment to the surging storm of humanity.



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The monks had torn the desecrated block from the niche in the Serapeum, hauled it through the courts on to the steps, and were now taking it to the arena where it was to be burnt. Others of their kidney, and some of the Christian citizens who had caught the destructive mania, had forced their way into the temple of Anubis, hard by the Serapeum, where they had overthrown and wrecked the jackal-headed idols and the Canopic gods—four huge jars with lids representing respectively a man's head, an ape's, a hawk's and a jackal's. They were now bearing these heads in triumph, while others were shouldering the limbs of broken statues of Apollo, of Athene, or of Aphrodite, or carrying the fragments in baskets to cast them into the flames in the Hippodrome after the wooden stock of the great Serapis. The mob had broken off the noses of all the heads, had smeared the marble with pitch, or painted it grossly with the red paint they had found in the writing-rooms of the Serapeum. Every one who could get near enough to the remains of the statue, or to a fragment of a ruined idol, spit upon it, struck it or thrust at it; and not a heathen had, as yet, dared to interfere.

Behind the oak block of the image of Serapis and the other trophies of victory, came an endless stream of men of all ages, of monks and of women, compelling a large carruca—[A four-wheeled chariot used in the city and for travelling.]—that had fallen into their hands, and which they had completely surrounded, to keep pace with them. The two fine horses that drew it had to be led by the bridle; they were trembling with terror and excitement and made repeated attempts to kick over the pole or to rear.

In this vehicle was Porphyrius, who had fully recovered consciousness, and by his side sat Gorgo. Constantine had not stirred from the side of the convalescent till Apuleius had pronounced him out of all danger; but then the young officer's duty had called him away. The merchant had hailed the news of his daughter's union with the companion of her childhood as a most satisfactory and long-expected event.

A party of the Prefect's guards had been charged to bring the carriage for Porphyrius to the door of the temple, and the abbot of a monastery at Arsinoe, who was well known to the Prefect, undertook to escort them on their road home and protect them from the attacks of the raving mob. At the spot where the side street intersected the street of the Sun, and where Marcus and Dada had been forced to stop, unable either to proceed or to return, a troop of armed heathen had given the Christian rabble a check at the very moment when the carruca came up, and falling on the foe who had mocked and insulted their most sacred treasure, began a furious fray. Quite close to the young lovers a heathen cut down a Christian who was carrying the besmirched head of a Muse. Dada clung in terror to Marcus, who was beginning to be seriously alarmed for her when, looking round for aid or refuge, he caught sight of his brother forcing his way through the throng, and gesticulating vehemently. The farmer was telegraphing to the occupants of the carruca as well, and when he at last reached Marcus he briefly explained to him that the first thing to be done was to place Dada in safety.



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Only too glad to be out of the crush and danger, the girl nimbly climbed into the chariot, and, after hastily greeting the father and daughter, signed to Marcus to follow her; but Demetrius held his brother back, and it was hurriedly agreed that Dada should be sent for that evening to the house of Porphyrius. Demetrius whispered a few words of enthusiastic praise of the little singer into Gorgo's ear; then the carriage moved on again. Many of the heathen who had collected round it recognized Porphyrius, the noble friend of the great Olympius, and cleared a passage for him, so that at last he got out of the gate uninjured, and turned into the quieter street of Euergetes which led to the temple of Isis, the ship-yard and the merchant's residence.

But few words were exchanged in the chariot, for it was only step by step and with considerable difficulty that the horses could get along. It was now quite dark and the mob had spread even into this usually deserted quarter.

A flaring glow that tinged the temple, the wharf and the deep sky itself with a gorgeous crimson glare, showed very plainly what the populace were employed in doing. The monks had set fire to the temple of Isis and the flames had been driven by the northwest wind down into the ship-yard, where they had found ample food in the enormous timber stacks and the skeletons of ships. Tall jets of rushing and crackling sparks were thrown skywards to mingle with the paler stars. Porphyrius could see what danger his house was in; but thanks to the old steward's foresight and the indefatigable diligence of the slaves, it escaped the conflagration.

The two brothers, meanwhile, had left the mob far behind them. Demetrius was not alone, and as soon as he had introduced Marcus to his companion, an abbot of friendly mien, the monk warmly expressed his pleasure at meeting another son of Apelles, to whom he had once owed his life. Demetrius then told his brother what his adventures had been during the last few hours, and where he had met this worthy Father.

While taking Dada down into the arena to join Marcus, he had caught sight of Anubis, the Egyptian slave who had been his father's companion in his last memorable journey to Syria, and who, since the death of Apelles, had totally disappeared, the countryman had instantly followed him, seized him—not without a struggle and some little danger—and then had him led off by the city-guard to the prison by the Prefect's house. Once secured he had been induced to speak, and his narrative proved beyond a doubt that Apelles had perished in a skirmish with the Saracens; the Egyptian slave had only taken advantage of his master's death to make off with the money he had with him. He had found his way to Crete, where he had purchased a plot of ground with his plunder; but then, craving to see his wife and children once more, he had come back to fetch them away to his new home. Finally, to confirm the



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truth of his story, which—clearing him apparently of the murder of his master—did not invite implicit belief, he told Demetrius that he had seen in Alexandria, only the day before, a recluse who had been present when Apelles fell, and Demetrius had at once set out to find this monk, enquiring among those who had swarmed into the city. He had very soon been successful; Kosnias, who since then had been elected abbot of the monastery to which he belonged, now again told Marcus the story of his father's heroic courage in the struggle with the freebooters who had attacked his caravan. Apelles, he said, had saved his life and that of two other anchorites, one of whom was in Alexandria at this very time. They were travelling from Hebron to Aila, a party of seven, and had placed themselves under the protection of the Alexandrian merchant's escort; everything had gone well till the infidel Saracens had fallen upon them in the high land south of Petra. Four of the monks had been butchered out of hand; but Apelles, with a few of the more resolute spirits in the company, had fought the heathen with the valor of a lion. He, Kosmas, and his two surviving comrades had effected their escape, while Apelles engaged the foe; but from a rocky height which they climbed in their flight they saw him fall, and from that hour they had always mentioned him in their prayers. It would be an unspeakable satisfaction to him to do his utmost to procure for such a man as Apelles the rank he deserved in the list of martyrs for the Faith.

Marcus, only too happy, wanted to hurry away at once to his mother and tell her what he had heard, but Demetrius detained him. The Bishop—he told his brother—had desired his immediate presence, to be congratulated on his victory; his first duty was to obey that mandate, and he should at once avail himself of its favorable opportunity to obtain for his deceased parent the honor he had earned.

It rather startled Marcus to find his brother taking its interest in a matter which, so lately, he had vehemently opposed; however, he proceeded at once to the episcopal palace, accompanied by the abbot, and half an hour later Demetrius, who had awaited his return, met him coming out with sparkling eyes. The Prelate, he said, had received him very graciously, had thanked him for his prowess and had bid him crave a reward. He at once had spoken of his father, and called the recluse to witness to the facts. The Bishop had listened his story, and had ended by declaring himself quite willing to put the name of Apelles on the list of the Syrian martyrs. Theophilus had been most unwilling hitherto to reject the petitions of so good and illustrious Christian as Mary; and now, after such ample testimony as to the manner of her husband's death, it was with sincere satisfaction that he bestowed this high mark of honor on the Christian victor and his admirable mother. "So now," added the young man, "I shall fly home, and how happy my mother will be...."



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But Demetrius would not allow him to finish his sentence. He laid his hand on the young man's shoulder saying: "Patience, my dear fellow, patience! You must stay with me for the present, and not go to your mother till I have settled everything that is necessary. Do not contradict me I entreat you, unless you want to deprive me of the happiness of remedying an injustice to your pretty Dada. What you most desire for yourself and her is your mother's blessing—and do you think that will be easy to obtain? Far from it, lad! But I can manage it for you; and I will, too, if only you will do as I bid you, and if the old Heathen's niece can be induced to be baptized...."

"She is a Christian already!" exclaimed Marcus eagerly.

"Well then, she can be yours to-morrow," Demetrius went on calmly, "if you listen to the advice of your older and wiser brother. It cannot be very hard upon you, for you must own that if I had not fought it out with Anubis—and the rascal bit all he could reach like a trapped fox—if I had not got him locked up and almost run my legs off in hunting down the worthy abbot, our father would never have enjoyed the promotion which he is at last to obtain. Who would ever have believed that I should get any satisfaction out of this 'Crown of Martyrdom'? By the gods! It is by no means impossible, and I hope the manes of the deceased will forgive me for your sake. But it is getting late, so only one thing more: for my own share of the business all I claim is my right to tell your mother myself of all that has occurred; you, on your part, must go at once to Eusebius and beg him to receive Dada in his house. If he consents—and he certainly will—take him with you to our uncle Porphyrius and wait there till I come; then, if all goes well, I will take you and Dada to your mother—or, if not, we will go with Eusebius."

"Dada to my mother!" cried Marcus. "But what will she ....."

"She will receive her as a daughter," interrupted his brother, "if you hold your tongue about the whole business till I give you leave to speak.—There, the tall gate-keeper is closing the episcopal palace, so nothing more can come out of there to-night. You are a lucky fellow —well good-bye till we meet again; I am in a hurry."

The farmer went off, leaving Marcus with a thousand questions still unasked. However, the young man did his bidding and went, hopeful though not altogether free from doubts, to find his old tutor and friend.

## CHAPTER XXVII.



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While Marcus carried out his brother's instructions Dada was expecting him and Eusebius with the greatest impatience. Gorgo had charged her waiting-woman to conduct the girl into the music-room and to tell her that she would join her there if her father was in such a state as to allow of it. Some refreshments were brought in to her, all delicate and tempting enough; but Dada would not touch them, for she fancied that the merchant's daughter was avoiding her intentionally, and her heart ached with a sense of bereavement and loneliness. To distract her thoughts she wandered round the room, looking at the works of art that stood against the walls, feeling the stuffs with which the cushions were covered and striking a lute which was leaning against the pedestal of a Muse. She only played a few chords, but they sufficed to call up a whole train of memories; she sank on a divan in the darkest corner she could find in the brilliantly-lighted room, and gave herself up to reviewing the many events of the last few days. It was all so bright, so delightful, that it hardly seemed real, and her hopes were so radiantly happy that for a moment she trembled to think of their fulfilment—but only for a moment; her young soul was full of confidence and elation, and if a doubt weighed it down for an instant it was soon cast off and her spirit rose with bold expectancy.

Her heart overflowed with happiness and thankfulness as she thought of Marcus and his love for her; her fancy painted the future always by his side, and though her annoyance at Gorgo's continued absence, and her dread of her lover's mother slightly clouded her gladness, the sense of peace and rapture constantly came triumphantly to the front. She forgot time as it sped, till at length Gorgo made her appearance.

She had not deliberately kept out of the little singer's way; on the contrary, she had been detained by her father, for not till now had she dared to tell him that his mother, the beloved mistress of his house, was no more. In the Serapeum she had not mentioned it, by the physician's orders; and now, in addition, through the indiscretion of a friend, he had received some terrible tidings which had already been known for some hours in the city and which dealt him a serious blow. His two sons were in Thessalonica, and a ship, just arrived from thence, brought the news—only too well substantiated, that fifteen thousand of the inhabitants of that town had been treacherously assassinated in the Circus there.

This hideous massacre had been carried out by the Imperial troops at Caesar's command, the wretched citizens having been bidden to witness the races and then ruthlessly butchered. A general of the Imperial army—a Goth named Botheric—had been killed by the mob, and the Emperor had thus avenged his death.

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Porphyrius knew only too well that his sons would never have been absent from any races or games. They certainly must have been among the spectators and have fallen victims to the sword of the slaughterer. His mother and two noble sons were snatched from him in a day; and he would again have had recourse to poison as a refuge from all, if a dim ray of hope had not permitted him to believe in their escape. But all the same he was sunk in despair, and behaved as though he had nothing on earth left to live for. Gorgo tried to console him, encouraged his belief in her brothers' possible safety, reminded him that it was the duty of a philosopher to bear the strokes of Fate with fortitude; but he would not listen to her, and only varied his lamentations with bursts of rage.

At last he said he wished to be alone and reminded Gorgo that she ought to go to Dada. His daughter obeyed, but against her will; in spite of all that Demetrius had said in the young girl's favor she felt a little shy of her, and in approaching her more closely she had something of the feeling of a fine lady who condescends to enter the squalid hovel of poverty. But her father was right: Dada was her guest and she must treat her with kindness.

Outside the door of the music-room she dried away her tears for her brothers, for her emotion seemed to her too sacred to be confessed to a creature who boldly defied the laws laid down by custom for the conduct of women. From Dada's appearance she felt sure that all those lofty ideas, which she herself had been taught to call "moral dignity" and "a yearning for the highest things," must be quite foreign to this girl with whom her cousin had condescended to intrigue. She felt herself immeasurably her superior; but it would be ungenerous to allow her to see this, and she spoke very kindly; but Dada answered timidly and formally.

"I am glad," Gorgo began, "that accident brought you in our way;" and Dada replied hastily: "I owe it to your father's kindness, and not to accident."

"Yes, he is very kind," said Gorgo, ignoring Dada's indignant tone. "And the last few hours have brought him terrible sorrows. You have heard, no doubt, that he has lost his mother; you knew her—she had taken quite a fancy to you, I suppose you know."

"Oh! forget it!" cried Dada.

"She was hard to win," Gorgo went on, "but she liked you. Do you not believe me? You should have seen how carefully she chose the dress you have on at this minute, and matched the ornaments to wear with it."

"Pray, pray say no more about it," Dada begged. "She is dead, and I have forgiven her—but she thought badly, very badly of me."



“It is very bad of you to speak so,” interrupted Gorgo, making no attempt to conceal her annoyance at the girl’s reply. “She—who is dead— deserves more gratitude for her liberality and kindness!”

Dada shook her head.

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“No,” she said firmly. “I am grateful, even for the smallest kindness; I have not often met with disinterested generosity. But she had an end in view—I must say it once for all. She wanted to make use of me to bring shame on Marcus and grief on his mother. You surely must know it; for why should you have thought me too vile to sing with you if you did not believe that I was a good-for-nothing hussy, and quite ready to do your dead grandmother’s bidding? Everybody, of course, looked down upon us all and thought we must be wicked because we were singers; but you knew better; you made a distinction; for you invited Agne to come to your house and sing with you.—No, unless you wish to insult me, say no more about my owing the dead lady a debt of gratitude!”

Gorgo’s eyes fell; but presently she looked up again and said:

“You do not know what that poor soul had suffered. Mary, her son’s widow, had been very cruel to her, had done her injuries she could never forgive—so perhaps you are right in your notion; but all the same, my grandmother had a great liking for you—and after all her wish is fulfilled, for Marcus has found you and he loves you, too, if I am not mistaken!”

“If you are not mistaken!” retorted Dada. “The gods forefend!—Yes, we have found each other, we love each other. Why should I conceal it?”

“And Mary, his mother—what has she to say to it?” asked Gorgo.

“I do not know,” replied Dada abashed.

“But she is his mother, you know!” cried Gorgo severely. “And he will never—never—marry against her will. He depends on her for all that he has in the world.”

“Then let her keep it!” exclaimed Dada. “The smaller and humbler the home he gives me the better I shall like it. I want his love and nothing more. All—all he desires of me is right and good; he is not like other men; he does not care for nothing but my pretty face. I will do whatever he bids me in perfect confidence; and what he thinks about me you may judge for yourself, for he is going to put me in the care of his tutor Eusebius.”

“Then you have accepted his creed?” asked Gorgo. “Certainly I have,” said Dada.

“I am glad of that for his sake,” said the merchant’s daughter. “And if the Christians only did what their preachers enjoin on them one might be glad to become one. But they make a riot and destroy everything that is fine and beautiful. What have you to say to that—you, who were brought up by Karnis, a true votary of the Muses?”

“I?” said Dada. “There are bad men everywhere, and when they rise to destroy what is beautiful I am very sorry. But we can love it and cherish it all the same.”



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“You are happy indeed if you can shut your eyes at the dictates of your heart!” retorted Gorgo, but she sighed. “Happy are they and much to be envied who can compel their judgment to silence when it is grief to hear its voice. I—I who have been taught to think, cannot abandon my judgment; it builds up a barrier between me and the happiness that beckons me. And yet, so long as truth remains the highest aim of man, I will bless the faculty of seeking it with all the powers of my mind. My betrothed husband, like yours, is a Christian; and I would I could accept his creed as unflinchingly as you; but it is not in my nature to leap into a pool when I know that it is full of currents and whirlpools. — However, the present question has to do with you and not with me. Marcus, no doubt, will be happy to have won you; but if he does not succeed in gaining his mother’s consent he will not continue happy you may rely upon it. I know these Christians! they cannot conceive of any possible joy in married life without their parents’ blessing, and if Marcus defies his mother he will torture his conscience and lead a death-in-life, as though he were under some heavy load of guilt.”

“For all that, and all that,” Dada insisted, “he can no more be happy without me than I can without him. I have never in my life paid court to any one, but I have always met with kindness. Why then should I not be able to win his mother’s heart? I will wager anything and everything that she will take kindly to me, for, after all, she must be glad when she sees her son happy. Eusebius will speak for us and she will give its her blessing! But if it is not to be, if I may never be his wife honestly and in the face of the world, still I will not give him up, nor he me. He may deal with me as he will—as if he were my god and I were his slave!”

“But, my poor child, do you know nothing of womanly honor and womanly dignity?” cried Gorgo clasping her hands. “You complain of the lot of a singing-girl, and the cruel prejudices of the world—and what are you saying? Let me have my way, you would say, or I scorn your morality?”

“Scorn!” exclaimed Dada firing up. “Do you say I scorn morality? No, indeed no. I am an insignificant little person; there is nothing proud or great about me, and as I know it full well I am quite humble; in all my life I never dared to think of scorn, even of a child. But here, in my heart, something was awoke to life—through Marcus, only through him—something that makes me strong; and when I see custom and tradition in league against me because I am a singer, when they combine to keep me out of what I have a right to have—well, within these few hours I have found the spirit to defend myself, to the death if need be! What you call womanly honor I have been taught to hold as sacred as you yourself, and I have kept it as untainted as any girl living. Not that I meant to do anything grand, but you have no idea of what it is when every



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man thinks he has a right to oppress and insult a girl and try to entrap her. You, and others like you, know nothing of small things, for you are sheltered by walls and privileges. We are every man's game, while they approach you as humbly as if you were goddesses.—Besides! It is not only what I have heard from Karnis, who knows the world and fine folks like you; I have seen it for myself at Rome, in the senators' houses, where there were plenty of young lords and great men's daughters—for I have not gone through life with my eyes shut; with you love is like lukewarm water in a bath, but it catches us like fire. Sappho of Lesbos flung herself from the Leucadian rock because Phaon flouted her, and if I could save Marcus from any calamity by doing the same, I would follow her example.—You have a lover, too; but your feeling for him, with all the 'intellect' and 'reflections,' and 'thought' of which you spoke, cannot be the right one. There is no but or if in my love at any rate; and yet, for all that, my heart aches so sorely and beats so wildly, I will wait patiently with Eusebius and submit to whatever I am bidden.—And in spite of it all you condemn me unheard, for you. . . . But why do you stand and look like that? You look just like you did that time when I heard you sing. By all the Muses! but you, too, like us, have some fire in your veins, you are not one of the lukewarm sort; you are an artist, and a better one than I; and if you ever should feel the right love, then—then take care lest you break loose from propriety and custom—or whatever name you give to the sacred powers that subdue passion—even more wildly than I—who am an honest girl, and mean to remain so, for all the fire and flame in my breast!”

Gorgo remembered the hour in which she had, in fact, proffered to the man of her choice as a free gift, the love which, by every canon of propriety, she ought only to have granted to his urgent wooing. She blushed and her eyes fell before the humble little singer; but while she was considering what answer she could make men's steps were heard approaching, and presently Eusebius and Marcus entered the room, followed by Gorgo's lover. Constantine was in deep dejection, for one of his brothers had lost his life in the burning of his father's ship-yard, and as compared with this grief, the destruction of the timber stores which constituted the chief part of his wealth scarcely counted as a calamity.

Gorgo had met him with a doubtful and embarrassed air; but when she learnt of the blow that had fallen on him and his parents, she clung to him caressingly and tried to comfort him. The others sympathized deeply with his sorrow; but soon it was Dada's turn to weep, for Eusebius brought the news of her foster-parent's death in the fight at the Serapeum, and of Orpheus being severely wounded.



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The cheerful music-room was a scene of woe till Demetrius came to conduct his brother and Dada to the widow Mary who was expecting them. He had arrived in a chariot, for he declared his legs would no longer carry him. "Men," said he, "are like horses. A swift saddle-horse is soon tired when it is driven in harness and a heavy cart-horse when it is made to gallop. His hoofs were spoilt for city pavements, and scheming, struggling and running about the streets were too much for his country brains and wore him out, as trotting under a saddle would weary a plough-horse. He thanked the gods that this day was over. He would not be rested enough till to-morrow to be really glad of all his success."—But in spite of this assertion he was radiant with overflowing satisfaction, and that in itself cheered the mourners whom he tried to encourage. When he said they must be going, Gorgo kissed the little singer; indeed, as soon as she saw how deeply she was grieved, shedding bitter but silent tears, she had hastened to take her in her arms and comfort her like a sister.

Constantine, Gorgo and old Eusebius were left together, and the young girl was longing to unburden her over-full heart. She had agreed to her lover's request that she would at once accompany him to see his sorrowing parents; still, she could not appear before the old Christian couple and crave their blessing in her present mood. Recent events had embittered her happy belief in the creed into which she had thrown herself, and much as it pained her to add a drop to Constantine's cup of sorrow, duty and honesty commanded that she should show him the secrets of her soul and the doubts and questionings which had begun to trouble her. The old priest's presence was a comfort to her; for her earnest wish was to become a Christian from conviction; as soon as they were alone she poured out before them all the accusations she had to bring against the adherents of their Faith: They had triumphed in ruining the creations of Art; the Temple of Isis and the ship-yard lay in ashes, destroyed by Christian incendiaries; their tears were not yet dry when they flowed afresh for the sons of Porphyrius—Christians themselves—who, unless some happy accident had saved them, must have perished with thousands of innocent sufferers—believers and infidels together—by the orders of the Emperor whom Constantine had always lauded as a wise sovereign and pious Christian, as the Defender of the Faith, and as a faithful disciple of the Redeemer.

When, at last, she came to an end of her indictment she appealed to Constantine and Eusebius to defend the proceedings of their co-religionists, and to give her good grounds for confessing a creed which could sanction such ruthless deeds.

Neither the Deacon nor his pupil attempted to excuse these acts; nay, Constantine thought they were in plain defiance of that high law of Love which the Christian Faith imposes on all its followers. The wicked servant, he declared, had committed crimes in direct opposition to the spirit and the letter of the Master.



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But this admission by no means satisfied Gorgo; she represented to the young Christian that a master must be judged by the deeds of his servant; she herself had turned from the old gods only because she felt such intense contempt for their worshippers; but now it had been her lot to see—the Deacon must pardon her for saying so—that many a Christian far outdid the infidels in coarse brutality and cruelty. Such an experience had filled her with distrust of the creed she was required to subscribe to—she was shaken to the very foundations of her being.

Eusebius had, till now, listened in silence; but as she ended he went towards her, and asked her gently whether she would think it right to turn the fertilizing Nile from its bed and leave its shores dry, because, from time to time, it destroyed fields and villages in the excess of its overflow? “This day and its deeds of shame,” he went on sadly, “are a blot on the pure and sublime book of the History of our Faith, and every true Christian must bitterly bewail the excesses of a frenzied mob. The Church must no less condemn Caesar’s sanguinary vengeance; it casts a shade on his honor and his fair name, and his conscience no doubt will punish him for such a crime. Far be it from me to defend deeds which nothing can justify. . .”

But Gorgo interrupted him. “All this,” she said, “does not alter the fact that such crimes are just as possible and as frequent with you, as with those whom I am expected to give up, and who. . .”

“But it is not merely on account of their ill deeds that you are giving them up, Gorgo,” Constantine broke in. “Confess, dear girl, that your wrath makes you unjust to yourself and your own heart. It was not out of aversion for the ruthless and base adherents of the old gods but—as I hope and believe—out of love for me that you consented to adopt my faith—our faith.”

“True, true,” she exclaimed, coloring as she remembered the doubts Dada had cast on the truth of her love.

“True, out of love for you—love of Love and of peace, I consented to become a Christian. But with regard to the deeds committed by your followers, tell me yourself—and I appeal to you reverend Father—what inspired them: Love or Hate.”

“Hate!” said Constantine gloomily; and Eusebius added sorrowfully

“In these dark days our Faith is seen under an aspect that by no means fairly represents its true nature, noble lady; trust my words! Have you not yourself seen, even in your short life, that what is highest and greatest can in its excess, be all that is most hideous? A noble pride, if not kept within bounds, becomes overweening ambition; the lovely grace of humility degenerates into an indolent sacrifice of opinion and will; high-hearted enterprise into a mad chase after fortune, in which we ride down everything that

comes in the way of success. What is nobler than a mother's love, but when she fights for her child she becomes a raving Megaera.



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In the same way the Faith—the consoler of hearts—turns to a raging wild-beast when it stoops to become religious partisanship. If you would really understand Christianity you must look neither down to the deluded masses, and those ambitious worldlings who only use it as a means to an end by inflaming their baser passions, nor up to the throne, where power translates the impulse of a disastrous moment into sinister deeds. If you want to know what true and pure Christianity is, look into our homes, look at the family life of our fellow believers. I know them well, for my humble functions lead me into daily and hourly intercourse with them. Look to them if you purpose to give your hand to a Christian and make your home with him. There, my child, you will see all the blessings of the Saviour's teaching, love and soberness, pitifulness to the poor and a real heart-felt eagerness to forgive injuries. I have seen a Christian bestow his last crust on his hapless foe, on the enemy of his house, on the Heathen or the Jew, because they, too, are men, because our neighbor's woes should be as our own—I have seen them taken in and cherished as though they were fellow-Christians.—There you will find a striving after all that is good, a never-fading hope in better days to come, even under the worst afflictions; and when death requires the sacrifice of all that is dearest, or swoops down on life itself, a firm assurance of the forgiveness of sins through Christ. Believe me, mistress, there is no home so happy as that of the Christian; for he who really apprehends the Saviour and understands his teaching need not mar his own joys in this life to the end that he may be a partaker of the bliss of the next. On the contrary: He who called the erring to himself, who drew little children to his heart, who esteemed the poor above the rich, who was a cheerful guest at wedding-feasts, who bid us gain interest on the spiritual talents in our care, who commanded us to remember Him at a social meal, who opened hearts to love—He longed to release the life of the humblest creature from want and suffering. Where love and peace reign must there not be happiness? And as He preached love and peace above all else, He cannot have desired that we should intentionally darken our lives on earth and load them with sorrow and miseries in order to will our share of Heaven. The soul that is full of the happy confidence of being one with Him and his love, is released from the bondage of sin and sorrow, even here below; for Jesus has taken all the sins and pains of the world on himself; and if Fate visits the Christian with the heaviest blows he bears them in silence and patience. Our Lord is Love itself; neither hatred nor envy are known to Him as they are to the gods of the Heathen; and when he afflicts us, it is as the wise and tender pastor of our souls, and for our good. The omniscient Lord knows his own counsel, and the Christian submits as a child does to a wise father whose loving kindness he can always trust; nay, he can even thank him for sorrow and pain as though they were pleasurable benefits.”



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Gorgo shook her head.

“That all sounds very beautiful and good; it is required of the Christian, and sometimes, no doubt, fulfilled; but the Stoa demands the same virtues of its disciples. You, Constantine, knew Damon the Stoic, and you will remember how strictly he enjoined on all that they should rise superior to pain and grief. And then, when his only daughter lost her sight—she was a great friend of mine—he behaved like one possessed. My father, too, has often spoken to you of philosophy as a help to contemning the discomforts of life, and bearing the sports of Fate with a lofty mind; and now? You should see the poor man, reverend Father. What good have all the teachings of the great master done him?”

“But he has lost so much—so much!” sighed Constantine thinking of his own loss; and Eusebius shook his head.

“In sorrow such as his, no philosophy, no mental effort can avail. The blows that wound the affections can only be healed by the affections, and not by the intellect and considerations of reason. Faith, child! Faith is the true Herb of Grace. The intellect is its foe; the feelings are its native soil where it finds constant nourishment; and however deep the bleeding wound of the mourner may be, Faith can heal it and reconcile the sufferer to his loss. You have been taught to value a fine understanding, to measure everything by it, to build everything on its decisions. To you the knowledge you have attained to by argument and inference is supreme; but the Creator has given us a heart as well as a brain; our affections, too, stir and grow in their own way, and the knowledge they can attain to, my child, is Faith. You love—and Love is part of your affections; and now take my advice; do not let that reasoning intelligence, which has nothing to do with love, have anything to say in the matter; cherish your love and nurture it from the rich stores of your heart; thus only can it thrive to beauty and harmony.—And this must suffice for to-day, for I have already kept the wounded waiting too long in the Serapeum. If you desire it, another time I will show you Christianity in all its depth and beauty, and your love for this good man will prepare the way and open your heart to my teaching. A day will come when you will be able to listen to the voice of your heart as gladly as you have hitherto obeyed the dictates of your intellect; something new will be born in you which you will esteem as a treasure above all you ever acquired by reason and thought. That day will assuredly dawn on you; for he whom you love has opened the path for you that leads to the gates of Truth; and as you seek you will not fail to find.—And so farewell. When you crave a teacher you have only to come to him—and I know he will not have long to wait.”

Gorgo looked thoughtfully at the old man as he went away and then went with Constantine to see his parents. It was in total silence that they made their way along the short piece of road to the house of Clemens. Lights were visible in the viridarium and the curtains of the doorway were drawn back; as they reached the threshold

Constantine pointed to a bier which had been placed in the little court among the flower-beds; his parents were on their knees by the side of it.



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Neither he nor Gorgo ventured to disturb their wordless devotions, but presently the ship-master rose, drawing his fine, stalwart figure to its full height; then turning his kind, manly, grave face to his wife, who had also risen to her feet, he laid one hand on her still abundant white hair and held out the other which she took in hers. Mariamne dried her eyes and looked up, in her husband's face as he said firmly and calmly:

"The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away!" She hid her face on his shoulder and responded sadly but fervently:

"Blessed be the name of the Lord!"

"Yea—Blessed!" repeated Clemens emphatically but he passed his arm across his eyes. "For thirty-two years hath He lent him to us; and in our hearts . . ." and he struck his broad breast, "in here, he will never die for you or for me. As for the rest—and there was a deal of property of our own and of other folks in these wood-piles—well, in time we shall get over that. We may bless the Almighty for what we have left!"

Gorgo felt her lover's hand grasp hers more tightly and she understood what he meant; she clung closer to him and whispered softly: "Yes, that is grand—that is the Truth."

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

In the great house in the Canopic street it was late ere all was quiet for the night. Even Demetrius, in spite of his fatigue, broke through his rule of "early to bed"; he felt he must see the reaping of the harvest he had sown for his brother.

It had been no easy task to persuade Mary to accede to his importunities, but to his great joy he at last succeeded.

He would have met with a rough dismissal if he had begun by praising Dada and expressing his wish to see her married to Marcus; he had gained his point inch by inch, very quietly; but when he had explained to her that it was in his hands to secure the martyr's crown for her husband she had turned suspicious and ironical, had made him swear that it was true, threatening him with punishments in this world and in the next; but he had let it all pass over his head, had solemnly sworn as she desired him, pledging not merely the salvation of his soul but his possessions in this world; till, at length, convinced that it really was in his power to gratify the dearest wish of her heart, she had yielded somewhat and altered her demeanor. Still, he had not spoken a word to help her through her deliberations and bewilderment, but had left her to fight out the hard struggle with her own soul; not without some malicious enjoyment but also not without anxiety, till the first decisive question was put to him by his stepmother.

She had heard that Dada was quite resolved to be baptized, and having once more made sure of the fact that the girl was anxious to become a Christian, she next asked:

“And it was Marcus who won her to the faith?”

“He alone.”



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“And you can swear that she is a pure-minded and well-conducted girl?”

Certainly, with the firmest conviction.”

“I saw her in the arena—she is pretty, uncommonly charming indeed—and Marcus...?”

“He has set his heart on the girl, and I am sure that his passion is sincere and unselfish. On the other hand I need hardly remind you that in this city there are many women, even among those of the first rank, whose birth and origin are far more doubtful than those of your son’s little friend, for she, at any rate, is descended from free and respectable parents. Her uncle’s connections are among the best families in Sicily; not that we need trouble ourselves about that, for the wife of Philip’s grandson would command respect even if she were only a freed-woman.”

“I know, I know,” murmured Mary, as though all this were of minor importance in her eyes; and then for some little time she remained silent. At last she looked up and exclaimed in a voice that betrayed the struggle still going on in her soul:

“What have I to care for but my child’s happiness? In the sight of God we are all equal—great and small alike; and I myself am but a weak woman, full of defects and sins—but for all that I could have wished that the only son of a noble house might have chosen differently. All I can say is that I must look upon this marriage as a humiliation laid upon me by the Almighty—still, I give it my sanction and blessing, and I will do freely and with my whole heart if my son’s bride brings as her marriage-portion the one thing which is the first and last aim of all my desires: The everlasting glory of Apelles. The martyr’s crown will open the gates of Heaven to him—who was your father, too, Demetrius. Gain that and I myself will lead the singer to my son’s arms.”

“That is a bargain!” cried Demetrius—and soon after midnight he had retired to rest, after seeing Mary fulfil her promise to give a parental blessing to the betrothed pair.

A few weeks later Dada and Gorgo were both baptized, and both by the name of Cecilia; and then, at Mary’s special entreaty, Marcus’ marriage was solemnized with much pomp by the Bishop himself.

Still, and in spite of the lavish demonstrations of more than motherly affection which the widow showered her daughter-in-law, Dada felt a stranger, and ill at ease in the great house in the Canopic way. When Demetrius, a few weeks after their marriage, proposed Marcus that he should undertake the management of family estates in Cyrenaica, she jumped at the suggestion; and Marcus at once decided to act upon it when his brother promised to remain with him for the first year or two, helping him with his advice and instructions.



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Their fears lest Mary should oppose the project, proved unfounded; for, though the widow declared that life would be a burden to her without her children, she soon acceded to her son's wishes and admitted that they were kind and wise. She need not fear isolation, for, as the widow of the martyred Apelles, she was the recognized leader of the Christian sisterhood in the town, and preferred working in a larger circle than that of the family. She always spoke with enthusiasm to her visitors of her daughter-in-law Cecilia, of her beauty, her piety and her gentleness; in fact, she did all she could to make it appear that she herself had chosen her son's wife. But she did not care to keep this "beloved daughter" with her in Alexandria, for the foremost position in every department of social life was far more certain to be conceded to the noble widow of a "martyred witness" in the absence of the pretty little converted singer.

So the young couple moved to Cyrenaica, and Dada was happy in learning to govern her husband's large estates with prudence and good sense. The gay singing-girl became a capable housewife, and the idle horse-loving Marcus a diligent farmer. For three years Demetrius staid with them as adviser and superintendent; even afterwards he frequently visited them, and for months at a time, and he was wont to say:

"In Alexandria I am heart and soul, a Heathen, but in the house with your Cecilia I am happy to be a Christian."

Before they quitted the city a terrible blow fell on Eusebius. The sermon he had delivered just before the overthrow of Serapes, to soothe the excited multitude and guide them in the right way, had been regarded by the Bishop of the zealot priests, who happened to be present, as blasphemous and as pandering to the infidels; Theophilus, therefore, had charged his nephew Cyril—his successor in the see—to verify the facts and enquire into the deacon's orthodoxy. It thus came to light that Agne, an Arian, was not only living under his roof, but had been trusted by him to nurse certain sick persons among the orthodox; the old man was condemned by Cyril to severe acts of penance, but Theophilus decided that he must be deprived of his office in the city, where men of sterner stuff were needed, and only allowed the charge of souls in a country congregation.

It was a cruel blow to the venerable couple to be forced to quit the house and the little garden where they had been happy together for half a lifetime; however, the change proved to be to their advantage, for Marcus invited his worthy teacher to be the spiritual pastor of his estates. The churches he built for his peasants were consecrated by Eusebius, whose mild doctrine and kindly influence persuaded many laborers and slaves to be baptized and to join his flock of disciples. But the example and amiability of their young mistress was even more effectual than his preaching. Men and women, slaves and free, all adored and respected her; to imitate her in all she did could only lead to honor and happiness, could only be right and good and wise. Thus by degrees, and without the exertion of any compulsion, the temples and shrines on the Martyr's inheritance were voluntarily abandoned, and fell into ruin and decay.

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It was the same on the property of Constantine, which lay at no more than a day's journey from that of Marcus; the two young couples were faithful friends and good neighbors. The estate which had come into Constantine's possession had belonged to Barkas, the Libyan, who, with his troops, had been so anxiously and vainly expected to succor the Serapeum. The State had confiscated his extensive and valuable lands, and the young officer, after retiring from the service, had purchased them with the splendid fortune left to Gorgo by her grandmother.

The two sons of Porphyrius had, as it proved, been so happy as to escape in the massacre at Thessalonica; and as they were Christians and piously orthodox, the old man transferred to them, during his lifetime, the chief share of his wealth; so that henceforth he could live honestly—alienated from the Church and a worshipper of the old gods, without anxiety as to his will. The treasures of art which Constantine and Gorgo found in the house of Barkas they carefully preserved, though, ere long, few heathen were to be found even in this neighborhood which had formerly been the headquarters of rebellion on behalf of the old religion.

Papias was brought up with the children of Marcus and Dada Cecilia, while his sister Agne, finding herself relieved of all care on his account, sought and found her own way through life.

Orpheus, after seeing his parents killed in the fight at the Serapeum, was carried, sorely wounded, to the sick-house of which Eusebius was spiritual director. Agne had volunteered to nurse him and had watched by his couch day and night. Eusebius had also brought Dada and Papias to visit them, and Dada had promised, on behalf of Marcus, that Agne and her brother should always be provided for, even in the event of the good Deacon's death. The little boy was for the moment placed in Eusebius' care, and it was a cause of daily rejoicing to Agne to hear from the kind old man of all the charming qualities he discovered in the child who was perfectly happy with the old folks, and who, though he was always delighted to see his sister, was quite content to part from her and return home with Eusebius, or with Dada, to whom he was devoted.

Orpheus recognized no one, neither Agne nor the child—and when visitors had been to see him, in his fevered ravings he would talk more vehemently than ever of great Apollo and other heathen divinities. Then he would fancy that he was still fighting in the Serapeum and butchering thousands of Christian foes with his own hand. Agne, whom he rarely recognized for a moment, would talk soothingly to him, and even try to say a few words about the Saviour and the life to come; but he always interrupted her with blasphemous exclamations, and cursed and abused her. Never had she gone through such anguish of soul as by his bed of suffering, and yet she could not help gazing at his face; and when she told herself that he must soon be no more, that the light of his eyes would cease to shine on hers, she felt as though the sun were about to be extinguished and the earth darkened for all time. However, his healthy vigor kept him lingering for many days and nights.



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On the last evening of his life he took Agne for a Muse, and calling to her to come to him seized her hand and sank back unconscious, never to move again. She stood there as the minutes slowly passed, waiting in agonized suspense till his hand should be cold in hers; and as she waited she overheard a dialogue between two deaconesses who were watching by a sleeping patient. One of them was telling the other that her sister's husband, a mason, had died an obdurate heathen and a bitter enemy of the Christian Church. Then Dorothea, his widow, had devoted herself to saving his soul; she left her children, abandoning them to the charity of the congregation, and had withdrawn to a cloister to pray in silence and unceasingly for the soul of her deceased husband. At first he used to appear to her in her dreams, with furious gestures, accompanied by centaurs and goat-footed creatures, and had desired her to go home to her children and leave his soil in peace, for that he was in very good quarters with the jolly devils; but soon after she had seen him again with scorched limbs, and he lead implored her to pray fervently for mercy on him, for that they were torturing him cruelly in hell.

Dorothea had then retired into the desert of Kolzoum where she was still living in a cave, feeding on herbs, roots, and shell-fish thrown up on the sea-shore. She had schooled herself to do without sleep, and prayed day and night for her husband's soul; and she had obtained strength never to think of anything but her own and her husband's salvation, and to forget her children completely. Her fervid devotion had at length met with full reward; for some little time her husband had appeared to her in a robe of shining light and often attended by lovely angels.

Agne had not lost a word of this narrative, and when, next morning, she felt the cold hand of the dead youth and looked at his drawn and pain-stricken features, she shuddered with vague terrors: he, she thought, like Dorothea's husband, must have hell-torments to endure. When she presently found herself alone with the corpse she bent over it and kissed the pale lips, and swore to herself that she would save his soul.

That same evening she went back to Eusebius and told him of her wish to withdraw to the desert of Koizoum and become a recluse. The old man besought her to remain with him, to take charge of her little brother, and not to abandon him and his old wife; for that it was a no less lovely Christian duty to be compassionate and helpful, and cherish the feeble in their old age. His wife added her entreaties and tears; but a sudden chill had gripped Agne's heart; dry-eyed and rigid she resisted their prayers, and took leave of her benefactors and of Papias. Bare-foot and begging her way, she started for the south-east and reached the shores of the Red Sea. There she found the stonemason's widow, emaciated and haggard, with matted hair, evidently dying. Agne remained with her, closed her eyes, and then lived on as Dorothea had lived, in the same cave, till the fame of her sanctity spread far beyond the boundaries of Egypt.

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When Papias had grown to man's estate and was installed as steward to Demetrius, he sought his sister many times and tried to persuade her to live with him in his new home; but she never would consent to quit her solitary cell. She would not have exchanged it for a king's palace; for Orpheus appeared to her in nightly visions, radiant with the glories of Heaven; and time was passing and the hour drawing near when she might hope to be with him once more.

The widow Mary, in her later years, made many pilgrimages to holy places and saintly persons, and among others to Agne, the recluse; but she would never be induced to visit Cyrenaica, whither she was frequently invited by her children and grandchildren; some more powerful excitant was needed to prompt her to face the discomforts of a journey.

The old Heathen cults had completely vanished from the Greek capital long before her death. With it died the splendor and the power of the second city in the world; and of all the glories of the city of Serapis nothing now remains but a mighty column—[Known as Pompey's Pillar.]—towering to the skies, the last surviving fragment of the beautiful temple of the sovereign-god whose fall marked so momentous an epoch in the life of the human race. But, like this pillar, outward Beauty—the sense of form that characterized the heathen mind—has survived through the ages. We can gaze up at the one and the other, and wherever the living Truth—the Spirit of Christianity—has informed and penetrated that form of Beauty, the highest hopes of old Eusebius have been realized. Their union is solemnized in Christian Art.

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What have I to care for but my child's happiness?  
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