Serapis — Complete eBook

Serapis — Complete by Georg Ebers

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CHAPTER I.

The busy turmoil of the town had been hushed for some hours; the moon and stars were keeping silent watch over Alexandria, and many of the inhabitants were already in the land of dreams. It was deliciously fresh—a truly gracious night; but, though peace reigned in the streets and alleys, even now there was in this pause for rest a lack of the soothing calm which refreshes and renews the spirit of man. For some few weeks there had been an oppressive and fevered tension in the repose of night. Every house and shop was closed as securely as though it were done, not only to secure slumber against intrusion, but to protect life and property from the spoiler; and instead of tones of jollity and mirth the sleeping city echoed the heavy steps and ringing arms of soldiers. Now and again, when the Roman word of command or the excited cry of some sleepless monk broke the silence, shops and doors were cautiously opened and an anxious face peered out, while belated wanderers shrunk into gateways or under the black shadow of a wall as the watch came past. A mysterious burden weighed on the Heart of the busy city and clicked its pulses, as a nightmare oppresses the dreamer.

On this night of the year of our Lord 391, in a narrow street leading from the commercial harbor known as Kibotus, an old man was slinking along close to the houses. His clothes were plain but decent, and he walked with his head bent forward looking anxiously on all sides; when the patrol came by he shrank into the shadow; though he was no thief he had his reasons for keeping out of the way of the soldiery, for the inhabitants, whether natives or strangers, were forbidden to appear in the streets after the harbor was closed for the night.

He stopped in front of a large house, whose long, windowless wall extended from one side street to the next, and pausing before the great gate, he read an inscription on which the light fell from a lamp above: The House of the Holy Martyr. His widow here offers shelter to all who need it. He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord."

"At how much per cent I wonder?" mattered the old man and a satirical smile curled his bearuless lips. A heavy thud with the knocker rang through the silent street, and after a few short questions from within and equally curt replies from without, a small door was opened in the great gate. The stranger was on the point of crossing the vestibule when a human creature crept up to him on all fours, and clutched his ancle with a strong hand, exclaiming in a hoarse voice: "As soon as the door is shut—an entrance fee; for the poor, you know."

The old man flung a copper piece to the gatekeeper who tried it, and then, holding on to the rope by which he was tied to a post like a watch-dog, he whined out "Not a drop to wet a Christian's lips?"

“It has not rained for some time,” retorted the stranger, who proceeded to open a second door which led into a vast court-yard open to the blue vault of heaven. A few torches stuck against the pillars and a small fire on the pavement added thin smoky, flickering light to the clear glory of the stars, and the whole quadrangle was full of a heavy, reeking atmosphere, compounded of smoke and the steam of hot food.

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Even in the street the wanderer had heard the dull buzz and roar which now met his ear as a loud medley of noises and voices, rising from hundreds of men who were encamped in the wide space before him—in groups or singly, sleeping and snoring, or quarrelling, eating, talking and singing as they squatted on the ground which was strewn with straw.

The inn was full, and more than half of the humble guests were monks who, during the last two days, had flowed into the city from every Cenoby, Laura and hermitage in the desert, and from most of the monasteries in the surrounding district—the 'Nitriote Nome'. Some of them had laid their heads close together for confidential whispering, others squabbled loudly, and a large group in the northern angle of the court had raised a psalm which mingled strangely with the "three," "four," "seven," of the men who were playing 'mora', and the cry of the cook inviting purchasers to his stall spread with meat, bread, and onions.

At the end of the court furthest from the gateway there was a covered way, on to which a row of doors opened leading to the rooms devoted to families of women and children, each apartment being divided into two by a curtain across the middle. The stranger made his way into one of these rooms, where he was warmly welcomed by a young man, who was occupied in cutting a Kopais reed into a mouth-piece for a double flute, and by a tall matronly woman.

The new-comer's name was Karnis and he was the head of a family of wandering singers who had arrived in Alexandria only the day before from Rome. His surroundings were poor and mean, for their ship had been attacked off the African coast by a band of pirates, and though they had saved their lives they had lost everything they possessed. The young owner of the vessel, to whom he owed his safety, had procured him admission to this Xenodochium,—[a refuge or inn]—kept by his mother the Widow Mary; Karnis had, however, found it far from comfortable, and had gone forth at noon to seek other quarters.

"All in vain!" said he, as he wiped the heat drops from his forehead. "I have hunted Medius half the city through and found him at last at the house of Posidonius the Magian, whose assistant he is. There was singing behind a curtain—wretched rubbish; but there were some old airs too with an accompaniment on the flutes, in the style of Olympus, and really not so bad.

"Then spirits appeared. By Sirius a queer business altogether! Medius is in the midst of it all. I arranged the chorus and sang with them a little. All I got for it was a little dirty silver—there! But as for a lodging—free quarters!—there are none to be found here for anything above an owl; and then there is the edict—that cursed edict!"

During this speech the younger man had exchanged meaning glances with his mother. He now interrupted Karnis, saying in a tone of encouragement:

“Never mind, father; we have something good in view.”

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“You have?” said the old man with an incredulous shrug, while his wife served him with a small roast chicken, on a stool which did duty for a table.

“Yes father, we!” the lad went on, laying aside his knife. “You know we vowed an offering to Dionysus for our escape, since he himself once fell into the hands of pirates, so we went at once to his temple. Mother knew the way; and as we—she, I mean, and Dada and myself. . .”

“Heh! what is this?” interrupted Karnis, now for the first time noticing the dish before him. “A fowl—when we are so miserably poor? A whole fowl, and cooked with oil?” He spoke angrily, but his wife, laying her hand on his shoulder, said soothingly:

“We shall soon earn it again. Never a sesterce was won by fretting. Enjoy to-day’s gifts and the gods will provide for to-morrow.”

“Indeed?” asked Karnis in an altered key. “To be sure when a roast fowl flies into one’s mouth instead of a pigeon. . . . But you are right as usual, Herse, as usual, only—here am I battening like a senator while you—I lay a wager you have drunk nothing but milk all day and eaten nothing but bread and radishes. I thought so? Then the chicken must pretend to be a pheasant and you, wife, will eat this leg. The girls are gone to bed? Why here is some wine too! Fill up your cup, boy. A libation to the God! Glory to Dionysus!” The two men poured the libation on the floor and drank; then the father thrust his knife into the breast of the bird and began his meal with a will, while Orpheus, the son, went on with his story:

“Well, the temple of Dionysus was not to be found, for Bishop Theophilus has had it destroyed; so to what divinity could we offer our wreath and cake? Here in Egypt there is none but the great Mother Isis. Her sanctuary is on the shore of Lake Mareotis and mother found it at once. There she fell into conversation with a priestess who, as soon as she learnt that my mother belonged to a family of musicians—though Dame Herse was cautious in announcing this fact—and hoped to find employment in Alexandria, led her away to a young lady who was closely veiled. This lady,” Orpheus went on—he not only played the flute but took the higher parts for a man’s voice and could also strike the lyre—“desired us to go to her later at her own house, where she would speak with us. She drove off in a fine carriage and we, of course followed her orders; Agne was with us too. A splendid house! I never saw anything handsomer in Rome or Antioch. We were kindly received, and with the lady there were another very old lady and a tall grave man, a priest I should fancy or a philosopher, or something of that kind.”

“Not some Christian trap?” asked Karnis suspiciously. “You do not know this place, and since the edict. . .”

“Never fear, father! There were images of the gods in the halls and corridors, and in the room where we were received by Gorgo, the beautiful daughter of Porphyrius, there

was an altar before an image of Isis, quite freshly anointed.—This Porphyrius is a very rich merchant; we learnt that afterwards, and many other things. The philosopher asked us at once whether we were aware that Theodosius had lately promulgated a new edict forbidding young maidens to appear in public as singers or flute-players."

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“And did Agne hear that?” said the old man in a low voice as he pointed to the curtain.

“No, she and Dada were in the garden on to which the room opened, and mother explained at once that though Agne was a Christian she was a very good girl, and that so long as she remained in our service she was bound to sing with us whenever she was required. The philosopher exclaimed at once: ‘The very thing!’ and they whispered together, and called the girls and desired them to show what they could do.”

“And how did they perform?” asked the old man, who was growing excited.

“Dada warbled like a lark, and Agne—well you know how it always is. Her voice sounded lovely but it was just as usual. You can guess how much there is in her and how deep her feeling is but she never quite brings it out. What has she to complain of with us? And yet whatever she sings has that mournful, painful ring which even you can do nothing to alter. However, she pleased them better than Dada did, for I noticed that Gorgo and the gentleman glanced at each other and at her, and whispered a word now and then which certainly referred to Ague. When they had sung two songs the young lady came towards us and praised both the girls, and asked whether we would undertake to learn something quite new. I told her that my father was a great musician who could master the most difficult things at the first hearing.”

“The most difficult! Hm . . . that depends,” said the old man. “Did she show it you?”

“No; it is something in the style of Linus and she sang it to us.”

“The daughter of the rich Porphyrius sang for your entertainment? Yours?” said Karnis laughing. “By Sirius! The world is turning upside down. Now that girls are forbidden to perform to the gentlefolks, art is being cultivated by the upper classes; it cannot be killed outright. For the future the listeners will be paid to keep quiet and the singers pay for the right of torturing their ears—our ears, our luckless ears will be victimized.”

Orpheus smiled and shook his head; then, again dropping his knife, he went on eagerly:

“But if you could only hear her! You would give your last copper piece to hear her again.”

“Indeed!” muttered his father. “Well, there are very good teachers here. Something by Linus did you say she sang?”

“Something of that kind; a lament for the dead of very great power: ‘Return, oh! return my beloved, came back—come home!’ that was the burthen of it. And there was a passage which said: ’Oh that each tear had a voice and could join with me in calling thee!” And how she sang it, father! I do not think I ever in my life heard anything like it. Ask mother. Even Dada’s eyes were full of tears.”

“Yes, it was beautiful,” the mother agreed. “I could not help wishing that you were there.”

Karnis rose and paced the little room, waving his arms and muttering:

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“Ah! so that is how it is! A friend of the Muses. We saved the large lute—that is well. My chlamys has an ugly hole in it—if the girls were not asleep . . . but the first thing to-morrow Ague. . . . Tell me, is she handsome, tall?”

Herse had been watching her excitable husband with much satisfaction and now answered his question: “Not a Hera—not a Muse—decidedly not. Hardly above the middle height, slightly made, but not small, black eyes, long lashes, dark straight eyebrows. I could hardly, like Orpheus, call her beautiful. . .”

“Oh yes, mother.—Beautiful is a great word, and one my father has taught me to use but rarely; but she—if she is not beautiful who is?—when she raised her large dark eyes and threw back her head to bring out her lament; tone after tone seemed to come from the bottom of her heart and rise to the furthest height of heaven. Ah, if Agne could learn to sing like that! ’Throw your whole soul into your singing.’—You have told her that again and again. Now, Gorgo can and does. And she stood there as steady and as highly strung as a bow, every note came out with the ring of an arrow and went straight to the heart, as clear and pure as possible.”

“Be silent!” cried the old man covering his ears with his hands. “I shall not close an eye till daylight, and then . . . Orpheus, take that silver—take it all, I have no more—go early to market and buy flowers—laurel branches, ivy, violets and roses. But no lotuses though the market here is full of them; they are showy, boastful things with no scent, I cannot bear them. We will go crowned to the Temple of the Muses.”

“Buy away, buy all you want!” said Herse laughing, as she showed her husband some bright gold pieces. “We got that to-day, and if all is well. . . . " Here she paused, pointed to the curtain, and went on again in a lower tone: “It all depends of course, on Agne’s playing us no trick.”

“How so? Why? She is a good girl and I will. . .”

“No, no,” said Herse holding him back. “She does not know yet what the business is. The lady wants her. . .”

“Well?”

“To sing in the Temple of Isis.”

Karnis colored. He was suddenly called from a lovely dream back to the squalid reality. “In the Temple of Isis,” he said gloomily. “Agne? In the face of all the people? And she knows nothing about it?”

“Nothing, father.”

“No? Well then, if that is the case . . . Agne, the Christian, in the Temple of Isis—here, here, where Bishop Theophilus is destroying all our sanctuaries and the monks outdo their master. Ah, children, children, how pretty and round and bright a soap-bubble is, and how soon it bursts. Do you know at all what it is that you are planning? If the black flies smell it out and it becomes known, by the great Apollo! we should have fared better at the hands of the pirates. And yet, and yet.—Do you know at all how the girl . . . ?”

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“She wept at the lady’s singing,” interrupted Herse eagerly, “and, silent as she generally is, on her way home she said: ’To sing like that! She is a happy girl!’”

Karnis looked up with renewed confidence.

“Ah!” he exclaimed, “that is my Agne. Yes, yes, she truly loves her divine art. She can sing, she will sing! We will venture it, if you, I, all of us die for it!

“Herse, Orpheus, what have we to lose? Our gods, too, shall have their martyrs. It is a poor life that has no excitement. Our art—why, all I have ever had has been devoted to it. I make no boast of having sacrificed everything, and if gold and lands were again to be mine I would become a beggar once more for the sake of art: We have always held the divine Muse sacred, but who can keep up a brave heart when he sees her persecuted! She may only be worshipped in darkness in these days, and the Queen of Gods and men shuns the light like a moth, a bat, an owl. If we must die let it be with and for Her! Once more let pure and perfect song rejoice this old heart, and if afterwards . . . My children, we have no place in this dim, colorless world. While the Arts lived there was Spring on the earth. Now they are condemned to death and it is Winter. The leaves fall from all the trees, and we piping birds need groves to sing in. How often already has Death laid his hand on our shoulder, every breath we draw is a boon of mercy—the extra length given in by the weaver, the hour of grace granted by the hangman to his victim! Our lives are no longer our own, a borrowed purse with damaged copper coins. The hard-hearted creditor has already bent his knuckles, and when he knocks the time is up. Once more let us have one hour of pure and perfect enjoyment, and then we will pay up capital and interest when we must.”

“It cannot and will not be yet,” said Herse resolutely, but she wiped her eyes with her band. “If Agne sings even, so long as she does it without coercion and of her own free-will no Bishop can punish us.”

“He cannot, he dare not!” cried the old man. There are still laws and judges.”

“And Gorgo’s family is influential as well as rich. Porphyrius has power to protect us, and you do not yet know what a fancy he has taken to us. Ask mother.”

“It is like a story,” Herse put in. “Before we left, the old lady—she must be eighty or more—took me aside and asked me where we were lodging. I told her at the Widow Mary’s and when she heard it she struck her crutch on the floor. ‘Do you like the place?’ she asked. I told her not at all, and said we could not possibly stop here.”

“Quite right!” cried Karnis. “The monks in the court-yard will kill us as dead as rats if they hear us learning heathen hymns.”

“That is what I told her; but the old lady did not allow me to finish; she drew me close to her and whispered, ’only do as my granddaughter wishes and you shall be safely housed and take this for the present’—and she put her hand into the purse at her girdle, gave the gold into my hand, and added loud enough for the others to hear: ’Fifty gold pieces out of my own pocket if Gorgo tells me that she is satisfied with your performance.’”

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“Fifty gold pieces!” cried Karnis clasping his hands. “That brightens up the dull grey of existence. Fifty, then, are certain. If we sing six times that makes a talent—[estimated in 1880 at $1100]—and that will buy back our old vineyard at Leontium. I will repair the old Odeum—they have made a cowhouse of it—and when we sing there the monks may come and listen! You laugh? But you are simpletons—I should like to see who will forbid my singing on my own land and in my own country. A talent of gold!

“It is quite enough to pay on account, and I will not agree to any bargain that will not give me the field-slaves and cattle. Castles in the air, do you say? But just listen to me: We are sure you see of a hundred gold pieces at least. . .” He had raised his voice in his eagerness and while he spoke the curtains had been softly opened, and the dull glimmer of the lamp which stood in front of Orpheus fell on a head which was charming in spite of its disorder. A quantity of loose fair hair curled in papers stuck up all over the round head and fell over the forehead, the eyes were tired and still half shut, but the little mouth was wide awake and laughing with the frank amusement of light-hearted youth.

Karnis, without noticing the listener, had gone on with his visionary hopes of regaining his estates by his next earnings, but at this point the young girl, holding the curtain in her right hand, stretched out her plump left arm and begged in a humble whine:

“Good father Karnis, give me a little of your wealth; five poor little drachmae!”

The old man started; but he instantly recovered himself and answered good-naturedly enough:

“Go back to bed, you little hussy. You ought to be asleep instead of listening there!”

“Asleep?” said the girl. “While you are shouting like an orator against the wind! Five drachmae, father. I stick to that. A new ribband for me will cost one, and the same for Agne, two. Two I will spend on wine for us all, and that makes the five.”

“That makes four—you are a great arithmetician to be sure!”

“Four?” said Dada, as much amazed as though the moon had fallen. “If only I had a counting-frame. No, father, five I tell you—it is five.”

“No, child, four; and you shall have four,” replied her father. “Plutus is at the door and to-morrow morning you shall both have garlands.”

“Yes, of violets, ivy and roses,” added Dame Herse. “Is Agne asleep?”

“As sound as the dead. She always sleeps soundly unless she lies wide awake all the night through. But we were both so tired—and I am still. It is a comfort to yawn. Do you see how I am sitting?”

“On the clothes-chest?” said Herse.

“Yes, and the curtain is not a strong back to the seat. Fortunately if I fall asleep I shall drop forwards, not backwards.”

“But there is a bed for each of you,” said the mother, and giving the girl a gentle push she followed her into the sleeping-alcove. In a few minutes she came out again.

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“That is just like Dada!” she exclaimed. “Little Papias had rolled off the chest on which he was sleeping, so the good girl had put him into her bed and was sitting on the chest herself, tired as she was.”

“She would do anything for that boy,” said Karnis. “But it is past midnight. Come, Orpheus, let us make the bed!”

Three long hen-coops which stood piled against the wall were laid on the ground and covered with mats; on these the tired men stretched their limbs, but they could not sleep.

The little lamp was extinguished, and for an hour all was still in the dark room. Then, suddenly, there was a loud commotion; some elastic object flew against the wall with a loud flap, and Karnis, starting up, called out: “Get out—monster!”

“What is it?” cried Herse who had also been startled, and the old man replied angrily:

“Some daemon, some dog of a daemon is attacking me and giving me no peace. Wait, you villain—there, perhaps that will settle you,” and he flung his second sandal. Then, without heeding the rustling fall of some object that he had hit by accident, he gasped out:

“The impudent fiend will not let me be. It knows that we need Agne’s voice, and it keeps whispering, first in one ear and then in the other, that I should threaten to sell her little brother if she refuses; but I—I—strike a light, Orpheus!—She is a good girl and rather than do such a thing. . .”

“The daemon has been close to me too,” said the son as he blew on the spark he had struck.

“And to me too,” added Herse nervously. “It is only natural. There are no images of the gods in this Christian hovel. Away, hateful serpent! We are honest folks and will not agree to any vile baseness. Here is my amulet, Karnis; if the daemon comes again you must turn it round—you know how.”

CHAPTER II.

Early next morning the singers set out for the house of Porphyrius. The party was not complete, however, for Dada had been forced to remain at home. The shoes that the old man had flung to scare away the daemon had caught in the girl’s dress which she had just washed, and had dragged it down on to the earth; she had found it in the morning full of holes burnt by the ashes into the damp material. Dada had no other presentable garment, so, in spite of her indignant refusal and many tears, she had to remain indoors with Papias. Agne’s anxious offers to stay in her place with the little boy

and to lend Dada her dress, both Karnis and his wife had positively refused; and Dada had lent her aid—at first silently though willingly and then with her usual merriment—in twining garlands for the others and in dressing Agne's smooth black plaits with a wreath of ivy and violets.

The men were already washed, anointed and crowned with poplar and laurel when a steward arrived from Porphyrius to bid them follow him to his master's house. But a small sacrifice was necessary, for the messenger desired them to lay aside their wreaths, which would excite ill-feeling among the monks, and certainly be snatched off by the Christian mob. Karnis when he started was greatly disappointed, and as much depressed as he had been triumphant and hopeful a short time before.

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The monks, who had gathered outside the Xenodochium, glanced with scowling suspicion at the party, who could not recover the good spirits with which they had begun the day till they were fairly out of the narrow, gloomy alleys, reeking with tar and salt fish, that adjoined the harbor, and where they had to push their way through a dense throng. The steward led the van with Herse, talking freely in reply to her enquiries.

His master, he said, was one of the great merchants of the city, whose wife had died twenty years since in giving birth to Gorgo. His two sons were at present absent on their travels. The old lady who had been so liberal in her treatment of the singers was Damia, the mother of Porphyrius. She had a fine fortune of her own, and notwithstanding her great age was still respected as the soul of business in the household, and as a woman deeply versed in the mysterious sciences. Mary, the pious Christian, who had founded the "House of the Holy Martyr," was the widow of Apelles, the brother of Porphyrius, but she had ceased all intercourse with her husband's family. This was but natural, as she was at the head of the Christian women of Alexandria, while the household of Porphyrius—though the master himself had been baptized—was as thoroughly heathen as any in Alexandria.

Karnis heard nothing of all this, for he came last of the party. Orpheus and Agne followed next to Herse and the steward, and after them came two slaves, carrying the lutes and pipes. Agne walked with downcast eyes, as if she desired to avoid seeing all that surrounded her, though when Orpheus addressed her she shyly glanced up at him and answered briefly and timidly. They presently came out of an obscure alley by the canal connecting Kibotus with Lake Mareotis where the Nile-boats lay at anchor. Karnis drew a deeper breath, for here the air was clear and balmy; a light northerly breeze brought the refreshing fragrance of the sea, and the slender palm-trees that bordered the canal threw long shadows mingling with the massive shade of the sycamores. The road was astir with busy groups, birds sang in the trees, and the old musician drank in the exciting and aromatic atmosphere of the Egyptian Spring with keen enjoyment.

As they reached the middle of the steep bridge across the canal he involuntarily stood still, riveted by the view of the southwest. In his excitement he threw up his arms, his eyes glistened with moisture and with the enthusiasm of youth, and, as was always the case when his emotions were stirred by some glorious work of God or man, an image rose to his mind, all unbidden—the image of his eldest son, now dead, but in life his closest and most sympathetic comrade. He felt as though his hand could grasp the shoulder of that son, too early snatched away, whose gifts had far transcended those of the surviving Orpheus—as though he too could gaze with him on the grand scene that lay before him.

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On a platform of rocks and mighty masonry rose a structure of wonderful magnificence and beauty, so brilliantly illuminated by the morning sun that its noble proportions and gorgeous colors showed in dazzling splendor and relief. Over the gilt dome bent the cloudless blue of the African sky, and the polished hemisphere shone, as radiant as the sun whose beams it reflected. Sloping planes for vehicles, and flights of steps for pedestrians led up to the gates. The lower part of this wonderful edifice—the great Temple of Serapis—was built to stand forever, and the pillars of the vestibule supported a roof more fitted to the majesty of the gods than to the insignificance of mortals; priests and worshippers moved here like children among the trunks of some gigantic forest. Round the cornice, in hundreds of niches, and on every projection, all the gods of Olympus and all the heroes and sages of Greece seemed to have met in conclave, and stood gazing down on the world in gleaming brass or tinted marble. Every portion of the building blazed with gold and vivid coloring; the painter's hand had added life to the marble groups in high relief that filled the pediments and the smaller figures in the long row of metopes. All the population of a town might have found refuge in the vast edifice and its effect on the mind was like that of a harmonious symphony of adoration sung by a chorus of giants.

"All hail! Great Serapis! I greet thee in joyful humility, thankful that Thou hast granted to my old eyes to see Thy glorious and eternal temple once again!" murmured Karnis in devout contemplation. Then, appealing to his wife and son, he pointed in silence to the building. Presently, however, as he watched Orpheus gazing in speechless delight at its magnificent proportions he could not forbear.

"This," he began with fervid enthusiasm, "is the stronghold of Serapis the King of the Gods! A work for all time. Its youth has lasted five hundred years, its future will extend to all eternity.—Aye, so it is; and so long as it endures in all its glory the old gods cannot be deposed!"

"No one will ever dare to touch a stone of it," said the steward. "Every child in Alexandria knows that the world will crumble into dust and ashes if a finger is laid on that Temple, and the man who ventures to touch the sacred image. . ."

"The god can protect himself!" interrupted the singer. "But you—you Christian hypocrites who pretend to hate life and love death—if you really long so vehemently for the end of all things, you have only to fall upon this glorious structure.—Do that, do that—only do that!"

The old man shook his fist at the invisible foe and Herse echoed his words:

"Aye, aye, only do that!" Then she added more calmly: "Well, if everything comes to an end at once the enemies of the gods will die with us; and there can be nothing terrible in perishing at the same time with everything that is beautiful or dear to us."

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“Nevertheless,” said the steward, “the Bishop has put out his hand to touch the sanctuary. But our noble Olympius would not suffer the sacrilegious host to approach, and they had to retire with broken heads. Serapis will not be mocked; he will stand though all else perish. ‘Eternity,’ the priest tells us, ’is to him but as an instant, and while millions of generations bloom and fade, he is still and forever the same!’”

“Hail, all hail to the great god!” cried Orpheus with hands outstretched towards the temple.

“Yea, hail! for everlasting glory shall be his!” repeated his father. “Great is Serapis, and his house and his image shall last. . .”

“Till the next full moon!” said a passer-by in a tone of sinister mockery, shaking his fist in the face, as it were, of the god. Orpheus turned quickly to punish the prophet of evil; but he had disappeared in the crowd and the tide of men had borne him onwards. “Till the next full moon!” murmured Agne, who had shuddered at her companion’s rapturous ejaculations, and she glanced uneasily at Orpheus; but by the time Herse addressed her a minute or two later she had controlled the expression of her features, and the matron’s heart was gladdened by her bright smile. Nay, many a young Alexandrian, passing the group on foot or in a carriage, looked at her a second time, for that smile lent a mysterious charm to her pale, calm face. Nor had it faded away when they had crossed the bridge and were nearing the shores of the lake, for an idea once conceived lingered long in Agne’s mind; and as she walked on in the bright glory of the morning’s sun her mind’s eye was fixed on a nocturnal scene—on the full moon, high in the sky—-on the overthrow of the great idol and a glittering army among the marble ruins of the Serapeum. Apostles and martyrs soared around, the Saviour sat enthroned in glory and triumph, while angels, cradled on the clouds that were his footstool, were singing beatific hymns which sounded clearly in her ear above the many-voiced tumult of the quays. The vision did not vanish till she was desired to get into the boat.

Herse was a native of Alexandria and Karnis had passed some of the best years of his life there; but to Orpheus and Agne all was new, and even the girl, when once she had escaped from the crowd and noise which oppressed her, took an interest in the scene and asked a question now and then. The younger man had not eyes enough to see all that claimed his attention and admiration.

There were the great sluice-gates at the entrance to the canal that joined the lake to the sea—there, in a separate dock, lay the splendid imperial Nile-boats which served to keep up communication between the garrison of Alexandria and the military stations on the river—there, again, were the gaudy barges intended for the use of the ‘comes’, the prefect and other high officials—and there merchant-vessels of every size lay at anchor in countless number. Long trains of many-colored

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sails swept over the rippling lake like flights of birds across a cornfield, and every inch of the shore was covered with stores or buildings. Far away to the south long trellices of vine covered the slopes, broken by the silvery glaucous tones of the olive-groves, and by clumps of towering palms whose crowns mingled to form a lofty canopy. White walls, gaudily-painted temples and private villas gleamed among the green, and the slanting rays of the low sun, shining on the drops that fell from the never-resting wheels and buckets that irrigated the land, turned them into showers of diamonds. These water-works, of the most ingenious construction, many of them invented and contrived by scientific engineers, were the weapons with which man had conquered the desert that originally surrounded this lake, forcing it into green fertility and productiveness of grain and fruit. Nay, the desert had, for many centuries, here ceased to exist. Dionysus the generous, and the kindly garden-gods had blest the toil of men, and yet, now, in many a plot—in all which belonged to Christian owners—their altars lay scattered and overthrown.

During the last thirty years much indeed was changed, and nothing to the satisfaction of old Karnis; Herse, too, shook her head, and when the rowers had pulled them about half-way across, she pointed to a broad vacant spot on the bank where a new building was just rising above the soil, and said sadly to her husband:

“Would you know that place again? Where is our dear old temple gone? The temple of Dionysus.” Karnis started up so hastily that he almost upset the boat, and their conductor was obliged to insist on his keeping quiet; he obeyed but badly, however, for his arms were never still as he broke out:

“And do you suppose that because we are in Egypt I can keep my living body as still as one of your dead mummies? Let others keep still if they can! I say it is shameful, disgraceful; a dove’s gall might rise at it! That splendid building, the pride of the city and the delight of men’s eyes, destroyed—swept away like dust from the road! Do you see? Do you see, I say? Broken columns, marble capitals, here, there and everywhere at the bottom of the lake—here a head and there a torso! Great and noble masters formed those statues by the aid of the gods, and they—they, small and ignoble as they are, have destroyed them by the aid of evil daemons. They have annihilated and drowned works that were worthy to live forever! And why? Shall I tell you? Because they shun the Beautiful as an owl shuns light. Aye, they do! There is nothing they hate or dread so much as beauty; wherever they find it, they deface and destroy it, even if it is the work of the Divinity. I accuse them before the Immortals—for where is the grove even, not the work of man but the special work of Heaven itself? Where is our grove, with its cool grottos, its primaeval trees, its shady nooks, and all the peace and enjoyment of which it was as full as a ripe grape is full of sweet juice?”

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“It was cut down and rooted up,” replied the steward. “The emperor gave the sanctuary over to Bishop Theophilus and he set to work at once to destroy it. The temple was pulled down, the sacred vessels went into the melting-pot, and the images were mutilated and insulted before they were thrown into the lime-kiln. The place they are building now is to be a Christian church. Oh! to think of the airy, beautiful colonnades that once stood there, and then of the dingy barn that is to take their place!”

“Why do the gods endure it? Has Zeus lost his thunderbolts?” cried Orpheus clenching his hands, and paying no heed to Agne who sat pale and sternly silent during this conversation.

“Nay, he only sleeps, to wake with awful power,” said the old man. “See those blocks of marble and ruins under the waves. Swift work is destruction! And men lost their wits and looked on at the crime, flinging the delight of the gods into the water and the kiln. They were wise, very wise; fishes and flames are dumb and cannot cry to heaven. One barbarian, in one hour can destroy what it has taken the sublimest souls years, centuries, to create. They glory in destruction and ruin and they can no more build up again such a temple as stood there than they can restore trees that have taken six hundred years to grow. There—out there, Herse, in the hollow where those black fellows are stirring mortar—they have given them shirts too, because they are ashamed of the beauty of men’s bodies—that is where the grotto was where we found your poor father.”

“The grotto?” repeated his wife, looking at the spot through her tears, and thinking of the day when, as a girl, she had hurried to the feast of Dionysus and sought her father in the temple. He had been famous as a gem-cutter. In obedience to the time-honored tradition in Alexandria, after intoxicating himself with new wine in honor of the god, he had rushed out into the street to join the procession. The next morning he had not returned; the afternoon passed and evening came and still he did not appear, so his daughter had gone in search of him. Karnis was at that time a young student and, as her father’s lodger, had rented the best room in the house. He had met her going on her errand and had been very ready to help her in the search; before long they had found the old man in the ivy-grown grotto in the grove of Dionysus—motionless and cold, as if struck by lightning. The bystanders believed that the god had snatched him away in his intoxicated legion.

In this hour of sorrow Karnis had proved himself her friend, and a few months after Herse had become his wife and gone with him to Tauromenium in Sicily.

All this rose before her mind, and even Karnis sat gazing dumbly at the waves; for every spot where some decisive change has occurred in our lives has power to revive the past when we see it again after a long absence. Thus they all sat in silence till Orpheus, touching his father, pointed out the temple of Isis where he had met the fair Gorgo on

the previous day. The old man turned to look at the sanctuary which, as yet, remained intact.

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“A barbarous structure!” he said bitterly. “The art of the Egyptians has long been numbered with the dead and the tiger hungers only for the living!”

“Nay, it is not such a bad piece of work,” replied the steward, “but it is out of their reach; for the ground on which it stands belongs to my old mistress, and the law protects private property.—You must at your leisure inspect the ship-yard here; it is perhaps the most extensive in the world. The timber that is piled there—cedar of Lebanon, oak from Pontus and heavy iron-wood from Ethiopia—is worth hundreds of talents.”

“And does all that belong to your master?”

“No; the owner is the grandson of a freedman, formerly in his family. Now they are very rich and highly respected, and Master Clemens sits in the Senate. There he is—that man in a white robe.”

“A Christian, I should imagine,” observed the singer.

“Very true;” replied the steward. “But what is good remains good, and he is a worthy and excellent man notwithstanding. He keeps a tight hand over the ship-yard here and over the others too by the harbor of Eunostus. Only Clemens can never let other people have their own opinions; in that he is just like the rest of them. Every slave he buys must become a Christian and his sons are the same; even Constantine, though he is an officer in the imperial army and as smart and clever a soldier as lives.—As far as we are concerned we leave every man to his own beliefs. Porphyrius makes no secret of his views and all the vessels we use in the corn-trade are built by Christians.—But here we are.”

The boat stopped at a broad flight of marble steps which led from the lake into the garden of Porphyrius’ house. Karnis as he walked through the grounds felt himself at greater ease, for here the old gods were at home; their statues gleamed among the dark clumps of evergreens, and were mirrored in the clear tanks, while delicious perfumes were wafted from the garlanded shrines and freshly anointed altars, to greet the newcomers.

CHAPTER III.

The family of musicians were kindly received, but they were not immediately called upon to perform, for as soon as Damia heard that the pretty fair-haired child who had pleased her so much the day before had been obliged to remain at home, she had one of her granddaughter’s dresses brought out, and requested Herse to go back to fetch her. Some slaves were to accompany Herse and transfer all her little property on board a Nile-boat belonging to Porphyrius, which was lying at anchor just off the ship-yard. In this large barge there were several cabins which had often accommodated guests, and

which would now serve very well as a residence for Karnis and his party. Indeed, it was particularly well suited for a family of musicians, for they could practise there undisturbed, and Gorgo could at any time pay them a visit.

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Herse went back to the Xenodochium with a lighter heart; her son also returned to the city to replace a number of necessaries that had been lost on board ship, and Karnis, rejoicing to be out of the monk-haunted asylum had remained in the men's room in the house of his new patron, enjoying the good things which abounded there. He felt as though he was here once more at home after years of exile. Here dwelt the spirit of his fathers; here he found men who enjoyed life after his own fashion, who could share his enthusiasms and his hatreds. He drank noble liquor out of an elegantly carved onyx cup, all that he heard soothed his ears, and all that he said met with entire sympathy. The future prospects of his family, till now so uncertain, were hardly inferior to those which his vivid imagination had painted the night before. And even if Fortune should again desert him, the hours of present enjoyment should be written down to the profit side of life, and remain a permanent gain at any rate in memory.

The venerable Damia, her son Porphyrius, and the fair Gorgo were in fact a trio such as are rarely met with. The master of the house, more cautious than the women, was inclined to think that his mother and daughter had been somewhat overhasty and imprudent in their advances and he had at first received Karnis with considerable reserve; but after a short interview he had convinced himself that the musician was a man of unusual culture and superior stamp. The old lady had, from the first, been predisposed in his favor, for she had read in the stars last night that the day was to bring her a fortunate meeting. Her wish was law, and Karnis could not help smiling when she addressed her son, whose hair had long been grey and who looked fully competent to manage his own household, as "my child," not hesitating to scold and reprove him. Her cathedra was a high arm-chair which she never quitted but to be carried to her observatory on the roof of the house, where she kept her astrological tablets and manuscripts. The only weakness about her was in her feet; but strong, and willing arms were always at her disposal to carry her about—to table, into her sleeping-room, and during the daytime out to sunny spots in the garden. She was never so happy as when Helios warmed her back with his rays, for her old blood needed it after the long night-watches that she still would keep in her observatory. Even during the hottest noon she would sit in the sun, with a large green umbrella to shade her keen eyes, and those who desired to speak with her might find shade as best they could. As she stood, much bent, but propped on her ivory crutches, eagerly following every word of a conversation, she looked as though she were prepared at any moment to spring into the middle of it and interrupt the speaker. She always said exactly what she meant without reserve or ruth; and throughout her long life, as the mistress of great wealth, she had always been allowed to have her own way. She asserted her

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rights even over her son, though he was the centre of a web whose threads reached to the furthest circumference of the known world. The peasants who tilled the earth by the Upper and Lower Nile, the shepherds who kept their flocks in the Arabian desert, in Syria, or on the Silphium meads of Cyrenaica, the wood-cutters of Lebanon and Pontus, the mountaineers of Hispania and Sardinia, the brokers, merchants, and skippers of every port on the Mediterranean, were bound by these threads to the villa on the shore of Mareotis, and felt the tie when the master there—docile as a boy to his mother's will—tightened or released his hold.

His possessions, even in his youth, had been so vast that their increment could bring no added enjoyment to him or his family, and yet their increase had become his life's task. He strove for a higher sum to figure on the annual balance sheet, as eagerly as an athlete strives for a prize; and his mother not only inspected the account, but watched every important undertaking with keen interest. When her son and his colleagues doubted over some decision it was she who gave the casting vote; but though her advice in most cases proved sound and profitable, she herself ascribed this less to her own acumen and knowledge of the world than to the hints she obtained from the stars and from magical calculations. Her son did not follow her in these speculations, but he rarely disputed the conclusions that she drew from her astrological studies. While she was turning night into day he was glad to entertain a few learned friends, for all the hours of leisure that he could snatch from his pursuit of fortune, he devoted to philosophy, and the most distinguished thinkers of Alexandria were happy to be received at the hospitable table of so rich a patron. He was charmed to be called "Callias,"

> [The noble Athenian family of Callias was famed for its wealth and splendor.]

and the heathen teachers at the schools of the Museum and Serapeum regarded him as a faithful ally. It was known that he had been baptized, but he never liked to hear the fact mentioned. He won all hearts by his perfect modesty, but even more perhaps by a certain air of suffering and melancholy which protected the wealthy merchant against the envy of detractors.

In the course of her conversation with Karnis the old lady enquired particularly as to the antecedent history of Agne, for if there had been a stain on her character, or if she were by birth a slave, Gorgo could not of course be seen with her in public, and in that case Karnis would have to teach the lament of Isis to some freeborn singer. Karnis in reply could only shrug his shoulders, and beg the ladies and Porphyrius to judge for themselves when he should have related the young girl's story.

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Three years since, he said, he had been staying at Antioch at the time of a violent outbreak against the levying of certain taxes. There had been much bloodshed, and he and his family had got out of the city as quickly as they could. It was growing dusk when they turned into a wayside inn, where they found Agne and her little brother captives to a soldier. During the night the girl had crept up to the little boy's bed, and to comfort and lull him had begun to sing him a simple song. The singer's voice was so pure and pathetic that it had touched both him and his wife and they had at once purchased the girl and her brother for a small sum. He had simply paid what the soldier asked, not regarding the children in the light of slaves; nor had he had any description of them written out, though it was, no doubt, in his power to treat them as slaves and to sell them again, since the sale had taken place before witnesses who might still be found. He had afterwards learnt from the girl that her parents were Christians and had settled in Antioch only a few years previously; but she had no friends nor relatives there. Her father, being a tax-collector in the service of the Emperor, had moved about a great deal, but she remembered his having spoken of Augusta Treviroruin in Belgica prima, as his native place.—[Now Trier or Treves, on the Moselle.]

Agne had witnessed the attack on her father's house by the angry mob who had killed her parents, their two slaves, and her elder brother. Her father must certainly have been an official of some rank, and probably, as it would seem, a Roman citizen, in which case—as Porphyrius agreed—both the young girl and her little brother could legally claim their freedom. The insurgents who had dragged the two children out into the street had been driven off by the troops, and it was from them that Karnis had rescued them. "And I have never regretted it," added the old musician, "for Agne is a sweet, gentle soul. Of her voice I need say nothing, since you yourselves heard it yesterday."

"And were quite delighted with it!" cried Gorgo. "If flowers could sing it would be like that!"

"Well, well," said Karnis. "She has a lovely voice—but she wants wings. Something—-what, I know not, keeps the violet rooted to the soil."

"Christian scruples," said the merchant, and Damia added:

"Let Eros touch her—that will loosen her tongue."

"Eros, always Eros!" repeated Gorgo shrugging her shoulders. "Nay, love means suffering—those who love drag a chain with them. To do the best of which he is capable man needs only to be free, true, and in health."

"That is a great deal, fair mistress," replied Karnis eagerly. "With these three gifts the best work is done. But as to Agne—what can be further from freedom than a girl bound to service? her body, to be sure is healthy, but her spirit suffers; she can get no peace for dread of the Christian's terrors: Sin, Repentance, and Hell. . . ."

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“Oh, we know how their life is ruined!” interrupted the old lady. “Was it Agne who introduced you to Mary’s Asylum?”

“No, noble lady.”

“But how then—that prudent saint generally selects her guests, and those that are not baptized . . .”

“She certainly sheltered heathens on this occasion.”

“I am much surprised. Tell me how it happened.”

“We were at Rome,” began Karnis, “and my patron there persuaded Marcus, Mary’s son, to take us on board his ship at Ostia. We dropped anchor at Cyrene, where the young master wanted to pick up his brother and bring him also to Alexandria.”

“Then is Demetrius here?” asked Porphyrius.

“Yes, sir. He came on board at Cyrene. Hardly had we got fairly to sea again when we saw two pirate ships. Our trireme was at once turned round, but in our hurry to regain the harbor we stuck fast on a sand bank; the boats were at once put out to save the passengers and Cynegius, the consul. . .”

“Cynegius—on his way here!” exclaimed Porphyrius, much excited.

“He landed yesterday with us in the harbor of Eunostus. The secretaries and officers of his suite filled one boat and Marcus and his brother were getting into the other with their men. We, and others of the free passengers, should have been left behind if Dada . . .”

“That pretty little blonde?” asked Damia.

“The very same. Marcus had taken a great fancy to her prattle and her songs during the voyage—no nightingale can sing more clearly—and when she begged and prayed him he gave way at once, and said: he would take her in his boat. But the brave child declared that she would jump into the sea before she would leave without us.”

“Well done!” cried the old lady, and Porphyrius added:

“That speaks well for her and for you.”

“So after all Marcus found room for us in the boat—for all of us, and we got safely to land. A few days after we all came on in a troop-ship: Cynegius, the two brothers and the rest, all safe and sound; and, as we had lost everything we possessed, Marcus gave us a certificate which procured our admission into his mother’s Xenodochium. And then the gods brought me and mine under the notice of your noble daughter.”

“Then Cynegius is here, positively here?” asked Porphyrius once more. Karnis assured him that he was, and the merchant, turning to his mother, went on:

“And Olympius has not yet come home. It is always the same thing; he is as rash as a boy. If they should take him! The roads are swarming with monks. There is something astir. Bring out the chariot, Syrus, at once; and tell Atlas to be ready to accompany me. Cynegius here!—Ha, ha! I thank the gods!”

The last exclamation was addressed to a man who at this instant came into the room, muffled up to the eyes. He threw off the hood of his cloak and the wrapper that went round his throat, concealing his long white beard, and as he did so he exclaimed with a gasp for breath:

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“Here I am once more!—Cynegius is here and matters look serious my friend.”

“You have been to the Museum?”

“Without any obstruction. I found them all assembled. Brave lads. They are all for us and the gods. There are plenty of weapons. The Jews—[At that time about two-fifths of the whole population.]—are not stirring, Onias thinks he may vouch for that; and we must surely be a match for the monks and the imperial cohorts.”

“If the gods only stand by us to-day and tomorrow,” replied Porphyrius doubtfully.

“For ever, if only the country people do their duty!” cried the other. “But who is this stranger?”

“The chief of the singers who were here yesterday,” replied Gorgo.

“Karnis, the son of Hiero of Tauromenium,” said the musician, bowing to the stranger, whose stately figure and handsome, thoughtful head struck him with admiration.

“Karnis of Tauromenium!” exclaimed the newcomer with glad surprise. “By Hercules! a strange meeting. Your hand, your hand, old man. How many years is it since we last emptied a wine-jar together at the house of old Hippias? Seven lustres have turned our hair grey, but we still can stand upright. Well, Karnis son of Hiero—and who am I?”

“Olympius—the great Olympius!” cried Karnis, eagerly grasping the offered hand. “May all the gods bless this happy day!”

“All the gods?” repeated the philosopher. “Is that what you say? Then you have not crawled under the yoke of the cross?”

“The world can rejoice only under the auspices of the gods!” cried Karnis excitedly.

“And it shall rejoice still, we will save it from gloom!” added the other with a flash of vehemence.

“The times are fateful. We must fight; and no longer over trifles; we cannot now break each other’s heads over a quibble, or believe that the whole world hangs on the question whether the instant of death is the last minute of this life or the first of the next. No—what now remains to be decided is whether the old gods shall be victorious, whether we shall continue to live free and happy under the rule of the Immortals, or whether we shall bow under the dismal doctrine of the carpenter’s crucified son; we must fight for the highest hopes and aims of humanity.”

“I know,” interrupted Karnis, “you have already done battle valiantly for great Serapis. They wanted to lay hands on his sanctuary but you and your disciples put them to rout. The rest got off scot-free . . .”

“But they have taught me the value of my head,” said Olympius laughing. “Evagrius prices it at three talents. Why, you might buy a house with the money and a modest man could live upon the interest. This worthy man keeps me concealed here. We must talk over a few things, Porphyrius; and you, Gorgo, do not forget the solemn festival of Isis. Now that Cynegius is here it must be made as splendid as possible, and he must tell the Emperor, who has sent him, what temper we Alexandrians are in. But where is the dark maiden I saw yesterday?”

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“In the garden,” replied Gorgo.

“She is to sing at the foot of the bier!” cried Olympius. “That must not be altered.”

“If I can persuade her—she is a Christian,” said Karnis doubtfully.

“She must,” said the philosopher positively. “It will be a bad lookout indeed for the logic and rhetoric of Alexandria if an old professor and disputant cannot succeed in turning a young girl’s resolutions upside down. Leave that to me. I shall find time for a chat with you by and bye, friend Karnis. How in the world does it happen that you, who so often have helped us with your father’s coin, have come down to be the chief of a band of travelling musicians? You will have much to tell me, my good friend; but even such important matters must give way to those that are more pressing. One word with you, Porphyrius.”

Agne had been all this time awaiting Herse’s return in the colonnade that ran along the garden-front of the house. She was glad to be alone, and it was very comfortable to rest on the soft cushions under the gilt-coffered ceiling of the arcade. At each end stood large shrubs covered with bunches of violet-blue flowers and the spreading branches cast a pleasant shade on the couch where she sat; the beautiful flowers, which were strange to her, were delightfully fragrant, and from time to time she helped herself to the refreshments which Gorgo herself had brought out to her. All she saw, heard, and felt, was soothing to her mind; never had she seen or tasted juicier peaches, richer bunches of grapes, fresher almonds or more tempting cakes; on the shrubs in the garden and on the grass-plots between the paths there was not a dead leaf, not a dry stem, not the tiniest weed. The buds were swelling on the tall trees, shrubs without end were covered with blossoms—white, blue, yellow, and red—while, among the smooth, shining leaves of the orange and lemon trees, gleamed the swelling fruit. On a round tank close at hand some black swans were noiselessly tracing evanescent circles and uttering their strange lament. The song of birds mingled with the plash of fountains, and even the marble statues, for all that they were dumb, seemed to be enjoying the sweet morning air and the stir and voice of nature.

Yes, she could be happy here; as she peeled a peach and slowly swallowed the soft fragrant mouthfuls, she laughed to remember the hard ship’s-biscuit, of the two previous days’ fare. And it was Gorgo’s privilege to revel in these good things day after day, year after year. It was like living in Eden, in the perpetual spring of man’s first blissful home on earth. There could be no suffering here; who could cry here, who could be sorrowful, who could die? . . . Here a new train of thought forced itself upon her. She was still so young, and yet she was as familiar with the idea of death as she was with life; for whenever she had happened to tell any minister of her creed that she was an orphan

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and a slave, and deeply sad and sorrowful, the joys of eternity in Paradise had always been described to her for her consolation, and it was in hopes of Heaven that her visionary nature found such a modicum of comfort as might suffice to keep the young artist-soul from despair. And now it struck her that it must be hard, very hard to die, in the midst of all this splendor. Living here must be a foretaste of the joys of Paradise—-and in the next world, among the angels of Heaven, in the presence of the Saviour—-would it not be a thousand times more beautiful even than this? She shuddered, for, sojourning here, she was no longer to be counted as one of the poor and humble sufferers to whom Christ had promised the Kingdom of Heaven—here she was one of the rich, who had nothing to hope for after death.

She pushed the peaches away with a feeling of oppression, and closed her eyes that she might no longer see all these perishable splendors and sinful works of the heathen, which pandered only to the senses. She longed to remain miserable and poor on earth, that she might rejoin her parents and dwell with them eternally.

To her it was not a belief but a certainty that her father and mother were dwelling in Heaven, and she had often felt moved to pray that she might die and be reunited to them; but she must not die yet, for her little brother still needed her care. The kind souls whom she served let him lack for nothing, it is true, that could conduce to his bodily welfare; still, she could not appear before her parents without the little one in her hand, and he would be lost eternally if his soul fell into the power of the enemies of her faith. Her heart ached when she reflected that Karnis, who was certainly not one of the reprobate and whom she affectionately revered as a master in the art she loved—that Herse, and the light-hearted Dada, and Orpheus even, must all be doomed to perish eternally; and to save Orpheus she would willingly have forfeited half the joys of Paradise. She saw that he was no less an idolater than his parents; and yet, day by day, she prayed that his soul might be saved, and she never ceased to hope for a miracle—that he too might see a vision, like Paul, and confess the Saviour. She was so happy when she was with him, and never happier than when it was her fortune to sing with him, or to his admirable accompaniment on the lute. When she could succeed in forgetting herself completely, and in giving utterance by her lovely voice to all that was highest and best in her soul, he, whose ear was no less sensitive and appreciative than his father's, would frankly express his approval, and in these moments life was indeed fair and precious.

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Music was the bond between her and Orpheus, and when her soul was stirred she could feel and express herself in music. Song was the language of her heart, and she had learnt by experience that it was a language which even the heathen could both use and understand. The Eternal Father himself must find joy in such a voice as Gorgo's. She was a heathen, and yet she had thrown into her song all that Agne herself could feel when she lifted up her heart in passionate prayer. The Christian—so she had often been taught—must have no part with the idolaters; but it was God himself who had cast her on the hands of Karnis, and the Church commanded that servants should obey their masters. Singing seemed to her to be a language in itself, bestowed by God on all living creatures, even on the birds, wherein to speak to Him; so she allowed herself to look forward with pleasure to an opportunity of mingling her own voice with that of the heathen lady.

CHAPTER IV.

Not long after Porphyrius and the philosopher had retired to a private room Herse returned with Dada. Gorgo's blue spangled dress, which Damia had sent her, suited the girl to perfection; but she was quite out of breath, and her hair was in disorder. Herse, too, looked agitated, her face was red and she dragged little Papias, whose hand she held, rather roughly at her heels.

Dada was evidently abashed; less by reason of the splendor that surrounded her than because her foster-mother had strictly enjoined her to be very quiet and mannerly in the presence of their patrons. She felt shy and strange as she made her low courtesy to the old lady; but Damia seemed to be pleased with the timid grace of her demeanor, for she offered her her hand—an honor she usually conferred only on her intimates, bid her stoop, and gave her a kiss, saying kindly: "You are a good brave girl. Fidelity to your friends is pleasing in the sight of the gods, and finds its reward even among men."

Dada, obeying a happy impulse, threw herself on her knees before the old woman, kissed her hands, and then, sitting on her heels, nestled at her feet.

Gorgo, however, noticing Herse's agitation, asked what had happened to them. Some monks, Herse explained, had followed them on the road hither, had snatched Dada's lyre from the slave who was carrying it and pulled the wreath out of her hair. Damia was furious as she heard it, and trembled with rage as she railed at the wild hordes who disgraced and desecrated Alexandria, the sacred home of the Muses; then she began to speak once more of the young captain, Mary's son, to whom the troupe of singers owed their lives.

"Marcus," said she, "is said to be a paragon of chastity. He races in the hippodrome with all the gallants of the town and yet—if it is true it is a miracle—he shuns women as though he were a priest already. His mother is very anxious that he should become

one; but he, by the grace of Aphrodite, is the son of my handsome Appelles, who, if he had gazed into those blue eyes all the way from Rome to Alexandria, would have surrendered at mercy; but then he would also have conquered them—as surely as I hope to live till autumn. You need not blush so, child. After all, Marcus is a man like other men. Keep your eyes open, Dame Herse!"

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“Never fear!” cried Herse. “And I have need to keep them open I am sorry to say. The young captain, who on board ship was so bashful and retiring, as soon as he was on land altered his time. While we were away this morning he crept into his own mother’s inn like a ferret, opened the door of our room with the keys of which he has the command—it is shameful!—and proposed to the girl to fly, to leave us—she is the daughter of a dear sister of mine—and go with him; who but he knows where!”

Damia struck the floor with her crutch and, interrupting the indignant matron with a spiteful laugh, exclaimed:

“Ha, ha! The saintly Mary’s most saintly son! Such wonders do not happen every day! Here, Dada—here; take this ring, it has been worn by a woman who once was young and who has had many lovers. Close—come close, my sweet child.”

Dada looked up at the old lady with puzzled eyes; Damia bent her head close to the girl’s, and whispered, softly but vehemently in her ear:

“Only turn that milksop’s head, make him so madly and desperately in love with you that he does not know which way to turn for delicious torment. You can do it I know, and if you do—well, I make no promises; but on the day when all Alexandria is talking of that woman’s son as wandering out, night after night, to watch under the window of the fair Dada, the heathen singer—when he drives you out in the face of day and in his own chariot, down the Canopic Way and past his mother’s door—then child, ask, claim whatever you will, and old Damia will not refuse it.”

Then raising her head she added to the others:

“In the afternoon, my friends, you can take possession of your new quarters. Go with them, Dada. By-and-bye we will find you a pretty room in the tower. Come and see me very often, sweet one, and tell me all your prettiest tales. When I am not too busy I shall always be glad to see you, for you and I have a secret you know.”

The girl stood up, looking uneasily at the old woman; Damia nodded knowingly, as much as to say that they quite understood each other and again offered her hand to Dada; but Dada could not kiss it; she turned and followed the others more gravely than usual.

Gorgo guessed what the old lady would be at with Dada; as soon as the party of singers had taken leave she went up to her grandmother and said reproachfully:

“That little fair thing will find no difficulty in making a fool of Marcus; for my part I hardly know him, but why should he pay for his mother’s sins against you? How can he help. . .”

“He cannot help it,” interrupted Damia with decisive abruptness. “He can do nothing to save his mother, any more than you can help being a child of twenty and bound to hold your tongue till your opinion is asked.”

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The family of musicians had all met on board the barge which was lying at anchor in the lake, off the ship-yard. Orpheus had just been an eye-witness of the disturbance which prevailed throughout the city, and the wild howls and cries that were audible in the distance confirmed his report; but the waters of the lake were an unruffled mirror of blue, the slaves in the ship-yard were at work as usual, and the cooing turtle-doves flew from palm to palm.

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No signs of troubled times were to be seen in the floating home of the wanderers. The steward had provided for everything. There were rooms and beds to spare in the vessel; the large deck-cabin was a comfortable sitting-room, and from the little galley at the prow came a savory smell of cooking and a cheerful clang of pots and pans.

“This is living!” exclaimed Karnis, stretching himself comfortably on a divan. “This abode seems made on purpose for our noble selves! Sit down, mother, make yourself at home. Here we are people of consequence, and if it were only to make things pleasant for the slaves we must behave as though we had never known people who take their meals squatted round an earthen bowl, and clawing out the broken meat. Enjoy the gifts of the present—who knows how long this golden hour may last! Ah, wife, it reminds us of former times! It would be very pleasant to be like this, side by side, and help ourselves from a table all our own to dainty dishes which we had not assisted in cooking. For you, old woman, have done everything with your own hands for so long, that you deserve to have some one to wait on you for once.”

A little table was placed by each divan and covered with appetizing food; the steward mixed some fine wine of the country with fresh, clear water, Orpheus offered the libation, and Karnis spiced the meal with jests and tales of his youth, of which he had been reminded by his meeting with his old friend and comrade Olympius.

Dada interrupted him frequently, laughing more loudly and recklessly than usual; she was in a fever of excitement and Herse did not fail to remark it. The good woman was somewhat uneasy. The very fact that her husband always gave himself up heart and soul to the influences of the hour—though she was glad that he should enjoy this good fortune to the utmost—made her look beyond the present into the future. She had seen with her own eyes the tumult that was rife in Alexandria, and felt that they had arrived at an inauspicious moment. If it should come to a struggle between the Christians and the Heathen, Karnis, finding that his old friend Olympius was the head of his party, would infallibly seize the sword, and if, then, the victory remained with the Christians no mercy would be shown to those who had fought for the old gods. Gorgo’s wish that Agne should sing in the temple of Isis was another source of anxiety; for if it came to that they might, only too probably, be accused of perverting a Christian to heathen worship, and be condemned to a severe penalty. All this had worn a very different aspect yesterday when she had thought of Alexandria as the gay home of her youth; but now she saw what a change had taken place in these thirty years. The Church had risen on the ruins of the Temple, and monks had forced the sacrificing priests into the background.

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Karnis and his troupe were musicians of no ordinary stamp; still the law concerning singing-girls might place him in peril, especially now that—to make matters worse—a young Christian was paying court to his pretty niece. What catastrophes might not be called down on his hapless head if so influential a woman as Marcus' mother Mary should come to know of her son's backsliding! Herse had long perceived how attractive that little simpleton was to all men—old and young—and when one of the lovers, of whom she had no lack, happened to take her fancy she was apt to forget herself and play a too audacious game; but as soon as she found she had gone too far and somewhat committed herself she would draw back and meet him, if she could not avoid him, with repellent and even unmannerly coldness. Again and again had Herse scolded and warned her, but Dada always answered her reproofs by saying that she could not make herself different from what she was, and Herse had never been able to remain stern and severe in the face of the foolish excuses that Dada put forward so convincingly.

To-day the good woman could not quite make up her mind whether it would be wiser to warn Dada against Marcus and desire her to repel any advances he might attempt to make, or to let bygones be bygones. She knew full well how a trifling incident gains importance when undue emphasis is laid on it; she therefore had merely asked the girl what secret she could have with old Damia and had accepted some evasive subterfuge in reply, while, at the same time, she guessed the truth and was quite determined not to remit her watchfulness. For a time, at any rate, she thought she would let matters go their own way, and never mention the young fellow's name; but her husband spoilt this plan, for with the eager jollity of a man very much at his ease after a good dinner he called upon Dada to tell their the whole history of the young Christian's invasion in the morning. Dada at first was reticent, but the old man's communicative humor proved infectious and she presently told her story:

"I was sitting alone with the poor little boy, like—well I do not know what like—you must find a comparison for yourselves. I was comforting myself with the reflection that the key was on the inside and the door locked, for I was getting frightened as the monks began to sing in the yard below, one part going off to the left, as it were, and the other part to the right. Did you ever see two drunken men walking arm in arm, and lurching first to one side and then to the other? You may laugh, but by the nine Muses it was just like that. Then Papias grew tired and cross and kept asking where Agne was, till at last he began to cry. When I asked him what he was crying for, he said he had forgotten, I really am patient—you must all allow that—I did not do anything to him, but, just to give him something to play with, I took out the key, for there was nothing else at hand that he could not break, and gave it to him and told him to play a tune on it. This delighted him, and he really did it quite prettily. Then I looked over my burnt dress and was horrified to see how large the holes were, and it struck me that I might turn it, because when you turn a thing the spots, you know, do not show."

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“You have invented that this very minute,” cried Orpheus laughing. “We know you. If you can only turn the laugh against yourself. . .”

“No, really,” cried Dada, “the idea flew through my head like a bird through a room; but I remembered at once that a hole burnt through shows on both sides, so I threw the dress aside as past mending and sat down on the low stool to peep through the wicket by the door out at the yard; the singing had stopped and the silence frightened me almost as much. Papias had stopped his piping too, and was sitting in the corner where Orpheus sat to write his letter to Tauromenium.”

“I know,” said Orpheus, “the inkstand was there, that the steward of the inn had lent us the day before.”

“Just so; and when mother came in, there he was, dipping his finger in the ink, and painting his white dress—you can study the pattern at your leisure.—But no not interrupt me.—Well, I was looking into the court-yard; it was quite empty; all the monks were gone. Suddenly a tall young man in a white dress with a beautiful sky-blue border appeared through the great gate. The gate-keeper crawled after him very humbly as far as his rope would allow and even the steward spoke to him with both hands pressed to his breast as if he had a faithful heart on the right side as well as the one on the left. This young man—it was our kind friend Marcus, of course—crossed the court, taking a zigzag at first, as a snipe flies, and then came towards our door. The steward and the gate-keeper had both vanished.—Do you remember the young Goths whom their father took to bathe in the Tiber last winter, when it was so cold? And how they first stood on the brink and dipped their toes in, and then ran away and when they came back again just wetted their heads and chests? But they had to jump in at last when their father shouted some barbaric words to them—I can see them now. Well, Marcus was exactly like those boys; but at last he suddenly walked straight up to our door and knocked.”

“He remembered your pretty face no doubt,” laughed Karnis.

“May be. However, I did not stir. I kept as still as a mouse, sitting on my stool and watching him through the key-hole, till presently he called out: ‘Is no one there?’ Then I forgot and answered: ‘They are all out!’ Of course I had betrayed myself—but it is impossible to think of everything at once. Oh! yes—you may laugh. And he smiled too—he is a very handsome fellow—and desired me most pressingly to open the door as he had something of the greatest importance to say to me. I said he could talk very well through the gap at the top; that Pyramus and Thisbe had even kissed through a chink in a wall. But he would not see the joke; he got graver and more earnest, and insisted, saying that our fate, his and mine, hung on that hour, and that not a soul must overhear what he had to say. The top of the door was too high to whisper through, so there was nothing for it but to ask Papias for

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the key; however, he did not know where he had put it. I afterwards thought of asking him what he had done with his flute and he fetched it then at once.—In short, the key was nowhere to be found. I told Marcus this and he wrung his hands with vexation; but in a few minutes the inn-steward, who must have been hiding to listen behind a pillar, suddenly appeared as if he had dropped from the skies, took a key out of his girdle, threw the door wide open, and vanished as if the earth had swallowed him.

“There we stood, Marcus and I, face to face. He was quite agitated; I really believe the poor fellow was trembling, and I did not feel very confident; however, I asked him what it was that he wanted. Then he recovered himself a little: ’I wished,’—he began; so I went on: ’Thou wishedst,’—and it might have gone on to the end: ’he wished, we wished’——and so forth, like the children at school at Rome, when we were learning Greek; but, Papias came to the rescue, for he ran up to Marcus and asked him to toss him up high, as he used to do on board ship. Marcus did as he was asked, and then he suddenly broke out into such a torrent of words that I was quite terrified. First he said so many fine things that I quite expected a declaration of love, and was trying to make up my mind whether I would laugh him out of it or throw myself into his arms—for he really is a dear, good, handsome fellow—and if you would like to know the truth I should have been very willing to oblige him—to a certain extent. But he asked me nothing, and from talking of me—listen to this Father Karnis—and saying that the great Father in Heaven had granted me every good gift, he went on to speak of you as a wicked, perverse and reprobate old heathen.”

“I will teach him!” exclaimed Karnis shaking his fist.

“Nay, but listen,” Dada went on. “He praised you and mother for a great many things; but do you know what he says is wrong? He says you will imperil my psyche—my soul, my immortal soul. As if I had ever heard of any Psyche but the Psyche whom Eros loved!”

“That is quite another thing,” said Karnis very seriously. “In many songs, you know, I have tried to make you uplift your soul to a higher flight. You have learnt to sing, and there is no better school for a woman’s soul than music and singing. If that conceited simpleton—why, he is young enough to be my grandson—if he talks any such nonsense to you again you may tell him from me . . .”

“You will tell him nothing,” cried Herse, “for we can have nothing whatever to do with the Christian. You are my own sister’s child and I desire and order you—do you hear—to keep out of his way, if he ever tries to come near you again . . .”

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“Who is likely to find us here?” said Dada. “Besides, he has no such ideas and motives as you suppose. It is what he calls my soul that he cares for and not myself; and he wanted to take me away, not to his own house, but to some man who would be the physician of my soul, he said. I am generally ready enough to laugh, but what he said was so impressive and solemn, and so wonderfully earnest and startling that I could not jest over it. At last I was more angry at his daring to speak to me in such a way than any of you ever thought I could be, and that drove him half mad. You came in, mother, just as the gentleman had fallen on his knees to implore me to leave you.”

“And I gave him my mind on the subject,” retorted Herse with grim satisfaction. “I let him know what I thought of him. He may talk about the soul—what he is after is the girl. I know these Christians and I know what the upshot will be. He will take advantage of the edict to gain his ends, and then you will be separated from us and shut up in a reformatory or a refuge or a cloister or whatever they call their dismal prisons, and will learn more about your soul than you will care to know. It will be all over then with singing, and laughter, and amusement. Now you know the truth, and if you are wise you will keep out of his way till we leave Alexandria; and that will be as soon as possible, if you listen to reason, Karnis.”

She spoke with such earnest conviction that Dada remained silent with downcast eyes, and Karnis sat up to think the matter over.

However, there was no time now for further reflection; the steward came in and desired that he, with his son and Agne should go at once to Gorgo to practise the lament of Isis.

This command did not include Herse and Dada, who remained on the barge. Herse having plenty to occupy her in the lower rooms, Dada went on deck and watched the others on their way to the house; then she sat looking at the shipwrights at their work and tossed fruit and sweetmeats, the remains of their dessert, for the children to catch who were playing on the shore. Meanwhile she thought over Marcus’ startling speech, Damia’s injunctions and Herse’s warnings.

At first it seemed to her that Herse might be right, but by degrees she fell back into her old conviction that the young Christian could mean no harm by her; and she felt as sure that he would find her out wherever she might hide herself, as that it was her pretty and much-admired little person that he sought to win, and not her soul—for what could such an airy nothing as a soul profit a lover? How rapturously he had described her charms, how candidly he had owned that her image was always before him even in his dreams, that he could not and would not give her up—nay, that he was ready to lay down his life to save her soul. Only a man in love could speak like this and a man so desperately in love can achieve whatever he will. On her way from the Xenodochium to the

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house of Porphyrius she had passed him in his chariot, and had admired the splendid horses which he turned and guided with perfect skill and grace. He was scarcely three years older than herself; he was eighteen—but in spite of his youth and simplicity he was not unmanly; and there was something in him—something that compelled her to be constantly thinking of him and asking herself what that something was. Old Damia's instructions troubled her; they took much of the charm from her dream of being loved by Marcus, clasped in his arms, and driven through the city in his chariot.

It was impossible—yes, quite impossible, she was sure—that they should have parted forever; as she sat, thinking still of him and glancing from time to time at the toiling carpenters, a boat pulled up at the landing close to the barge out of which jumped an officer of the imperial guard. Such a handsome man! with such a noble, powerful, sunburnt face, a lightly waving black beard, and hair that fell from under his gold helmet! The short-sword at his side showed him to be a tribune or prefect of cavalry, and what gallant deeds must not this brilliant and glittering young warrior have performed to have risen to such high rank while still so young! He stood on the shore, looking all round, his eyes met hers and she felt herself color; he seemed surprised to see her there and greeted her respectfully with a military salute; then he went on towards the unfinished hulk of a large ship whose bare curved ribs one or two foremen were busily measuring with tape and rule.

An elderly man of dignified aspect was standing close by, who, as Dada had already discovered, was the head of the ship-yard, and the warrior hastened towards him. She heard him say: "Father," and in the next instant she saw the old man open his arms and the officer rush to embrace him.

Dada never took her eyes off the couple who walked on, arm in arm and talking eagerly, till they disappeared into a large house on the further side of the dockyard.

"What a handsome man!" Dada repeated to herself, but while she waited to see him return she gazed across the lake by which Marcus might find his way to her. And as she lingered, idly dreaming, she involuntarily compared the two men. There were fine soldiers in plenty in Rome, and the ship-builder's son was in no particular superior to a hundred others; but such a man as Marcus she had never before seen—there could hardly be such another in the world. The young guard was one fine tree among a grove of fine trees; but Marcus had something peculiar to himself, that distinguished him from the crowd, and which made him exceptionally attractive and lovable. His image at length so completely filled her mind that she forgot the handsome officer, and the shipmaster and every one else.

ETEXT *editor's bookmarks*:

Christian hypocrites who pretend to hate life and love death
He may talk about the soul—what he is after is the girl
Love means suffering—those who love drag a chain with them
To her it was not a belief but a certainty
Trifling incident gains importance when undue emphasis is laid

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SERAPIS

By Georg Ebers

Volume 2.

CHAPTER V.

Karnis and his two companions were a long time away. Dada had almost forgotten her wish to see the young soldier once more, and after playing with little Papias for some time, as she might have played with a dog, she began to feel dull and to think the quiet of the boat intolerable. The sun was sinking when the absentees returned, but she at once reminded Karnis that he had promised to take her for a walk and show her Alexandria. Herse, however, forbid her going on such an expedition till the following day. Dada, who was more irritable and fractious than usual, burst into tears, flung the distaff that her foster-mother put into her hand over the side of the ship, and declared between her sobs that she was not a slave, that she would run away and find happiness wherever it offered. In short she was so insubordinate that Herse lost patience and scolded her severely. The girl sprang up, flung on a handkerchief and in a moment would have crossed the plank to the shore; Karnis, however, held her back.

“Why, child,” he said, “do you not see how tired I am?” The appeal had its effect; Dada recovered her reason and tried to look up brightly, but her eyes were still tearful and heavy and she could only creep away into a corner and cry in silence. The old man’s heart was very soft towards the girl; he would have been glad only to speak a few kind words to her and smoothe down her hair; however, he made an effort, and whispering a few words to his wife said he was ready, if Dada wished it, to take her as far as the Canopic way and the Bruchium.

Dada laughed with delight, wiped away her tears, flung her arms round the musician’s neck and kissed his brown cheeks, exclaiming:

“You are the best of them all! Make haste, and Agne shall come too; she must see something of the city.”

But Agne preferred to remain on board, so Karnis and Dada set out together. Orpheus followed them closely for, though the troops had succeeded in quelling the uproar, the city was still in a state of ferment. Closely veiled, and without any kind of adornment—-on this Herse had positively insisted—the girl, clinging to the old man’s arm, made her way through the streets, asking questions about everything she saw; and her spirits rose, and she was so full of droll suggestions that Karnis soon forgot his fatigue and gave himself up to the enjoyment of showing her the old scenes that he knew and the new beauties and improvements.

In the Canopic way Dada was fairly beside herself with delight. Houses like palaces stood arrayed on each side. Close to the buildings ran a covered arcade, and down the centre of the roadway there was a broad footpath shaded by sycamores. This fine avenue swarmed with pedestrians, while on each side chariots, drawn by magnificent horses, hurried past, and riders galloped up and down; at every step there was something new and interesting to be seen.

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Rome, even, could not boast of a handsomer street, and Dada expressed her delight with frank eagerness; but Karnis did not echo her praises; he was indignant at finding that the Christians had removed a fine statue of the venerable Nile-god surrounded by the playful forms of his infant children, which had formerly graced the fountain in the middle of the avenue, and had also overthrown or mutilated the statues of Hermes that had stood by the roadside. Orpheus sympathized in his wrath which reached its climax when, on looking for two statues, of Demeter and of Pallas Athene, of which Karnis had spoken to his son as decorating the gateway of one of the finest houses in the city, they beheld instead, mounted on the plinths, two coarsely-wrought images of the Lamb with its Cross.

“Like two rats that have been caught under a stone!” cried the old man. “And what is most shameful is that I would wager that they have destroyed the statues which were the pride of the town and thrown them on a rubbish heap. In my day this house belonged to a rich man named Philippus. But stop—was not he the father of our hospitable protector . . .”

“The steward spoke of Porphyrius as the son of Philippus,” Orpheus said.

“And Philippus was a corn merchant, too,” added Karnis. “Demeter was figurative of a blessing on the harvest, for it was from that the house derived its wealth, and Pallas Athene was patroness of the learning that was encouraged by its owners. When I was a student here every wealthy man belonged to some school of philosophy. The money-bag did not count for everything. Heathen or Jew, whether engaged in business or enjoying the revenues of an inherited fortune, a man was expected to be able to talk of something besides the price of merchandise and the coming and sailing of vessels.”

During this conversation Dada had withdrawn her hand from the old man’s arm to raise her veil, for two men had gone up to the gate between the images that had roused Karnis to wrath, and one of them, who at this instant knocked at the door, was Mary’s son.

“Father, see, there he is!” cried Dada, as the door was opened, speaking louder than was at all necessary to enable her companion to hear her; the musician at once recognized Marcus, and turning to his son he said:

“Now we may be quite sure! Porphyrius and this young Christian’s father were brothers. Philippus must have left his house to his eldest son who is the one that is dead, and it now belongs no doubt to Mary, his widow. I must admit, child, that you choose your adorers from respectable families!”

“I should think so,” said the girl laughing. “And that is why he is so proud. My fine gentleman has not even a glance to cast at us. Bang! the door is shut. Come along, uncle!”

The young man in question entered the hall of his father's house with his companion and paused there to say in a tone of pressing entreaty: "Only come and speak with my mother; you really must not leave like this."

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“How else?” said the other roughly. “You stick to your way, I will go mine. You can find a better steward for the estate—I go to-morrow. May the earth open and swallow me up if I stay one hour longer than is absolutely necessary in this demented place. And after all Mary is your mother and not mine.”

“But she was your father’s wife,” retorted Marcus.

“Certainly, or you would not be my brother. But she—I have amply repaid any kindness she ever did me by ten years of service. We do not understand each other and we never shall.”

“Yes, yes, you will indeed. I have been in church and prayed—nay, do not laugh—I prayed to the Lord that he would make it all work right and He—well, you have been baptized and made one of His flock.”

“To my misfortune! You drive me frantic with your meek and mild ways,” cried the other passionately. “My own feet are strong enough for me to stand on and my hand, though it is horny, can carry out what my brain thinks right.”

“No, no, Demetrius, no. You see, you believe in the old gods. . .”

“Certainly,” said the other with increasing irritation. “You are merely talking to the winds, and my time is precious. I must pack up my small possessions, and for your sake I will say a few words of farewell when I take the account-books to your mother. I have land enough belonging to myself alone, at Arsinoe; I know my own business and am tired of letting a woman meddle and mar it. Good-bye for the present, youngster. Tell your mother I am coming; I shall be with her in just an hour.”

“Demetrius!” cried the lad trying once more to detain his brother; but Demetrius freed himself with a powerful wrench and hurried across the court-yard—gay with flowers and with a fountain in the middle—into which the apartments of the family opened, his own among the number.

Marcus looked after him sadly; they differed too widely in thought and feeling ever to understand each other completely, and when they stood side by side no one would have imagined that they were the sons of one father, for even in appearance they were strongly dissimilar. Marcus was slight and delicate, Demetrius, on the contrary, broad-shouldered and large-boned.

After this parting from his half-brother Marcus betook himself to the women’s rooms where Mary, after superintending the spinning and other work of the slave-girls, in the rooms at the back, was wont to sit during the evening. He found his mother in eager conversation with a Christian priest of advanced age, an imposing personage of gentle and dignified aspect. The widow, though past forty, might still pass for a handsome

woman: it was from her that her son had inherited his tall, thin figure with narrow shoulders and a slight stoop, his finely-cut features, white skin and soft, flowing, raven-black hair. Their resemblance was rendered all the more striking by the fact that each wore a simple, narrow circlet of gold-round the head; nay it would have seemed some unusual trick of Nature's but that their eyes were quite unlike. Hers were black, and their gaze was shrewd and sharp and sometimes sternly hard; while the dreamy lustre of her son's, which were blue, lent his face an almost feminine softness.

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She must have been discussing some grave questions with the old man, for, as the young man entered the room, she colored slightly and her long, taper fingers impatiently tapped the back of the couch on which she was lounging.

Marcus kissed first the priest's hand and then his mother's, and, after enquiring with filial anxiety after her health, informed her that Demetrius would presently be coming to take leave of her.

"How condescending?" she said coldly. "You know reverend Father what it is that I require of him and that he refuses. His peasants—always his peasants! Now can you tell me why they, who must feel the influence and power of their masters so much more directly than the lower class in towns, they, whose weal or woe so obviously depends on the will of the Most High, are so obstinately set against the Gospel of Salvation?"

"They cling to what they are used to," replied the old man. "The seed they sow bore fruit under the old gods; and as they cannot see nor handle our Heavenly Father as they can their idols, and at the same time have nothing better to hope for than a tenth or a twentieth of the grain. . ."

"Yes, mine and thine—the miserable profit of this world!" sighed the widow. "Oh! Demetrius can defend the idolatry of his favorites warmly enough, never fear. If you can spare the time, good Father, stay and help me to convince him."

"I have already stayed too long," replied the priest, "for the Bishop has commanded my presence. I should like to speak to you, my dear Marcus; to-morrow morning, early, will you come to me? The Lord be with you, beloved!"

He rose, and as he gave Mary his hand she detained him a moment signing to her son to leave them, and said in a low tone:

"Marcus must not suspect that I know of the error into which he has been led; speak roundly to his conscience, and as to the girl, I will take her in hand. Will it not be possible for Theophilus to grant me an interview?"

"Hardly, at present," replied the priest. "As you know, Cynegius is here and the fate of the Bishop and of our cause hangs on the next few days. Give up your ambitious desires I beseech you, daughter, for even if Theophilus were to admit you I firmly believe, nay—do not be angry—I can but hope that he would never give way on this point."

"No?" said the widow looking down in some embarrassment; but when her visitor was gone she lifted her head with a flash of wilful defiance.

She then made Marcus, who had on the previous day given her a full account of his voyage from Rome, tell her all that had passed between himself and Demetrius; she

asked him how he liked his horse, whether he hoped to win the approaching races, and generally what he had been doing and was going to do. But it did not escape her notice that Marcus was more reticent than usual and that he tried to bring the conversation round to his voyage and to the guests in the Xenodochium; however, she always stopped him, for she knew what he was aiming at and would not listen to anything on that subject.

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It was not till long after the slaves had lighted the three-branched silver lamps that Demetrius appeared. His stepmother received him kindly and began to talk on indifferent subjects; but he replied with ill-disguised impatience, for he had not come to chatter and gossip. She fully understood this; but it pleased her to check and provoke him and she did it in a way which vividly reminded him of his early days, of the desolation and unhappiness that had blighted his young life when this woman had taken the place of his own tender gentle mother, and come between him and his father. Day after day, in that bygone time, she had received him just as she had this evening: with words that sounded kindly, but with a cold, unloving heart. He knew that she had always seen his boyish errors and petty faults in the worst light, attributing them to bad propensities and innate wickedness, that she had injured him in his father's eyes by painting a distorted image of his disposition and doings—and all these sins he could not forgive her. At the time of his father's assassination Demetrius was already grown to man's estate, and as the eldest son it would have been his right and duty to take part with his uncle Porphyrius in the management of the business; but he could not endure the idea of living in the same place with his stepmother, so, having a pronounced taste for a country life, he left the widow in possession of the house in the Canopic street, persuaded his uncle to pay over his father's share in the business in hard cash and then had quitted Alexandria to take entire charge of the family estates in Cyrenaica. In the course of a few years he had become an admirable farmer; the landowners throughout the province were glad to take his advice or follow his example, and the accounts which he now laid on the table by the side of Mary's couch—three goodly rolls—proved by the irrefragable evidence of figures that he had actually doubled their revenues from the estates of which he had been the manager. He had earned his right to claim his independence, to persist in his own determinations and to go his own way; he was animated by the pride of an independent nature that recklessly breaks away from a detested tie when it has means at command either to rest without anxiety or to devote its energies to new enterprise.

When Demetrius had allowed his stepmother time enough for subjects in which he took no interest, he laid his hand on the account-books and abruptly observed that it was now time to talk seriously. He had already explained to Marcus that he could no longer undertake to meet her requirements; and as, with him, to decide was to act, he wished at once to come to a decision as to whether he should continue to manage the family estates in the way he thought proper, or should retire and devote himself to the care of his own land. If Mary accepted the latter alternative he would at once cancel their deed of agreement, but even then he was very willing to stay on for a time in Cyrenaica, and put the new steward, when she had appointed one, in the way of performing his onerous duties. After that he would have nothing more to do with the family estates. This was his last word; and whichever way she decided, they might part without any final breach, which he was anxious to avoid if only for the sake of Marcus.

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Demetrius spoke gravely and calmly; still, the bitterness that filled his soul imparted a flavor to his speech that did not escape the widow, and she replied with some emphasis that she should be very sorry to think that any motives personal to herself had led to his decision; she owed much, very much, to his exertions and had great pleasure in expressing her obligations. He was aware, of course, that the property he had been managing had been purchased originally partly with her fortune and partly out of her husband's pocket, and that half of it was therefore hers and half of it the property of Marcus and himself; but that by her husband's will the control and management were hers absolutely. She had endeavored to carry out the intentions of her deceased husband by entrusting the stewardship of the estate to Demetrius while he was still quite young; under his care the income had increased, and she had no doubt that in the future he might achieve even greater results; at the same time, the misunderstandings that the whole business had given rise to were not to be endured, and must positively be put an end to, even if their income were to diminish by half.

"I," she exclaimed, "am a Christian, with my whole heart and soul. I have dedicated my body and life to the service of my Saviour. What shall all the treasures of the world profit me if I lose my soul; and that, which is my immortal part, must inevitably perish if I allow my pockets to be filled by the toil of heathen peasants and slaves. I therefore must insist—and on this point I will not yield a jot—that our slaves in Cyrenaica, a flock of more than three thousand erring sheep, shall either submit to be baptized or be removed to make way for Christians."

"That is to say . . ." began Demetrius hastily.

"I have not yet done," she interrupted. "So far as the peasants are concerned who rent and farm our land they all, without exception—as you said yesterday—are stiff-necked idolaters. We must give them time to think it over, but the annual agreement will not be renewed with any who will not pledge themselves to give up the old sacrifices and to worship the Redeemer. If they submit they will be safe—in this world and the next; if they refuse they must go, and the land must be let to Christians in their stead."

"Just as I change this seat for another!" said Demetrius with a laugh, and lifting up a heavy bronze chair he flung it down again on the hard mosaic pavement so that the floor shook.

Maria started violently.

"My body may tremble," she said in great excitement, "but my soul is firm when its everlasting bliss is at stake. I insist—and my representative, whether he be you or another, must carry my orders into effect without an hour's delay—I insist that every heathen shrine, every image of the field and garden-gods, every altar and sacred stone which the heathens use for their idolatrous practices shall be pulled down, overthrown, mutilated and destroyed. That is what I require and insist on."

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“And that is what I will never consent to,” cried Demetrius in a voice like low thunder. “I cannot and will not. These things have been held precious and sacred to men for thousands of years and I cannot, will not, blow them off the face of the earth, as you blow a feather off your cloak. You may go and do it yourself; you may be able to achieve it.”

“What do you mean?” asked Mary drawing herself up with a glance of indignant protest.

“Yes—if any one can do it you can!” repeated Demetrius imperturbably. “I went to-day to seek the images of our forefathers—the venerable images that were clear to our infancy, the portraits of our fathers’ fathers and mothers, the founders of the honor of our race. And where are they? They have gone with the protectors of our home, the pride and ornament of this house—of the street, of the city—the Hermes and Pallas Athene that you—you flung into the lime-kiln. Old Phabis told me with tears in his eyes. Alas poor house that is robbed of its past, of its glory, and of its patron deities!”

“I have placed it under a better safeguard,” replied Maria in a tremulous voice, and she looked it Marcus with an appeal for sympathy. “Now, for the last time, I ask you: Will you accede to my demands or will you not?”

“I will not,” said Demetrius resolutely.

“Then I must find a new agent to manage the estates.”

“You will soon find one; but your land—which is our land too—will become a desert. Poor land! If you destroy its shrines and sanctuaries you will destroy its soul; for they are the soul of the land. The first inhabitants gathered round the sanctuary, and on that sanctuary and the gods that dwell there the peasant founds his hopes of increase on what he sows and plants, and of prosperity for his wife and children and cattle and all that he has. In destroying his shrines you ruin his hopes, and with them all the joy of life. I know the peasant; he believes that his labors must be vain if you deprive him of the gods that make it thrive. He sows in hope, in the swelling of the grain he sees the hand of the gods who claim his joyful thanksgiving after the harvest is gathered in. You are depriving him of all that encourages and uplifts and rejoices his soul when you ruin his shrines and altars!”

“But I give him other and better ones,” replied Mary.

“Take care then that they are such as he can appreciate,” said Demetrius gravely. “Persuade him to love, to believe, to hope in the creed you force upon him; but do not rob him of what he trusts in before he is prepared to accept the substitute you offer him. —Now, let me go; we are neither of us in the temper to make the best arrangements for the future. One thing, at any rate, is certain: I have nothing more to do with the estate.”

CHAPTER VI.

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After leaving his stepmother Demetrius made good use of his time and dictated a number of letters to his secretary, a slave he had brought with him to Alexandria, for the use of the pen was to him unendurable labor. The letters were on business, relating to his departure from Cyrenaica and his purpose of managing his own estates for the future, and when they lay before him, finished, rolled up and sealed, he felt that he had come to a mile-stone on his road, a landmark in his life. He paced the room in silence, trying to picture to himself the fate of the slaves and peasants who, for so many years, had been his faithful servants and fellow-laborers, whose confidence he had entirely won, and many of whom he truly loved. But he could not conceive of their life, their toil or their festivals, bereft of images, offerings, garlands, and hymns of rejoicing. To him they were as children, forbidden to laugh and play, and he could not help once more recurring to his boyhood and the day of his going to school, when, instead of running and shouting in his father's sunny garden, he had been made to sit still and silent in a dull class-room. And now had the whole world reached such a boundary line in existence beyond which there was to be no more freedom and careless joy—where a ceaseless struggle for higher things must begin and never end?

If the Gospel were indeed true, and if all it promised could ever find fulfilment, it might perhaps be prudent to admit the sinfulness of man and to give up the joys and glories of this world to win the eternal treasure that it described. Many a good and wise man whom he had known—nay the Emperor, the great and learned Theodosius himself—-was devoted heart and soul to the Christian faith, and Demetrius knew from his own experience that his mother's creed, in which he had been initiated as a boy and from which his father, after holding him at the font had perverted him at an early age, offered great consolations and enduring help to those whose existence was one of care, poverty, and suffering. But his laborers and servants? They were healthy and contented. What power on earth could induce them—a race that clung devotedly to custom—to desert the faith of their fathers, and the time-honored traditions to which they owed all the comforts and pleasures of life, or to seek in a strange creed the aid which they already believed that they possessed.

He did not repent of his determination; but he nevertheless said to himself that, when once he was gone, Mary would proceed only too soon on the work of extermination and destruction; and every temple on the estate, every statue, every whispering grotto, every shrine and stone anointed by pious hands, doomed now to perish, rose before his fancy.

Demetrius was accustomed to rise at cock-crow and go to bed at an early hour, and he was on the point of retiring even before the usual time, when Marcus came to his room and begged him to give him yet an hour.

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“You are angry with my mother,” said the younger man with a look of melancholy entreaty, “but you know there is nothing that she would not sacrifice for the faith. And you can smile so bitterly! But only put yourself in my place. Loving my mother as I do, it is acutely painful to me to see another person—to see you whom I love, too, for you are my friend and brother—to see you, I say, turn your back on her so completely. My heart is heavy enough to-day I can tell you.”

“Poor boy!” said the countryman. “Yes, I am truly your friend, and am anxious to remain so; you are not to blame in this business—and for that matter, I am anything but cheerful. You have chosen to say: Down with the shrines! Perish all those who do not think as we do! Still, look at the thing as you will, in some cases certainly violence must ensue—nay, if no blood is shed it will be a wonder! You sum up the matter in one common term: The heathen peasants on the estate. My view of it is totally different; I know these farmers and their wives and children, each one by name and by sight. There is not one but is ready to bid me good day and shake my hand or kiss my dress. Many a one has come to me in tears and left me happy.—By the great Zeus! no one ever accused me of being soft-hearted, but I could wish this day that I were harder; and my blood turns to gall as I ask—What is all this for—to what possible end?”

“For the sake and honor of the faith, Demetrius; for the eternal salvation of our people.”

“Indeed!” retorted Demetrius with a drawl, “I know better. If that and that alone were intended you would build churches and chapels and send us worthy priests—Eusebius and the like—and would try to win men’s hearts to your Lord by the love you are always talking so much about. That was my advice to your mother, only this morning. I believe the end might be attained by those means, among us as elsewhere; ultimately it will, no doubt, be gained—but not to-day nor to-morrow. A peasant, when he had become accustomed to the church and grasped a trust in the new God, would of his own accord give up the old gods and their sanctuaries; I could count you off a dozen such instances. That I could have looked on at calmly, for I want only men’s arms and legs and do not ask for their souls; but to burn down the old house before you have collected wood and stone to build a new one I call wicked.—It is cruelty and madness, and when so shrewd a woman as your mother is bent on carrying through such a measure, come what may, there is something more behind it.”

“You think she wants to get rid of you—you, Demetrius!” interrupted Marcus eagerly. “But you are mistaken, you are altogether wrong. What you have done for the estate . . .”

“Oh! as for that!” cried the other, “what has my work to do with all this? Ere the year is out everything that can remind us of the heathen gods is to be swept away from the hamlets and fields of the pious Mary. That is what is intended! Then they will hurry off to the Bishop with the great news and to crown one marvel with another, the reversion

will be secured of a martyr's nimbus. And this is what all this zeal is for—this and nothing else!"

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“You are speaking of my mother, remember!” cried Marcus, looking at his brother with a touching appeal in his eyes. Demetrius shook his shaggy head and spoke more temperately as he went on:

“Yes, child, I had forgotten that—and I may be mistaken of course, for I am no more than human. Here one thing follows so close on another, and in this house I feel so battered and storm-tossed, that I hardly know myself. But old Phabis tells me that steps are being seriously taken to procure the title of Martyr for our father Apelles.”

“My mother is quite convinced that he died for the faith, and she loved him devotedly . . .”

“Then it is so!” cried Demetrius, grinding his teeth and thumping his fist down on the table. “The lies sown by one single man have produced a deadly weed that is smothering this miserable house! You—to be sure, what can you know of our father? I knew him; I have been present when he and his friends, the philosophers, have laughed to scorn things which not only you Christians but even pious heathen regard as sacred. Lucretius was his evangelist, and the Cosmogony of that utter atheist lay by his pillow and was his companion wherever he went.”

“He admired the heathen poets, but he was a Christian all the same,” replied Marcus.

“Neither more nor less than Porphyrius, our uncle, or myself,” retorted his brother. “Since the day when our grandfather Philippus was baptized, wealth and happiness have deserted this house. He gave up the old gods solely that he might not lose the right of supplying the city and the Emperor with corn, and became a Christian and made his sons Christians. But he had us educated by his heathen friends, and though we passed for Christians we were not so in fact. When it was absolutely necessary he showed himself in church with us; but our daily life, our pleasures, our pastimes were heathen, and when life began for us in earnest we offered a bleeding sacrifice to the gods. It was impossible to retract honestly, since a renegade Christian returning to the worship of the old gods is incapacitated by law from making a will. You know this; and when you ask me why I am content to live alone, without either wife or child—and I love children, even those of other people—a solitary man dragging out my days and nights joylessly enough—I tell you: I am openly and honestly a worshipper of our old gods, and I will not go to church because I scorn a lie. What should I do with children who, in consequence of my retractation, must forfeit all I might leave them? It was this question of inheritance only that induced my father to have us baptized and to make a pretense of Christianity. He set out for Petra with his Lucretius in his satchel—I packed it with my own hands into his money-bag—to put in a claim to supply grain to the ‘Rock city.’ He was slain on his way. home; most likely by his servant Anubis, who certainly knew what money he had with him, and who vanished and left no

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trace. Because—about the same time—a band of Saracens had fallen on some Christian anchorites and travellers, in the district between Petra and Aila, your mother chose to assume a right to call our father a martyr! But she knew his opinions full well, I tell you, and shed many a tear over them, too.—Now she has expended vast sums on church-building, she has opened the Xenodochium and pours her money by lavish handfuls clown the insatiable throats of monks and priests. To what end? To have her husband recognized as a martyr. Hitherto her toil and money have been wasted. In my estimation the Bishop is a perfectly detestable tyrant, and if I know him at all he will take all she will give and never grant her wish. Now she is preparing her great move, and hopes to startle him into compliance by a new marvel. She thinks that, like a juggler who turns a white egg black, she can turn a heathen district into a Christian one by a twist of her finger. Well—so far as I am concerned I will have nothing to do with the trick."

During this harangue Marcus had alternately gazed at the floor and fixed his large eyes in anguish on his brother's face. For some minutes he found nothing to reply, and he was evidently going through a bitter mental struggle. Demetrius spoke no more, but arranged the sheets of papyrus that strewed the table. At length Marcus, after a deep sigh, broke out in a tone of fervent conviction and with a blissful smile that lighted up his whole face:

"Poor mother! And others misunderstand her just as you do; I myself was in danger of doubting her. But I think that now I understand her perfectly. She loved my father so completely that she hopes now to win for his immortal soul the grace which he, in the flesh, neglected to strive after. He was baptized, so she longs to win, by her prayers and oblations, the mercy of the Lord who is so ready to forgive. She herself firmly believes in the martyrdom of her beloved dead, and if only the Church will rank him among those who have died for Her, he will be saved, and she will find him standing in the pure radiance of the realms above, with open arms, overflowing with fervent love and gratitude, to welcome the faithful helpmate who will have purged his soul. Yes, now I quite understand; and from this day forth I will aid and second her; the hardest task shall not be too hard, the best shall not be too good, if only we may open the gates of Heaven to my poor father's imperilled soul."

As he spoke his eye glistened with ecstatic light; his brother, too, was touched, and to hide his emotion, he exclaimed, more recklessly and sharply than was his wont:

"That will come all right, never fear, lad!" But he hastily wiped his eyes with his hand, slapped Marcus on the shoulder, and added gaily: "It is better to choke than to swallow down the thing you think right, and it never hurt a man yet to make a clean breast of his feelings, even if we do not quite agree we understand each other the better for it. I have my way of thinking, you have yours; thus we each know what the other means; but after

the tragedy comes the satyr play, and we may as well finish this agitating evening with an hour's friendly chat."

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So saying Demetrius stretched himself on a divan and invited Marcus to do the same, and in a few minutes their conversation had turned, as usual, to the subject of horses. Marcus was full of praises of the stallions his brother had bred for him, and which he had ridden that very day round the Myssa—[The Myssa was the Meta, or turning-post]—in the Hippodrome, and his brother added with no small complacency:

“They were all bred from the same sire and from the choicest mares. I broke them in myself, and I only wish. . . . But why did you not come to the stables this morning?”

“I could not,” replied Marcus coloring slightly. Then we will go to-morrow to Nicopolis and I will show you how to get Megaera past the Taraxippios.”—[The terror of the horses.]

“To-morrow?” said Marcus somewhat embarrassed. “In the morning I must go to see Eusebius and then. . . .”

“Well, then?”

“Then I must—I mean I should like. . . .”

“What?”

“Well, to be sure I might, all the same.—But no, it is not to be done—I have. . . .”

“What, what?” cried Demetrius with increasing impatience: “My time is limited and if you start the horses without knowing my way of managing them they will certainly not do their best. As soon as the market begins to fill we will set out. We shall need a few hours for the Hippodrome, then we will dine with Damon, and before dark. . . .”

“No, no,” replied Marcus, “to-morrow, certainly, I positively cannot. . . .”

“People who have nothing to do always lack time,” replied the other. “Is to-morrow one of your festivals?”

“No, not that=-and Good Heavens! If only I could. . . .”

“Could, could!” cried Demetrius angrily and standing close in front of his brother with his arms folded. “Say out honestly: ‘I will not go,’ or else, ’my affairs are my own secret and I mean to keep it.’—But give me no more of your silly equivocations.”

His vehemence increased the younger man’s embarrassment, and as he stood trying to find an explanation which might come somewhat near the truth and yet not betray him, Demetrius, who had stood watching him closely, suddenly exclaimed:

“By Aphrodite, the daughter of the foam! it is a love affair—an assignation.—Woman, woman, always woman!”

“An assignation!” cried Marcus shaking his head. “No indeed, no one expects me; and yet—I had rather you should misunderstand me than think that I had lied. Yes—I am going to seek a woman; and if I do not find her to-morrow, if in the course of tomorrow I do not succeed in my heart’s desire, she is lost—not only to me, though I cannot give up the heavenly love for the sake of the earthly and fleshly—but to my Lord and Saviour. It is the life—the everlasting life or death of one of God’s loveliest creatures that hangs on to-morrow’s work.”

Demetrius was greatly astonished, and it was with an angry gesture of impatience that he replied:

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“Again you have overstepped the boundary within which we can possibly understand each other. In my opinion you are hardly old enough to undertake the salvation of the imperilled souls of pretty women. Take care what you are about, youngster! It is safe enough to go into the water with those who can swim, but those who sink are apt to draw you down with them. You are a good-looking young fellow, you have money and fine horses, and there are women enough who are only too ready to spread their nets abroad. . .”

“What are you thinking of?” cried Marcus passionately. “It is I who am the fisher—a fisher of souls, and so every true believer ought to be. She—she is innocence and simplicity itself, in spite of her roguish sauciness. But she has fallen into the hands of a reprobate heathen, and here, where vice prowls about the city like a roaring lion, she will be lost—lost, if I do not rescue her. Twice have I seen her in my dreams; once close to the cavern of a raging dragon, and again on the edge of a precipitous cliff, and each time an angel called out to me and bid me save her from the jaws of the monster, and from falling into the abyss. Since then I seem to see her constantly; at meals, when I am in company, when I am driving,—and I always hear the warning voice of the angel. And now I feel it a sacred duty to save her—a creature on whom the Almighty has lavished every gift he ever bestowed on the daughters of Eve—to lead her into the path of Salvation.”

Demetrius had listened to his brother’s enthusiastic speech with growing anxiety, but he merely shrugged his shoulders and said:

“I almost envy you your acquaintance with this favorite of the gods; but you might, it seems to me, postpone the work of salvation. You were away from Alexandria for half a year, and if she could hold out so long as that . . .”

“Do not speak so; you ought not to speak so!” cried Marcus, pressing his hand on his heart as though in physical pain. “But I have no time to lose, for I must at once find out where the old singer has taken her. I am not so inexperienced as you seem to think. He has brought her here to trade in her beauty, and enrich himself. Why, you, too, saw her on board ship; I, as you know, had arranged for them to be taken in at my mother’s Xenodochium.”

“Whom?” asked Demetrius folding his hands.

“The singers whom I brought with me from Ostia. And now they have disappeared from thence, and Dada . . .”

“Dada!” cried Demetrius, bursting into a loud laugh without heeding Marcus who stepped up to him, crimson with rage. “Dada! that little fair puss! You see her day and night and an angel calls upon you to save that child’s merry soul? You ought to be ashamed of yourself, boy! Why, what shall I wager now? I will stake this roll of gold

that I could make her come with me to-morrow—with me, a hard-featured countryman, freckled all over like a plover's egg, where my clothes do not protect my skin, and with hair on end like the top of a broom—yes, that she will follow me to Arsinoe or wherever I choose to bid her. Let the hussy go, you simple innocent. Such a Soul as hers is of small account even in a less exclusive Heaven than yours is."

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“Take back those words!” cried Marcus, beside himself and clenching his fist. “But that is just like you! Your impure eyes and heart defile purity itself, and see spots even in the sun. Nothing is too bad for a ‘singing girl,’ I know. But that is just the marrow of the matter; it is from that very curse that I mean to save her. If you can accuse her of anything, speak; if not, and if you do not want to appear a base slanderer in my eyes, take back the words you have just spoken!”

“Oh! I take them back of course,” said Demetrius indifferently. “I know nothing of your beauty beyond what she has herself said to me and you and Cynegius and his Secretaries—with her pretty, saucy eyes. But the language of the eye, they say, is not always to be depended on; so take it as unsaid. And, if I understood you rightly, you do not even know where the singers are hiding? If you have no objection, I will help you to seek them out.”

“That is as you please,” answered Marcus hotly. “All your mockery will not prevent my doing my duty.”

“Very right, very right,” said his brother. “Perhaps this damsel is unlike all the other singing-girls with whom I used so often to spend a jolly evening in my younger days. Once, at Barca, I saw a white raven—but perhaps after all it was only a dove. Your opinion, in this case, is at any rate better founded than mine, for I never thought twice about the girl and you did.—But it is late; till to-morrow, Marcus.”

The brothers parted for the night, but when Demetrius found himself alone he walked up and down the room, shaking his head doubtfully. Presently, when his body-slave came in to pack for him, he called out crossly:

“Let that alone—I shall stay in Alexandria a few days longer.”

Marcus could not go to bed; his brother’s scorn had shaken his soul to the foundations. An inward voice told him that his more experienced senior might be right, but at the same time he hated and contemned himself for listening to its warnings at all. The curse that rested on Dada was that of her position; she herself was pure—as pure as a lily, as pure as the heart of a child, as pure as the blue of her eyes and the ring of her voice. He would obey the angel’s behest! He could and he must save her!

In the greatest excitement he went out of the house, through the great gate, into the Canopic way, and walked on. As he was about to turn down a side street to go to the lake he found the road stopped by soldiers, for this street led past the prefect’s house where Cynegius, the Emperor’s emissary, was staying; he had come, it was said, to close the Temples, and the excited populace had gathered outside the building, during the afternoon, to signify their indignant disapprobation. At sundown an armed force had been called out and had dispersed the crowd; but it was by another road that the young Christian at length made his way to the shore.

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CHAPTER VII.

While Marcus was restlessly wandering on the shore of Mareotis, dreaming of Dada's image and arranging speeches of persuasive eloquence by which to touch her heart and appeal to her soul, silence had fallen on the floating home of the singers. A light white mist, like a filmy veil—a tissue of clouds and moonbeams—hung over the lake. Work was long since over in the ship-yard, and the huge skeletons of the unfinished ships threw weird and ghostly shadows on the silvered strand-forms like black visions of crayfish, centipedes, or enormous spiders.

From the town there came not a sound; it lay in the silence of intoxicated sleep. The Roman troops had cleared the streets, the lights were dead in every house, and in all the alleys and squares; only the moon shone over the roofs of Alexandria, while the blazing beacon of the light-house on the north-eastern point of the island of Pharos shone like a sun through the darkness.

In a large cabin in the stern of the vessel lay the two girls, on soft woollen couches and covered with rugs. Agne was gazing wide-eyed into the darkness; Dada had long been asleep, but she breathed painfully and her rosy lips were puckered now and then as if she were in some distress. She was dreaming of the infuriated mob who had snatched the garland from her hair—she saw Marcus suddenly interfere to protect her and rescue her from her persecutors—then she thought she had fallen off the gangway that led from the land to the barge, and was in the water while old Damia stood on the shore and laughed at her without trying to help her. Night generally brought the child sound sleep or pleasant dreams, but now one hideous face after another haunted her.

And yet the evening had brought her a great pleasure. Not long after their return from their walk the steward had come down to the boat and brought her a very beautiful dress, with greetings from his old mistress; he had at the same time brought an Egyptian slave-woman, well skilled in all the arts of the toilet, who was to wait upon her so long as she remained in Alexandria. Dada had never owned such a lovely dress! The under-robe was of soft sea-green bombyx silk, with a broad border, delicately embroidered, of a garland of roses and buds. The peplos was of the same color and decorated to match; costly clasps of mosaic, representing full-blown roses and set in oval gold settings, fastened it on the shoulders. In a separate case were a gold girdle, a bracelet, also of gold, in the shape of a snake, a gold crescent with a rose, like those on the shoulder-clasps, in its centre, and a metal mirror of spotless lustre.

The slave, a middle-aged woman with a dark cunning face, had helped her to put on this new garment; she had also insisted on dressing her hair, and all the time had never ceased praising the charms that nature had bestowed on her young mistress, with the zeal of a lover.

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Agne had looked on smiling, good-naturedly handing the slave the pins and ribbands she had needed, and sincerely rejoicing in her companion's beauty and delight.

At last Dada had made her appearance in the deckroom and was greeted by many an Ah! and Oh! of admiration from the men of the party, including Medius, the singer whom Karnis had met in the street. Even Herse, who had received her quite disagreeably on her return from the city, could not suppress a smile of kindly approval, though she shook her finger at her saying:

"The old lady has set her heart on turning your head completely I see. All that is very pretty, but all the good it will do will be to rouse spiteful tongues. Remember, Dada, that you are my sister's child; I promise you I shall not forget it, and I shall keep my eye upon you."

Orpheus made haste to light every lamp and taper, of which there were plenty, for the barge was handsomely furnished, and when Dada was plainly visible in the brilliant illumination Karnis exclaimed:

"You look like a senator's daughter! Long live the Fair!"

She ran up to him and kissed him; but when Orpheus walked all round her, examining the fineness of the tissue and the artistic finish of the clasps, and even turned the snake above her round elbow, she sharply bid him let her be.

Medius, a man of the age of Karnis who had formerly been his intimate companion, never took his eyes off the girl, and whispered to the old musician that Dada would easily carry off the palm for beauty in Alexandria, and that with such a jewel in his keeping he might recover wealth and position and by quite honest means. At his suggestion she then assumed a variety of attitudes; she stood as Hebe, offering nectar to the gods—as Nausicae, listening to the tale of Odysseus—and as Sappho, singing to her lyre. The girl was delighted at all this, and when Medius, who kept close to her, tried to persuade her to perform in a similar manner in the magical representations at the house of Posidonius, before a select company of spectators, she clapped her hands exclaiming:

"You took me all round the city, father, and as your reward I should like to earn back your pretty vineyards, I should stand like this, you know, and like this—to be stared at. I only hope I might not be seized with a sudden impulse to make a face at the audience. But if they did not come too close I really might . . ."

"You could do no better than to play the parts that Posidonius might give you," interrupted Medius. "His audiences like to see good daemons, the kindly protecting spirits, and so forth. You would have to appear among clouds behind a transparent veil, and the people would hail you with acclamations or even raise their hands in adoration."

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All this seemed to Dada perfectly delightful, and she was on the point of giving her hand to Medius in token of agreement, when her eye caught the anxious gaze of the young Christian girl who stood before her with a deep flush on her face. Agne seemed to be blushing for her. The color rushed to her own cheeks, and shortly saying: "No—after all, I think not," she turned her back on the old man and threw herself on the cushions close to where the wine-jug was standing. Medius now began to besiege Karnis and Herse with arguments, but they refused all his offers as they intended quitting Alexandria in a few days, so he had no alternative but to submit. Still, he did not altogether throw up the game, and to win Dada's consent, at any rate, he made her laugh with a variety of comical pranks and showed her some ingenious conjuring tricks, and ere long their floating home echoed with merriment, with the clinking of wine-cups and with songs, in which even Agne was obliged to take part. Medius did not leave till near midnight and Herse then sent them all to bed.

As soon as the slave had undressed her young mistress and left the girls alone, Dada threw herself into the arms of Agne who was on the point of getting into bed, and kissed her vehemently, exclaiming: "You are much—so much better than I! How is that you always know what is right?"

Then she lay down; but before she fell asleep she once more spoke to Agne: "Marcus will find us out, I am certain," she said, "and I should really like to know what he has to say to me."

In a few minutes sleep had sealed her eyes, but the Christian girl lay awake; her thoughts would not rest, and Sleep, who the night before had taken her to his heart, to-night would not come near her pillow; so much to agitate and disturb her soul had taken place during the day.

She had often before now been a silent spectator of the wild rejoicings of the musician's family, and she had always thought of these light-hearted creatures as spendthrifts who waste all their substance in a few days to linger afterwards through years of privation and repentance. Troubled, as she could not fail to be, as to the eternal salvation of these lost souls, though happy in her own faith, she had constantly turned for peace to her Saviour and always found it; but to-night it was not so, for a new and unexpected temptation had sprung up for her in the house of Porphyrius.

She had heard Gorgo sing again, and joined her own voice with hers. Dirges, yearning hymns, passionate outpourings in praise of the mighty and beautiful divinity had filled her ear and stirred her soul with an ecstatic thrill, although she knew that they, were the composition of heathen poets and had first been sung to the harmony of lutes by reprobate idolaters. And yet, and yet they had touched her heart, and moved her soul to rapture, and filled her eyes with tears.

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She could not but confess to herself that she could have given no purer, sweeter, or loftier expression to her own woes, thankfulness, aspirations, and hopes of ever lasting life and glory, than this gifted creature had given to the utterance of her idolatry. Surprise, unrest, nay, some little jealousy had been mingled with her delight at Gorgo's singing. How was it that this heathen could feel and utter emotions which she had always conceived of as the special privilege of the Christian, and, for her own part, had never felt so fervently as in the hours when she had drawn closest to her Lord? Were not her own sentiments the true and right ones; had her intercourse with these heathens tainted her?

This doubt disturbed her greatly; it must be based on something more than mere self-torture, for she had not once thought of asking to whom the two-part hymn, with its tender appeal, was addressed, when Karnis had first gone through it with her alone; nor even subsequently, when she had sung it with Gorgo—timidly at first, more boldly the second time, and finally without a mistake, but carried completely away by the beauty and passion of the emotions it expressed.

She knew now, for Karnis himself had told her. It was the Lament of Isis for her—lost husband and brother—oh that horrible heathen confusion!—The departed Osiris. The wailing widow, who called on him to return with "the silent speech of tears," was that queen of the idolater's devils whose shameful worship her father had often spoke of with horror. Still, this dirge was so true and noble, so penetrated with fervent, agonized grief, that it had gone to her heart. The sorrowing Mother of God, Mary herself, might thus have besought the resurrection of her Son; just thus must the "God-like maid"—as she was called in the Arian confession of her father—have uttered her grief, her prayers, and her longings.

But it was all a heathen delusion, all the trickery and jugglery of the Devil, though she had failed to see through it, and had given herself up to it, heart and soul. Nay, worse! for after she had learnt that Gorgo was to represent Isis and she herself Nephthys, the sister of the divine pair, she had opposed the suggestion but feebly, even though she knew that they were to sing the hymn together in the Temple of Isis; and when Gorgo had clasped her in her arms with sisterly kindness, begging her not to spoil her plans but to oblige her in this, she had not repulsed the tempter with firm decision, but merely asked for time to think it over.

How indeed could she have found the heart to refuse the noble girl, whose beauty and voice had so struck and fascinated her, when she flung her arms round her neck, looked into her eyes and earnestly besought her:

"Do it for my sake, to please me. I do not ask you to do anything wicked. Pure song is acceptable to every god. Think of your lament, if you like, as being for your own god who suffered on the cross. But I like singing with you so much; say yes. Do not refuse, for my sake!"

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She had thrown her arms so gladly, so much too gladly round the heathen lady—for she had a loving heart and no one else had ever made it a return in kind—and clinging closely to her she had said:

“As you will; I will do whatever you like.”

Then Orpheus, too, had urged her to oblige Gorgo, and himself, and all of them; and it had seemed almost impossible to refuse the first request that the modest youth—to whom she would willingly have granted anything and everything—had ever made. Still, she had held back; and in her anxious bewilderment, not daring to think or act, she had tried every form of excuse and postponement. She would probably have been awkward enough about this, but Gorgo was content to press her no further, and when, after leaving the house, she had summoned up courage to refuse to enter the Temple of Isis, Karnis had only said: “Be thankful that this gifted lady, the favorite of the Muses, should think you worthy to sing with her. We will see about the rest by-and-bye.”

Now, in the watches of the sleepless night, she saw clearly the abyss above which she was standing. She, like Judas, was on the point of betraying her Saviour; not indeed for money, but in obedience to the transient sound of an earthly voice, for the pleasure of exercising her art, to indulge a hastily-formed liking; nay, perhaps because it satisfied her childish vanity to find herself put on an equality with a lady of rank and wealth, and matched with a singer who had roused Karnis and Orpheus to such ardent admiration.

She was an enigma to herself; while passages out of the Bible crowded on her memory to reproach her conscience.

There lay Dada’s embroidered dress. Worn for the first time this day, in a month it would be unpresentably shabby and then, ere long, flung aside as past wearing. Like this—just like this—was every earthly pleasure, every joy of this brief existence. Alas, she certainly was not happy here in Karnis’ sense of the word; but in the other world there were joys eternal, and she had only to deny herself the petty enjoyments of this life to secure unfailing and everlasting happiness in the next. There she would find an endless flow of all her soul could desire, there perhaps she might be allowed to cool the lips of Gorgo, as Lazarus cooled those of the rich man.

She was quite clear now what her answer would be to-morrow, and, firmly resolved not to allow herself to think of singing in the Temple of Isis, she at last fell asleep just as the light began to dawn in the east. She did not wake till late, and it was with downcast eyes and set lips that she went with Karnis and Orpheus to the house of Porphyrius.

CHAPTER VIII.

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When the steward went to summons the musicians to his master's house he had again had no bidding for Dada, and she was very indignant at being left behind. "That old cornsack's daughter," she said, "was full of her airs, and would have nothing to say to them excepting to make use of them for her own purposes!" If she had not been afraid of being thought intrusive she would have acted on old Damia's invitation to visit her frequently, and have made her appearance, in defiance of Gorgo, dropping like a shooting-star into the midst of their practising. It never occurred to her to fancy that the young lady had any personal dislike to her, for, though she might be ignored and forgotten, who had ever had any but a kind word for her. At the same time she assumed the right of feeling that "she could not bear" the haughty Gorgo, and as the party set out she exclaimed to Agne, "Well, you need not kill her for me, but at any rate, I send her no greeting; it is a shame that I should be left to mope alone with Herse. Do not be surprised if you find me turned to a stark, brown mummy—for we are in Egypt, you know, the land of mummies. I bequeath my old dress to you, my dear, for I know you would never put on the new one. If you bewail me as you ought I will visit you in a dream, and put a sugarplum in your mouth—a cake of ambrosia such as the gods eat. You are not even leaving me Papias to tease!"

For in fact Agne's little brother, dressed in a clean garment, was to be taken to Gorgo who had expressed a wish to see him.

When they had all left the ship Dada soon betrayed how superficial her indignation had been; for, presently spying through the window of the cabin the young cavalry officer's grey-bearded father, she sprang up the narrow steps—barefoot as she was accustomed to be when at home—and threw herself on a cushion to lean over the gunwale of the upper deck, which was shaded by a canvas awning, to watch the ship-yard and the shore-path. Before she had begun to weary of this occupation the waiting-slave, who had been up to the house to put various matters in order, came back to the vessel, and squatting down at her feet was ready to give her all the information she chose to require. Dada's first questions naturally related to Gorgo. The young mistress, said the slave, had already dismissed many suitors, the sons of the greatest families of Alexandria, and if her suspicions—those of Sachepris, the slave—were well founded, all for the sake of the old shipbuilder's son, whom she had known from childhood and who was now an officer in the Imperial guard. However, as she opined, this attachment could hardly lead to marriage, since Constantine was a zealous Christian and his family were immeasurably beneath that of Porphyrius in rank; and though he had distinguished himself greatly and risen to the grade of Prefect, Damia, who on all occasions had the casting-vote, had quite other views for her granddaughter.

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All this excited Dada's sympathies to the highest pitch, but she listened with even greater attention when her gossip began to speak of Marcus, his mother, and his brother. In this the Egyptian slave was the tool of old Damia. She had counted on being questioned about the young Christian, and as soon as Dada mentioned his name she shuffled on her knees close up to the girl, laid her hand gently on her arm and looking up into her eyes with a meaning flash, she whispered in broken Greek—and hastily, for Herse was bustling about the deck: "Such a pretty mistress, such a young mistress as you, and kept here like a slave! If the young mistress only chose she could easily—quite easily—have as good a lover as our Gorgo, and better; so pretty and so young! And I know some one who would dress the pretty mistress in red gold and pale pearls and bright jewels, if sweet Dada only said the word."

"And why should sweet Dada not say the word?" echoed the girl gaily. "Who is it that has so many nice things and all for me? You—I shall never remember your name if I live to be as old as Damia. . . ."

"Sachepris, Sachepris is my name," said the woman, but call me anything else you like. The lover I mean is the son of the rich Christian, Mary. A handsome man, my lord Marcus; and he has horses, such fine horses, and more gold pieces than the pebbles on the shore there. Sachepris knows that he has sent out slaves to look for the pretty mistress. Send him a token—write to my lord Marcus."

"Write?" laughed Dada. "Girls learn other things in my country; but if I could—shall I tell you something? I would not write him a line. Those who want me may seek me!"

"He is seeking, he is trying to find the pretty mistress," declared the woman; "he is full of you, quite full of you, and if I dared. . . ."

"Well?"

"I would go and say to my lord Marcus, quite in a secret. . . ."

"Well, what? Speak out, woman."

"First I would tell him where the pretty mistress is hidden; and then say that he might hope once—this evening perhaps—he is not far off, he is quite near this . . . over there; do you see that little white house? It is a tavern and the host is a freedman attached to the lady Damia, and for money he would shut his shop up for a day, for a night, for many days.—Well, and then I would say—shall I tell you all? My lord Marcus is there, waiting for his pretty mistress, and has brought her dresses that would make the rose-garment look a rag. You would have gold too, as much gold as heart can wish. I can take you there, and he will meet you with open arms."

“What, this evening?” cried Dada, and the blue veins swelled on her white forehead. “You hateful, brown serpent! Did Gorgo teach you such things as this? It is horrible, disgraceful, sickening!”

So base a proposal was the last thing she would ever have expected from Marcus—of all men in the world, Marcus, whom she had imagined so good and pure! She could not believe it; and as her glance met the cunning glitter of the Egyptian’s eyes her own sparkled keenly, and she exclaimed with a vehemence and decision which her attendant had never suspected in her:

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“It is deceit and falsehood from beginning to end! Go, woman, I will hear no more of it. Why should Marcus have come to you since yesterday if he does not know where I am? You are silent—you will not say? . . . Oh! I understand it all. He—I know he would never have ventured it. But it is your ’noble lady Damia’—that old woman, who has told you what to say. You are her echo, and as for Marcus. . . . Confess, confess at once, you witch. . . .”

“Sachepris is only a poor slave,” said the woman raising her hands in entreaty. “Sachepris can only obey, and if the pretty mistress were to tell my lady Damia . . .”

“It was she then who sent for me to go to the little tavern?”

The woman nodded. “And Marcus?”

“If the pretty mistress had consented . . .”

“Well?”

“Then—but Great Isis! if you tell of me!”

“I will not tell; go on.”

“I should have gone to my lord Marcus and invited him, from you . . .”

“It is shameful!” interrupted Dada, and a shudder ran through her slight frame. “How cruel, how horrible it is! You—you will stay here till the others come home and then you will go home to the old woman. I thank the gods, I have two hands and need no maid to wait upon me! But look there—what is the meaning of that? That pretty litter has stopped and there is an old man signing to you.”

“It is the widow Mary’s house steward,” whined the woman, while Dada turned pale, wondering what a messenger from Marcus’ mother could want here.

Herse, who had kept a watchful eye on the landing-plank, on Dada’s account, had also seen the approach of the widow’s messenger and suspected a love-message from Marcus; but she was utterly astounded when the old man politely but imperiously desired her—Herse to get into the litter which would convey her to his mistress’s house. Was this a trap? Did he merely want to tempt her from the vessel so as to clear the way for his young master? No—for he handed her a tablet on which there was a written message, and she, an Alexandrian, had been well educated and could read:

“Mary, the widow of Apelles, to the wife of Karnis, the singer.” And then followed the same urgent request as she had already received by word of mouth. To reassure herself entirely she called the slave-woman aside, and asked her whether Phabis was indeed a trust worthy servant of the widow’s. Evidently there was no treason to be

apprehended and she must obey the invitation, though it disturbed her greatly; but she was a cautious woman, with not only her heart but her brains and tongue in the right place, and she at once made up her mind what must be done under the circumstances. While she gave a few decorative touches to her person she handed the tablet to the waiting-woman, whom she had taken into her own room, and desired her to carry it at once to her husband, and tell him whither she had gone, and to beg him to return without delay to take

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care of Dada. But what if her husband and son could not come away? The girl would be left quite alone, and then. . . The picture rose before her anxious mind of Marcus appearing on the scene and tempting Dada on shore—of her niece stealing away by herself even, if the young Christian failed to discover her present residence—loitering alone along the Canopic way or the Bruclumn, where, at noon, all that was most disreputable in Alexandria was to be seen at this time of year—she saw, shuddered, considered—and suddenly thought of an expedient which seemed to promise an issue from the difficulty. It was nothing new and a favorite trick among the Egyptians; she had seen is turned to account by a lame tailor at whose house her father had lodged, when he had to go out to his customers and leave his young negress wife alone at home. Dada was lying barefoot on the deck: Herse would hide her shoes.

She hastily acted on this idea, locking up not only Dada's sandals, but also Agne's and her own, in the trunk they had saved; a glance at the slave's feet assured her that hers could be of no use.

"Not if fire were to break out," thought she, "would my Dada be seen in the streets with those preposterous things on her pretty little feet."

When this was done Herse breathed more freely, and as she took leave of her niece, feeling perhaps that she owed her some little reparation, she said in an unusually kind tone:

"Good bye, child. Try to amuse yourself while I am gone. There is plenty to look at here, and the others will soon be back again. If the city is fairly quiet this evening we will all go out together, to Canopus, to eat oysters. Good bye till we meet again, my pet!" She kissed the child, who looked up at her in astonishment, for her adopted mother was not usually lavish of such endearments.

Before long Dada was alone, cooling herself with her new fan and eating sweetmeats; but she could not cease thinking of the shameful treachery planned by old Damia, and while she rejoiced to reflect that she had not fallen into the net, and had seen through the plot, her wrath against the wicked old woman and Gorgo—whom she could not help including—burnt within her. Meanwhile she looked about her, expecting to see Marcus, or perhaps the young officer. Finding it impossible to think any evil of the young Christian, and having already trusted him so far, her fancy dwelt on him with particular pleasure; but she was curious, too, about the prefect, the early love of the proud merchant's daughter.

Time went on; the sun was high in the heavens, she was tired of staring, wondering and thinking, and, yawning wearily, she began to consider whether she would make herself comfortable for a nap, or go down stairs and fill up the time by dressing herself up in her

new garments. However, before she could do either, the slave returned from her errand to the house, and a few moments after she espied the young officer crossing the ship-yard towards the lake; she sat up, set the crescent straight that she wore in her hair, and waved her fan in a graceful greeting.

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The cavalry prefect, who knew that, of old, the barge was often used by Porphyrius' guests, though he did not happen to have heard who were its present occupants—-bowed, with military politeness and precision, to the pretty girl lounging on the deck. Dada returned the greeting; but this seemed likely to be the end of their acquaintance, for the soldier walked on without turning round. He looked handsomer even than he had seemed the day before; his hair was freshly oiled and curled, his scale-armor gleamed as brightly, and his crimson tunic was as new and rich as if he were going at once to guard the Imperial throne. The merchant's daughter had good taste, but her friend looked no less haughty than herself. Dada longed to make his acquaintance and find out whether he really had no eyes for any one but Gorgo. To discover that it was not so, little as she cared about him personally, would have given her infinite satisfaction, and she decided that she must put him to the test. But there was no time to lose, so, as it would hardly do to call after him, she obeyed a sudden impulse, flung overboard the handsome fan which had been in her possession but one day, and gave a little cry in which alarm and regret were most skilfully and naturally expressed.

This had the wished-for effect. The officer turned round, his eyes met hers, and Dada leaned far over the boat's side pointing to the water and exclaiming:

"It is in the water—it has fallen into the lake!—my fan!"

The officer again bowed slightly; then he walked from the path down to the water's edge, while Dada went on more quietly:

"There, close there! Oh, if only you would! . . .

"I am so fond of the fan, it is so pretty. Do you see, it is quite obliging? it is floating towards you!" Constantine had soon secured the fan, and shook it to dry it as he went across the plank to the vessel. Dada joyfully received it, stroked the feathers smooth, and warmly thanked its preserver, while he assured her that he only wished he could have rendered her some greater service. He was then about to retire with a bow no less distant than before, but he found himself unexpectedly detained by the Egyptian slave who, placing herself in his way, kissed the hem of his tunic and exclaimed:

"What joy for my lord your father and the lady your mother, and for poor Sachepris! My lord Constantine at home again!"

"Yes, at home at last," said the soldier in a deep pleasant voice. "Your old mistress is still hale and hearty? That is well. I am on my way to the others."

"They know that you have come," replied the slave. "Glad, they are all glad. They asked if my lord Constantine forgot old friends."

"Never, not one!"

“How long now since my lord Constantine went away—two, three years, and just the same. Only a cut over the eyes—may the hand wither that gave the blow!”

Dada had already observed a broad scar which marked the soldier’s brow as high up as she could see it for the helmet, and she broke in:

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“How can you men like to slash and kill each other? Just think, if that cut had been only a finger’s breadth lower—you would have lost your eyes, and oh! it is better to be dead than blind. When all the world is bright not to be able to see it; what must that be! The whole earth in darkness so that you see nothing—no one; neither the sky, nor the lake, nor the boat, nor even me.”

“That would indeed be a pity,” said the prefect with a laugh and a shrug.

“A pity!” exclaimed Dada. “As if it were nothing at all! I should find something else to say than that. It gives me a shudder only to think of being blind. How dreadfully dull life can be with one’s eyes open! so what must it be when they are of no use and one cannot even look about one. Do you know that you have done me not one service only, but two at once?”

“I?” said the officer.

“Yes, you. But the second is not yet complete. Sit down awhile, I beg—there is a seat. You know it is a fatal omen if a visitor does not sit down before he leaves.—That is well. —And now, may I ask you: do you take off your helmet when you go into battle? No. —Then how could a swordcut hurt your forehead?”

“In a hand to hand scuffle,” said the young man, “everything gets out of place. One man knocked my helmet off and another gave me this cut in my face.”

“Where did it happen?”

“On the Savus, where we defeated Maximus.”

“And had you this same helmet on?”

“Certainly.”

“Oh! pray let me look at it! I can still see the dent in the metal; how heavy such a thing must be to wear!”

Constantine took off his helmet with resigned politeness and put it into her hands. She weighed it, thought it fearfully heavy, and then lifted it up to put it on her own fair curls; but this did not seem to please her new acquaintance, and saying rather shortly: “Allow me—” he took it from her, set it on his head and rose.

But Dada pointed eagerly to the seat.

“No, no,” she said, “I have not yet had enough of your second kindness. I was on the point of death from sheer tedium; then you came, just in time; and if you want to carry out your work of mercy you must tell me something about the battle where you were

wounded, and who took care of you afterwards, and whether the women of Pannonia are really as handsome as they are said to be. . .”

“I am sorry to say that I have not time,” interrupted the officer. “Sachepris here is far better qualified to amuse you than I; some years since, at any rate, she lead a wonderful store of tales. I wish you a pleasant day!”

And with this farewell greeting, Constantine left the vessel, nor did he once look back at it or its pretty inhabitant as he made his way towards the house of Porphyrius.

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Dada as she gazed after him colored with vexation; again she had done a thing that Herse and—which she regretted still more—that Agne would certainly disapprove of. The stranger whom she had tried to draw into a flirtation was a really chivalrous man. Gorgo might be proud of such a lover; and if now, he were to go to her and tell her, probably with some annoyance, how provokingly he had been delayed by that pert little singing-girl, it would be all her own fault. She felt as though there were something in her which forced her to seem much worse than she really was, and wished to be. Agne, Marcus, the young soldier—nay, even Gorgo, were loftier and nobler than she or her people, and she was conscious for the first time that the dangers from which Marcus had longed to protect her were not the offspring of his fancy. She could not have found a name for them, but she understood that she was whirled and tossed through life from one thing to another, like a leaf before the wind, bereft of every stay or holdfast, defenceless even against the foolish vagaries of her own nature. Everyone, thought the girl to herself, distrusted and suspected her, and, solely because she was one of a family of singers, dared to insult and dishonor her. A strange spite against Fate, against her uncle and aunt, against herself even, surged up in her, and with it a vague longing for another and a better life.

Thus meditating she looked down into the water, not noticing what was going on around her, till the slave-woman, addressing her by name, pointed to a carriage drawn up at the side of the road that divided the grove of the Temple of Isis from the ship-yard, and which the Egyptian believed that she recognized as belonging to Marcus. Dada started up and ran off to the cabin to fetch her shoes, but everything in the shape of a sandal had vanished, and Herse had been wise when she had looked at those of the Egyptian, for Dada did the same and would not have hesitated to borrow them if they had been a little less dirty and clumsy.

Herse, no doubt, had played her this trick, and it was easy to guess why! It was only to divert her suspicions that the false woman had been so affectionate at parting. It was cheating, treachery-cruel and shameful! She, who had always submitted like a lamb—-but this was too much—this she could not bear—this! . . . The slave-woman now followed her to desire her to come up on deck; a new visitor had appeared on the scene, an old acquaintance and fellow-voyager: Demetrius, Marcus' elder brother.

At any other time she would have made him gladly welcome, as a companion and comfort in her solitude; but he had chosen an evil hour for his visit and his proposals, as the girl's red cheeks and tearful eyes at once told him.

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He had come to fetch her, cost him what it might, and to carry her away to his country-home, near Arsinoe on the coast. It was not that he had any mad desire to make her his own, but that he thought it his most urgent duty to preserve his inexperienced brother from the danger into which his foolish passion for the little singing-girl was certain to plunge him. A purse full of gold, and a necklace of turquoise and diamonds, which he had purchased from a jeweller in the Jews' quarter for a sum for which he had often sold a ship-load of corn or a whole cellar full of wine or oil, were to supplement his proposals; and he went straight to the point, asking the girl simply and plainly to leave her friends and accompany him to Arsinoe. When she asked him, in much astonishment, "What to do there?" he told her he wanted a cheerful companion; he had taken a fancy to her saucy little nose, and though he could not flatter himself that he had ever found favor in her eyes he had brought something with him which she would certainly like, and which might help him to win her kindness. He was not niggardly, and if this—and this—and he displayed the sparkling necklace and laid the purse on her pillow—could please her she might regard them as an earnest of more, as much more as she chose, for his pockets were deep.

Dada did not interrupt him, for the growing indignation with which she heard him took away her breath. This fresh humiliation was beyond the bounds of endurance; and when at last she recovered her powers of speech and action, she flung the purse off the divan, and as it fell clattering on the floor, she kicked it away as far as possible, as though it were plague-tainted. Then, standing upright in front of her suitor, she exclaimed:

"Shame upon you all! You thought that because I am a poor girl, a singing-girl, and because you have filthy gold. . . . Your brother Marcus would never have done such a thing, I am very sure! . . . And you, a horrid peasant! . . . If you ever dare set foot on this vessel again, Karnis and Orpheus shall drive you away as if you were a thief or an assassin! Eternal Gods! what is it that I have done, that everyone thinks I must be wicked? Eternal Gods. . . ."

And she burst into loud spasmodic sobs and vanished down the steps that led below.

Demetrius called after her in soothing words and tones, but she would not listen. Then he sent down the slave to beg Dada to grant him a hearing, but the only answer he received was an order to quit the barge at once.

He obeyed, and as he picked up the purse he thought to himself:

"I may buy ship and vineyard back again; but I would send four more after those if I could undo this luckless deed. If I were a better and a worthier man, I might not so easily give others credit for being evil and unworthy."

CHAPTER IX.

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The town of Alexandria was stirred to its very foundations. From dawn till night every centre of public traffic and intercourse was the scene of hostile meetings between Christians and heathen, with frequent frays and bloodshed, only stopped by the intervention of the soldiery. Still, as we see that the trivial round of daily tasks is necessarily fulfilled, even when the hand of Fate lies heaviest on a household, and that children cannot forego their play even when their father is stretched on his death-bed, so the minor interests of individual lives pursued their course, even in the midst of the general agitation and peril.

The current of trade and of public business was, of course, checked at many points, but they never came to a stand-still. The physician visited the sick, the convalescent made his first attempt, leaning on a friendly arm, to walk from his bedroom to the “viridarium,” and alms were given and received. Hatred was abroad and rampant, but love held its own, strengthening old ties and forming new ones. Terror and grief weighed on thousands of hearts, while some tried to make a profit out of the prevailing anxiety, and others—many others—went forth, as light-hearted as ever, in pursuit of pleasure and amusement.

Horses were ridden and driven in the Hippodrome, and feasts were held in the pleasure-houses of Canopus, with music and noisy mirth; in the public gardens round the Paneum cock-fighting and quail-fighting were as popular as ever, and eager was the betting in new gold or humble copper. Thus may we see a child, safe on the roof of its father’s house, floating its toy boat on the flood that has drowned them all out; thus might a boy fly his gaudy kite in the face of a gathering storm; thus does the miser, on whom death has already laid its bony hand, count his hoarded coin; thus thoughtless youth dances over the heaving soil at the very foot of a volcano. What do these care for the common weal? Each has his separate life and personal interests. What he himself needs or desires—the greatest or the least—is to him more important and more absorbing than the requirements of the vast organism in which he is no more than a drop of blood or the hair of an eyelash.

Olympius was still in concealment in the house of Porphyrius—Olympius, whose mind and will had formerly had such imperious hold on the fate of the city, and to whose nod above half of the inhabitants were still obedient. Porphyrius and his family shared his views and regarded themselves as his confederates; but, even among them, the minor details of life claimed their place, and Gorgo, who entered into the struggle for the triumph of the old gods, gave but a half-hearted attention to the great cause to which she was enthusiastically devoted, because a companion of her childhood, to whose attentions she had every claim, delayed his visit longer than was kind.

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She had performed her 'Isis' lament the day before with all her heart and soul, and had urgently claimed Agne's assistance; but to-day, though she had been singing again and well, she had stopped to listen whenever she heard a door open in the adjoining room or voices in the garden, and had sung altogether with so much less feeling and energy than before that Karnis longed to reprove her sharply enough. This, however, would have been too indiscreet, so he could only express his annoyance by saying to his son, in a loud whisper:

"The most remarkable gifts, you see, and the highest abilities are of no avail so long as Art and Life are not one and the same—so long as Art is not the Alpha and Omega of existence, but merely an amusement or a decoration."

Agne had been true to herself, and had modestly but steadfastly declared that she could not possibly enter the temple of Isis, and her refusal had been accepted quite calmly, and without any argument or controversy. She had not been able to refuse Gorgo's request that she would repeat to-day the rehearsal she had gone through yesterday, since, to all appearance, her cooperation at the festival had been altogether given up. How could the girl guess that the venerable philosopher, who had listened with breathless admiration to their joint performance, had taken upon himself to dissipate her doubts and persuade her into compliance?

Olympius laid the greatest stress on Agne's assistance, for every one who clung to the worship of the old gods was to assemble in the sanctuary of Isis; and the more brilliant and splendid the ceremony could be made the more would that enthusiasm be fired which, only too soon, would be put to crucial proof. On quitting the temple the crowd of worshippers, all in holiday garb, were to pass in front of the Prefect's residence, and if only they could effect this great march through the city in the right frame of mind, it might confidently be expected that every one who was not avowedly Jew or Christian, would join the procession. It would thus become a demonstration of overwhelming magnitude and Cynegius, the Emperor's representative, could not fail to see what the feeling was of the majority of the towns folk, and what it was to drive matters to extremes and lay hands on the chief temples of such a city.

To Olympius the orator, grown grey in the exercise of logic and eloquence, it seemed but a small matter to confute the foolish doubts of a wilful girl. He would sweep her arguments to the winds as the storm drives the clouds before it; and any one who had seen the two together—the fine old man with the face and front of Zeus, with his thoughtful brow and broad chest, who could pour forth a flood of eloquence fascinatingly persuasive or convincingly powerful, and the modest, timid girl—could not have doubted on which side the victory must be.

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To-day, for the first time, Olympius had found leisure for a prolonged interview with his old friend Karnis, and while the girls were in the garden, amusing little Papias by showing him the swans and tame gazelles, the philosopher had made enquiries as to the Christian girl's history and then had heard a full account of the old musician's past life. Karnis felt it as a great favor that his old friend, famous now for his learning—the leader of his fellow-thinkers in the second city of the world, the high-priest of Serapis, to whose superior intellect he himself had bowed even in their student days—should remember his insignificant person and allow him to give him the history of the vicissitudes which had reduced him—the learned son of a wealthy house—to the position of a wandering singer.

Olympius had been his friend at the time when Karnis, on leaving college, instead of devoting himself to business and accounts, as his father wished, had thrown himself into the study of music, and at once distinguished himself as a singer, lute-player and leader of heathen choirs. Karnis was in Alexandria when the news reached him of his father's death. Before quitting the city he married Herse, who was beneath him alike in birth and in fortune, and who accompanied him on his return to Tauromenium in Sicily, where he found himself the possessor of an inheritance of which the extent and importance greatly astonished him.

At Alexandria he had been far better acquainted with the theatre than with the Museum or the school of the Serapeum; nay, as an amateur, he had often sung in the chorus there and acted as deputy for the regular leader. The theatre in his native town of Tauromenium had also been a famous one of old, but, at the time of his return, it had sunk to a very low ebb. Most of the inhabitants of the beautiful city nestling at the foot off Etna, had been converted to Christianity; among them the wealthy citizens at whose cost the plays had been performed and the chorus maintained. Small entertainments were still frequently given, but the singers and actors had fallen off, and in that fine and spacious theatre nothing was ever done at all worthy of its past glories. This Karnis deeply regretted, and with his wonted energy and vigor he soon managed to win the interest of those of his fellow-citizens who remained faithful to the old gods and had still some feeling for the music and poetry of the ancient Greeks, in his plans for their revival.

His purpose was to make the theatre the centre of a reaction against the influence of the Christians, by vieing with the Church in its efforts to win back the renegade heathen and confirming the faithful in their adhesion. The Greeks of Tauromenium should be reminded from the stage-boards of the might of the old gods and the glories of their past. To this end it was needful to restore the ruined theatre, and Karnis, after advancing the greater part of the money required, was entrusted with the management. He devoted himself zealously to the task, and soon was so successful that the plays at Tauromenium, and the musical performances in its Odeum, attracted the citizens in crowds, and were talked of far and wide. Such success was of course only purchased

at a heavy cost, and in spite of Herse's warnings, Karnis would never hesitate when the object in view was the preservation or advancement of his great work.

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Thus passed twenty years; then there came a day when his fine fortune was exhausted, and a time when the Christian congregation strained every nerve to deal a death-blow to the abomination of desolation in their midst. Again and again, and with increasing frequency, there were sanguinary riots between the Christians who forced their way into the theatre and the heathen audience, till at last a decree of the Emperor Theodosius prohibited the performance of heathen plays or music.

Now, the theatre at Tauromenium, for which Karnis had either given or advanced his whole inheritance, had ceased to exist, and the usurers who, when his own fortune was spent, had lent him moneys on the security of the theatre itself—while it still flourished—or on his personal security, seized his house and lands and would have cast him into the debtor's prison if he had not escaped that last disgrace by flight. Some good friends had rescued his family and helped them to follow him, and when they rejoined him he had begun his wanderings as a singer. Many a time had life proved miserable enough; still, he had always remained true to his art and to the gods of Olympus.

Olympius had listened to his narrative with many tokens of sympathy and agreement, and when Karnis, with tears in his eyes, brought his story to a close, the philosopher laid his hand on his friend's shoulder and drawing him towards him, exclaimed:

"Well done, my brave old comrade! We will both be faithful to the same good cause! You have made sacrifices for it as I have; and we need not despair yet. If we triumph here our friends in a thousand towns will begin to look up. The reading of the stars last night, and the auguries drawn from this morning's victims, portend great changes. What is down to the ground to-day may float high in the air to-morrow. All the signs indicate: 'A fall to the Greatest;' and what can be greater than Rome, the old tyrant queen of the nations? The immediate future, it is true, can hardly bring the final crash, but it is fraught with important consequences to us. I dreamed of the fall of the Caesars, and of a great Greek Empire risen from the ruins, powerful and brilliant under the special protection of the gods of Olympus; and each one of us must labor to bring about the realization of this dream. You have set a noble example of devotion and self-sacrifice, and I thank you in the name of all those who feel with us—nay, in the name of the gods themselves whom I serve! The first thing to be done now is to avert the blow which the Bishop intends shall strike us by the hand of Cynegius—it has already fallen on the magnificent sanctuary of the Apamaean Zeus. If the ambassador retires without having gained his purpose the balance will be greatly—enormously, in our favor, and it will cease to be a folly to believe in the success of our cause."

"Ah! teach us to hope once more," cried the musician. "That in itself is half the victory; still, I cannot see how this delay. . ."

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“It would give us time, and that is what we want,” replied Olympius. “Everything is in preparation, but nothing is ready. Alexandria, Athens, Antioch, and Neapolis are to be the centres of the outbreak. The great Libanius is not a man of action, and even he approves of our scheme. No less a man than Florentin has undertaken to recruit for our cause among the heathen officers in the army. Messala, and the great Gothic captains Fraiut and Generid are ready to fight for the old gods. Our army will not lack leaders. . .”

“Our army!” exclaimed Karnis in surprise. “Is the matter so far advanced?”

“I mean the army of the future,” cried Olympius enthusiastically. “It does not count a man as yet, but is already distributed into several legions. The vigor of mind and body—our learned youth on one hand and strong-armed peasantry on the other—form the nucleus of our force. Maximus could collect, in the utmost haste, the army which deprived Gratian of his throne and life, and was within a Hair-breadth of overthrowing Theodosius; and what was he but an ambitious rebel, and what tempted his followers but their hopes of a share in the booty? But we—we enlist them in the name of the loftiest ideas and warmest desires of the human heart, and, as the prize of victory, we show them the ancient faith with freedom of thought—the ancient loveliness of life. The beings whom the Christians can win over—a patch-work medley of loathsome Barbarians—let them wear out their lives as they choose! We are Greeks—the thinking brain, the subtle and sentient soul of the world. The polity, the empire, that we shall found on the overthrow of Theodosius and of Rome shall be Hellenic, purely Hellenic. The old national spirit, which made the Greeks omnipotent against the millions of Darius and Xerxes, shall live again, and we will keep the Barbarians at a distance as a Patrician forbids his inferiors to count themselves as belonging to his illustrious house. The Greek gods, Greek heroism, Greek art and Greek learning, under our rule shall rise from the dust—all the more promptly for the stringent oppression under which their indomitable spirit has so long languished.”

“You speak to my heart!” cried Karnis. “My old blood flows more swiftly already, and if I only had a thousand talents left to give. . .”

“You would stake them on the future Greek Empire,” said Olympius eagerly. “And we have adherents without number who feel as you do, my trusty friend. We shall succeed—as the great Julian would have succeeded but for the assassins who laid him low at so early an age; for Rome. . .”

“Rome is still powerful.”

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“Rome is a colossus built up of a thousand blocks; but among them a hundred and more be but loosely in their places, and are ready to drop away from the body of the foul monster—sooner rather than later. Our shout alone will shake them down, and they will fall on our side, we may choose the best for our own use. Ere long—a few months only—the hosts will gather in the champaign country at the foot of Vesuvius, by land and by sea; Rome will open its gates wide to us who bring her back her old gods; the Senate will proclaim the emperor deposed and the Republic restored. Theodosius will come out against us. But the Idea for which we go forth to fight will hover before us, will stir the hearts of those soldiers and officers who would gladly—ah! how gladly-sacrifice to the Olympian gods and who only kiss the wounds of the crucified Jew under compulsion. They will desert from the labarum, which Constantine carried to victory, to our standards; and those standards are all there, ready for use; they have been made in this city and are lying hidden in the house of Apollodorus. Heaven-sent daemons showed them in a vision to my disciple Ammonius, when he was full of the divinity and lost in ecstasy, and I have had them made from his instructions.”

“And what do they represent?”

“The bust of Serapis with the ‘modius’ on his head. It is framed in a circle with the signs of the zodiac and the images of the great Olympian deities. We have given our god the head of Zeus, and the corn-measure on his head is emblematic of the blessing that the husbandman hopes for. The zodiac promises us a good star, and the figures representing it are not the common emblems, but each deeply significant. The Twins, for instance, are the mariner’s divinities, Castor and Pollux; Hercules stands by the Lion whom he has subdued; and the Fishes are dolphins, which love music. In the Scales, one holds the cross high in the air while the other is weighed down by Apollo’s laurel-wreath and the bolts of Zeus; in short, our standard displays everything that is most dear to the soul of a Greek or that fills him with devotion. Above all, Nike hovers with the crown of victory. If only fitting leaders are to be found at the centres of the movement, these standards will at once be sent out, and with them arms for the country-folk. A place of meeting has already been selected in each province, the pass-word will be given, and a day fixed for a general rising.”

“And they will flock round you!” interrupted Karnis, “and—I, my son, will not be absent. Oh glorious, happy, and triumphant day! Gladly will I die if only I may first live to see the smoking offerings sending up their fragrance to the gods before the open doors of every temple in Greece; see the young men and maidens dancing in rapt enthusiasm to the sound of lutes and pipes, and joining their voices in the chorus! Then light will shine once more on the world, then life will once more mean joy, and death a departure from a scene of bliss.”

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“Aye, and thus shall it be!” cried Olympius, fired by this eager exposition of his own excitement, and he wrung the musician’s hand. “We will restore life to the Greeks and teach them to scorn death as of yore. Let the Christians, the Barbarians, make life miserable and seek joy in death, if they list! But the girls have ceased singing. There is still much to be done to-day, and first of all I must confute the objections of your recalcitrant pupil.”

“You will not find it an easy task,” said Karnis. “Reason is a feeble weapon in contending with a woman.”

“Not always,” replied the philosopher. “But you must know how to use it. Leave me to deal with the child. There are really no singing-women left here; we have tried three, but they were all vulgar and ill taught. This girl, when she sings with Gorgo, has a voice that will go to the heart of the audience. What we want is to fire the crowd with enthusiasm, and she will help us to do it.”

“Well, well. But you, Olympius, you who are the very soul of the revulsion we hope for, you must not be present at the festival. Indeed, sheltered as you are under Porphyrius’ roof, there is a price on your head, and this house swarms with slaves, who all know you; if one of them, tempted by filthy lucre . . .”

“They will not betray me,” smiled the philosopher. “They know that their aged mistress, Damia, and I myself command the daemons of the upper and lower spheres, and that at a sign from her or from me they would instantly perish; and even if there were an Ephialtes among them, a spring through that loop-hole would save me. Be easy, my friend. Oracles and stars alike foretell me death from another cause than the treason of a slave.”

CHAPTER X.

Olympius followed Agne into the garden where he found her sitting by the marble margin of a small pool, giving her little brother pieces of bread to feed the swans with. He greeted her kindly and, taking up the child, showed him a ball which rose and fell on the jet of water from the fountain. Papias was not at all frightened by the big man with his white beard, for a bright and kindly gleam shone in his eyes, and his voice was soft and attractive as he asked him whether he had such another ball and could toss it as cleverly as the fountain did.

Papias said: “No,” and Olympius, turning to Agne, went on:

“You should get him a ball. There is no better plaything, for play ought to consist in pleasant exertion which is in itself its object and gain. Play is the toil of a little child; and a ball, which he can throw and run after or catch, trains his eye, gives exercise to his

limbs and includes a double moral which men of every age and position should act upon: To look down on the earth and keep his gaze on the heavens."

Agne nodded agreement and thanks, while Olympius set the child down and bid him run away to the paddock where some tame gazelles were kept. Then, going straight to the point, he said:

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“I hear you have declined to sing in the temple of Isis; you have been taught to regard the goddess to whom many good men turn in faith and confidence, as a monster of iniquity, but, tell me, do you know what she embodies?”

“No,” replied Agne looking down; but she hastily rose from her seat and added with some spirit: “And I do not want to know, for I am a Christian and your gods are not mine.”

“Well, well; your beliefs, of course, differ from ours in many points: still, I fancy that you and I have much in common. We belong to those who have learnt to ’look upwards’—-there goes the ball, up again!—and who find comfort in doing so. Do you know that many men believe that the universe was formed by concurrence of mechanical processes and is still slowly developing, that there is no divinity whose love and power guard, guide and lend grace to the lives of men?”

“Oh! yes, I have been obliged to hear many such blasphemous things in Rome!”

“And they ran off you like water off the silvery sheen of that swan’s plumage as he dips and raises his neck. Those who deny a God are, in your estimation, foolish or perhaps abominable?”

“I pity them, with all my heart.”

“And with very good reason. You are an orphan and what its parents are to a child the divinity is to every member of the human race. In this Gorgo, and I, and many others whom you call heathen, feel exactly as you do; but you—have you ever asked yourself why and how it is that you, to whom life has been so bitter, have such a perfect conviction that there is a benevolent divinity who rules the world and your own fate to kindly ends? Why, in short, do you believe in a God?”

“I?” said Ague, looking puzzled, but straight into his face. “How could anything exist without God? You ask such strange questions. All I can see was created by our Father in Heaven.”

“But there are men born blind who nevertheless believe in Him.”

“They feel Him just as I see Him.”

“Nay you should say: ‘As I believe that I see and feel Him.’ But I, for my part, think that the intellect has a right to test what the soul only divines, and that it must be a real happiness to see this divination proved by well-founded arguments, and thus transformed to certainty. Did you ever hear of Plato, the philosopher?”

“Yes, Karnis often speaks of him when he and Orpheus are discussing things which I do not understand.”

“Well, Plato, by his intellect, worked out the proof of the problem which our feelings alone are so capable of apprehending rightly. Listen to me: If you stand on a spit of land at the entrance to a harbor and see a ship in the distance sailing towards you—a ship which carefully avoids the rocks, and makes straight for the shelter of the port—are you not justified in concluding that there is, on board that ship, a man who guides and steers it? Certainly. You not only may,

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but must infer that it is directed by a pilot. And if you look up at the sky and contemplate the well-ordered courses of the stars—when you see how everything on earth, great and small, obeys eternal laws and unerringly tends to certain preordained ends and issues, you may and must infer the existence of a ruling hand. Whose then but that of the Great Pilot of the universe—the Almighty Godhead.—Do you like my illustration?"

"Very much. But it only proves what I knew before."

"Nevertheless, you must, I think, be pleased to find it so beautifully expressed."

"Certainly."

"And must admire the wise man who thought out the comparison. Yes?—Well, that man again was one of those whom you call heathen, who believed as we believe, and who at the same time worked out the evidence of the foundations of his faith for you as well as himself. And we, the later disciples of Plato—[Known as the school of the Neo-Platonists]—have gone even further than our master, and in many respects are much nearer to you Christians than you perhaps suspect. You see at once, of course, that we are no more inclined than you to conceive of the existence of the world and the destiny of man as independent of a God? However, I dare say you still think that your divinity and ours are as far asunder as the east from the west. But can you tell me where any difference lies?"

"I do not know," said Ague uneasily. "I am only an ignorant girl; and who can learn the names even of all your gods?"

"Very true," said Olympius. "There is great Serapis, whose temple you saw yesterday; there is Apollo, to whom Karnis prefers to offer sacrifice; there is Isis the bountiful, and her sister Nephthys, whose lament you and my young friend sing together so thrillingly; and besides these there are more immortals than I could name while Gorgo—who is leading your little brother to the lake out there—walked ten times from the shore to us and back; and yet—and yet my child, your God is ours and ours is yours."

"No, no, He is not, indeed!" cried Agne with increasing alarm.

"But listen," Olympius went on, with the same kind urgency but with extreme dignity, "and answer my questions simply and honestly. We are agreed, are we not?—that we perceive the divinity in the works of his creation, and even in his workings in our own souls. Then which are the phenomena of nature in which you discern Him as especially near to you? You are silent. I see, you have outlived your school-days and do not choose to answer to an uninvited catechism. And yet the things I wish you to name are lovely in themselves and dear to your heart; and if only you did not keep your soft lips

so firmly closed, but would give me the answer I ask for, you would remember much that is grand and beautiful. You would speak of the pale light of dawn, the tender flush that tinges the clouds as the glowing day-star rises from the waves,

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of the splendor of the sun-as glorious as truth and as warm as divine love. You would say: In the myriad blossoms that open to the morning, in the dew that bathes them and covers them with diamonds, in the ripening ears in the field, in the swelling fruit on the trees—in all these I see the mercy and wisdom of the divinity. I feel his infinite greatness as I gaze on the wide expanse of deep blue sea; it comes home to me at night when I lift my eyes to the skies and see the sparkling hosts of stars roll over my head. Who created that countless multitude, who guides them so that they glide past in glorious harmony, and rise and set, accurately timed to minutes and seconds, silent but full of meaning, immeasurably distant and yet closely linked with the fate of individual men?—All this bears witness to the existence of a God, and as you contemplate it and admire it with thankful emotion, you feel yourself drawn near to the Omnipotent. Aye, and even if you were deaf and blind, and lay bound and fettered in the gloom of a closely-shut cavern, you still could feel if love and pity and hope touched your heart. Rejoice then, child! for the immortals have endowed you with good gifts, and granted you sound senses by which to enjoy the beauty of creation. You exercise an art which binds you to the divinity like a bridge; when you give utterance to your whole soul in song that divinity itself speaks through you, and when you hear noble music its voice appeals to your ear. All round you and within you, you can recognize its power just as we feel it—everywhere and at all times.

“And this incomprehensible, infinite, unfettered, bountiful and infallibly wise Power, which penetrates and permeates the life of the universe as it does the hearts of men, though called by different names in different lands, is the same to every race, wherever it may dwell, whatever its language or its beliefs. You Christians call him the Heavenly Father, we give him the name of the Primal One. To you, too, your God speaks in the surging seas, the waving corn, the pure light of day; you, too, regard music which enchants your heart, and love which draws man to man, as his gifts; and we go only a step further, giving a special name to each phenomenon of nature, and each lofty emotion of the soul in which we recognize the direct influence of the Most High; calling the sea Poseidon, the corn-field Demeter, the charm of music Apollo, and the rapture of love Eros. When you see us offering sacrifice at the foot of a marble image you must not suppose that the lifeless, perishable stone is the object of our adoration. The god does not descend to inform the statue; but the statue is made after the Idea figured forth by the divinity it is intended to represent; and through that Idea the image is as intimately connected with the Godhead, as, by the bond of Soul, everything else that is manifest to our senses is connected with the phenomena of the supersensuous World. But this is beyond you; it

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will be enough for you if I assure you that the statue of Demeter, with the sheaf in her arms, is only intended to remind us to be grateful to the Divinity for our daily bread—a hymn of praise to Apollo expresses our thanks to the Primal One for the wings of music and song, on which our soul is borne upwards till it feels the very presence of the Most High. These are names, mere names that divide us; but if you were called anything else than Agne—Ismene, for instance, or Eudoxia—would you be at all different from what you are?—There you see—no, stay where you are—you must listen while I tell you that Isis, the much—maligned Isis, is nothing and represents nothing but the kindly influences of the Divinity, on nature and on human life. What she embodies to us is the abstraction which you call the loving-kindness of the Father, revealed in his manifold gifts, wherever we turn our eyes. The image of Isis reminds us of the lavish bounties of the Creator, just as you are reminded by the cross, the fish, and the lamb, of your Redeemer. Isis is the earth from whose maternal bosom the creative God brings forth food and comfort for man and beast; she is the tender yearning which He implants in the hearts of the lover and the beloved one; she is the bond of affection which unites husband and wife, brother and sister, which is rapture to the mother with a child at her breast and makes her ready and able for any sacrifice for the darling she has brought into the world. She shines, a star in the midnight sky, giving comfort to the sorrowing heart; she, who has languished in grief, pours balm into the wounded souls of the desolate and bereaved, and gives health and refreshment to the suffering. When nature pines in winter cold or in summer drought and lacks power to revive, when the sun is darkened, when lies and evil instincts alienate the soul from its pure first cause, then Isis uplifts her complaint, calling on her husband, Osiris, to return, to take her once more in his arms and fill her with new powers, to show the benevolence of God once more to the earth and to us men. You have learnt that lament; and when you sing it at her festival, picture yourself as standing with the Mother of Sorrows—the mother of your crucified divinity, by his open grave, and cry to your God that he may let him rise from the dead.”

Olympius spoke the last words with excited enthusiasm as though he were certain of the young girl’s consent; but the effect was not what he counted on; for Agne, who had listened to him, so far, with increasing agitation, setting herself against his arguments like a bird under the fascinating glare of the snake’s eye, at this last address seemed suddenly to shake off the spell of his seductive eloquence as the leaves drop from the crown of a tree shaken by the blast; the ideas of her Saviour and of the hymn she was to sing were utterly irreconcilable in her mind; she remembered the struggle she had fought out during the night, and the determination with which she had come to the house this morning. All the insidious language she had just heard was forgotten, swept away like dust from a rocky path, and her voice was firmly repellent as she said:

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“Your Isis has nothing in common with the Mother of our God, and how can you dare to compare your Osiris with the Lord who redeemed the world from death?”

Olympius, startled at the decision of her tone, rose from his seat, but he went on, as though he had expected this refusal:

“I will tell you—I will show you. Osiris—we will take him as being an Egyptian god, instead of Serapis in whose mysterious attributes you would find much to commend itself even to a Christian soul—Osiris, like your Master, voluntarily passed through death—to redeem the world from death—in this resembling your Christ. He, the Risen One, gives new light, and life, and blossom, and verdure to all that is darkened, dead and withered. All that seems to have fallen a prey to death is, by him, restored to a more beautiful existence; he, who has risen again, can bring even the departed soul to a resurrection; and when during this life its high aims have kept it unspotted by the dust of the sensual life, and he, as the judge, sees that it has preserved itself worthy of its pure First Cause, he allows it to return to the eternal and supreme Spirit whence it originally proceeded.

“And do not you, too, strive after purification, to the end that your soul may find an everlasting home in the radiant realms? Again and again do we meet with the same ideas, only they bear different forms and names. Try to feel the true bearing of my words, and then you will gladly join in the pathetic appeal to the sublime god to return. How like he is to your Lord! Is he not, like your Christ, a Saviour, and risen from the dead? The Temple or the Church—both are the sanctuaries of the Deity. By the ivy-wreathed altar of the weeping goddess, at the foot of the tall cypresses which cast their mysterious shadows on the snowy whiteness of the marble steps on which lies the bier of the god, you will feel the sacred awe which falls upon every pure soul when it is conscious of the presence of the Deity—call Him what you will.

“Isis, whom you now know, and who is neither more nor less than a personification of divine mercy, will make you a return by restoring you to the freedom for which you pine. She will allow you to find a home in some Christian house through our intervention, in acknowledgment of the pious service you are rendering, not to her but to the faith in divine goodness. There you may live with your little brother, as free as heart can desire. To-morrow you will go with Gorgo to the temple of the goddess . . .”

But Agne broke in on his speech: “No, I will not go with her!”

Her cheeks were scarlet and her breath came short and fast with excitement as she went on:

“I will not, I must not, I cannot! Do what you will with me: sell me and my brother, put us to turn a mill—but I will not sing in the temple!”

Olympius knit his brows; his beard quivered and his lips parted in wrath, but he controlled himself and going close to the girl he laid his hand on her shoulder and said in a deep grave tone of fatherly admonition:

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“Reflect, child, pause; think over what I have been saying to you; remember, too, what you owe the little one you love, and to-morrow morning tell us that you have duly weighed your answer. Give me your hand, my daughter; believe me, Olympius is one of your sincerest well-wishers.”

He turned his back on her and was going in doors. In front of the house Porphyrius and Karnis were standing in eager colloquy. The news that Marcus’ mother Mary had sent for Herse had reached the singer, and his vivid fancy painted his wife as surrounded by a thousand perils, threatened by the widow, and carried before the judges. The merchant advised him to wait and see what came of it, as did Damia and Gorgo who were attracted to the spot by the vehemence of the discussion; but Karnis would not be detained, and he and Orpheus hurried off to the rescue. Thus Agne was left alone in the garden with her little brother, and perceiving that no one paid any further attention to their proceedings, she fell on her knees, clasped the child closely to her and whispered:

“Pray with me, Papias; pray, pray that the Lord will protect us, and that we may not be turned out of the way that leads us to our parents! Pray, as I do!”

For a minute she remained prostrate with the child by her side. Then, rising quickly, she took him by the hand and led him in almost breathless haste through the garden-gate out into the road, bending her steps towards the lake and then down the first turning that led to the city.

ETEXT *editor’s bookmarks*:

People who have nothing to do always lack time
Perish all those who do not think as we do
Reason is a feeble weapon in contending with a woman
Words that sounded kindly, but with a cold, unloving heart

SERAPIS

By Georg Ebers

Volume 3.

CHAPTER XI.

Agne’s flight remained unperceived for some little time, for every member of the merchant’s household was at the moment intent on some personal interest. When Karnis and Orpheus had set out Gorgo was left with her grandmother and it was not till some little time after that she went out into the colonnade on the garden side of the house, whence she had a view over the park and the shore as far as the ship-yard.

There, leaning against the shaft of a pillar, under the shade of the blossoming shrubs, she stood gazing thoughtfully to the southward.

She was dreaming of the past, of her childhood's joys and privations. Fate had bereft her of a mother's love, that sun of life's spring. Below her, in a splendid mausoleum of purple porphyry, lay the mortal remains of the beautiful woman who had given her birth, and who had been snatched away before she could give her infant a first caress. But all round the solemn monument gardens bloomed in the sunshine, and on the further side of the wall covered with creepers, was the ship-yard, the scene of numberless delightful games. She sighed as she looked at the tall hulks, and watched for the man who, from her earliest girlhood, had owned her heart, whose image was inseparable from every thing of joy and beauty that she had ever known, and every grief her young soul had suffered under.

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Constantine, the younger son of Clemens the shipbuilder, had been her brothers' companion and closest friend. He had proved himself their superior in talents and gifts, and in all their games had been the recognized leader. While still a tiny thing she would always be at their heels, and Constantine had never failed to be patient with her, or to help and protect her, and then came a time when the lads were all eager to win her sympathy for their games and undertakings. When her grandmother read in the stars that some evil influences were to cross the path of Gorgo's planet, the girl was carefully kept in the house; at other times she was free to go with the boys in the garden, on the lake or to the ship-yard. There the happy playmates built houses or boats; there, in a separate room, old Melampus modelled figure-heads for the finished vessels, and he would supply them with clay and let them model too. Constantine was an apt pupil, and Gorgo would sit quiet while he took her likeness, till, out of twenty images that he had made of her, several were really very like. Melampus declared that his young master might be a very distinguished sculptor if only he were the son of poor parents, and Gorgo's father appreciated his talent and was pleased when the boy attempted to copy the beautiful busts and statues of which the house was full; but to his parents, and especially his mother, his artistic proclivities were an offence. He himself, indeed, never seriously thought of devoting himself to such a heathenish occupation, for he was deeply penetrated by the Christian sentiments of his family, and he had even succeeded in inflaming the sons of Porphyrius, who had been baptized at an early age, with zeal for their faith. The merchant perceived this and submitted in silence, for the boys must be and remain Christians in consequence of the edict referring to wills; but the necessity for confessing a creed which was hateful to him was so painful and repulsive to a nature which, though naturally magnanimous was not very steadfast, that he was anxious to spare his sons the same experience, and allowed them to accompany Constantine to church and to wear blue—the badge of the Christians—at races and public games, with a shrug of silent consent.

With Gorgo it was different. She was a woman and need wear no colors; and her enthusiasm for the old gods and Greek taste and prejudices were the delight of her father. She was the pride of his life, and as he heard his own convictions echoed in her childish prattle, and later in her conversation and exquisite singing, he was grateful to his mother and to his friend Olympius who had implanted and cherished these feelings in his daughter. Constantine's endeavors to show her the beauty of his creed and to win her to Christianity were entirely futile; and the older they grew, and the less they agreed, the worse could each endure the dissent of the other.

An early and passionate affection attracted the young man to his charming playfellow; the more ardently he cherished his faith the more fervently did he desire to win her for his wife. But Olympius' fair pupil was not easy of conquest; nay, he was not unfrequently hard beset by her questions and arguments, and while, to her, the fight for a creed was no more than an amusing wrestling match, in which to display her strength, to him it was a matter in which his heart was engaged.

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Damia and Porphyrius took a vain pleasure in their eager discussions, and clapped with delight, as though it were a game of skill, when Gorgo laughingly checkmated her excited opponent with some unanswerable argument.

But there came a day when Constantine discovered that his eager defence of that which to him was high and holy, was, to his hearers, no more than a subject of mockery, and henceforth the lad, now fast growing to manhood, kept away from the merchant's house. Still, Gorgo could always win him back again, and sometimes, when they were alone together, the old strife would be renewed, and more seriously and bitterly than of old. But while he loved her, she also loved him, and when he had so far mastered himself as to remain away for any length of time she wore herself out with longing to see him. They felt that they belonged to each other, but they also felt that an insuperable gulf yawned between them, and that whenever they attempted to clasp hands across the abyss a mysterious and irresistible impulse drove them to open it wider, and to dig it deeper by fresh discussions, till at last Constantine could not endure that she, of all people, should mock at his Holy of Holies and drag it in the dust.

He must go—he must leave Gorgo, quit Alexandria, cost what it might. The travellers' tales that he had heard from the captains of trading-vessels and ships of war who frequented his father's house had filled him with a love of danger and enterprise, and a desire to see distant lands and foreign peoples. His father's business, for which he was intended, did not attract him. Away—away—he would go away; and a happy coincidence opened a path for him.

Porphyrius had taken him one day on some errand to Canopus; the elder man had gone in his chariot, his two sons and Constantine escorting him on horseback. At the city-gates they met Romanus, the general in command of the Imperial army, with his staff of officers, and he, drawing rein by the great merchant's carriage, had asked him, pointing to Constantine, whether that were his son.

"No," replied Porphyrius, "but I wish he were." At these words the ship-master's son colored deeply, while Romanus turned his horse round, laid his hand on the young man's arm and called out to the commander of the cavalry of Arsinoe: "A soldier after Ares' own heart, Columella! Do not let him slip."

Before the clouds of dust raised by the officers' horses as they rode off, had fairly settled, Constantine had made up his mind to be a soldier. In his parents' house, however, this decision was seen under various aspects. His father found little to say against it, for he had three sons and only two shipyards, and the question seemed settled by the fact that Constantine, with his resolute and powerful nature, was cut out to be a soldier. His pious mother, on the other hand, appealed to the learned works of Clemens and Tertullian, who forbid the faithful Christian to draw the sword; and she related the legend of the holy Maximilianus, who, being compelled, under Diocletian, to join the army, had suffered death at the hands of the executioner rather than shed his

fellow-creatures' blood in battle. The use of weapons, she added, was incompatible with a godly and Christian life.

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His father, however, would not listen to this reasoning; new times, he said, were come; the greater part of the army had been baptized; the Church prayed for, victory, and at the head of the troops stood the great Theodosius, an exemplar of an orthodox and zealous Christian.

Clemens was master in his own house, and Constantine joined the heavy cavalry at Arsinoe. In the war against the Blemmyes he was so fortunate as to merit the highest distinction; after that he was in garrison at Arsinoe, and, as Alexandria was within easy reach of that town, he was in frequent intercourse with his own family and that of Porphyrius. Not quite three years previously, when a revolt had broken out in favor of the usurper Maximus in his native town, Constantine had assisted in suppressing it, and almost immediately afterwards he was sent to Europe to take part in the war which Theodosius had begun, again against Maximus.

An unpleasant misunderstanding had embittered his parting from Gorgo; old Damia, as she held his hand had volunteered a promise that she and her granddaughter would from time to time slay a beast in sacrifice on his behalf. Perhaps she had had no spiteful meaning in this, but he had regarded it as an insult, and had turned away angry and hurt. Gorgo, however, could not bear to let him go thus; disregarding her grandmother's look of surprise, she had called him back, and giving him both hands had warmly bidden him farewell. Damia had looked after him in silence and had ever afterwards avoided mentioning his name in Gorgo's presence.

After the victory over Maximus, Constantine, though still very young, was promoted to the command of the troop in the place of Columella, and he had arrived in Alexandria the day before at the head of his 'ala miliaria'.

> [The ala miliaria consisted of 24 'turmae' or 960 mounted troopers under the conduct of a Prefect.]

Gorgo had never at any time ceased to think of him, but her passion had constantly appeared to her in the light of treason and a breach of faith towards the gods, so, to condone the sins she committed on one side by zeal on another, she had come forth from the privacy of her father's house to give active support to Olympius in his struggle for the faith of their ancestors. She had become a daily worshipper at the temple of Isis, and the hope of hearing her sing had already mere than once filled it to overflowing at high festivals. Then, while Olympius was defending the sanctuary of Serapis against the attacks of the Christians, she and her grandmother had become the leaders of a party of women who made it their task to provide the champions of the faith with the means of subsistence.

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All this had given purpose to her life; still, every little victory in this contest had filled her soul with regrets and anxieties. For months and years she had been conspicuous as the opponent of her lover's creed, and the bright eager child had developed into a grave girl a clear-headed and resolute woman. She was the only person in the house who dared to contradict her grandmother, and to insist on a thing when she thought it right. The longing of her heart she could not still, but her high spirit found food for its needs in all that surrounded her, and, by degrees, would no doubt have gained the mastery and have been supreme in all her being and doing, but that music and song still fostered the softer emotions of her strong, womanly nature.

The news of Constantine's return had shaken her soul to the foundations. Would it bring her the greatest happiness or only fresh anguish and unrest?

She saw him coming!—The plume of his helmet first came in sight above the bushes, and then his whole figure emerged from among the shrubbery. She leaned against the pillar for support now, for her knees trembled under her. Tall and stately, his armor blazing in the sunshine, he came straight towards her—a man, a hero—exactly as her fancy had painted him in many a dark and sleepless hour. As he passed her mother's tomb, she felt as though a cold hand laid a grip on her beating heart. In a swift flash of thought she saw her own home with its wealth and splendor, and then the ship-builder's house-simple, chillingly bare, with its comfortless rooms; she felt as though she must perish, nipped and withered, in such a home. Again she thought of him standing on his father's threshold, she fancied she could hear his bright boyish laugh and her heart glowed once more. She forgot for the moment—clear-headed woman though she was, and trained by her philosopher to "know herself"—she forgot what she had fully acknowledged only the night before: That he would no more give up his Christ than she would her Isis, and that if they should ever reach the dreamed-of pinnacle of joy it must be for an instant only, followed by a weary length of misery. Yes—she forgot everything; doubts and fears were cast aside; as his approaching footsteps fell on her ear, she could hardly keep herself from flying, open armed, to meet him.

He was standing before her; she offered him her hand with frank gladness, and, as he clasped it in his, their hearts were too full for words. Only their eyes gave utterance to their feelings, and when he perceived that hers were sparkling through tears, he spoke her name once, twice—joyfully and yet doubtfully, as if he dared not interpret her emotion as he would. She laid her left hand lightly on his which still grasped her right, and said with a brilliant smile: "Welcome, Constantine, welcome home! How glad I am to see you back again!"

"And I—and I . . . " he began, greatly moved.

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“O Gorgo! Can it really be years since we parted?”

“Yes, indeed,” she said. “Anxious, busy, struggling years!”

“But to-day we celebrate the festival of Peace,” he exclaimed fervently. “I have learnt to leave every man to go his own way so long as I am allowed to go mine. The old strife is buried; take me as I am and I, for my part, will think only of the noble and beautiful traits in which your nature is so rich. The fruit of all wholesome strife must be peace; let us pluck that fruit, Gorgo, and enjoy it together. Ah! as I stand here and gaze out over the gardens and the lake, hearing the hammers of the shipwrights, and rejoicing in your presence, I feel as though our childhood might begin all over again—only better, fuller and more beautiful!”

“If only my brothers were here!”

“I saw them.”

“Oh! where?”

“At Thessalonica, well and happy—I have letters for you from them.”

“Letters!” cried Gorgo, drawing away her hand. “Well, you are a tardy messenger! Our houses are within a stone’s throw, and yet in a whole day, from noon till noon, so old a friend could not find a few minutes to deliver the letters entrusted to him, or to call upon such near neighbors . . .”

“First there were my parents,” interrupted the young soldier. “And then the tyrant military duty, which kept me on the stretch from yesterday afternoon till an hour or two since. Romanus robbed me even of my sleep, and kept me in attendance till the morn had set. However, I lost but little by that, for I could not have closed my eyes till they had beheld you! This morning again I was on duty, and rarely have I ridden to the front with such reluctance. After that I was delayed by various details; even on my way here—but for that I cannot be sorry for it gave me this chance of finding you alone. All I ask now is that we may remain so, for such a moment is not likely to be repeated.—There, I heard a door . . .”

“Come into the garden,” cried Gorgo, signing to him to follow her. “My heart is as full as yours. Down by the tank under the old sycamores—we shall be quietest there.”

Under the dense shade of the centenarian trees was a rough-hewn bench that they themselves had made years before; there Gorgo seated herself, but her companion remained standing.

“Yes!” he exclaimed. “Here—here you must hear me! Here where we have been so happy together!”

“So happy!” she echoed softly,

“And now,” he went on, “we are together once more. My heart beats wildly, Gorgo; it is well that this breastplate holds it fast, for I feel as though it would burst with hope and thankfulness.”

“Thankfulness?” said Gorgo, looking down.

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“Yes, thankfulness—sheer, fervent passionate gratitude! What you have given me, what an inestimable boon, you yourself hardly know; but no emperor could reward love and fidelity more lavishly than you have done—you, the care and the consolation, the pain and the joy of my life! My mother told me—it was the first thing she thought of—how you shed tears of grief on her bosom when the false report of my death reached home. Those tears fell as morning dew on the drooping hopes in my heart, they were a welcome such as few travellers find on their return home. I am no orator, and if I were, how could speech in any way express my feelings? But you know them—you understand what it is, after so many years . . .”

“I know,” she said looking up into his eyes, and allowing him to seize her hand as he dropped on the bench by her side. “If I did not I could not bear this—and I freely confess that I shed many more tears over you than you could imagine. You love me, Constantine . . .”

He threw his arm round her; but she disengaged herself, exclaiming:

“Nay—I implore you, not so—not yet, till I have told you what troubles me, what keeps me from throwing myself wholly, freely into the arms of happiness. I know what you will ask—what you have a right to ask; but before you speak, Constantine, remember once more all that has so often saddened our life, even as children, that has torn us asunder like a whirlwind although, ever since we can remember, our hearts have flowed towards each other. But I need not remind you of what binds us—that we both know well, only too well. . . .”

“Nay,” he replied boldly: “That we are only beginning to know in all its fullness and rapture. The other thing the whirlwind of which you speak, has indeed tossed and tormented me, more than it has you perhaps; but since I have known that you could shed tears for me and love me I have had no more anxieties; I know for certain that all must come right! You love me as I am, Gorgo. I am no dreamer nor poet; but I can look forward to finding life lovely and noble if shared with you, so long as one—only one thing is sure. I ask you plainly and truly: Is your heart as full of love for me as mine is for you? When I was away did you think of me every day, every night, as I thought of you, day and night without fail?”

Gorgo’s head sank and blushes dyed her cheeks as she replied: “I love you, and I have never even thought of any one else. My thoughts and yearnings followed you all the while you were away . . . and yet . . . oh, Constantine! That one thing . . .”

“It cannot part us,” said the young man passionately, “since we have love—the mighty and gracious power which conquers all things! When love beckon: the whirlwind dies away like the breath from a child’s lips; it can bridge over any abyss; it created the world and preserves the existence of humanity, it can remove mountains—and these are the most beautiful words of the greatest of the apostles: ’It is long suffering and kind, it

believes all things, hopes all things' and it knows no end. It remains with us till death and will teach us to find that peace whose bulwark and adornment, whose child and parent it is!"

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Gorgo had looked lovingly at him while he spoke, and he, pressing her hand to his lips went on with ardent feeling:

“Yes, you shall be mine—I dare, and I will go to ask you of your father. There are some words spoken in one’s life which can never be forgotten. Once your father said that he wished that I was his son. On the march, in camp, in battle, wherever I have wandered, those words have been in my mind; for me they could have but one meaning: I would be his son—I shall be his son when Gorgo is my wife!—And now the time has come . . .”

“Not yet, not to-day,” she interrupted eagerly. “My hopes are the same as yours. I believe with you that our love can bring all that is sweetest into our lives. What you believe I must believe, and I will never urge upon you the things that I regard as holiest. I can give up much, bear much, and it will all seem easy for your sake. We can agree, and settle what shall be conceded to your Christ and what to our gods—but not to-day; not even to-morrow. For the present let me first carry out the task I have undertaken—-when that is done and past, then. . . . You have my heart, my love; but if I were to prove a deserter from the cause to-day or to-morrow it would give others—Olympius—a right to point at me with scorn.”

“What is it then that you have undertaken?” asked Constantine with grave anxiety.

“To crown and close my past life. Before I can say: I am yours, wholly yours . . .”

“Are you not mine now, to-day, at once?” he urged.

“To day-no,” she replied firmly. “The great cause still has a claim upon me; the cause which I must renounce for your sake. But the woman who gives only one person reason to despise her signs the death-warrant of her own dignity. I will carry out what I have undertaken. . . . Do not ask me what it is; it would grieve you to know.—The day after tomorrow, when the feast of Isis is over. . . .”

“Gorgo, Gorgo!” shouted Damia’s shrill voice, interrupting the young girl in her speech, and half a dozen slave-women came rushing out in search of her.

They rose, and as they went towards the house Constantine said very earnestly:

“I will not insist; but trust my experience: When we have to give something up sooner or later, if the wrench is a painful one, the sooner and the more definitely it is done the better. Nothing is gained by postponement and the pain is only prolonged. Hesitation and delay, Gorgo, are a barrier built up by your own hand between us and our happiness. You always had abundance of determination; be brave then, now, and cut short at once a state of things that cannot last.”

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“Well, well,” she said hurriedly. “But you must not, you will not require me to do anything that is beyond my strength, or that would involve breaking my word. To-morrow is not, and cannot be yours; it must be a day of leave-taking and parting. After that I am yours, I cannot live without you. I want you and nothing else. Your happiness shall be mine; only, do not make it too hard to me to part from all that has been dear to me from my infancy. Shut your eyes to tomorrow’s proceedings, and then—oh! if only we were sure of the right path, if only we could tread it together! We know each other so perfectly, and I know, I feel, that it will perhaps be a comfort to our hearts to be patient with each other over matters which our judgment fails to comprehend or even to approve. I might be so unutterably happy; but my heart trembles within me, and I am not, I dare not be quite glad yet.”

CHAPTER XII.

The young soldier was heartily welcomed by his friends of the merchant’s family; but old Damia was a little uneasy at the attitude which he and Gorgo had taken up after their first greeting. He was agitated and grave, she was eager and excited, with an air of determined enterprise.

Was Eros at the bottom of it all? Were the young people going to carry out the jest of their childhood in sober earnest? The young officer was handsome and attractive enough, and her granddaughter after all was but a woman.

So far as Constantine was concerned the old lady had no personal objection to him; nay, she appreciated his steady, grave manliness and, for his own sake, was very glad to see him once more; but to contemplate the ship-builder’s son—the grandson of a freedman—a Christian and devoted to the Emperor, even though he were a prefect or of even higher grade—as a possible suitor for her Gorgo, the beautiful heiress of the greater part of her wealth—the centre of attraction to all the gilded youth of Alexandria—this was too much for her philosophy; and, as she had never in her life restrained the expression of her sentiments, though she gave him a friendly hand and the usual greeting, she very soon showed him, by her irony and impertinence, that she was as hostile to his creed as ever.

She put her word in on every subject, and when, presently, Demetrius—who, after Dada’s rebuff, had come on to see his uncle—began speaking of the horses he had been breeding for Marcus, and Constantine enquired whether any Arabs from his stables were to be purchased in the town, Damia broke out:

“You out-do your crucified God in most things I observe! He could ride on an ass, and a stout Egyptian nag is not good enough for you.”

However, the young officer was not to be provoked; and though he was very well able to hold his own in a strife of words, he kept himself under control and pretended to see nothing in the old woman's taunts but harmless jesting.

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Gorgo triumphed in his temperate demeanor, and thanked him with grateful glances and a silent grasp of the hand when opportunity offered.

Demetrius, who had also known Constantine as a boy, and who, through Porphyrius, had sold him his first charger, met him very warmly and told him with a laugh that he had seen him before that day, that he had evidently learnt something on his travels, that he had tracked the prettiest head of game in all the city; and he slapped him on the shoulder and gave him what he meant to be a very knowing glance. Constantine could not think where Demetrius had seen him or what he meant; while Gorgo supposed that he alluded to her, and thought him perfectly odious.

Porphyrius pelted the prefect with questions which Constantine was very ready to answer, till they were interrupted by some commotion in the garden. On looking out they saw a strange and unpleasing procession, headed by Herse who was scolding, thumping and dragging Dada's Egyptian slave, while her husband followed, imploring her to moderate her fury. Behind them came Orpheus, now and then throwing out a persuasive word to soothe the indignant matron. This party soon came up with the others, and Herse, unasked, poured out an explanation of her wrath.

She had had but a brief interview with Mary, Marcus' mother, for she had positively opposed the Christian lady's suggestion that Karnis and his family would do well to quit Alexandria as soon as possible, accepting an indemnification from Mary herself. To the widow's threats of seeking the intervention of the law, she had retorted that they were not public singers but free citizens who performed for their own enjoyment; to the anxious mother's complaints that Dada was doing all she could to attract Marcus, she had answered promptly and to the point that her niece's good name would certainly out-weigh anything that could be said against a young man to whom so much license was allowed in Alexandria. She would find some means of protecting her own sister's child. Mary had replied that Herse would do well to remember that she—Mary—had means at her command of bringing justice down on those who should attempt to entrap a Christian youth, and tempt him into the path of sin.

This had closed the interview. Herse had found her husband and son waiting for her at the door of Mary's house and had at once returned with them to the ship. There an unpleasant surprise awaited them; they had found no one on board but the Egyptian slave, who told them that Dada had sent her on shore to procure her some sandals; on her return the girl had vanished. The woman at the same time declared that she had seen Agne and her brother leave the garden and make for the high-road.

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So far as the Christian girl was concerned Herse declared there would be no difficulty; but Dada, her own niece, had always clung to them faithfully, and though Alexandria was full of sorcerers and Magians they could hardly succeed in making away with a fullgrown, rational, and healthy girl. In her inexperience she had, no doubt, gone at the bidding of some perfidious wretch, and the Egyptian witch, the brown slave had, of course, had a finger in the trick. She would accuse no one, but she knew some people who would be only too glad if Dada and that baby-faced young Christian got into trouble and disgrace together. She delivered herself of this long story with tears of rage and regret, angrily refusing to admit any qualifying parentheses from her husband, to whose natural delicacy her rough and vociferous complaints were offensive in the presence of the high-bred ladies of the house. Old Damia, however, had listened attentively to her indignant torrent of words, and had only shrugged her shoulders with a scornful smile at the implied accusation of herself.

Porphyrius, to whom the whole business was simply revolting, questioned Herse closely and when the facts were clearly established, and it also was plainly proved that Agne had escaped from the garden, he desired the slave-woman to tell her story of all that had occurred during the absence of Karnis, promising her half a dozen stripes from the cane on the soles of her feet for every false word she might utter. The threat was enough to raise a howl from the Egyptian; but this Porphyries soon put a stop to, and Sachepris, with perfect veracity, told her tale of all that had happened till Herse's return to the vessel. The beginning of the narrative was of no special interest, but when she was pressed to go faster to the point she went on to say:

"And then—then my lord Constantine came to us on the ship, and the pretty mistress laughed with him and asked him to take off his helmet, because the pretty mistress wanted to see the cut, the great sword-cut above his eyes, and my lord Constantine took it off."

"It is a lie!" exclaimed Gorgo.

"No, no; it is true. Sachepris does not want her feet flayed, mistress," cried the slave. "Ask my lord Constantine himself."

"Yes, I went on board," said Constantine. "Just as I was crossing the ship-yard a young girl dropped her fan into the lake. I fished it out at her request, and carried it back to her."

"Yes, that was it," cried Sachepris. "And the pretty mistress laughed with my lord Constantine—is it not true?—and she took his helmet out of his hand and weighed it in hers . . ."

"And you could stop on your way here to trifle with that child?" cried Gorgo wrathfully. "Pah! what men will do!"

These words portended rage and intense disgust to Constantine. “Gorgo!” he cried with a reproachful accent, but she could not control her indignation and went on more vehemently than ever:

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“You stopped—with that little hussy—on your way to me—stopped to trifle and flirt with her! Shame! Yes, I say shame! Men are thought lucky in being light-hearted, but, for my part, may the gods preserve me from such luck! Trifling, whispering, caressing—a tender squeeze of the hand—solemnly, passionately earnest!—And what next? Who dares warrant that it will not all be repeated before the shadows are an ell long on the shore!”

She laughed, a sharp, bitter laugh; but it was a short one. She ceased and turned pale, for her lover’s face had undergone a change that terrified her. The scar on his forehead was purple, and his voice was strange, harsh and hoarse as he leaned forward to bring his face on a level with hers, and said:

“Even if you had seen me with your own eyes you ought not to have believed them! And if you dare to say that you do believe it, I can say Shame! as well as you. My life may be at stake but I say: Shame!”

As he spoke he clutched the back of a chair with convulsive fury and stood facing the girl like an avenging god of war, his eyes flashing to meet hers. This was too much for old Damia; she could contain herself no longer, and striking her crutch on the floor she broke out:

“What next shall we hear! You threaten and storm at the daughter of this house as if she were a soldier in your camp! Listen to me, my fine gentleman, and mind what I say: In the house of a free Alexandrian citizen no one has any right to give his orders—be he Caesar, Consul or Comes; he has only to observe the laws of good manners.” Then turning to Gorgo she shook her head with pathetic emphasis; “This, my love, is the consequence of too much familiar condescension. Come, an end of this! Greeting and parting often go hand in hand.”

The prefect turned on his heel and went towards the steps leading to the garden; but Gorgo flew after him and seized his hand, calling out to the old woman:

“No, no, grandmother; he is in the right, I am certain he is in the right. Stop, Constantine—wait, stay, and forgive my folly! If you love me, mother, say no more—he will explain it all presently.”

The soldier heaved a sigh of relief and assented in silence, while the slave went on with her story: “And when my lord Constantine was gone, my lord Demetrius came and he—but what should poor Sachepris say—ask my lord Demetrius himself to tell you.”

“That is soon done,” replied Demetrius, who had failed to understand a great deal of all that had been going forward. My brother Marcus is over head and ears in love with the little puss—she is a pretty creature—and to save that simple soul from mischief I thought I would take the business on my own shoulders which are broader and stronger

than his. I went boldly to work and offered the girl—more shame for me, I must say—-the treasures of Midas; however, offering is one thing and accepting is another, and the child snapped me

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up and sent me to the right about—by Castor and Pollux! packed me off with my tail between my legs! My only comfort was that Constantine had just quitted the pretty little hussy. By the side of the god of war, thought I, a country Pan makes but a poor figure; but this Ares was dismissed by Venus, and so, if only to keep up my self-respect, I was forced to conclude that the girl, with all her pertness, was of a better sort than we had supposed. My presents, which would have tempted any other girl in Alexandria to follow a cripple to Hades, she took as an insult; she positively cried with indignation, and I really respect pretty little Dada!"

"She is my very own sister's child," Herse threw in, honestly angered by the cheap estimation in which every one seemed to hold her adopted child. "My own sister's," she insisted, with an emphasis which seemed to imply that she had a whole family of half-sisters. "Though we now earn our bread as singers, we have seen better days; and in these hard times Croesus to-day may be Irus to-morrow. As for us, Karnis did not dissipate his money in riotous living. It was foolish perhaps but it was splendid—I believe we should do the same again; he spent all his inheritance in trying to reinstate Art. However, what is the use of looking after money when it is gone! If you can win it, or keep it you will be held of some account, but if you are poor the dogs will snap at you! —The girl, Dada—we have taken as much care of her as if she were our own, and divided our last mouthful with her before now. Karnis used to tease her about training her voice—and now, when she could really do something to satisfy even good judges—-now, when she might have helped us to earn a living-now. . ."

The good woman broke down and burst into tears, while Karnis tried to soothe and comfort her.

"We shall get on without them somehow," he said. "'Nil desperandum' says Horace the Roman. And after all they are not lizards that can hide in the cracks of the walls; I know every corner of Alexandria and I will go and hunt them up at once."

"And I will help you, my friend," said Demetrius, "We will go to the Hippodrome—the gentry you will meet with there are capital blood-hounds after such game as the daughter of your 'own sister,' my good woman. As to the black-haired Christian girl—I have seen her many a time on board ship. . ."

"Oh! she will take refuge with some fellow-Christians," remarked Porphyrius. "Olympius told me all about her. I know plenty of the same sort in the Church. They fling away life and happiness as if they were apple-peelings to snatch at something which they believe to constitute salvation. It is folly, madness! pure unmitigated madness! To have sung in the temple of the she-devil Isis with Gorgo and the other worshippers would have cost her her seat in Paradise. That, as I believe, is the cause of her flight."

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“That and nothing else!” cried Karnis. “How vexed the noble Olympius will be. Indeed, Apollo be my witness! I have not been so disturbed about anything for many a day. Do you happen to recollect,” he went on, turning to Demetrius, “our conversation on board ship about a dirge for Pytho? Well, we had transposed the lament of Isis into the Lydian mode, and when this young lady’s wonderful voice gave it out, in harmony with Agne’s and with Orpheus’ flute, it was quite exquisite! My old heart floated on wings as I listened! And only the day after to-morrow the whole crowd of worshippers in the temple of Isis were to enjoy that treat!—It would have roused them to unheard-of enthusiasm. Yesterday the girl was in it, heart and soul; nay, only this morning she and the noble Gorgo sang it through from beginning to end. One more rehearsal to-morrow, and then the two voices would have given such a performance as perhaps was never before heard within the temple walls.”

Constantine had listened to this rhapsody with growing agitation; he was standing close to Gorgo, and while the rest of the party held anxious consultation as to what could be done to follow up and capture the fugitives, he asked Gorgo in a low voice, but with gloomy looks:

“You intended to sing in the temple of Isis? Before the crowd, and with a girl of this stamp?”

“Yes,” she said firmly.

“And you knew yesterday that I had come home?” She nodded.

“And yet, this morning even, while you were actually expecting me, you could practise the hymn with such a creature?”

“Agne is not such another as the girl who played tricks with your helmet,” replied Gorgo, and the black arches of her eyebrows knit into something very like a scowl. “I told you just now that I was not yours today, nor to-morrow. We still serve different gods.”

“Indeed we do!” he exclaimed, so vehemently that the others looked round, and old Damia again began to fidget in her chair.

Then with a strong effort he recovered himself and, after standing for some minutes gazing in silence at the ground, he said in a low tone:

“I have borne enough for to-day. Gorgo, pause, reflect. God preserve me from despair!”

He bowed, hastily explained that his duties called him away, and left the spot.

CHAPTER XIII.

The amateurs of horse-racing who assembled in the Hippodrome could afford no clue to Dada's hiding-place, because she had not, in fact, run away with any gay young gallant. Within a few minutes of her sending Sachepris to fetch her a pair of shoes, Medius had hailed her from the shore; he wanted to speak with Karnis, and having come on an ass it was not in vain that the incensed damsel entreated him to take her with him. He had in fact only come to try to persuade Karnis and his wife to spare Dada for a few performances, such as he had described, in the house of Posidonius. His hopes of success had been but slender; and now the whole thing had settled itself, and Dada's wish that her people should not, for a while, know where to find her was most opportune for his plans.

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In the days when Karnis was the manager of the theatre at Tauromenium Medius had led the chorus, and had received much kindness at the hands of the girl's uncle. All this, he thought, he could now repay, for certainly his old patron was poor enough, and he intended honestly to share with his former benefactor the profits he expected to realize with so fair a prodigy as Dada. No harm could come to the girl, and gold—said he to himself—glitters as brightly and is just as serviceable, even when it has been earned for us against our will.

Medius, being a cautious man, made the girl bring her new dress away with her, and the girdle and jewels belonging to it, and his neat hands packed everything into the smallest compass. He filled up the basket which he took for the purpose with sweetmeats, oranges and pomegranates "for the children at home," and easily consoled Dada for the loss of her shoes. He would lead the ass and she should ride. She covered her face with a veil, and her little feet could be hidden under her dress. When they reached his house he would at once have "a sweet little pair of sandals" made for her by the shoemaker who worked for the wife of the Comes and the daughters of the Alabarch—-[The chief of the Jewish colony in Alexandria.]—These preparations and the start only took a few minutes; and their rapid search and broken conversation caused so much absurd confusion that Dada had quite recovered her spirits and laughed merrily as she tripped bare-foot across the strand. She sprang gaily on to the little donkey and as they made their way along the road, the basket containing her small wardrobe placed in front of her on the ass's shoulders, she remarked that she should be mistaken for the young wife of a shabby old husband, returning from market with a load of provisions.

She was delighted to think of what Herse's face would be when, on her return home, she should discover that the prisoner could make her escape even without shoes.

"Let her have a good hunt for me!" she cried quite enchanted. "Why should I always be supposed to be ready for folly and wickedness! But one thing I warn you: If I am not comfortable and happy with you, and if I do not like the parts you want me to fill, we part as quickly as we have come together.—Why are you taking me through all these dirty alleys? I want to ride through the main streets and see what is going on." But Medius would not agree to this, for in the great arteries of the town there were excitement and tumult, and they might think themselves fortunate if they reached his house unmolested.

He lived in a little square, between the Greek quarter and Rhacotis where the Egyptians lived, and his house, which was exactly opposite the church of St. Marcus, accommodated Medius himself, his wife, his widowed daughter and her five children, besides being crammed from top to bottom with all sorts of strange properties, standing or hanging in every available space. Dada's curiosity had no rest, and by the time she had spent a few hours in the house her host's pretty little grandchildren were clinging to her with devoted affection.

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Agne had not been so fortunate as to find a refuge so easily. With no escort, unveiled, and left entirely to her own guidance, leading the little boy, she hurried forward, not knowing whither. All she thought was to get away—far away from these men who were trying to imperil her immortal soul.

She knew that Karnis had actually bought her, and that she was, therefore, his property and chattel. Even Christian doctrine taught her that the slave must obey his master; but she could not feel like a slave, and if indeed she were one her owner might destroy and kill her body, but not her soul. The law, however, was on the side of Karnis, and it allowed him to pursue her and cast her into prison. This idea haunted her, and for fear of being caught she avoided all the chief thoroughfares and kept close to the houses as she stole through the side streets and alleys. Once, in Antioch, she had seen a runaway slave, who, having succeeded in reaching a statue of the Emperor and laying his hand on it, was by that act safe from his pursuers. There must surely be such a statue somewhere in Alexandria—but where? A woman, of whom she enquired, directed her down a wider street that would take her into the Canopic Way. If she crossed that and went down the first turning to the left she would reach a large open square in the Bruchium, and there, in front of the Prefect's residence and by the side of the Bishop's house, stood the new statue of Theodosius.

This information, and the mention of the Bishop, gave a new course to her proceedings. It was wrong to defy and desert her master, but to obey him would be deadly sin. Which must she choose and which avoid? Only one person could advise in such a case—only one could relieve her mind of its difficulties and terrors: The Shepherd of souls in the city—the Bishop himself. She too was a lamb of his flock; to him and to no one else could she turn.

This thought fell on her heart like a ray of light dispersing the clouds of uncertainty and alarm. With a deep breath of relief she took the child in her arms and told him—for he was whimpering to know where she was taking him, and why he might not go back to Dada—that they were going to see a good, kind man who would tell them the way home to their father and mother. Papias, however, still wailed to go to Dada and not to the man.

Half insisting and half coaxing him with promises, she dragged him along as far as the main street. This was full of an excited throng; soldiers on foot and on horseback were doing what they could to keep the peace, and the bustle amused the little boy's curiosity so that he soon forgot his homesickness. When, at length, Ague found the street that led to the Prefect's house she was fairly carried along by the surging, rushing mob. To turn was quite impossible; the utmost she could do was to keep her wits about her, and concentrate her strength so as not to be parted from the child. Pushed, pulled,

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squeezed, scolded, and abused by other women for her folly in bringing a child out into such a crowd, she at last found herself in the great square. A hideous hubbub of coarse, loud voices pierced her unaccustomed ears; she could have sunk on the earth and cried; but she kept up her courage and collected all her energies, for she saw in the distance a large gilt cross over a lofty doorway. It was like a greeting and welcome home. Under its protection she would certainly, find rest, consolation and safety.

But how was she to reach it? The space before her was packed with men as a quiver is packed with arrows; there was not room for a pin between. The only chance of getting forward was by forcing her way, and nine-tenths of the crowd were men—angry and storming men, whose wild and strange demeanor filled her with terror and disgust. Most of them were monks who had flocked in at the Bishop's appeal from the monasteries of the desert, or from the Lauras and hermitages of Kolzum by the Red Sea, or even from Tabenna in Upper Egypt, and whose hoarse voices rent the air with vehement cries of: "Down with the idols! Down with Serapis! Death to the heathen!"

This army of the Saviour whose very essence was gentleness and whose spirit was love, seemed indeed to have deserted from his standard of light and grace to the blood-stained banner of murderous hatred. Their matted locks and beards fringed savage faces with glowing eyes; their haggard or paunchy nakedness was scarcely covered by undressed hides of sheep and goats; their parched skins were scarred and striped by the use of the scourges that hung at their girdles. One—a "crown bearer"—had a face streaming with blood, from the crown of thorns which he had vowed to wear day and night in memory and imitation of the Redeemer's sufferings, and which on this great occasion he pressed hard into the flesh with ostentatious martyrdom. One, who, in his monastery, had earned the name of the "oil-jar," supported himself on his neighbors' arms, for his emaciated legs could hardly carry his dropsical carcass which, for the last ten years, he had fed exclusively on gourds, snails, locusts and Nile water. Another was chained inseparably to a comrade, and the couple dwelt together in a cave in the limestone hills near Lycopolis. These two had vowed never to let each other sleep, that so their time for repentance might be doubled, and their bliss in the next world enhanced in proportion to their mortifications in this.

One and all, they were allies in a great fight, and the same hopes, ideas, and wishes fired them all. The Abominable Thing—which imperilled hundreds of thousands of souls, which invited Satan to assert his dominion in this world—should fall this day and be annihilated forever! To them the whole heathen world was the "great whore;" and though the gems she wore were beautiful to see and rejoiced the mind and heart of fools, they must be snatched from her painted brow; they would scourge

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her from off the face of the redeemed earth and destroy the seducer of souls forever. “Down with the idols! Down with Serapis! Down with the heathen!” Their shouts thundered and bellowed all about Agne; but, just as the uproar and crush were at the worst, a tall and majestic figure appeared on a balcony above the cross and extended his hand in calm and dignified benediction towards the seething mass of humanity. As he raised it all present, including Ague, bowed and bent the knee.

Agne felt, knew, that this stately man was the Bishop whom she sought, but she did not point him out to her little brother, for his aspect was that of some proud sovereign rather than of “the good, kind man” of whom she had dreamed. She could never dare to force her way into the presence of this great lord! How should the ruler over a million souls find time or patience for her and her trivial griefs?

However, there must be within his dwelling sundry presbyters and deacons, and she would address herself to one of them, as soon as the crowd had dispersed enough for her to make her way to the door beneath the cross. Twenty times at least did she renew her efforts, but she made very small progress; most of the monks, as she tried to squeeze past them, roughly pushed her back; one, on whose arm she ventured to lay her hand, begging him to make way for her, broke out into shrieks as though a serpent had stung him, and when the crush brought her into contact with the crown-bearer he thrust her away exclaiming:

“Away woman! Do not touch me, spawn of Satan tool of the evil one! or I will tread you under foot!”

Retreat had been as impossible as progress, and long hours went by which to her seemed like days; still she felt no fatigue, only alarm and disgust, and, more than anything else, an ardent desire to reach the Bishop’s palace and take counsel of a priest. It was long past noon when a diversion took place which served at any rate to interest and amuse the crying child.

On the platform above the doorway Cynegius came forth—Cynegius, the Emperor’s delegate; a stout man of middle height, with a shrewd round head and a lawyer’s face. State dignitaries, Consuls and Prefects had, at this date, ceased to wear the costume that had marked the patricians of old Rome—a woollen toga that fell in broad and dignified folds from the shoulders; a long, close-fitting robe had taken its place, of purple silk brocade with gold flowers. On the envoy’s shoulder blazed the badge of the highest officials, a cruciform ornament of a peculiarly thick and costly tissue. He greeted the crowd with a condescending bow, a herald blew three blasts on the tuba, and then Cynegius, with a wave of his hand introduced his private secretary who stood by his side, and who at once opened a roll he held and shouted at the top of a ringing voice:

“Silence in Caesar’s name!”

The trumpet then sounded for the fourth time, and silence so complete fell on the crowded square that the horses of the mounted guard in front of the Prefect’s house could be heard snorting and champing.

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“In Caesar’s name,” repeated the official, who had been selected for the duty of reading the Imperial message. Cynegius himself bent his head, again waved his hand towards his secretary, and then towards the statues of the Emperor and Empress which, mounted on gilt standards, were displayed to the populace on each side of the balcony; then the reading began:

“Theodosius Caesar greets the inhabitants of the great and noble city of Alexandria, by Cynegius, his faithful ambassador and servant. He knows that its true and honest citizens confess the Holy Faith in all piety and steadfastness, as delivered to believers in the beginning by Peter, the prince of the Apostles; he knows that they hold the true Christian faith, and abide by the doctrine delivered by the Holy Ghost to the Fathers of the Church in council at Nicaea.

“Theodosius Caesar who, in all humility and pride, claims to be the sword and shield, the champion and the rampart of the one true faith, congratulates his subjects of the great and noble city of Alexandria inasmuch as that most of them have turned from the devilish heresy of Arius, and have confessed the true Nicaean creed; and he announces to them, by his faithful and noble servant Cynegius, that this faith and no other shall be recognized in Alexandria, as throughout his dominions.

“In Egypt, as in all his lands and provinces, every doctrine opposed to this precious creed shall be persecuted, and all who confess, preach or diffuse any other doctrine shall be considered heretics and treated as such.”

The secretary paused, for loud and repeated shouts of joy broke from the multitude. Not a dissentient word was heard-indeed, the man who should have dared to utter one would certainly not have escaped unpunished. It was not till the herald had several times blown a warning blast that the reader could proceed, as follows:

“It has come to the ears of your Caesar, to the deep grieving of his Christian soul, that the ancient idolatry, which so long smote mankind with blindness and kept them wandering far from the gates of Paradise, still, through the power of the devil, has some temples and altars in your great and noble city. But because it is grievous to the Christian and clement heart of the Emperor to avenge the persecutions and death which so many holy martyrs have endured at the hands of the bloodthirsty and cruel heathen on their posterity, or on the miscreant and—misbelieving enemies of our holy faith—and because the Lord hath said ’vengeance is mine’—Theodosius Caesar only decrees that the temples of the heathen idols in this great and noble city of Alexandria shall be closed, their images destroyed and their altars overthrown. Whosoever shall defile himself with blood, or slay an innocent beast for sacrifice, or enter a heathen temple, or perform any religious ceremony therein, or worship any image of a god made by hands-nay, or pray in any temple in the country or in the city, shall be at once required to pay a fine of fifteen pounds of gold; and whosoever shall know of such a crime being

committed without giving information of it, shall be fined to the same amount."—[Codex Theodosianus XVI, 10, 10.]

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The last words were spoken to the winds, for a shout of triumph, louder and wilder than had ever before been heard even on this favorite meeting-place of the populace, rent the very skies. Nor did it cease, nor yield to any trumpet-blast, but rolled on in spreading waves down every street and alley; it reached the ships in the port, and rang through the halls of the rich and the hovels of the poor; it even found a dull echo in the light-house at the point of Pharos, where the watchman was trimming the lamp for the night; and in an incredibly short time all Alexandria knew that Caesar had dealt a death-blow to the worship of the heathen gods.

The great and fateful rumor was heard, too, in the Museum and the Serapeum; once more the youth who had grown up in the high schools of the city, studying the wisdom of the heathen, gathered together; men who had refined and purified their intellect at the spring of Greek philosophy and fired their spirit with enthusiasm for all that was good and lovely in the teaching of ancient Greece—these obeyed the summons of their master, Olympius, or flew to arms under the leadership of Orestes, the Governor, for the High-Priest himself had to see to the defences of the Serapeum.—Olympius had weapons ready in abundance, and the youths rapidly collected round the standards he had prepared, and rushed into the square before the Prefect's house to drive away the monks and to insist that Cynegius should return forthwith to Rome with the Emperor's edict.

Young and noble lads were they who marched forth to the struggle, equipped like the Helleman soldiers of the palmy days of Athens; and as they went they sang a battle-song of Callinus which some one—who, no one could tell—had slightly altered for the occasion:

> "Come, rouse ye Greeks; what, sleeping still!
> Is courage dead, is shame unknown?
> Start up, rush forth with zealous will,
> And smite the mocking Christians down!"

Everything that opposed their progress was overthrown. Two maniples of foot-soldiers who held the high-road across the Bruchium attempted to turn them, but the advance of the inflamed young warriors was irresistible and they reached the street of the Caesareum and the square in front of the Prefect's residence. Here they paused to sing the last lines of their battlesong:

> "Fate seeks the coward out at home,
> He dies unwept, unknown to fame,
> While by the hero's honored tomb
> Our grandsons' grandsons shall proclaim:
> 'In the great conflict's fiercest hour
> He stood unmoved, our shield and tower.'"

It was here, at the wide opening into the square, that the collision took place: on one side the handsome youths, crowned with garlands, with their noble Greek type of heads, thoughtful brows, perfumed curls, and anointed limbs exercised in the gymnasium—on the other the sinister fanatics in sheep-skin, ascetic visionaries grown grey in fasting, scourging, and self-denial.

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The monks now prepared to meet the onset of the young enthusiasts who were fighting for freedom of thought and enquiry, for Art and Beauty. Each side was defending what it felt to be the highest Good, each was equally in earnest as to its convictions, both fought for something dearer and more precious than this earthly span of existence. But the philosophers' party had swords; the monks' sole weapon was the scourge, and they were accustomed to ply that, not on each other but on their own rebellious flesh. A wild and disorderly struggle began with swingeing blows on both sides; prayers and psalms mingling with the battle-song of the heathen. Here a monk fell wounded, there one lay dead, there again lay a fine and delicate-looking youth, felled by the heavy fist of a recluse. A hermit wrestled hand to hand with a young philosopher who, only yesterday had delivered his first lecture on the Neo-Platonism of Plotinus to an interested audience.

And in the midst of this mad struggle stood Agne with her little brother, who clung closely to her skirts and was too terrified to shed a tear or utter a cry. The girl was resolutely calm, but she was too utterly terror-stricken even to pray. Fear, absorbing fear had stunned her thoughts; it overmastered her like some acute physical pain which began in her heart and penetrated every fibre of her frame.

Even while the Imperial message was being read she had been too frightened to take it all in; and now she simply shut her eyes tight and hardly understood what was going on around her, till a new and different noise sounded close in her ears: the clatter of hoofs, blare of trumpets and shouts and screams. At last the tumult died away and, when she ventured to open her eyes and look about her, the place all round her was as clear as though it had been swept by invisible hands; here and there lay a dead body and there still was a dense crowd in the street leading to the Caesareum, but even that was dispersing and retreating before the advance of a mounted force.

She breathed freely once more, and released the child's head from the skirt of her dress in which he had wrapped and buried it. The end of her alarms was not yet come, however, for a troop of the young heathen came flying across the square in wild retreat before a division of the heavy cavalry, which had intervened to part the combatants.

The fugitives came straight towards her; again she closed her eyes tightly, expecting every instant to find herself under the horses' feet. Then one of the runaways knocked down Papias, and she could bear no more; her senses deserted her, her knees failed under her, she lost consciousness, and with a dull groan she fell on the dusty pavement. Close to her, as she lay, rushed the pursued and the pursuers—and at last, how long after she knew not, when she recovered her senses she felt as if she were floating in the air, and presently perceived that a soldier had her in his arms and was carrying her like a child.

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Fresh alarms and fresh shame overwhelmed the poor girl; she tried to free herself and found him quite ready to set her down. When she was once more on her feet and felt that she could stand she glanced wildly round her with sudden recollection, and then uttered a hoarse cry, for her mouth and tongue were parched:

“Christ Jesus! Where is my brother?” She pushed back her hair with a desperate gesture, pressing her hands to her temples and peering all round her with a look of fevered misery.

She was still in the square and close to the door of the Prefect’s house; a man on horseback, in all probability her preserver’s servant, was following them, leading his master’s horse. On the pavement lay wounded men groaning with pain; the street of the Caesareum was lined with a double row of footsoldiers of Papias no sign!

Again she called him, and with such deep anguish in her voice, which was harsh and shrill with terror, that the young officer looked at her with extreme compassion.

“Papias, Papias—my little brother! O God my Saviour!—where, where is the child?”

“We will have him sought for,” said the soldier whose voice was gentle and kind. “You are too young and pretty—what brought you into this crowd and amid such an uproar?”

She colored deeply and looking down answered low and hurriedly: “I was going to see the Bishop.”

“You chose an evil hour,” replied Constantine, for it was he who had found her lying on the pavement and who had thought it only an act of mercy not to trust so young and fair a girl to the protection of his followers. “You may thank God that you have got off so cheaply. Now, I must return to my men. You know where the Bishop lives? Yes, here. And with regard to your little brother. . . . Stay; do you live in Alexandria?” “No, my lord.”

“But you have some relation or friend whom you lodge with?”

“No, my lord. I am . . . I have . . . I told you, I only want to see my lord the Bishop.”

“Very strange! Well, take care of yourself. My time is not my own; but by-and-bye, in a very short time, I will speak to the city watchmen; how old is the boy?”

“Nearly six.”

“And with black hair like yours?”

“No, my lord—fair hair,” and as she spoke the tears started to her eyes. “He has light curly hair and a sweet, pretty little face.”

The prefect smiled and nodded. “And if they find him,” he went on, “Papias, you say, is his name where is he to be taken?”

“I do not know, my lord, for—and yet! Oh! my head aches, I cannot think—if only I knew. . . . If they find him he must come here—here to my lord the Bishop.”

“To Theophilus?” said Constantine in surprise. “Yes, yes—to him,” she said hastily. “Or—stay—to the gate-keeper at the Bishop’s palace.”

“Well, that is less aristocratic, but perhaps it is more to the purpose,” said the officer; and with a sign to his servant, he twisted his hand in his horse’s mane, leaped into the saddle, waved her a farewell, and rejoined his men without paying any heed to her thanks.

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CHAPTER XIV.

There was much bustle and stir in the hall of the Episcopal palace. Priests and monks were crowding in and out; widows, who, as deaconesses, were entrusted with the care of the sick, were waiting, bandages in hand, and discussing their work and cases, while acolytes lifted the wounded on to the litters to carry them to the hospitals.

The deacon Eusebius, whom we have met as the spiritual adviser of Marcus, was superintending the good work, and he took particular care that as much attention should be shown to the wounded heathen as to the Christians.

In front of the building veterans of the twenty-first legion paced up and down in the place of the ordinary gate-keepers, who were sufficient protection in times of peace.

Agne looked in vain for any but soldiers, but at last she slipped in unobserved among the men and women who were tending the wounded. She was terribly thirsty, and seeing one of the widows mixing some wine and water and offer it to one of the wounded men who pushed it away, she took courage and begged the deaconess to give her a drink. The woman handed her the cup at once, asking to whom she belonged that she was here.

“I want to see my lord, the Bishop,” replied Agne, but then correcting herself, she added hastily: “If I could see the Bishop’s gate-keeper, I might speak to him.”

“There he is,” said the deaconess, pointing to an enormously tall man standing in the darkest and remotest corner of the hall. The darkness reminded her for the first time that it was now evening. Night was drawing on, and then where could she take refuge and find shelter? She shuddered and simply saying: “Thank you,” she went to the man who had been pointed out to her and begged that if her little brother should be found and brought to him, he would take charge of him.

“To be sure,” said the big man good-naturedly. “He can be taken to the orphanage of the ‘Good Samaritan’ if they bring him here, and you can enquire for him there.”

She then made so bold as to ask if she could see a priest; but for this she was directed to go to the church, as all those who were immediately attached to the Bishop were to-day fully occupied, and had no time for trifles. Agne, however, persisted in her request till the man lost patience altogether and told her to be off at once; but at this instant three ecclesiastics came in at the door by which her friend was on guard, and Agne, collecting all her courage, went up to one of them, a priest of advanced age, and besought him urgently:

“Oh! reverend Father, I beg of you to hear me. I must speak to a priest, and that man drives me away and says you none of you have time to attend to me!”

“Did he say that!” asked the priest, and he turned angrily on the culprit saying: “The Church and her ministers never lack time to attend to the needs of any faithful soul—I will follow you, brothers.—Now, my child, what is it that you need?”

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“It lies so heavily on my soul,” replied Agne, raising her eyes and hands in humble supplication. “I love my Saviour, but I cannot always do exactly as I should wish, and I do not know how I ought to act so as not to fall into sin.”

“Come with me,” said the priest, and leading the way across a small garden, he took her into a wide open court and from thence in at a side door and up a flight of stairs which led to the upper floor. As she followed him her heart beat high with painful and yet hopeful excitement. She kept her hands tightly clasped and tried to pray, but she could hardly control her thoughts of her brother and of all she wanted to say to the presbyter.

They presently entered a lofty room where the window-shutters were closed, and where a number of lamps, already lighted, were hanging over the cushioned divans on which sat rows of busy scribes of all ages.

“Here we are,” said the priest kindly, as he seated himself in an easy-chair at some little distance from the writers. “Now, tell me fully what troubles you; but as briefly as you can, for I am sparing you these minutes from important business.”

“My lord,” she began, “my parents were freeborn, natives of Augusta Trevirorum. My father was a collector of tribute in the Emperor’s service . . .”

“Very good—but has this anything to do with the matter?”

“Yes, yes, it has. My father and mother were good Christians and in the riots at Antioch—you remember, my lord, three years ago—they were killed and I and my brother—-Papias is his name . . .”

“Yes, yes—go on.”

“We were sold. My master paid for us—I saw the money; but he did not treat us as slaves. But now he wants me—he, Sir, is wholly devoted to the heathen gods-and he wants me . . .”

“To serve his idols?”

“Yes, reverend Father, and so we ran away.”

“Quite right, my child.”

“But the scriptures say that the slave shall obey his master?”

“True; but higher than the master in the flesh is the Father in Heaven, and it is better a thousand times to sin against man than against God.”

This conversation had been carried on in an undertone on account of the scribes occupied at the desks; but the priest raised his voice with his last words, and he must have been heard in the adjoining room, for a heavy curtain of plain cloth was opened, and an unusually deep and powerful voice exclaimed:

“Back again already, Irenaeus! That is well; I want to speak with you.”

“Immediately, my lord—I am at your service in a moment.—Now, my child,” he added, rising, “you know what your duty is. And if your master looks you up and insists on your assisting at the sacrifice or what ever it may be, you will find shelter with us. My name is Irenaeus.”

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Here he was again interrupted, for the curtain was lifted once more and a man came out of the inner room whom no one could forget after having once met him. It was the Bishop whom Agne had seen on the balcony; she recognized him at once, and dropped on her knees to kiss the hem of his robe in all humility. Theophilus accepted the homage as a matter of course, hastily glancing at the child with his large keen eyes; Agne not daring to raise hers, for there was certainly something strangely impressive in his aspect. Then, with a wave of his long thin hand to indicate Agne, he asked:

“What does this girl want?”

“A freeborn girl—parents Christian—comes from Antioch. . .” replied Irenaeus. “Sold to a heathen master—commanded to serve idols—has run away and now has doubts. . .”

“You have told her to which Lord her service is due?” interrupted the Bishop. Then, turning to Agne, he said: “And why did you come here instead of going to the deacon of your own church?”

“We have only been here a few days,” replied the girl timidly, as she ventured to raise her eyes to the handsome face of this princely prelate, whose fine, pale features looked as if they had been carved out of marble.

“Then go to partake of the sacred Eucharist in the basilica of Mary,” replied the Bishop. “It is just now the hour—but no, stop. You are a stranger here you say; you have run away from your master—and you are young, very young and very. . . . It is dark too. Where are you intending to sleep?”

“I do not know,” said Agne, and her eyes filled with tears.

“That is what I call courage!” murmured Theophilus to the priest, and then he added to Agne: “Well, thanks to the saints, we have asylums for such as you, here in the city. That scribe will give you a document which will secure your admission to one. So you come from Antioch? Then there is the refuge of Seleucus of Antioch. To what parish—-[Parochia in Latin]—did your parents belong?”

“To that of John the Baptist?”

“Where Damascius was the preacher?”

“Yes, holy Father. He was the shepherd of our souls.”

“What! Damascius the Arian?” cried the Bishop. He drew his fine and stately figure up to its most commanding height and closed his thin lips in august contempt, while Irenaeus, clasping his hands in horror, asked her:

“And you—do you, too, confess the heresy of Arius?”

“My parents were Arians,” replied Agne in much surprise. “They taught me to worship the godlike Saviour.”

“Enough!” exclaimed the Bishop severely. “Come Irenaeus.”

He nodded to the priest to follow him, opened the curtain and went in first with supreme dignity.

Agne stood as if a thunderbolt had fallen, pale, trembling and desperate. Then was she not a Christian? Was it a sin in a child to accept the creed of her parents? And were those who, after charitably extending a saving hand, had so promptly withdrawn it—-were they Christians in the full meaning of the All-merciful Redeemer?

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Agonizing doubts of everything that she had hitherto deemed sacred and inviolable fell upon her soul; doubts of everything in heaven and earth, and not merely of Christ and of his godlike, or divine goodness—for what difference was there to her apprehension in the meaning of the two words which set man to hunt and persecute man? In the distress and hopeless dilemma in which she found herself, she shed no tears; she simply stood rooted to the spot where she had heard the Bishop's verdict.

Presently her attention was roused by the shrill voice of an old writer who called out to one of the younger assistants.

"That girl disturbs me, Petubastis; show her out." Petubastis, a pretty Egyptian lad, was more than glad of an interruption to his work which somehow seemed endless to-day; he put aside his implements, stroked back the black hair that had fallen over his face, and removing the reed-pen from behind his ear, stuck in a sprig of dark blue larkspur. Then he tripped to the door, opened it, looked at the girl with the cool impudence of a connoisseur in beauty, bowed slightly, and pointing the way out said with airified politeness:

"Allow me!"

Agne at once obeyed and with a drooping head left the room; but the young Egyptian stole out after her, and as soon as the door was shut he seized her hand and said in a whisper: "If you can wait half an hour at the bottom of the stairs, pretty one, I will take you somewhere where you will enjoy yourself."

She had stopped to listen, and looked enquiringly into his face, for she had no suspicion of his meaning; the young fellow, encouraged by this, laid his hand on her shoulder and would have drawn her towards him but that she, thrusting him from her as if he were some horrible animal, flew down the steps as fast as her feet could carry her, and through the courtyard back into the great entrance-hall.

Here all was, by this time, dark and still; only a few lamps lighted the pillared space and the flare of a torch fell upon the benches placed there for the accommodation of priests, laymen and supplicants generally.

Utterly worn out—whether by terror or disappointment or by hunger and fatigue she scarcely knew—she sank on a seat and buried her face in her hands.

During her absence the wounded had been conveyed to the sick-houses; one only was left whom they had not been able to move. He was lying on a mattress between two of the columns at some little distance from Agne, and the light of a lamp, standing on a medicine-chest, fell on his handsome but bloodless features. A deaconess was kneeling at his head and gazed in silence in the face of the dead, while old Eusebius crouched prostrate by his side, resting his cheek on the breast of the man whose eyes

were sealed in eternal sleep. Two sounds only broke the profound silence of the deserted hall: an occasional faint sob from the old man and the steady step of the soldiers on guard in front of the Bishop's palace. The widow, kneeling with clasped hands, never took her eyes off the face of the youth, nor moved for fear of disturbing the deacon who, as she knew, was praying—praying for the salvation of the heathen soul snatched away before it could repent. Many minutes passed before the old man rose, dried his moist eyes, pressed his lips to the cold hand of the dead and said sadly:

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“So young—so handsome—a masterpiece of the Creator’s hand! . . . Only to-day as gay as a lark, the pride and joy of his mother-and now! How many hopes, how much triumph and happiness are extinct with that life. O Lord my Saviour, Thou hast said that not only those who call Thee Lord, Lord, shall find grace with our Father in Heaven, and that Thou hast shed Thy blood for the salvation even of the heathen—save, redeem this one! Thou that are the Good Shepherd, have mercy on this wandering sheep!”

Stirred to the bottom of his soul the old man threw up his arms and gazed upwards rapt in ecstasy. But presently, with an effort, he said to the deaconess:

“You know, Sister, that this lad was the only son of Berenice, the widow of Asclepiodorus, the rich shipowner. Poor, bereaved mother! Only yesterday he was driving his guadriga out of the gate on the road to Marea, and now—here! Go and tell her of this terrible occurrence. I would go myself but that, as I am a priest, it might be painful to her to learn of his tragic end from one of the very men against whom the poor darkened youth had drawn the sword. So do you go, Sister, and treat the poor soul very tenderly; and if you find it suitable show her very gently that there is One who has balm for every wound, and that we—we and all who believe in Him—lose what is dear to us only to find it again. Tell her of hope: Hope is everything. They say that green is the color of hope, for it is the spring-tide of the heart. There may be a Spring for her yet.”

The deaconess rose, pressed a kiss on the eyes of the dead youth, promised Eusebius that she would do her best and went away. He, too, was about to leave when he heard a sound of low sobbing from one of the benches. He stood still to listen, shook his old head, and muttering to himself:

“Great God—merciful and kind. . . . Thou alone canst know wherefore Thou hast set the rose-garland of life with so many sharp thorns,” he went up to Agne who rose at his approach.

“Why, my child,” he said kindly, “what are you weeping for? Have you, too, lost some dear one killed in the fray?”

“No, no,” she hastily replied with a gesture of terror at the thought.

“What then do you want here at so late an hour?”

“Nothing—nothing,” she said. “That is all over! Good God, how long I must have been sitting here—I—I know I must go; yes, I know it.”

“And are you alone-no one with you?”

She shook her head sadly. The old man looked at her narrowly.

“Then I will take you safe home,” he said. “You see I am an old man and a priest. Where do you live, my child?”

“I? I. . .” stammered Agne, and a torrent of scalding tears fell down her cheeks. “My God! my God! where, where am I to go?”

“You have no home, no one belonging to you?” asked the old man. “Come, child, pluck up your courage and tell me truly what it is that troubles you; perhaps I may be able to help you.”

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“You?” she said with bitter melancholy. “Are not you one of the Bishop’s priests?”

“I am a deacon, and Theophilus is the head of my church; but for that very reason . . .”

“No,” said Agne sharply, “I will deceive no one. My parents were Arians, and as my beliefs are the same as theirs the Bishop has driven me away as an outcast, finally and without pity.”

“Indeed,” said Eusebius. “Did the Bishop do that? Well, as the head of a large community of Christians he, of course, is bound to look at things in their widest aspect; small things, small people can be nothing to him. I, on the contrary, am myself but a small personage, and I care for small things. You know, child, that the Lord has said ’that in his Father’s kingdom there are many mansions,’ and that in which Arius dwells is not mine; but it is in the Father’s kingdom nevertheless. It cannot be so much amiss after all that you should cling to the creed of your parents. What is your name?”

“Agne.”

“Agne, or the lamb. A pretty, good name! It is a name I love, as I, too, am a shepherd, though but a very humble one, so trust yourself to me, little lamb. Tell me, why are you crying? And whom do you seek here? And how is it that you do not know where to find a home?”

Eusebius spoke with such homely kindness, and his voice was so full of fatherly sympathy that hope revived in Agne’s breast, and she told him with frank confidence all he wanted to know.

The old man listened with many a “Hum” and “Ha”—then he bid her accompany him to his own house, where his wife would find a corner that she might fill.

She gladly agreed, and thanked him eagerly when he also told the doorkeeper to bring Papias after them if he should be found. Relieved of the worst of her griefs, Agne followed her new friend through the streets and lanes, till they paused at the gate of a small garden and he said: “Here we are. What we have we give gladly, but it is little, very little. Indeed, who can bear to live in luxury when so many are perishing in want and misery?”

As they went across the plot, between the little flower-beds, the deacon pointed to a tree and said with some pride: “Last year that tree bore me three hundred and seven peaches, and it is still healthy and productive.”

A hospitable light twinkled in the little house at the end of the garden, and as they entered a queer-looking dog came out to meet his master, barking his welcome. He jumped with considerable agility on his fore-legs, but his hind legs were paralyzed and

his body sloped away and stuck up in the air as though it were attached to an invisible board.

“This is my good friend Lazarus,” said the old man cheerfully. “I found the poor beggar in the road one day, and as he was one of God’s creatures, although he is a cripple, I comfort myself with the verse from the Psalms: ’The Lord has no joy in the strength of a horse, neither taketh he pleasure in any man’s legs.’”

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He was so evidently content and merry that Agne could not help laughing too, and when, in a few minutes, the deacon's wife gave her a warm and motherly reception she would have been happier than she had been for a long time past, if only her little brother had not been a weight on her mind and if she had not longed so sadly to have him safe by her side. But even that anxiety presently found relief, for she was so weary and exhausted that, after eating a few mouthfuls, she was thankful to lie down in the clean bed that Elizabeth had prepared for her, and she instantly fell asleep. She was in the old deacon's bed, and he made ready to pass the night on the couch in his little sitting-room.

As soon as the old couple were alone Eusebius told his wife how and where he had met the girl and ended by saying:

"It is a puzzling question as to these Arians and other Christian heretics. I cannot be hard on them so long as they cling faithfully to the One Lord who is necessary to all. If we are in the right—and I firmly believe that we are—and the Son is of one substance of the Father, he is without spot or blemish; and what can be more divine than to overlook the error of another if it concerns ourselves, or what more meanly human than to take such an error amiss and indulge in a cruel or sanguinary revenge on the erring soul? Do not misunderstand me. I, unfortunately—or rather, I say, thank God!—I have done nothing great here on earth, and have never risen to be anything more than a deacon. But if a boy comes up to me and mistakes me for an acolyte or something of that kind, is that a reason why I should flout or punish him? Not a bit of it.

"And to my belief our Saviour is too purely divine to hate those who regard Him as only 'God-like.' He is Love. And when Arius goes to Heaven and sees Jesus Christ in all His divine glory, and falls down before Him in an ecstasy of joy and repentance, the worst the Lord will do to him will be to take him by the ear and say: 'Thou fool! Now thou seest what I really am; but thine errors be forgiven!'"

Elizabeth nodded assent. "Amen," she said, "so be it.—And so, no doubt, it will be. Did the Lord cast out the woman taken in adultery? Did he not give us the parable of the Samaritan?—Poor little girl! We have often wished for a daughter and now we have found one; a pretty creature she is too. God grants us all our wishes! But you must be tired, old man; go to rest now."

"Directly, directly," said Eusebius; but then, striking his forehead with his hand, he went on in much annoyance: "And with all this tumult and worry I had quite forgotten the most important thing of all: Marcus! He is like a possessed creature, and if I do not make a successful appeal to his conscience before he sleeps this night mischief will come of it. Yes, I am very tired; but duty before rest. It is of no use to contradict me, Mother. Get me my cloak; I must go to the lad." And a few minutes later the old man was making his way to the house in the Canopic street.

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CHAPTER XV.

Dread and anxiety had taken possession of the merchant's household after Constantine had left them. Messengers came hurrying in, one after another, to request the presence of Olympius. A heathen secretary of Evagrius the Governor, had revealed what was astir, and the philosopher had at once prepared to return to the Serapeum. Porphyrius himself ordered his closed harmamaxa to be brought out, and undertook to fetch weapons and standards to the temple from a storehouse where they were laid by. This building stood on a plot of ground belonging to him in Rhacotis, behind a timber-yard which was accessible from the streets in front and behind, but sheltered from the public gaze by sheds and wood-stacks.

The old aqueduct, which supplied the courts of sacrifice and the Subterranean crypts of the temple where the mysteries of Serapis were celebrated, passed close by the back-wall of this warehouse. Since the destruction of the watercourse, under the Emperor Julian, the underground conduit had been dry and empty, and a man by slightly stooping could readily pass through it unseen into the Serapeum. This mysterious passage had lately been secretly cleared out, and it was now to be used for the transport of the arms to the temple precincts.

Damia had been present at the brief but vehement interview between her son and Olympius, and had thrown in a word now and again: "It is serious, very serious!" or, "Fight it out—no quarter!"

The parting was evidently a very painful one to Olympius; when the merchant held out both his hands the older man clasped them in his and held them to his breast, saying: "Thanks, my friend; thanks for all you have done. We have lived—and if now we perish it is for the future happiness of our grandchildren. What would life be to you and me if it were marred by scourgings and questionings?—The omens read ill, and if I am not completely deceived we are at the beginning of the end. What lies beyond! . . . we as philosophers must meet it calmly. The supreme Mind that governs us has planned the universe so well, that it is not likely that those things of which we now have no knowledge should not also be ordered for the best. The pinions of my soul beat indeed more freely and lightly as I foresee the moment when it shall be released from the burden of this flesh!"

The High-Priest raised his arms as though indeed he were prepared to soar and uttered a fervent and inspired prayer in which he rehearsed to the gods all that he and his had done in their honor and vowed to offer them fresh sacrifices. His expressions were so lofty, and his flow of language so beautiful and free, that Porphyrius did not dare to interrupt him, though this long delay on the part of the leader of the cause made him intolerably anxious. When the old man—who was as emotional as a boy—ceased speaking, his white beard was wet with tears, and seeing that even Damia's and

Gorgo's eyes were moist, he was preparing to address them again; but Porphyrius interposed. He gave him time only to press his lips to Datnia's hand and to bid Gorgo farewell.

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“You were born into stirring times,” he said to her, “but under a good sign. Two worlds are in collision; which shall survive?—For you, my darling, I have but one wish: May you be happy!”

He left the room and the merchant paced up and down lost in gloomy thoughts. Presently, as he caught his mother’s eye fixed uneasily upon him, he murmured, less to her than to himself: “If he can think thus of what the end will be, who can still dare to hope?” Damia drew herself up in her chair.

“I,” she exclaimed passionately, “I—I dare, and I do hope and trust in the future. Is everything to perish which our forefathers planned and founded? Is this dismal superstition to overwhelm and bury the world and all that is bright and beautiful, as the lava stream rolled over the cities of Vesuvius? No, a thousand times no! Our retrograde and cowardly generation, which has lost all heart to enjoy life in sheer dread of future annihilation, may perhaps be doomed by the gods, as was that of Deucalion’s day. Well—if so, what must be must! But such a world as they dream of never can, never will last. Let them succeed in their monstrous scheme! if the Temple of temples, the House of Serapis, were to be in ashes and the image of the mighty god to be dashed to pieces, what then. . . . I say what then? Then indeed everything will be at an end—we, everybody; but they too, they, too, will perish.”

She clenched her fist with hatred and revenge and went on: “I know what I know—there are legible and infallible signs, and it is given to me to interpret them, and I tell you: It is true, unerringly true, as every Alexandrian child has learnt from its nurse: When Serapis falls the earth will collapse like a dry puff-ball under a horse’s hoof. A hundred oracles have announced it, it is written in the prophecies of the heavenly bodies, and in the scroll of Fate. Let them be! Let it come! The end is sweet to those who, in the hour of death, can see the enemy thrust the sword into his own breast.”

The old woman sank back panting and gasping for breath, but Gorgo hastened to support her in her arms and she soon recovered. Hardly had she opened her eyes again than, seeing her son still in the room, she went on angrily:

“You—here still? Do you think there is any time to spare? They will be waiting, waiting for you! You have the key and they need weapons.”

“I know what I am about,” replied Porphyrius calmly. “All in good time. I shall be on the spot long before the youngsters have assembled. Cyrus will bring me the pass-words and signs; I shall send off the messengers, and then I shall still be in time for action.”

“Messengers! To whom?”

"To Barkas. He is at the head of more than a thousand Libyan peasants and slaves. I shall send one, too, to Pachomius to bid him win us over adherents among the Biamite fishermen and the population of the eastern Delta."

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“Right, right—I know. Twenty talents—Pachomius is poor—twenty talents shall be his, out of my private coffer, if only they are here in time.”

“I would give ten, thirty times as much if they were only here now!” cried the merchant, giving way for the first time to the expression of his real feelings. “When I began life my father taught me the new superstitions. Its chains still hang about me; but in this fateful hour I feel more strongly than ever, and I mean to show, that I am faithful to the old gods. We will not be wanting; but alas! there is no escape for us now if the Imperial party are staunch. If they fall upon us before Barkas can join us, all is lost; if, on the contrary, Barkas comes at once and in time, there is still some hope; all may yet be well. What can a party of monks do? And as yet only our Constantine’s heavy cavalry have come to the assistance of the two legions of the garrison.”

“Our Constantine!” shrieked Damia. “Whose? I ask you, whose? We have nothing to do with that miserable Christian!”

But Gorgo turned upon her at once:

“Indeed, grandmother,” she exclaimed, quivering with rage, “but we have! He is a soldier and must do his duty; but he is fondly attached to us.”

“Us, us?” retorted the old woman with a laugh. “Has he sworn love to you, let me ask? Has he? and you-do you believe him, simple fool? I know him, I know him! Why, for a scrap of bread and a drop of wine from the hand of his priest he would see you and all of us plunged into misery! But see, here are the messengers.”

Porphyrius gave his instructions to the young men who now entered the hall, hurried them off, clasped Gorgo in a tender embrace and then bent over his mother to kiss her—a thing he had not done for many a day. Old Damia laid aside her stick, and taking her son’s face in both her withered hands, muttered a few words which were half a fond appeal and half a magical formula, and then the women were alone. For a long while both were silent. The old woman sat sunk in her arm-chair while Gorgo stood with her back against the pedestal of a bust of Plato, gazing meditatively at the ground. At last it was Damia who spoke, asking to be carried into the women’s rooms.

Gorgo, however, stopped her with a gesture, went close to her and said: “No, wait a minute, mother; first you must hear what I have to say.”

“What you have to say?” asked her grandmother, shrugging her shoulders.

“Yes. I have never deceived you; but one thing I have hitherto concealed from you because I was never till this morning sure of it myself—now I am. Now I know that I love him.”

“The Christian?” said the old woman, pushing aside a shade that screened her eyes.

“Yes, Constantine; I will not hear you abuse him.” Damia laughed sharply, and said in a tone of supreme scorn:

“You will not? Then you had better stop your ears, my dear, for as long as my tongue can wag. . . .”

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“Hush, grandmother, say no more,” said the girl resolutely. “Do not provoke me with more than I can bear. Eros has pierced me later than he does most girls and has done it but once, but how deeply you can never know. If you speak ill of him you only aggravate the wound and you would not be so cruel! Do not—I entreat you; drop the subject or else. . .”

“Or else?”

“Or else I must die, mother—and you know you love me.”

Her tone was soft but firm; her words referred to the future, but that future was as clear to Gorgo’s view as if it were past. Damia gave a hasty, sidelong glance at her grandchild, and a cold chill ran through her; the—girl stood and spoke with an air of inspiration—she was full of the divinity as Damia thought, and the old woman herself felt as though she were in a temple and in the immediate presence of the Immortals.

Gorgo waited for a reply, but in vain; and as her grandmother remained silent she went back to her place by the pedestal. At last Damia raised her wrinkled face, looked straight in the girl’s eyes and asked:

“And what is to be the end of it?”

“Aye—what?” said Gorgo gloomily and she shook her head. “I ask myself and can find no answer, for his image is ever present to me and yet walls and mountains stand between us. That face, that image—I might perhaps force myself to shatter it; but nothing shall ever induce me to let it be defiled or disgraced! Nothing!”

The old woman sank into brooding thought once more; mechanically she repeated Gorgo’s last word, and at intervals that gradually became longer she murmured, at last scarcely audibly: “Nothing—nothing!”

She had lost all sense of time and of her immediate surroundings, and long-forgotten sorrows crowded on her memory: The dreadful day when a young freedman—a gifted astronomer and philosopher who had been appointed her tutor, and whom she had loved with all the passion of a vehement nature—had been kicked out of her father’s house by slaves, for daring to aspire to her hand. She had given him up—she had been forced to do so; and after she was the wife of another and he had risen to fame, she had never given him any token that she had not forgotten him. Two thirds of a century lay between that happy and terrible time, and the present. He had been dead many a long year, and still she remembered him, and was thinking of him even now. A singular effort of fancy showed her herself, as she had then been, and Gorgo—whom she saw not with her bodily eyes, though the girl was standing in front of her—two young creatures side by side. The two were but one in her vision; the same anguish that embittered one life now threatened the other. But after all she, Damia, had dragged this

grief after her through the weary decades, like the iron ball at the end of a chain which keeps the galley-slave to his place at the oar, and from which he can no more escape than from a ponderous and ever-present shadow; and Gorgo's sorrow could not at any rate be for long, since the end of all things was at hand—it was coming slowly but with inevitable certainty, nearer and nearer every hour.

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When had a troop of enthusiastic students and hastily-collected peasant-soldiers ever been able to snake an effectual stand against the hosts of Rome? Damia, who only a few minutes since had spoken with such determined encouragement to her son, had terrible visions of the Imperial legions putting Olympius to rout, with the Libyans under Barkas and the Biamite rabble under Pachomius; storming the Serapeum and reducing it to ruin: Firebrands flying through its sacred halls, the roof giving way, the vaults falling in; the sublime image of the god—the magnificent work of Bryaxis—battered by a hail of stones, and sinking to mingle with the reeking dust. Then a cry rose up from all nature, as though every star in heaven, every wave of ocean, every leaf of the forest, every blade in the meadow, every rock on the shore and every grain of sand in the measureless desert had found a voice; and this universal wail of "Woe, woe!" was drowned by rolling thunder such as the ear of man had never heard, and no mortal creature could hear and live. The heavens opened, and out of the black gulf of death-bearing clouds poured streams of fire; consuming flames rose to meet it from the riven womb of earth, rushing up to lick the sky. What had been air turned to fire and ashes, the silver and gold stars fell crashing from the firmament, and the heavens themselves bowed and collapsed, burying the ruined earth. Ashes, ashes, fine grey dusty ashes pervaded space, till presently a hurricane rose and swept away the chaos of gloom, and vast nothingness yawned before her: a bottomless abyss—an insatiable throat, swallowing down with greedy thirst all that was left; till where the world had been, with gods and men and all their works, there was only nothingness; hideous, inscrutable and unfathomable. And in it, above it, around it—for what are the dimensions of nothingness?—there reigned the incomprehensible Unity of the Primal One, in calm and pitiless self-concentration, beyond—the Real, nay even beyond the Conceivable—for conception implies plurality—the Supreme One of the Neo-Platonists to whose school she belonged.

The old woman's blood ran cold and hot as she pictured the scene; but she believed in it, and chose to believe in it; "Nothing, nothing . . ." which she had begun by muttering, insensibly changed to "Nothingness, nothingness!" and at last she spoke it aloud.

Gorgo stood spellbound as she gazed at her grandmother. What had come over her? What was the meaning of this glaring eye, this gasping breath, this awful expression in her face, this convulsive action of her hands? Was she mad? And what did she mean by "Nothingness, nothingness. . ." repeated in a sort of hollow cry?

Terrified beyond bearing she laid her hand on Dalnia's shoulder, saying: "Mother, mother! wake up! What do you mean by saying 'nothingness, nothingness' in that dreadful way?"

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Dainia collected her scattered wits, shivered with cold and then said, dully at first, but with a growing cheerfulness that made Gorgo's blood run cold: "Did I say 'nothingness'? Did I speak of the great void, my child? You are quick of hearing. Nothingness—well, you have learnt to think; are you capable of defining the meaning of the word—a monster that has neither head nor tail, neither front nor back—can you, I say, define the idea of nothingness?"

"What do you mean, mother?" said Gorgo with growing alarm.

"No, she does not know, she does not understand," muttered the old woman with a dreary smile. "And yet Melampus told me, only yesterday, that you understood his lesson on conic sections better than many men. Aye, aye, child; I, too, learnt mathematics once, and I still go through various calculations every night in my observatory; but to this day I find it difficult to conceive of a mathematical point. It is nothing and yet it is something. But the great final nothingness!—And that even is nonsense, for it can be neither great nor small, and come neither sooner nor later. Is it not so, my sweet? Think of nothing—who cannot do that; but it is very hard to imagine nothingness. We can neither of us achieve that. Not even the One has a place in it. But what is the use of racking our brains? Only wait till to-morrow or the day after; something will happen then which will reduce our own precious persons and this beautiful world to that nothingness which to-day is inconceivable. It is coming; I can hear from afar the brazen tramp of the airy and incorporeal monster. A queer sort of giant—smaller than the mathematical point of which we were speaking, and yet vast beyond all measurement. Aye, aye; our intelligence, polyp-like, has long arms and can apprehend vast size and wide extent; but it can no more conceive of nothingness than it can of infinite space or time.

"I was dreaming that this monstrous Nought had come to his kingdom and was opening a yawning mouth and toothless jaws to swallow its all down into the throat that it has not got—you, and me, and your young officer, with this splendid, recreant city and the sky and the earth. Wait, only wait! The glorious image of Serapis still stands radiant, but the cross casts an ominous shadow that has already darkened the light over half the earth! Our gods are an abomination to Caesar, and Cynegius only carries out his wishes. . ."

Here Damia was interrupted by the steward, who rushed breathless into the room, exclaiming:

"Lost! All is lost! An edict of Theodosius commands that every temple of the gods shall be closed, and the heavy cavalry have dispersed our force."

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“Ah ha!” croaked the old woman in shrill accents. “You see, you see! There it is: the beginning of the end! Yes—your cavalry are a powerful force. They are digging a grave—wide and deep, with room in it for many: for you, for me, and for themselves, too, and for their Prefect.—Call Argus, man, and carry me into the Gynaeconitis—[The women’s apartment]—and there tell us what has happened.” In the women’s room the steward told all he knew, and a sad tale it was; one thing, however, gave him some comfort: Olympius was at the Serapeunt and had begun to fortify the temple, and garrison it with a strong force of adherents.

Damia had definitively given up all hope, and hardly heeded this part of his story, while on Gorgo’s mind it had a startling effect. She loved Constantine with all the fervor of a first, and only, and long-suppressed passion; she had repented long since of her little fit of suspicion, and it would have cost her no perceptible effort to humble her pride, to fly to him and pray for forgiveness. But she could not—dared not—now, when everything was at stake, renounce her fidelity to the gods for whose sake she had let him leave her in anger, and to whom she must cling, cost what it might; that would be a base desertion. If Olympius were to triumph in the struggle she might go to her lover and say: “Do you remain a Christian, and leave me the creed of my childhood, or else open my heart to yours.” But, as matters now stood, her first duty was to quell her passion and retrain faithful to the end, even though the cause were lost. She was Greek to the backbone; she knew it and felt it, and yet her eye had sparkled with pride as she heard the steward’s tale, and she seemed to see Constantine at the head of his horsemen, rushing upon the heathen and driving them to the four winds like a flock of sheep. Her heart beat high for the foe rather than for her hapless friends—these were but bruised reeds—those were the incarnation of victorious strength.

These divided feelings worried and vexed her; but her grandmother had suggested a way of reconciling them. Where he commanded victory followed, and if the Christians should succeed in destroying the image of Serapis the joints of the world would crack and the earth would crumble away. She herself was familiar with the traditions and the oracles which with one consent foretold this doom; she had learnt them as an infant from her nurse, from the slave-women at the loom, from learned men and astute philosophers—and to her the horrible prophecy meant a solution of every contradiction and the bitter-sweet hope of perishing with the man she loved.

As it grew dark another person appeared: the Moschosphragist—[The examiner of sacrificed animals]—from the temple of Serapis, who, every day, examined the entrails of a slaughtered beast for Damia; to-day the augury had been so bad that he was almost afraid of revealing it. But the old woman, sure of it beforehand, took his soothsaying quite calmly, and only desired to be carried up to her observatory that she might watch the risings of the stars.

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Gorgo remained alone below. From the adjoining workrooms came the monotonous rattle of the loom at which, as usual, a number of slaves were working.

Suddenly the clatter ceased. Damia had sent a slave-girl down to say that they might leave off work and rest till next day if they chose. She had ordered that wine should be distributed to them in the great hall, as freely as at the great festival of Dionysus.

All was silent in the Gynaeconitis. The garlands of flowers, which Gorgo herself had helped some damsels of her acquaintance to twine for the temple of Isis, lay in a heap-the steward had told her that the venerable sanctuary was to be closed and surrounded by soldiers. This then put an end to the festival; and she could have been heartily glad, for it relieved her of the necessity of defying Constantine; still, it was with tender melancholy that she thought of the gentle goddess in whose sanctuary she had so often found comfort and support. She could remember, as a tiny child, gathering the first flowers in her little garden, and sticking them in the ground near the tank from which water was fetched for libations in the temple; with the pocketmoney given her by her elders, she had bought perfumes to pour on the altars of the divinity; and often when her heart was heavy she had found relief in prayer before the marble statue of the goddess. How splendid had the festivals of Isis been, how gladly and rapturously had she sung in their honor! Almost everything that had lent poetry and dignity to her childhood had been bound up with Isis and her sanctuary—and now it was closed and the image of the divine mother was perhaps lying in fragments in the dirt!

Gorgo knew all the lofty ideals which lay at the foundation of the worship of this goddess; but it was not to them that she had turned for help, but to the image in whose mystical strength she trusted. And what had already been done to Isis and her temple might soon be done to Serapis and to his house.

She could not bear the thought, for she had been accustomed to regard the Serapeum as the very heart of the universe—the centre and fulcrum on which the balance of the earth depended; to her, Serapis himself was inseparable from his temple and its atmosphere of magical and mystical power. Every prophecy, every Sibylline text, every oracle must be false if the overthrow of that image could remain unpunished—if the destruction of the universe failed to follow, as surely as a, flood ensues from a breach in a dyke. How indeed could it be otherwise, according to the explanation which her teacher had given her of the Neo-Platonic conception of the nature of the god?

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It was not Serapis but the great and unapproachable One—supreme above comprehension and sublime beyond conception, for whose majesty every name was too mean, the fount and crown of Good and Beauty, in whole all that exists ever has been and ever shall be. He it was who, like a brimful vessel, overflowed with the quintessence of what we call divine; and from this effluence emanated the divine Mind, the pure intelligence which is to the One what light is to the sun. This Mind with its vitality—a life not of time but of eternity—could stir or remain passive as it listed; it included a Plurality, while the One was Unity, and forever indivisible. The concept of each living creature proceeded from the second: The eternal Mind; and this vivifying and energizing intelligence comprehended the prototypes of every living being, hence, also, of the immortal gods—not themselves but their idea or image. And just as the eternal Mind proceeded from the One, so, in the third place, did the Soul of the universe proceed from the second; that Soul whose twofold nature on one side touched the supreme Mind, and, on the other, the baser world of matter. This was the immortal Aphrodite, cradled in bliss in the pure radiance of the ideal world and yet unable to free herself from the gross clay of matter fouled by sensuality and the vehicle of sin.

The head of Serapis was the eternal Mind; in his broad breast slept the Soul of the Universe, and the prototypes of all created things; the world of matter was the footstool under his feet. All the subordinate forces obeyed him, the mighty first Cause, whose head towered up to the realm of the incomprehensible and inconceivable One. He was the sum total of the universe, the epitome of things created; and at the same time he was the power which gave them life and intelligence and preserved them from perishing by perpetual procreation. It was his might that kept the multiform structure of the material and psychical world in perennial harmony. All that lived—Nature and its Soul as much as Man and his Soul—were inseparably dependent on him. If he—if Serapis were to fall, the order of the universe must be destroyed; and with him: The Synthesis of the Universe—the Universe itself must cease to exist.

But what would survive would not be the nothingness—the void of which her grandmother had spoken; it would be the One—the cold, ineffable, incomprehensible One! This world would perish with Serapis; but perhaps it might please that One to call another world into being out of his overflowing essence, peopled by other and different beings.

Gorgo was startled out of these meditations by a wild tumult which came up from the slaves' hall some distance off and reached her ears in the women's sitting-room. Could her grandmother have opened the wine stores all too freely; were the miserable wretches already drunk?

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No, the noise was not that of a troop of slaves who have forgotten themselves, and given the rein to their wild revelry under the influence of Dionysus! She listened and could distinctly hear lamentable howls and wild cries of grief. Something frightful must have happened! Had some evil befallen her father? Greatly alarmed she flew across the courtyard to the slaves' quarters and found the whole establishment, black and white alike, in a state of frenzy. The women were rushing about with their hair unbound over their faces, beating their breasts and wailing, the men squatted in silence with their wine-cups before them untouched, softly sobbing and whining.

What had come upon them—what blow had fallen on the house?

Gorgo called her old nurse and learnt from her that the Moschosphragist had just told them that the troops had been placed all round the Serapeum and that the Emperor had commanded the Prefect of the East to lay violent hands on the temple of the King of gods. Today or to-morrow the crime was to be perpetrated. They had been warned to pray and repent of their sins, for at the moment when the holiest sanctuary on earth should fall the whole world would crumble into nothingness. The entrails of the beast sacrificed by Damia had been black as though scorched, and a terrific groan had been heard from the god himself in the great shrine; the pillars of the great hypostyle had trembled and the three heads of Cerberus, lying at the feet of Serapis; had opened their jaws.

Gorgo listened in silence to the old woman's story; and all she said in reply was: "Let them wail."

ETEXT *editor's bookmarks*:

Pretended to see nothing in the old woman's taunts
Very hard to imagine nothingness

SERAPIS

By Georg Ebers

Volume 4.

CHAPTER XVI.

The day had flown swiftly for Dada under the roof of Medius; there were costumes and scenery in wonderful variety for her to look over; the children were bright and friendly, and she had enjoyed playing with them, for all her little tricks and rhymes, which Papias was familiar with by this time, were to them new and delightful. It amused her, too, to

see what the domestic difficulties were of which the singer had described himself as being a victim.

Medius was one of those men who buy everything that strikes them as cheap—for instance, that very morning, at Kibotus he had stood to watch a fish auction and had bought a whole tub-full of pickled fish for “a mere trifle;” but when, presently, the cargo was delivered, his wife flew into a great rage, which she vented first on the innocent lad who brought the fish, and then on the less innocent purchaser. They would not get to the bottom of the barrel and eat the last herring, she asserted, till they were a century old. Medius, while he disputed so monstrous a statement, vehemently declared that such wholesome and nutritious food as those fish was undoubtedly calculated to prolong the lives of the whole family to an exceptionally great age.

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This discussion, which was not at all by way of a jest, amused Dada far more than the tablets, cylinders and cones covered with numbers and cabalistic signs, to which Medius tried to direct her attention. She darted off in the midst of his eager explanations to show his grandchildren how a rabbit sniffs and moves his ears when he is offered a cabbage-leaf.

The report, which reached them in the afternoon, of the proceedings in the square by the Prefect's house, disturbed Medius greatly, and he set off at once for the scene of action.

He did not return till evening, and then he looked like an altered man. He must have witnessed something very terrible, for his face was as pale as death, and his usually confident and swaggering manner had given place to a stricken and care-worn air. He walked up and down the room, groaning as he went; he flung himself on the divan and stared fixedly at the ground; he wandered into the atrium and gazed cautiously out on the street. Dada's presence seemed suddenly to be the source of much anxiety to him, and the girl, painfully conscious of this, hastened to tell him that she would prefer to return home at once to her uncle and aunt.

"You can please yourself," was all he said, with a shrug and a sigh. "You may stay for aught I care. It is all the same now!"

So far his wife had left him to himself, for she was used to his violent and eccentric behavior whenever anything had crossed him; but now she peremptorily desired to be informed what had happened to him and he at once acceded. He had been unwilling to frighten them sooner than was needful, but they must learn it sooner or later: Cynegius had arrived to overthrow the image of Serapis, and what must ensue they knew only too well. "To-day," he cried, "we will live; but by to-morrow—a thousand to one-by to-morrow there will be an end of all our joys and the earth will swallow up the old home and us with it!"

His words fell on prepared ground; his wife and daughter were appalled, and as Medius went on to paint the imminent catastrophe in more vivid colors, his energy growing in proportion to its effect on them, they began at first to sob and whimper and then to wail loudly. When the children, who by this time were in bed, heard the lamentations of their elders, they, too, set up a howl, and even Dada caught the infection. As for Medius himself, he had talked himself into such a state of terror by his own descriptions of the approaching destruction of the world that he abandoned all claim to his proud reputation as a strong-minded man, and quite forgot his favorite theory that everything that went by the name of God was a mere invention of priests and rulers to delude and oppress the ignorant; at last he even went so far as to mutter a, prayer, and when his wife begged to be allowed to join a family of neighbors in sacrificing a black lamb at daybreak, he recklessly gave her a handful of money.

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None of the party closed an eye that night. Dada could not bear to remain in the house. Perhaps all these horrors existed only in Medius' fancy; but if destruction were indeed impending, she would a thousand times rattier perish with her own relations than with these people, in whom there was something—she did not know what—for which she felt a deep aversion. This she explained to her host early in the day and he was ready to set out at once and restore her to the care of Karnis.

In fact, the purpose for which he had needed her must certainly come to nothing. He himself was attached to the service of Posidonius, a great magician and wizard, to whom half Alexandria flocked—Christians, Jews, and heathens—in order to communicate with the dead, with gods and with demons, to obtain spells and charms by which to attract lovers or injure foes, to learn the art of becoming invisible, or to gain a glimpse into the future. In the performance which was being planned Dada was to have appeared to a bereaved mother as the glorified presence of her lost daughter; but the disturbance in the city had driven the matron, who was rich, to take refuge in the country the previous afternoon. Nor was it likely that the sorcerer's other clients—even if all turned out better than could be hoped—would venture into the streets by night. Rich people were timid and suspicious; and as the Emperor had lately promulgated fresh and more stringent edicts against the magic arts, Posidonius had thought it prudent to postpone the meeting. Hence Medius had at present no use for the girl; but he affected to agree so readily to her wishes merely out of anxiety to relieve Isarnis as soon as possible of his uneasiness as to her fate.

The morning was bright and hot, and the town was swarming with an excited mob soon after sunrise. Terror, curiosity and defiance were painted on every face; however, Medius and his young companion made their way unhindered as far as the temple of Isis by the lake. The doors of the sanctuary were closed, and guarded by soldiers; but the southern and western walls were surrounded by thousands and thousands of heathen. Some hundreds, indeed, had passed the night there in prayer, or in sheer terror of the catastrophe which could not fail to ensue, and they were kneeling in groups, groaning, weeping, and cursing, or squatting in stolid resignation, weary, crushed and hopeless. It was a heart-rending sight, and neither Dada—who till this moment had been dreading Dame Herse's scolding tongue far more than the destruction of the world—nor her companion could forbear joining in the wail that rose from this vast multitude. Medius fell on his knees groaning aloud and pulled the girl down beside him; for, upon the wall that enclosed the temple precincts, they now saw a priest who, after holding the sacred Sistrum up to view and muttering some unintelligible prayers and invocations, proceeded to address the people.

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He was a short stout man, and the sweat streamed down his face as he stood under the blazing sun to sketch a fearful picture of the monstrous doom which was hanging over the city and its inhabitants. He spoke with pompous exaggeration, in a shrill, harsh voice, wiping his face meanwhile with his white linen robe or gasping for air, when breath failed him, like a fish stranded on the beach. All this, however, did not trouble his audience, for the hatred that inspired his language, and the terror of the immediate future which betrayed itself in every word exactly reflected their feelings. Dada alone was moved to mirth; the longer she looked at him the more she felt inclined to laugh; besides, the day was so bright—a pigeon on the wall pattered round his mate, nodding and wriggling after the funny manner of pigeons in love—and, above all, her heart beat so high and she had such a happy instinctive feeling that all was ordered for the best, that the world seemed to her a beautiful and fairly secure dwelling-place, in spite of the dark forebodings of the zealous preacher. On the eve of destruction the earth must surely look differently from this; and it struck her as highly improbable that the gods should have revealed their purpose to such a queer old driveller as this priest, and have hidden it from other men. The very fact that this burly personage should prophesy evil with such conviction made her doubt it; and presently, when the plumes of three or four helmets became visible behind the speaker, and a pair of strong hands grasped his thick ancles and suddenly dragged him down from his eminence and back into the temple, she could hardly keep herself from laughing outright.

Now, however, there was more real cause for alarm a trumpet-blast was heard, and a maniple of the twenty-second legion marched down in close order on the crowd who fled before them. Medius was one of the first to make off; Dada kept close to his side, and when, in his alarm, he fairly took to his heels, she did the same; for, in spite of the reception she apprehended, she felt that the sooner she could rejoin her own people the better. Never till now had she known how dear they were to her. Herse might scold; but her sharpest words were truer and better than the smooth flattery of Medius. It was a joy to think of seeing them again—Agne, too, and little Papias—and she felt as though she were about to meet them after years of separation.

By this time they were at the ship-yard, which was divided only by a lane from the Temple-grove; there lay the barge. Dada pulled off her veil and waved it in the air, but the signal met with no response. They were at the house, no doubt, for some men were in the very act of drawing up the wooden gangway which connected the vessel with the land. Medius hurried forward and was so fortunate as to overtake the steward, who had been superintending the operation, before he reached the garden-gate.

The old man was rejoiced to see them, and told them at once that his old mistress had promised Herse to give Dada shelter if she should return to them. But Dada was proud. She had no liking for Gorgo or her grandmother; and when she had caught up to Medius, quite out of breath, she positively refused the old lady's hospitality.

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The barge was deserted. Karnis—so the steward informed her—had withdrawn to the temple of Serapis with his son, intending to assist in its defence; and Herse had accompanied them, for Olympius had said that women would be found useful in the beleaguered sanctuary, in preparing food for the combatants and in nursing the wounded.

Dada stood looking at their floating home, utterly disappointed and discouraged. She longed to follow her aunt and to gain admission to the Serapeutn; but how could she do this now, and of what use could she hope to be? There was nothing heroic in her composition, and from her infancy she had always sickened at the sight of blood. She had no alternative but to return with Medius, and take refuge under his roof.

The singer gave her ample time for reflection; he had seated himself, with the steward, under the shade of a sycamore, and the two men were absorbed in convincing each other, by a hundred arguments which they had picked up during the last day or two, how inevitably the earth must be annihilated if the statue of Serapis should be overthrown. In the warmth of their discussion they paid no heed to the young girl, who was sitting on a fallen Hermes by the road-side. Her vigorous and lively temperament rendered her little apt to dream, or even meditate, in broad daylight; but the heat and the recent excitement had overwrought her and she felt into a drowsy reverie. Now and again, as her heavy head drooped on her breast, she fancied the Serapeum had actually fallen; then, as she raised it again, she recovered her consciousness that it was hot, that she had lost her home, and that she must, however unwillingly, return with Medius. But at length her eyelids closed, and as she sat in the full blaze of the sun, a rosy light filled her eyes and a bright vision floated before her: Marcus took the modius—the corn measure—from the head of the statue of Serapis and offered it to her; it was quite full of lilies and roses and violets, and she was delighted with the flowers and thanked him warmly when he set the modius down before her. He held out his hands to her calmly and kindly, and she gave him hers, feeling very happy under the steady, compassionate gaze of his large eyes which had often watched her, on board ship, for some minutes at a time. She longed to say something to him, but she could not speak; and she looked on quite unmoved as the statue of the god and the hall in which it stood were wrapt in flames. No smoke mingled with this clear and genial blaze, but it compelled her to shade her dazzled eyes; and as she lifted her hand she woke to see Medius standing in front of her.

He desired her to come home with him at once, and she rose to obey, listening in silence to his assurances that the lives of Karnis and Orpheus would not be worth a sesterce if they fell into the hands of the Roman soldiers.

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She walked on, more hopeless and depressed than she had ever felt in her life before, past the unfinished hulks in the ship-yard where no one was at work to-day when, coming down the lane that divided the wharf from the temple precincts, she saw an old man and a little boy. She had not time to ask herself whether she saw rightly or was mistaken before the child caught sight of her, snatched his hand away from that of his companion, and flew towards her, shouting her name. In the next moment little Papias had rushed rapturously into her arms and, as she lifted him up, had thrown his hands round her neck, clinging to her as if he would never leave go again, while she hugged him closely for joy, and kissed him with her eyes full of tears. She was herself again at once; the sad and anxious girl was the lively Dada once more.

The man who had been leading the little boy was immediately besieged with questions, and from his answers they learnt that he had found the child the evening before at the corner of a street, crying bitterly; that he had taken him home, and with some little difficulty had ascertained from him that he belonged to some people who were living on board a barge, close to a ship-yard. In spite of the excitement that prevailed he had brought the child home as soon as possible, for he could fancy how anxious his parents must be. Dada thanked the kind-hearted artisan with sincere warmth, and the man, seeing how happy the girl and the child were at having met, went his way quite satisfied.

Medius had stood by and had said nothing, but he looked on the pretty little boy with much favor. If the earth were not to crumble into nothingness after all, this child would be a real treasure trove; and when Dada begged him to find a corner for Papias in his house, though he hinted at the smallness of his earnings and the limited space at his command, he yielded, if reluctantly, to her entreaties, on her offering him her gold brooch to cover his expenses.

As they made their way back she cast many loving glances at the child; she was extremely fond of him, and he seemed a link to bind her to her own people.

CHAPTER XVII.

The singer’s wife and daughter had joined some neighbors in sacrificing a black lamb to Zeus, a ceremony that was usual on the occasion of earthquakes or very severe storms; but it was done very secretly, for the edicts prohibiting the sacrifice of victims to the gods were promptly and rigidly enforced. The more the different members of the family came into contact with other citizens, the more deeply rooted was their terror that the end of all things was at hand. As soon as it was dark the old man buried all his savings, for even if everyone else were to perish, he felt that he—though how or why he knew not—might be exempt from the common doom.

The night was warm, and great and small alike slept—or lay awake—under the stars so as not to be overwhelmed by the crash of roofs and walls; the next day was

oppressively hot, and the family cowered in a row in the scanty shade of a palm and of a fig-tree, the only growth of any size in the singer's garden. Medius himself, in spite of the scorching sun, could not be still.

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He rushed off to the town again and again, but only to return each time to enhance the anguish of the household by relating all sorts of horrors which he had picked up in his wanderings. They were obliged to satisfy their hunger with bread, cheese, and fruit, for the two slave-women positively refused to risk their lives by cooking in the house.

Medius' temper varied as he came and went; now he was gentle and affectionate, and then again he raged like a madman; and his wife outdid him. At one moment she would abandon him and the children, while she anointed the household altar and put up prayers; at the next she railed at the baseness and cruelty of the gods. When her husband brought the news that the Serapeum was surrounded by the Imperial troops, she scoffed and spit at the sacred images, and five minutes later she was vowing a sacrifice to the deities of Olympus. The general confusion was distracting; as the sun rose, the anguish, physical and mental, of the whole family greatly increased, and by noon had reached an appalling pitch.

Dada looked on intensely disgusted, and only shook her head when one or another of her companions was sure she felt a shock of earthquake or heard the roll of distant thunder. She could not explain to herself why she, who was usually timid enough, was exempt from the universal panic though she felt deeply pitiful towards the terrified women and children. None of them troubled themselves about her; the day dragged on with intolerable slowness, quenching all her gay vivacity, while she was utterly exhausted by the scorching African sun, of which, till now, she had never known the power. At last, in the afternoon, she found the little garden, which was by this time heated like an oven, quite unbearable, and she looked round for Papias. The child was sitting on the wall looking at the congregation streaming into the basilica of St. Mark. Dada followed his example, and when the many-voiced psalms rang out of the open door of the church, she listened to the music, for it seemed long since she had heard any, and after wiping the perspiration from the little boy's face with her peplos, she pointed to the building and said: "It must be nice and cool in there."

"Of course it is," said Papias.

"It is never too hot in church. I will tell you what—we will go there." This was a bright idea; for, thought Dada, any place must be pleasanter than this; and she felt strongly tempted, too, to see the inside of one of Agne's temples and to sing once more, or, at any rate, hear others sing.

"Come along," she said, and they stole through the deserted house to get into the street by the atrium. Medius saw them, but he made no attempt to detain them; he had sunk into lethargic indifference. It was not an hour since he had taken stock of his life and means, setting the small figure of his average income against his hospitality to Dada and her little companion; but then, again, he had calculated that, if all went well, he might make considerable profits out of the girl and the child. Now, he felt it was all the

same to him whether he and his family and Dada met their doom in the house or out of it.

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Dada and Papias soon reached the church of St. Mark, the oldest Christian basilica in the city. It consisted of a vestibule—the narthex—and the body of the church, a very long hall, with a flat roof ceiled with stained wood and supported on a double row of quite simple columns. This space was divided into two parts by a screen of pierced work; the innermost portion had a raised floor or podium, on which stood a table with chairs placed round it in a semicircle. The centre seat was higher and more richly decorated than the others. These chairs were unoccupied; a few deacons in 'talares' of light-colored brocade were busied about the table.

In the middle of the vestibule there was a small tank; here a number of penitents had collected who, with their flayed ribs and abject lamentations, offered a more melancholy spectacle than even the terrified crowd whom Dada had seen the day before, gathered round the temple of Isis. Indeed, site would have withdrawn at once but that Papias dragged her forward, and when she had passed through the great door into the nave she breathed a sigh of relief. A soothing sense of respite came over her, such as she had rarely felt; for the lofty building, which was only half full, was deliciously cool and the subdued light was restful to her eyes. The slight perfume of incense and the sober singing of the assembled worshippers were soothing to her senses, and, as she took a seat on one of the benches, she felt sheltered and safe.

The old church struck her as a home of perfect peace; in all the city, she thought, there could hardly be another spot where she might rest so quietly and contentedly. So for some little time she gave herself up, body and soul, to the refreshing influences of the coolness, the solemnity, the fragrance and the music; but presently her attention was attracted to two women in the seats just in front of her.

One of them, who had a child on her arm, whispered to her neighbor:

"You here, Hannah, among the unbaptized? How are you going on at home?"

"I cannot stay long," was the answer. "It is all the same where one sits, and when I leave I shall disturb no one. But my heart is heavy; the child is very bad. The doctor says he cannot live through the day, and I felt as if I must come to church."

Very right, very right. Do you stay here and I will go to your house at once; my husband will not mind waiting."

"Thank you very much, but Katharine is staying with the boy and he is quite safe there."

"Then I will stay and pray with you for the dear little child."

Dada had not missed a word of this simple dialogue. The woman whose child was ill at home, and who had come here to pray for strength or mercy, had a remarkably sweet face; as the girl saw the two friends bow their heads and fold their hands with downcast

eyes, she thought to herself: “Now they are praying for the sick child . . .” and involuntarily she, too, bent her curly head, and murmured softly: “O ye gods, or thou God of the Christians, or whatever thou art called that hast power over life and death, make this poor woman’s little son well again. When I get home again I will offer up a cake or a fowl—a lamb is so costly.”

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And she fancied that some invisible spirit heard her, and it gave her a vague satisfaction to repeat her simple supplication over and over again.

Meanwhile a miserable blind dwarf had seated himself by her side; near him stood the old dog that guided him. He held him by a string and had been allowed to bring his indispensable comrade into the church. The old man joined loudly and devoutly in the psalm which the rest of the congregation were singing; his voice had lost its freshness, no doubt, but he sang in perfect tune. It was a pleasure to Dada to listen, and though she only half understood the words of the psalm she easily caught the air and began to sing too, at first timidly and hardly audibly; but she soon gained courage and, following the example of little Papias, joined in with all her might.

She felt as though she had reached land after a stormy and uncomfortable voyage, and had found refuge in a hospitable home; she looked about her to discover whether the news of the approaching destruction of the world had not penetrated even here, but she could not feel certain; for, though many faces expressed anguish of mind, contrition, and a passionate desire—perhaps for help or, perhaps, for something quite different—not a cry of lamentation was to be heard, such as had rent the air by the temple of Isis, and most of the men and women assembled here were singing, or praying in silent absorption. There were none of the frenzied monks who had terrified her in the Xenodochium and in the streets; on this day of tumult and anxiety they are devoting all their small strength and great enthusiasm to the service of the Church militant.

This meeting, at so unusual an hour, had been convened by Eusebius, the deacon of the district, with the intention of calming the spirits of those who had caught the general infection of alarm. Dada could see the old man step up into a raised pulpit on the inner side of the screen which parted the baptized from the unbaptized members of the congregation; his silvery hair and beard, and the cheerful calm of his face, with the high white forehead and gentle, loving gaze, attracted her greatly. She had heard Karnis speak of Plato, and knew by heart some axioms of his doctrine, and she had always thought of the sage as a young man; but in advanced age, she fancied, he might have looked like Eusebius. Aye, and it would have well beseemed this old man to die, like the great Athenian, at a mirthful wedding-feast.

The priest was evidently about to give a discourse, and much as she admired him, this idea prompted her to quit the church; for, though she could sit still for hours to hear music, she found nothing more irksome than to be compelled to listen for any length of time to a speech she might not interrupt. She was therefore rising to leave; but Papias held her back and entreated her so pathetically with his blue baby-eyes not to take him away and spoil his pleasure that she

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yielded, though the opportunity was favorable for moving unobserved, as the woman in front of her was preparing to go and was shaking hands with her neighbor. She had indeed risen from her seat when a little girl came in behind her and whispered, loud enough for Dada's keen ears to catch the words: "Come mother, come home at once. He has opened his eyes and called for you. The physician says all danger is over."

The mother in her turn whispered to her friend in glad haste: "All is well!" and hurried away with the girl. The friend she had left raised her hands and eyes in thanksgiving, and Dada, too, smiled in sympathy and pleasure. Had the God of the Christian heard her prayer with theirs.

Meanwhile the preacher had ended his preliminary prayer and began to explain to his hearers that he had bidden them to the church in order to warn them against foolish terrors, and to lead them into the frame of mind in which the true Christian ought to live in these momentous times of disturbance. He wished to point out to his brethren and sisters in the Lord what was to be feared from the idols and their overthrow, what the world really owed to the heathen, and what he expected from his fellow-believers when the splendid and imminent triumph of the Church should be achieved.

"Let us look back a little, my beloved," he said, after this brief introduction. "You have all heard of the great Alexander, to whom this noble city owes its existence and its name. He was a mighty instrument in the hand of the Lord, for he carried the tongue and the wisdom of the Greeks throughout all lands, so that, in the fulness of time, the doctrine which should proceed from the only Son of God might be understood by all nations and go home to all hearts. In those days every people had its own idols by hundreds, and in every tongue on earth men put up their prayers to the supreme Power which makes itself felt wherever mortal creatures dwell. Here, by the Nile, after Alexander's death, reigned the Ptolemies; and the Egyptian citizens of Alexandria prayed to other gods than their Greek neighbors, so that they could never unite in worshipping their divinities; but Philadelphus, the second Ptolemy, a very wise man, gave them a god in common. In consequence of a vision seen in a dream he had the divinity brought from Sinope, on the shores of Pontus, to this town. This idol was Serapis, and he was raised to the throne of divinity here, not by Heaven, but by a shrewd and prudent man; a grand temple was built for him, which is to this day one of the wonders of the world, and a statue of him was made, as beautiful as any image ever formed by the hand of man. You have seen and know them both, and you know too, how, before the gospel was preached in Alexandria, crowds of all classes, excepting the Jews, thronged the Serapeum.

"A dim perception of the sublime teaching of the Lord by whom God has redeemed the world had dawned, even before His appearance on earth, on the spirit of the best of the heathen, and in the hearts of those wise men who—though not born into the state of

grace—sought and strove after the truth, after inward purity, and an apprehension of the Almighty. The Lord chose them out to prepare the hearts of mankind for the good tidings, and make them fit to receive the gospel when the Star should rise over Bethlehem.

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“Many of these sages had infused precious doctrine into the worship of Serapis before the hour of true redemption had come. They enjoined the servants of Serapis to be more zealous in the care of the soul than in that of the body, for they had detected the imperishable nature of the spiritual and divine part of man; they saw that we are brought into existence by sin and love, and we must therefore die to our sinful love and rise again through the might of love eternal. These Hellenes, like the Egyptian sages of the times of the Pharaohs, divined and declared that the soul was held responsible after death for all it had done of good or evil in its mortal body. They distinguished virtue and sin by the eternal law, which was written in the hearts even of the heathen, to the end that they, by nature, might do the works of the law; nay, there were some of their loftiest spirits who, though they knew not the Lord, it is true, required the repentance in the sinner, in the name of Serapis, and pronounced that it was good to give up the delusive joys and vain pleasures of the flesh and to break away from the evil—whether of body or of soul—which we are led into by the senses. They called upon their disciples to hold meetings for meditation whereby they might discern truth and the divinity; and the vast precincts of the Serapeum contained cells and alcoves for penitents and devotees, in which many a soul touched by grace, dead to the world and absorbed in the contemplation of such things as they esteemed high and heavenly, has ripened to old age and death.

“But, my beloved, the Light in which we rejoice, through no merits or deserts of our own, had not yet been shed on the lost children of those days of darkness; and all those noble, and indeed most admirable efforts were polluted by an admixture, even here, of coarse superstition, bloody sacrifices, and foolish adoration of perishable stone idols and beasts without understanding; and in other places by the false and delusive arts of Magians and sorcerers. Even the dim apprehension of true salvation was darkened and distorted by the subtleties of a vain and inconsistent philosophy, which held a theory as immutably true one day and overthrew or denied it the next. Thus, by degrees, the temple of the idol of Sinope degenerated into a stronghold of deceit and bloodshed, of the basest superstition, the pleasures of the flesh, and abominations that cried to Heaven. Learning, to be sure, was still cherished in the halls of the Serapeum; but its disciples turned with hardened hearts from the truth which was sent into the world by the grace of God, and they remained the prophets of error. The doctrines which the sages had associated with the idea of Serapis, debased and degraded by the most contemptible trivialities; lost all their worth and dignity; and after the great Apostle to whom this basilica is dedicated, had brought the gospel to Alexandria, the idol’s throne began to totter, and the tidings of salvation shook

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its foundations and brought it to the verge of destruction in spite of the persecutions, in spite of the edicts of the apostate Julian, in spite of the desperate efforts of the philosophers, sophists, and heathen—for our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, has given certainty and actuality to the fleeting shadow of half-divined truth which lies in the core of the worship of Serapis. The pure and radiant star of Christian love has risen in the place of the dim nebulous mist of Serapis; and just as the moon pales when the sun appears triumphant, the worship of Serapis has died away in a thousand places where the gospel has been received. Even here, in Alexandria, its feeble flame is kept alive only by infinite care, and if the might of our pious and Christian Emperor makes itself felt-tomorrow, or next day—then, my beloved, it will vanish in smoke, and no power on earth can fan it into life again. Not our grandsons, no, but our own children will ask: Who—what was Serapis? For he who shall be overthrown is no longer a mighty god but an idol bereft of his splendor and his dignity. This is no struggle of might against might; it is the death-stroke given to a wounded and vanquished foe. The tree is rotten to the core and can crush no one in its fall, but it will cover all who stand near it with dust and rubbish. The sovereign has outlived his dominion, and when his fingers drop the sceptre few indeed will bewail him, for the new King has already mounted the throne and His is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever! Amen."

Dada had listened to the deacon's address with no particular interest, but the conclusion struck her attention. The old man looked dignified and honest; but Father Karnis was a well-meaning man, no doubt, and one of those who are wont to keep on the winning side. How was it that the preacher could draw so pitiable a picture of the very same god whose greatness her uncle had praised in such glowing terms only two days since? How could the same thing appear so totally different to two different people?

The priest looked more sagacious than the musician; Marcus, the young Christian, had a most kind heart; there was not a better or gentler creature under the sun than Agne—-it was quite possible that Christianity was something very different in reality from what her foster parents chose to represent. As to the frightful consequences of the overthrow of the temple of Serapis, on that point she was completely reassured, and she prepared to listen with greater attention as Eusebius went on:

"Let us rejoice, beloved! The great idol's days are numbered! Do you know what that false worship has been in our midst? It has been like a splendid and richly-dressed trireme sailing, plague-stricken, into a harbor full of ships and boats. Woe to those who allow themselves to be tempted on board by the magnificence of its decorations! How great is their chance of infection, how easily they will

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carry it from ship to ship, and from the ships on to the shore, till the pestilence has spread from the harbor to the city! Let us then be thankful to those who destroy the gorgeous vessel, who drive it from amongst us, or sink or burn it. May our Father in Heaven give courage to their hearts, strength to their hands and blessing on their deeds! When we hear: 'Great Serapis has fallen to the earth and is no more, we and the world are free from him!' then, in this city, and wherever Christians dwell and worship, let a solemn festival be held.

"But still let us be just, still let us bear in mind all the great and good gifts that the trireme brought to our parents when it rode the waves manned by a healthy crew. If we do, it will be with sincere pity that we shall watch the proud vessel sink to the bottom, and we shall understand the grief of those whom once it bore over ebb and flow, and who believe they owe every thing to it. We shall rejoice doubly, too, to think that we ourselves have a safe bark with stout planks and strong masts, and a trustworthy pilot at the helm; and that we may confidently invite others to join us on board as soon as they have purified themselves of the plague with which they have been smitten.

"I think you will all have understood this parable. When Serapis falls there will be lamentation and woe among the heathen; but we, who are true Christians, ought not to pass them by, but must strive to heal and save the wounded and sick at heart. When Serapis falls you must be the physicians—healers of souls, as the Lord hath said; and if we desire to heal, our first task must be to discover in what the sufferings consist of those we wish to succor, for our choice of medicine must depend on the nature of the injury.

"What I mean is this: None can give comfort but those who know how to sympathize with the soul that craves it, who feel the sorrows of others as keenly as though they were their own. And this gift, my brethren, is, next to faith, the Christian grace which of all others best pleases our Heavenly Master.

"I see it in my mind's eye! The ruined edifice of the Serapeum, the masterpiece of Bryaxis laid in fragments in the dust, and thousands of wailing heathen! As the Jews wept and hung their harps on the trees by the waters of Babylon when they remembered Zion, so do I see the heathen weep as they think of the perished splendor. They themselves, indeed, ruined and desecrated the glory they bewail; and when something higher and purer took its place they hardened their hearts, and, instead of leaving the dead to bury their dead and throwing themselves hopefully into the new life, they refused to be parted from the putrefying corpse. They were fools, but their folly was fidelity; and if we can win them over to our holy faith they will be faithful unto death, as they have been to their old gods, clinging to Jesus and earning the crown of life. 'There will be more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over ninety and nine that need no repentance,'—that you have heard; and whichever among you loves

the Saviour can procure him a great joy if he guides only one of these weeping heathen into the Kingdom of Heaven.

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“But perhaps you will ask: Is not the sorrow of the heathen a vain thing? What is it after all that they bewail? To understand that, try to picture to yourselves what it is that they think they are losing. Verily it is not a small matter, and it includes many things for which we and all mankind owe them a debt of gratitude. We call ourselves Christians and are proud of the name; but we also call ourselves Hellenes, and are proud of that name too. It was under the protection of the old gods, whose fall is about to be consummated, that the Greeks achieved marvellous deeds, nurturing the gifts of the intellect which the Almighty bestowed on their race, like faithful gardeners, and making them bring forth marvellous fruit. In the realm of thought the Greek is sovereign of the nations, and he has given to perishable matter a perfection of form which has elevated and vivified it to immortality. Nothing more beautiful has ever been imagined or executed, before or since, or by any other people, than was produced by Greece in its prime. But perhaps you will ask, why did not the Redeemer come down among our fathers in those glorious days? Because beauty, as they conceived and still conceive of it, is a mere perishable accident of matter, and because a race which thus devoted every thought and feeling to an inspired and fervent worship of beauty—which was so absorbed in the contemplation of the visible, could have no longing for the invisible which is the real life that came down among us with the only-begotten Son of God. Nevertheless Beauty is beautiful; and when the time shall come when the visible is married to the invisible, when eternal Truth is clothed in perfect form, then, and not till then, will the ideal which our fathers strove after in the great old days be realized, by the grace of the Saviour.

“But this visible beauty, which they so passionately cherished, does us good service too, so long as we do not allow it to dazzle us and lead us astray from the one thing needful. To whom, if not to the heathen Hellenes, do our great teachers owe, under God, the noble art of coordinating their loftiest feelings, and casting them in forms which are intelligible to the Christian and at once instruct, delight, and edify him? It was in a heathen school that each one of your pastors—that even I, the humblest of them—-studied that rhetoric which enables me to utter with a flowing tongue the things which the Spirit gives me to speak to you; and if some day there are Christian schools, in which our sons may acquire the same power, they must adopt many of the laws devised by the heathen. If in the future we are rich enough to raise churches to the Almighty, to the Virgin Mary and the great Saints, in any way worthy of their sublime merits, we shall owe our skill to the famous architects of heathen Hellas. We are indebted to the arts of the heathen for a thousand things in daily use, beside numberless others that lend charm to existence. Yes, my beloved, when we consider all they did for us we cannot in justice withhold our tribute of gratitude and admiration.

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“Nor can we doubt that the best of them were acceptable to the Almighty himself, for he granted to them to see darkly and from afar what he has brought nigh to us, and poured into our hearts by divine revelation. You all know the name of Plato. He, from whom Salvation was hidden, saw remotely, by presentiment as it were, many things which to us, the Redeemed, are clear and plain and near. He perceived the relation of earthly beauty and heavenly truth. The great gift of Love binds and supports us all and Plato gave the name of the divine Eros, that is divine love, to an inspired devotion to the Imperishable. He placed goodness—the Good—at the top of the great scale of Ideas which he constructed. The Good was, to him, the highest Idea and the uttermost of which we can conceive:—Good, whose properties he made manifest by every means his lofty and lucid mind could command. This heathen, my brethren and sisters, was well worthy of the grace bestowed on us. Do justice then to the blinded souls, justice in Plato’s sense of the word; he calls the virtue of reason Wisdom; the virtue of spirit Courage, and the virtue of the senses Temperance. Well, well! ’Prove all things and hold fast that which is good.’ That is to say: consider what may be worth anything in the works of the heathen that it may be duly preserved; but, on the other hand, tread all that is idolatry in the dust, all that brings the unclean thing among us, all that imperils our souls and bodies, or anything that is high and pure in life; but do not forget, my beloved, all that the heathen have done for us. Be temperate in all things; avoid excess of zeal; for thus, and thus only, can we be just. ’It is not to hate, but to love each other that we are here.’ It was not a Christian but Sophocles, one of the greatest of the heathen, who uttered those words, and he speaks them still to us!”

Eusebius paused and drew a deep breath.

Dada had listened eagerly, for it pleased her to hear all that she had been wont to prize spoken of here with due appreciation. But since Eusebius had begun to discourse about Plato she had been disturbed by two men sitting just in front of her. One was tall and lean, with a long narrow head, and the other a shorter and more comfortable-looking personage. The first fidgeted incessantly, nudging and twitching his companion, and looking now and then as if he were ready to start up and interrupt the preacher. This behavior evidently annoyed his neighbors who kept signing to him to be quiet and hushing him down, while he took no notice of their demonstrations but kept clearing his throat with obtrusive emphasis and at last scraped and shuffled his feet on the floor, though not very noisily. But Eusebius began again:

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“And now, my brethren, how ought we to demean ourselves in these fateful times of disturbance? As Christians; only—or rather, by God’s aiding grace as Christians in the true sense of our Lord and Master, according to the precepts given by Him through the Apostles. Their words shall be mine. They say there are two paths—the path of Life and the path of Death, and there is a great difference between them. The path of Life is this: First, Thou shalt love God who hath created thee; next thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, and whatsoever thou wouldst men should do unto thee even so do unto them; but what thou wouldst not have done unto thee do thou not to them. And the sum of the doctrine contained in these words is this: Bless those that curse you, pray for your enemies and repent for those who persecute you, for ’if ye love them that love you what thank have ye? Do not even the heathen the same?’ Love those that hate you and you will have no enemies.

“Take this teaching of the holy Apostles to heart this day. Beware of mocking or persecuting those who have been your enemies. Even the nobler heathen regarded it as an act of grace to respect the conquered foe, and to you, as Christians, it should be a law. It is not so hard to forgive an enemy when we regard him as a possible friend in the future; and the Christian can go so far as to love him when he remembers that every man is his brother and neighbor, and equally precious in the sight of the Saviour who is dearer to us than life.

“The heathen, the idolater, is the Christian’s archfoe; but soon he will be in fetters at our feet. And, then, my brethren, pray for him; for if the Almighty, who is without spot or stain and perfect beyond words, can forgive the sinner, ye who are base and guilty may surely forgive. ‘Fishers of souls’ we all should be; try to fulfil the injunction. Draw the enemy to you by kindness and love; show him by your example the beauty of the Christian life; let him perceive the benefits of Salvation; lead those whose gods and temples we have overthrown, into our churches; and when, after triumphing over those blind souls by the sword, we have also conquered them by love, faith and prayer—when they can rejoice with us in the Redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ—then shall we all be as one fold under one shepherd, and peace and joy shall reign in the city which is now torn by dissension and strife.”

At this point the preacher was interrupted, for a loud uproar broke out in the Narthex—-[The vestibule of the early Christian basilica which was open to penitents.]—shouts and cries of men fighting, mingled with the dull roar of a bull.

The congregation started to their feet in extreme consternation, and the door was flung open and a host of heathen youths rushed into the nave, followed by an overwhelming force of Christians from whom they had sought refuge in the sanctuary. Here they turned at bay to make a last desperate resistance. Garlands, stripped of their leaves and flowers, still crowned their heads and hung over their shoulders. They had been attacked close to the church, by a party of monks when in the act of driving a gaily-

decorated steer to the temple of Apollo, in defiance of the Imperial edict; and the beast, terrified by the tumult, had rushed into the narthex for shelter.

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The fight in the church was a short one; the idolaters were soon vanquished; but Eusebius threw himself between them and the monks, and tried to save the victims from the revengeful fury of the conquerors. The women had all made for the door, but they did not venture out into the vestibule, for the young bull was still raging there, trampling or tossing everything that came in his way. At last, however, a soldier of the city-watch dealt him a sword-thrust in the neck, and he fell rolling in his own blood. At once the congregation forced their way out, shrieking with alarm and excitement, Dada among the number, dragging the child with her. Papias pulled with all his might to keep her back, declaring with vehement insistence that he had seen Agne in the church and wanted to go back to her. Dada, however, neither heard nor heeded; frightened out of her wits she went on with the crowd, taking him with her.

She never paused till she reached the house of Medius, quite out of breath; but then, as the little boy still asserted that he had seen his sister in the sanctuary, she turned back with him, as soon as the throng had dispersed. In the church there was no one to hinder them; but they got no further than the dividing screen, for on the floor beyond lay the mutilated and bleeding bodies of many a youth who had fallen in the contest.

How she made her way back to the house of Medius once more she never knew. For the first time she had been brought face to face with life in hideous earnest, and when the singer went to look for her in her room, at dusk, he was startled to find her bright face clouded and her eyes dim with tears. How bitterly she had been weeping Medius indeed could not know; he ascribed her altered appearance to fear of the approaching cataclysm and was happy to be able to tell her, in all good faith, that the danger was as good as over. Posidonius, the Magian, had been to see him, and had completely reassured him. This man, whose accomplice he had been again and again in producing false apparitions of spirits and demons, had once gained an extraordinary influence over him by casting some mysterious spell upon him and reducing his will to abject subjection to his own; and this magician, who had recovered his own self-possession, had assured him, with an inimitable air of infallibility, that the fall of the Temple of Serapis would involve no greater catastrophe than that of any old worn-out statue. Since this announcement Medius had laughed at his own alarms; he had recovered his “strong-mindedness,” and when Posidonius had given him three tickets for the Hippodrome he had jumped at the offer.

The races were to be run next day, in spite of the general panic that had fallen on the citizens; and Dada, when he invited her to join him and his daughter in-the enjoyment of so great a treat, dried her eyes and accepted gleefully.

CHAPTER XVIII.

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Alarming as was the outlook in Alexandria, the races, were to be held as usual. This had been decided only a few hours since at the Bishop's palace, and criers had been sent abroad throughout the streets and squares of the city to bid the inhabitants to this popular entertainment. In the writing-office of the Ephemeris, which would be given to the public the first thing in the morning, five hundred slaves or more were occupied in writing from dictation a list of the owners of the horses, of the 'agitatores' who would drive them, and of the prizes offered to the winners, whether Christians or heathen.

> [Ephemeris—The news-sheet, which was brought out, not only in Rome, but in all the cities of the Empire, and which kept the citizens informed of all important events.]

The heat in the Episcopal council-hall had been oppressive, and not less so the heat of temper among the priests assembled there; for they had fully determined, for once, not to obey their prelate with blind submission, and they knew full well that Theophilus, on occasion, if his will were opposed, could not merely thunder but wield the bolt.

Besides the ecclesiastical members of the council, Cynegius, the Imperial legate—-Evagrius, the Prefect—and Romanus, the commander-in-chief and Comes of Egypt,—-had all been present. The officials of the Empire—Roman statesmen who knew Alexandria and her citizens well, and who had often smarted under the spiritual haughtiness of her Bishop—were on the prelate's side. Cynegius was doubtful; but the priests, who had not altogether escaped the alarms that had stricken the whole population, were so bold as to declare against a too hasty decision, and to say that the celebration of the games at a time of such desperate peril was not only presumptuous but sinful, and a tempting of God.

In answer to a scornful enquiry from Theophilus as to where the danger lay if—as the Comes promised—Serapis were to be overthrown on the morrow, one of the assembly answered in the name of his colleagues. This man, now very old, had formerly been a wonderfully successful exorcist, and, notwithstanding that he was a faithful Christian, he was the leader of a gnostic sect and a diligent student of magic. He proceeded to argue, with all the zeal and vehemence of conviction, that Serapis was the most terrible of all the heathen daemons, and that all the oracles of antiquity, all the prophecies of the seers, and all the conclusions of the Magians and astrologers would be proved false if his fall—which the present assembly could only regard as a great boon from Heaven—-did not entail some tremendous convulsion of nature.

At this Theophilus gave the reins to his wrath; he snatched a little crucifix from the wall above his episcopal throne, and broke it in fragments, exclaiming in deep tones that quavered with wrath:

"And which do you regard as the greater: The only-begotten Son of God, or that helpless image?" And he flung the pieces of the broken crucifix down on the table round

which they were sitting. Then, as though horror-stricken at his own daring act, he fell on his knees, raised his eyes and hands in prayer, and gathering up the broken image, kissed it devoutly.

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This rapid scene had a tremendous effect. Amazement and suspense were painted on every face, not a hand, not a lip moved as Theophilus rose again and cast a glance of proud and stern defiance round the assembly, which each man took to himself. For some moments he remained silent, as though awaiting a reply; but his repellent mien and majestic bearing made it sufficiently clear that he was ready to annihilate any opponent. In fact none of the priests contradicted him; and, though Evagrius looked at him with a doubting shake of his shrewd head, Cynegius on the other hand nodded assent. The Bishop, however, seemed to care for neither dissent nor approval, and it was in brief and cutting terms, with no flourish of rhetoric, that he laid it down that wood and stone had nothing to do with the divine Majesty, even though they were made in the image of all that was Holy and worshipful or were most lavishly beautified by the hand of man with the foul splendors of perishable wealth. The greater the power ascribed by superstition to the base material—whatever form it bore—the more odious must it be to the Christian. Any man who should believe that a daemon could turn even a breath of the Most High to its own will and purpose, would do well to beware of idolatry, for Satan had already laid his clutches somewhere on his robe.

At this sweeping accusation many a cheek colored wrathfully, and not a word was spoken when the Bishop proceeded to require of his hearers that, if the Serapeum should fall into the hands of the Imperial troops, it should be at once and ruthlessly destroyed, and that his hearers should not cease from the work of ruin till this scandal of the city should be swept from the face of the earth.

“If then the world crumbles to atoms!” he cried, “well and good—the heathen are right and we are wrong, and in that case it were better to perish; but as surely as I sit on this throne by the grace of God, Serapis is the vain imagining of fools and blind, and there is no god but the God whose minister I am!”

“Whose Kingdom is everlasting, Amen!” chanted an old priest; and Cynegius rose to explain that he should do nothing to hinder the total overthrow of the temple and image.

Then the Comes spoke in defence of the Bishop’s resolution to allow the races to be held, as usual, on the morrow. He sketched a striking picture of the shallow, unstable nature of the Alexandrians, a people wholly given over to enjoyment. The troops at his command were few in number in comparison with the heathen population of the city, and it was a very important matter to keep a large proportion of the worshippers of Serapis occupied elsewhere at the moment of the decisive onset. Gladiator-fights were prohibited, and the people were tired of wild beasts; but races, in which heathen and Christian alike might enter their horses for competition, must certainly prove most attractive just at this time of bitter rivalry and oppugnancy between the two religions,

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and would draw thousands of the most able-bodied idolaters to the Hippodrome. All this he had already considered and discussed with the Bishop and Cynegius; nay, that zealous destroyer of heathen worship had come to Alexandria with the express purpose of overthrowing the Serapeum; but, as a prudent statesman, he had first made sure that the time and circumstances were propitious for the work of annihilation. All that he had here seen and heard had only strengthened his purpose; so, after suggesting a few possible difficulties, and enjoining moderation and mercy as the guiding principles of his sovereign, he commanded, in the Emperor's name, that the sanctuary of Serapis should be seized by force of arms and utterly destroyed, and that the races should be held on the morrow.

The assembled council bowed low; and when Theophilus had closed the meeting with a prayer he withdrew to his ungarnished study, with his head bent and an air of profound humility, as though he had met with a defeat instead of gaining a victory.

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The fate of the great god of the heathen was sealed, but in the wide precincts of the Serapeum no one thought of surrender or of prompt defeat. The basement of the building, on which stood the grandest temple ever erected by the Hellenes, presented a smooth and slightly scarped rampart of impregnable strength to the foe. A sloping way extended up over a handsomely-decorated incline, and from the middle of the grand curve described by this road, two flights of steps led up to the three great doors in the facade of the building.

The heathen had taken care to barricade this approach in all haste, piling the road and steps with statuary-images of the gods of the finest workmanship, figures and busts of kings, queens, and heroes, Hermes, columns, stelae, sacrificial stones, chairs and benches-torn from their places by a thousand eager hands. The squared flags of the pavement and the granite blocks of the steps had been built up into walls and these were still being added to after the besiegers had surrounded the temple; for the defenders tore down stones, pilasters, gutters and pieces of the cornice, and flung them on to the outworks, or, when they could, on to the foe who for the present were not eager to commence hostilities.

The captains of the Imperial force had miscalculated the strength of the heathen garrison. They supposed a few hundreds might have entrenched themselves, but on the roof alone above a thousand men were to be seen, and every hour seemed to increase the number of men and women crowding into the Serapeum. The Romans could only suppose that this constantly growing multitude had been concealed in the

secret halls and chambers of the temple ever since Cynegius had first arrived, and had no idea that they were still being constantly reinforced.

Karnis, Herse, and Orpheus, among others, had made their way thither from the timber-yard, down the dry conduit, and an almost incessant stream of the adherents of the old gods had preceded and followed them.

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While Eusebius had been exhorting his congregation in the church of St. Mark to Christian love towards the idolaters, these had collected in the temple precincts to the number of about four thousand, all eager for the struggle. A vast multitude! But the extent of the Serapeum was so enormous that the mass of people was by no means densely packed on the roof, in the halls, and in the underground passages and rooms. There was no crowding anywhere, least of all in the central halls of the temple itself; indeed, in the great vestibule crowned with a dome which formed the entrance, in the vast hall next to it, and in the magnificent hypostyle with a semicircular niche on the furthest side in which stood the far-famed image of the god, there were only scattered groups of men, who looked like dwarfs as the eye compared them with the endless rows of huge columns.

The full blaze of day penetrated nowhere but into the circular vestibule, which was lighted by openings in the drum of the cupola that rested on four gigantic columns. In the inner hall there was only dim twilight; while the hypostyle was quite dark, but for a singularly contrived shaft of light which produced a most mysterious effect.

The shadows of the great columns in the fore hall, and of the double colonnade on each side of the hypostyle, lay like bands of crape on the many-colored pavement; borders, circles, and ellipses of mosaic diversified the smooth and lucent surface, in which were mirrored the astrological figures which sparkled in brighter hues on the ceiling, the trophies of symbols and mythological groups that graced the walls in tinted high relief, and the statues and Hermes between the columns. A wreath of lovely forms and colors dazzled the eye with their multiplicity and profusion, and the heavy atmosphere of incense which filled the halls was almost suffocating, while the magical and mystical signs and figures were so many and so new that the enquiring mind, craving for an explanation and an interpretation of all these incomprehensible mysteries, hardly dared investigate them in detail.

A heavy curtain, that looked as though giants must have woven it on a loom of superhuman proportions, hung, like a thick cloud shrouding a mountain-peak, from the very top of the hypostyle, in grand folds over the niche containing the statue, and down to the floor; and while it hid the sacred image from the gaze of the worshipper it attracted his attention by the infinite variety of symbolical patterns and beautiful designs which were woven in it and embroidered on it.

The gold and silver vessels and precious jewels that lay concealed by this hanging were of more value than many a mighty king’s treasure; and everything was on so vast a scale that man shuddered to feel his own littleness, and the mind sought some new standard of measurement by which to realize such unwonted proportions. The finite here seemed to pass into the infinite; and as the spectator gazed up, with his head thrown

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back, at the capitals of the lofty columns and the remote height of the ceiling, his sight failed him before he had succeeded in distinguishing or even perceiving a small portion only of the bewildering confusion of figures and emblems that were crowded on to the surface. Greek feeling for beauty had here worked hand in hand with Oriental taste for gorgeous magnificence, and every detail could bear examination; for there was not a motive of the architecture, not a work of sculpture, painting, or mosaic, not a product of the foundry or the loom, which did not bear the stamp of thorough workmanship and elaborate finish. The ruddy, flecked porphyry, the red, white, green, or yellow marbles which had been used for the decorations were all the finest and purest ever wrought upon by Greek craftsmen. Each of the hundreds of sculptured works which here had found a home was the masterpiece of some great artist; as the curious visitor lingered in loving contemplation of the mosaics on the polished floor, or examined the ornamental mouldings that framed the reliefs, dividing the walls into panels, he was filled with wonder and delight at the beauty, the elegance and the inventiveness that had given charm, dignity, and significance to every detail.

Adjoining these great halls devoted especially to the worship of the god, were hundreds of courts, passages, colonnades and rooms, and others not less numerous lay underground. There were long rows of rooms containing above a hundred thousand rolls of books, the famous library of the Serapeum, with separate apartments for readers and copyists; there were store-rooms, refectories and assembly-rooms for the high-priests of the temple, for teachers and disciples; while acrid odors came up from the laboratories, and the fragrance of cooking from the kitchen and bake-houses. In the very thickness of the walls of the basement were cells for penitents and recluses, long since abandoned, and rooms for the menials and slaves, of whom hundreds were employed in the precincts; under ground spread the mystical array of halls, grottoes, galleries and catacombs dedicated to the practice of the Mysteries and the initiation of neophytes; on the roof stood various observatories—among them one erected for the study of the heavens by Eratosthenes, where Claudius Ptolemaeus had watched and worked. Up here astronomers, star-gazers, horoscopists and Magians spent their nights, while, far below them, in the temple-courts that were surrounded by store-houses and stables, the blood of sacrificed beasts was shed and the entrails of the victims were examined.

The house of Serapis was a whole world in little, and centuries had enriched it with wealth, beauty, and the noblest treasures of art and learning. Magic and witchcraft hedged it in with a maze of mystical and symbolical secrets, and philosophy had woven a tissue of speculation round the person of the god. The sanctuary was indeed the centre of Hellenic culture in the city of Alexander; what marvel then, that the heathen should believe that with the overthrow of Serapis and his temple, the earth, nay the universe itself must sink into the abyss?

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Anxious spirits and throbbing hearts were those that now sought shelter in the Serapeum, fully prepared to perish with their god, and yet eager with enthusiasm to avert his fall if possible.

A strange medley indeed of men and women had collected within these sacred precincts! Grave sages, philosophers, grammarians, mathematicians, naturalists, and physicians clung to Olympius and obeyed him in silence. Rhetoricians with shaven faces, Magians and sorcerers, whose long beards flowed over robes embroidered with strange figures; students, dressed after the fashion of their forefathers in the palmy days of Athens; men of every age, who dubbed themselves artists though they were no more than imitators of the works of a greater epoch, unhappy in that no one at this period of indifference to beauty called upon them to prove what they could do, or to put forth their highest powers. Actors, again, from the neglected theatres, starving histrions, to whom the stage was prohibited by the Emperor and Bishop, singers and flute-players; hungry priests and temple-servitors expelled from the closed sanctuaries; lawyers, scribes, ships' captains, artisans, though but very few merchants, for Christianity had ceased to be the creed of the poor, and the wealthy attached themselves to the faith professed by those in authority.

One of the students had contrived to bring a girl with him, and several others, seeing this, went back into the streets by the secret way and brought in damsels of no very fair repute, till the crowd of men was diversified by a considerable sprinkling of wreathed and painted girls, some of them the outcast maids of various temples, and others priestesses of higher character, who had remained faithful to the old gods or who practised magic arts.

Among these women one, a tall and dignified matron in mourning robes, was a conspicuous figure. This was Berenice, the mother of the young heathen who had been ridden down and wounded in the skirmish near the Prefect's house, and whose eyes Eusebius had afterwards closed. She had come to the Serapeum expressly to avenge her son's death and then to perish with the fall of the gods for whom he had sacrificed his young life. But the mad turmoil that surrounded her was more than she could bear; she stood, hour after hour, closely veiled and absorbed in her own thoughts, neither raising her eyes nor uttering a word, at the foot of a bronze statue of justice dispensing rewards and punishments.

Olympius had entrusted the command of the little garrison of armed men to Memnon, a veteran legate of great experience, who had lost his left arm in the war against the Goths. The high-priest himself was occupied alternately in trying to persuade the hastily-collected force to obey their leader, and in settling quarrels, smoothing difficulties, suppressing insubordination, and considering plans with reference to supplies for his adherents, and the offering of a great sacrifice

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at which all the worshippers of Serapis were to assist. Karnis kept near his friend, helping him so far as was possible; Orpheus, with others of the younger men, had been ordered to the roof, where they were employed—under the scorching sun, reflected from the copper-plated covering and the radiating surface of the dome—in loosening blocks of stone from the balustrade to be hurled down to-morrow on the besieging force.

Herse devoted herself to the sick and wounded, for a few who had ventured forth too boldly to aid in barricading the entrance, had been hurt by arrows and lances flung by the idle soldiery; and a still greater number were suffering from sun-stroke in consequence of toiling on the top of the building.

Inside the vast, thick-walled halls it was much cooler than in the streets even, and the hours glided fast to the besieged heathen. Many of them were fully occupied, or placed on guard; others were discussing the situation, and disputing or guessing at what the outcome might, or must be. Numbers, panic-stricken or absorbed in pious awe, sat huddled on the ground, praying, muttering magical formulas, or wailing aloud. The Magians and astrologers had retired with knots of followers into the adjoining studies, where they were comparing registers, making calculations, reading signs, devising new formulas and defending them against their opponents.

An incessant bustle went on, to and fro between these rooms and the great library, and the tables were covered with rolls and tablets containing ancient prophecies, horoscopes and potent exorcisms. Messengers, one after another, were sent out from thence to command silence in the great halls, where the assembled youths and girls were kissing, singing, shouting and dancing to the shrill pipe of flutes and twang of lutes, clapping their hands, rattling tambourines—in short, enjoying to the utmost the few hours that might yet be theirs before they must make the fatal leap into nothingness, or at least into the dim shades of death.

The sun was sinking when suddenly the great brazen gong was loudly struck, and the hard, blatant clatter rent the air of the temple-hall. The mighty waves of sound reverberated from the walls of the sanctuary like the surge of a clangorous sea, and sent their metallic vibration ringing through every room and cell, from the topmost observatory-turret to the deepest vault beneath, calling all who were within the precincts to assemble. The holy places filled at once; the throng poured in through the vestibule, and in a few minutes even the hypostyle, the sanctum of the veiled statue, was full to overflowing. Without any distinction of rank or sex, and regardless of all the usual formalities or the degrees of initiation which each had passed through, the worshippers of Serapis crowded towards the sacred niche, till a chain, held up by neokores—-[Temple-servants]—at a respectful distance from the mystical spot, checked their advance. Densely packed and in almost breathless silence, they filled the nave and the colonnades, watching for what might befall.

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Presently a dull low chant of men's voices was heard. This went on for a few minutes, and then a loud pean in honor of the god rang through the temple with an accompaniment of flutes, cymbals, lutes and trumpets.

Karnis had found a place with his wife and son; all three, holding hands, joined enthusiastically in the stirring hymn; and, with them, Porphyrius, who by accident was close to them, swelling the song of the multitude. All now stood with hands uplifted and eyes fixed in anxious expectancy on the curtain. The figures and emblems on the hanging were invisible in the gloom—but now-now there was a stir, as of life, in the ponderous folds,—they moved—they began to ripple like streams, brooks, water-falls, recovering motion after long stagnation—the curtain slowly sank, and at length it fell so suddenly that the eye could scarcely note the instant. From every lip, as but one voice, rose a cry of admiration, amazement, and delight, for Serapis stood revealed to his people.

The noble manhood of the god sat with dignity on a golden throne that was covered with a blaze of jewels; his gracious and solemn face looked down on the crowd of worshippers. The hair that curled upon his thoughtful brow, and the kalathos that crowned it were of pure gold At his feet crouched Cerberus, raising his three fierce heads with glistening ruby eyes. The body of the god—a model of strength in repose—-and the drapery were of gold and ivory. In its perfect harmony as a whole, and the exquisite beauty of every detail, this statue bore the stamp of supreme power and divine majesty. When such a divinity as this should rise from his throne the earth indeed might quake and the heavens tremble! Before such a Lord the strongest might gladly bow, for no mortal ever shone in such radiant beauty. This Sovereign must triumph over every foe, even over death—the monster that lay writhing in impotent rage at his feet!

Gasping and thrilled with pious awe, enraptured but dumb with reverent fear, the assembled thousands gazed on the god dimly revealed to them in the twilight, when suddenly, for a moment of solemn glory, a ray of the setting sun—a shaft of intense brightness—pierced the star-spangled apse of the niche and fell on the lips of the god as though to kiss its Lord and Father.

A shout like a thunder-clap-like the roar of breakers on a reef, burst from the spectators; a shout of triumph so mighty that the statues quivered, the brazen altars rang, the hangings swayed, the sacred vessels clattered and the lamps trembled and swung; the echo rolled round the aisles like a whirlpool at the flood, and was dashed from pillar to column in a hundred wavelets of sound. The glorious sun still recognized its lord; Serapis still reigned in undiminished might; he had not yet lost the power to defend himself, his world and his children!

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The sun was gone, night fell on the temple and suddenly there was a swaying movement of the apse above the statue; the stars were shaken by invisible hands, and colored flames twinkled with dazzling brightness from a myriad five-rayed perforations. Once more the god was revealed to his worshippers under a flood of magical glory, and now fully visible in his unique beauty. Again the great halls rang with the acclamations of the delirious throng; Olympius stepped forth, arrayed in a flowing robe with the insignia and decorations of the high-priesthood; standing in front of the image he poured on the pedestal a libation to the gods out of a golden cup, and waved a censer of the costliest incense. Then, in burning words, he exhorted all the followers of Serapis to fight and conquer for their god, or—if need must—to perish for and with him. He added a fervent prayer in a loud ringing voice—a cry for help that came from the bottom of his heart, and went to the souls of his hearers.

Then a solemn hymn was chanted as the curtain was raised; and while the assembled multitude watched it rise in reverent silence, the temple-servants lighted the lamps that illuminated the sanctuary from every cornice and pillar.

Karnis had left hold of his companions' hands, for he wanted to wipe away the tears of devotional excitement that flowed down his withered cheeks; Orpheus had thrown his arms round his mother, and Porphyrius, who had joined a group of philosophers and sages, sent a glance of sympathy to the old musician.

CHAPTER XIX.

By an hour after sunset the sacrifice of a bull in the great court of the Serapeum was consummated, and the Moscosphragist announced that the god had graciously accepted it—the examination of the entrails showed more favorable indications than it had the day before. The flesh of the slaughtered beast went forthwith to the kitchen; and, if the savor of roast beef that presently rose up was as grateful to Serapis as to his worshippers, they might surely reckon on a happy issue from the struggle.

The besieged, indeed, were, ere long, in excellent spirits; for Olympius had taken care to store the cellars of the sanctuary with plenty of good wine, and the happy auguries drawn from the appearance of the god and the state of the victim had filled them with fresh confidence. As there was not sleeping accommodation for nearly all the men, they had to turn night into day; and as, to most of them, life consisted wholly in the enjoyment of the moment, and all was delightful that was new or strange, they soon eat and drank themselves into a valiant frame of mind.

Couches, such as they were wont to be on at meals, there were not, so each man snatched up the first thing he could lay his hands on to serve as a seat. When cups were lacking the jugs and vessels from the sanctuary were sent for, and passed from one to another. Many a youth lounged with his head in some fair one's lap; many a girl

leaned back to back with some old man; and as flowers were not to be had, messengers were sent to the town to buy them, with vine-wreaths and other greenery.

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They were easily procured, and with them came the news that the races were to be held next morning.

This information was regarded by many as being of the first importance; Nicarchus, the son of the rich Hippocleides, and Zenodotus a weaver of tapestry—whose quadriga had once proved victorious—hastily made their way into the town to give the requisite orders in their stables, and they were closely followed by Hippias, the handsome agitator, who was the favorite driver in the arena for the horses belonging to wealthy owners. In the train of these three every lover of horses vanished from the scene, with a number of Hippias' friends, and of flower-sellers, door-keepers, and ticket-holders-in short, of all who expected to derive special pleasure or profit from the games. Each man reflected that one could not be missed, and as the god was favorably disposed he might surely contrive to defend his own temple till after the races were over; they would then return to conquer or die with the rest.

Then some others began to think of wives and children in bed at home, and they, too, departed; still, by far the larger proportion remained behind—above three thousand in all, men and women. These at once possessed themselves of the half-emptied wine-jars left by the deserters; gay music was got up, and then, wreathed with garlands on their heads and shoulders, and 'filled with the god' they drank, shouted and danced far into the night. The merry feast soon became a wild orgy; loud cries of Evoe, and tumultuous singing reached the ears of the Magians, who had once more settled down to calculations and discussions over their rolls and tablets.

The mother of the youth that had been killed still sat huddled at the foot of the statue of justice, enduring the anguish of listening to these drunken revels with dull resignation. Every shout of laughter, every burst of mad mirth from the revellers above cut her to the heart—and yet, how they would have gladdened her if only one other voice could have mingled with those hundreds! When Olympius, still in his fullest dress, and carrying his head loftily as became him, made his way through the temple at the head of his subordinates, he noticed Berenice—whom he had known as a proud and happy mother—and begged her to join the friends whom he had bidden to his own table; but she dreaded any social contact with men whom she knew, and preferred to remain where she was at the feet of the goddess.

Wherever the high-priest went he was hailed with enthusiasm: "Rejoice," he would say to encourage the feasters, cheering them with wise and fervid exhortations, reminding them of Pharaoh Mycerinus who, having been told by an oracle that he had only six years to live, determined to prove the prophecy false, and by carousing through every night made the six years allotted to him a good dozen.

"Imitate him!" cried Olympius as he raised a cup to his lips, "crowd the joys of a year into the few hours that still are left us, and pour a libation to the god as I do, out of every cup ere you drink."

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His appeal was answered by a rapturous shout; the flutes and cymbals piped and clanged, metal cups rang sharply as the drinkers pledged each other, and the girls thumped their tambourines, till the calf-skin droned and the bells in the frames tinkled shrilly.

Olympius thanked them, and bowed on all sides, as he walked from group to group of his adherents. Seldom, indeed, had his heart beat so high! His end perhaps was very near, but it should at least be worthy of his life.

He knew how the sunbeam had been reflected so as to kiss the statue's lips. For centuries had this startling little scene and the sudden illumination of the niche round the head of the god been worked in precisely the same way at high festivals—[They are mentioned by Rufinus.]—these were mere stimulants to the dull souls of the vulgar who needed to be stirred up by the miraculous power of the god, which the elect recognized throughout the universe, in the wondrous co-operation of forces and results in nature, and in the lives of men. He, for his part, firmly believed in Serapis and his might, and in the prophecies and calculations which declared that his fall must involve the dissolution of the organic world and its relapse into chaos.

Many winds were battling in the air, each one driving the ship of life towards the whirlpool. To-day or to-morrow—what matter which? The threatened cataclysm had no terrors for Olympius. One thing only was a pang to his vanity: No succeeding generations would preserve the memory of his heroic struggle and death for the cause of the gods. But all was not yet lost, and his sunny nature read in the glow of the dying clay the promise and dawn of a brilliant morrow. If the expected succor should arrive—if the good cause should triumph here in Alexandria—if the rising were to be general throughout Greek heathendom, then indeed had he been rightly named Olympius by his parents—then he would not change places with any god of Olympus—then the glory of his name, more lasting than bronze or marble, would shine forth like the sun, so long as one Greek heart honored the ancient gods and loved its native land.

This night—perhaps its last—should see a grand, a sumptuous feast; he invited his friends and adherents—the leaders of spiritual life in Alexandria—to a 'symposium', after the manner of the philosophers and dilettanti of ancient Athens, to be held in the great concert-hall of the Serapeum.

How different was its aspect from that of the Bishop's council-chamber! The Christians sat within bare walls, on wooden benches, round a plain table; the large room in which Olympius received his supporters was magnificently decorated, and furnished with treasures of art in fine inlaid work, beaten brass and purple stuffs-a hall for kings to meet in. Thick cushions, covered with lion and panther-skins, tempted fatigue or indolence; and when the hero of the hour joined his guests, after his progress through the precincts, every couch was occupied. To his right lay Helladius, the famous grammarian and high-priest of Zeus; Porphyrius, the benefactor of the Serapeum, was

on his left; even Karnis had been allotted a place in his old friend's social circle, and greatly appreciated the noble juice of the grape, that was passed round, as well as the eager and intelligent friction of minds, from which he had long been cut off.

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Olympius himself was unanimously chosen Symposiarch, and he invited the company to discuss, in the first instance, the time-honored question: Which was the highest good?

One and all, he said, they were standing on a threshold, as it were; and as travellers, quitting an old and beloved home to seek a new and unknown one in a distant land, pause to consider what particular joy that they have known under the shelter of the old Penates has been the dearest, so it would beseem them to reflect, at this supreme moment, what had been the highest good of their life in this world. They were on the eve, perhaps, of a splendid victory; but, perchance, on the other hand, their foot was already on the plank that led from the shore of life to Charon's bark.

The subject was a familiar one and a warm discussion was immediately started. The talk was more flowery and brilliant, no doubt, than in old Athens, but it led to no deeper views and threw no clearer light on the well-worn question. The wranglers could only quote what had been said long since as to the highest Good, and when presently Helladius called upon them to bring their minds to bear on the nature of humanity, a vehement disputation arose as to whether man were the best or the worst of created beings. This led to various utterances as to the mystical connection of the spiritual and material worlds, and nothing could be more amazing than the power of imagination which had enabled these mystical thinkers to people with spirits and daemons every circle of the ladder-like structure which connected the incomprehensible and self-sufficing One with the divine manifestation known as Man. It became quite intelligible that many Alexandrians should fear to fling a stone lest it might hit one of the good daemons of which the air was full—a spirit of light perhaps, or a protecting spirit. The more obscure their theories, the more were they overloaded with image and metaphor; all simplicity of statement was lost, and yet the disputants prided themselves on the brilliancy of their language and the wealth of their ideas. They believed that they had brought the transcendental within the grasp of intelligent sense, and that their empty speculations had carried them far beyond the narrow limits of the Ancients.

Karnis was in raptures; Porphyrius only wished for Gorgo by his side, for, like all fathers, he would rather that his child should have enjoyed this supreme intellectual treat than himself.

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In Porphyrius' house, meanwhile, all was gloom and anxiety. In spite of the terrific heat Damia would not be persuaded to come down from the turret-room where she had collected all the instruments, manuals and formulas used by astrologers and Magians. A certain priest of Saturn, who had a great reputation as a master of such arts, and who,

for many years, had been her assistant whenever she sought to apply her science to any important event, was in attendance—to

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give her the astrological tables, to draw circles, ellipses or triangles at her bidding, to interpret the mystical sense of numbers or letters, which now and then escaped her aged memory; he made her calculations or tested those she made herself, and read out the incantations which she thought efficacious under the circumstances. Occasionally, too, he suggested some new method or fresh formula by which she might verify her results.

She had fasted, according to rule, the whole forenoon, and was frequently so far overcome by the heat as to drop asleep in the midst of her studies; then, when she woke with a start, if her assistant had meanwhile worked out his calculation to a result contrary to her anticipations, she took him up sharply and made him begin again from the beginning. Gorge, went up from time to time; but, though she offered the old woman refreshment prepared by her own hand, she could not persuade her even to moisten her lips with a little fruitsyrup, for to break the prescribed fast might endanger the accuracy of her prognostications and the result of all her labor. However, when she seemed to doze, her granddaughter sprinkled strong waters about the room to freshen the air, poured a few drops on the old lady's dress, wiped the dews from her brow, and fanned her to cool her. Damia submitted to all this; and though she had only closed her weary eyes, she pretended to be asleep in order to have the pleasure of being cared for by her darling.

Towards noon she dismissed the Magian and allowed herself a short interval of rest and sleep; but as soon as she woke she collected her wits, and set to work again with fresh zeal and diligence. When, at last, she had mastered all the signs and omens, she knew for certain that nothing could avert the awful doom foretold by the oracles of old.

The fall of Serapis and the end of the world were at hand.

The Magian covered his head as he saw, plainly demonstrated, how she had reached this conclusion, and he groaned in sincere terror; she, however, dismissed him with perfect equanimity, handing him her purse, which she had filled in the morning, and saying:

"To last till the end."

The sun was now long past the meridian and the old woman, quite worn out, threw herself back in her chair and desired Gorgo to let no one disturb her; nay, not to return herself till she was sent for. As soon as Damia was alone she gazed at herself in a mirror for some little time, murmuring the seven vocables incessantly while she did so; and then she fixed her eyes intently on the sky. These strange proceedings were directed to a particular end, she was endeavoring to close her senses to the external world, to become blind, deaf, and impervious to everything material—the polluting

burthen which divided her divine and spiritual part from the celestia fount whence it was derived; to set her soul free from its earthly shroud—free to gaze on the god that was its father. She had

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already more than once nearly attained to this state by long fasting and resolute abstraction and once, in a moment she could never forget, had enjoyed the dizzy ecstasy of feeling herself float, as it were through infinite space, like a cloud, bathed in glorious radiance. The fatigue that had been gradually over powering her now seconded her efforts; she soon felt slight tremor; a cold sweat broke out all over her; she lost all consciousness of her limbs, and all sense of sighs and hearing; a fresher and cooler air seemed to revive not her lungs only, but every part of her body, while undulating rays of red and violet light danced before her eyes. Was not their strange radiance an emanation from the eternal glory that she sought? Was not some mysterious power uplifting her, bearing her towards the highest goal? Was her soul already free from the bondage of the flesh? Had she indeed become one with God and had her earnest seeking for the Divinity ended in glorification? No; her arms which she had thrown up as if to fly, fell by her side it was all in vain. A pain—a trifling pain in her foot, had brought her down again to the base world of sense which she so ardently strove to soar away from.

Several times she took up the mirror, looked in it fixedly as before, and then gazed upwards; but each time that she lost consciousness of the material world and that her liberated soul began to move its unfettered pinions, some little noise, the twitch of a muscle, a fly settling on her hand, a drop of perspiration falling from her brow on to her cheek, roused her senses to reassert themselves.

Why—why was it so difficult to shake off this burthen of mortal clay? She thought of herself as of a sculptor who chisels away all superfluous material froth his block of marble, to reveal the image of the god within; but it was easier to remove the enclosing stone than to release the soul from the body to which it was so closely knit. Still, she did not give up the struggle to attain the object which others had achieved before her; but she got no nearer to it—indeed, less and less near, for, between her and that hoped-for climax, rose up a series of memories and strange faces which she could not get rid of. The chisel slipped aside, went wrong or lost its edge before the image could be extracted from the block.

One illusion after another floated before her eyes first it was Gorgo, the idol of her old heart, lying pale and fair on a sea of surf that rocked her on its watery waste—up high on the crest of a wave and then deep down in the abyss that yawned behind it. She, too—so young, a hardly-opened blossom—must perish in the universal ruin, and be crushed by the same omnipotent hand that could overthrow the greatest of the gods; and a glow of passionate hatred snatched her away from the aim of her hopes. Then the dream changed she saw a scattered flock of ravens flying in wide circles, at an unattainable height, against the clouds; suddenly they vanished

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and she saw, in a grey mist, the monument to Porphyrius' wife, Gorgo's long-departed mother. She had often visited the mausoleum with tender emotion, but she did not want to see it now—not now, and she shook it off; but in its place rose up the image of her daughter-in-law herself, the dweller in that tomb, and no effort of will or energy availed to banish that face. She saw the dead woman as she had seen her on the last fateful occasion in her short life. A solemn and festal procession was passing out through the door of their house, headed by flute-players and singing-girls; then came a white bull; a garland of the scarlet flowers of the pomegranate—[This tree was regarded as the symbol of fertility, on account of its many-seeded fruit.]—hung round its massive neck, and its horns were gilt. By its side walked slaves, carrying white baskets full of bread and cakes and heaps of flowers, and these were followed by others, bearing light-blue cages containing geese and doves. The bull, the calves, the flowers and the birds were all to be deposited in the temple of Eileithyia, as a sacrifice to the protecting goddess of women in child-birth. Close behind the bull came Gorgo's mother, dressed with wreaths, walking slowly and timidly, with shy, downcast eyes-thinking perhaps of the anguish to come, and putting up a silent prayer.

Damia followed with the female friends of the house, the clients and their wives and some personal attendants, all carrying pomegranates in the right hand, and holding in the left a long wreath of flowers which thus connected the whole procession.

In this order they reached the ship-yard; but at that spot they were met by a band of crazy monks from the desert monasteries, who, seeing the beast for sacrifice, abused them loudly, cursing the heathen. The slaves indignantly drove them off, but then the starveling anchorites fell upon the innocent beast which was the chief abomination in their eyes. The bull tossed his huge head, snuffing and snorting to right and left, stuck out his tail and rushed away from the boy whose guidance he had till now meekly followed, flung a monk high in the air with his huge horns, and then turned in his fury on the women who were behind.

They fled like a flock of doves on which a hawk comes swooping down; some were driven quite into the lake and others up against the paling of the shipyard, while Damia herself—who was going through it all again in the midst of her efforts to rise to the divinity—and the young wife whom she had vainly tried to shelter and support, were both knocked down. To that hour of terror Gorgo owed her birth, while to her mother it was death.

On the following day Alexandria beheld a funeral ceremony as solemn, as magnificent, and as crowded as though a conquering hero were being entombed; it was that of the monk whom the bull had gored; the Bishop had proclaimed that by this attack on the abomination of desolation—the blood-sacrifice of idolatry—he had won an eternal crown in Paradise.

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But now the black ravens crossed Damia's vision once more, till presently a handsome young Greek gaily drove them off with his thyrsus. His powerful and supple limbs shone with oil, applied in the gymnasium of Timagetes, the scene of his frequent triumphs in all the sports and exercises of the youthful Greeks. His features and waving hair were those of her son Apelles; but suddenly his aspect changed: he was an emaciated penitent, his knees bent under the weight of a heavy cross; his widow, Mary, had declared him a martyr to the cause of the crucified Jew and defamed his memory in the eyes of his own son and of all men. Damia clenched her trembling hands. Again those ravens came swirling round, flapping their wings wildly over the prostrate penitent.

Then her husband appeared to her, calmly indifferent to the birds of ill-omen. He looked just as she remembered him many—so many years ago, when he had come in smiling and said: "The best stroke of business I ever did! For a sprinkling of water I have secured the corn trade with Thessalonica and Constantinople; that is a hundred gold solidi for each drop."

Yes, he had made a good bargain. The profits of that day's work were multiplied by tens, and water, nothing in the world but Nile water—Baptismal water the priest had called it—had filled her son's money-bags, too, and had turned their plot of land into broad estates; but it had been tacitly understood that this sprinkling of water established a claim for a return, and this both father and son had solemnly promised. Its magic turned everything they touched to gold, but it brought a blight on the peace of the household. One branch, which had grown up in the traditions of the old Macedonian stock, had separated from the other; and her husband's great lie lay between them and the family still living in the Canopic way, like a wide ocean embittered with the salt of hatred. That he had infused poison into his son's life and compelled him, proud as he was, to forfeit the dignity of a free and high-minded man. Though devoted in his heart to the old gods he had humbled himself, year after year, to bow the knee with the hated votaries of the Christian faith, and in their church, to their crucified Lord, and had publicly confessed Christ. The water—the terrible thaumaturgic stream—clung to him more inseparably than the brand-mark on a slave's arm. It could neither be dried up nor wiped away; for if the false Christian, who was really a zealous heathen, had boldly confessed the Olympian gods and abjured the odious new faith, the gifts of the all-powerful water and all the possessions of their old family would be confiscated to the State and Church, and the children of Porphyrius, the grandchildren of the wealthy Damia, would be beggars. And this—all this—for the sake of a crucified Jew.

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The gods be praised the end of all this wretchedness was at hand! A thrill of ecstasy ran through her as she reflected that with herself and her children, every soul, everything that bore the name of Christian would be crushed, shattered and annihilated. She could have laughed aloud but that her throat was so dry, her tongue so parched; but her scornful triumph was expressed in every feature, as her fancy showed her Marcus riding along the Canopic street with that little heathen hussy Dada, the singing girl, while her much-hated daughter-in-law looked after them, beating her forehead in grief and rage.

Quite beside herself with delight the old woman rocked backwards and forwards in her chair; not for long, however, for the black birds seemed to fill the whole room, describing swift, interminable spirals round her head. She could not hear them, but she could see them, and the whirling vortex fascinated her; she could not help turning her head to follow their flight; she grew giddy and she was forced to try to recover her balance.

The old woman sat huddled in her chair, her hands convulsively clutching the arms, like a horseman whose steed has run away with him round and round the arena; till at length, worn out by excitement and exhaustion, she became unconscious, and sank in a heap on the ground, rigid and apparently lifeless.

ETEXT *editor's bookmarks*:

Christianity had ceased to be the creed of the poor
He spoke with pompous exaggeration
Whether man were the best or the worst of created beings

SERAPIS

By Georg Ebers

Volume 5.

CHAPTER XX.

Gorgo, when she had left her grandmother, could not rest. Her lofty calmness of demeanor had given way to a restless mood such as she had always contemned severely in others, since she had ceased to be a vehement child and grown to be a woman. She tried to beguile the alarm that made her pulses beat so quickly, and the heart-sickness that ached like a wound, by music and singing; but this only added to her torment. The means by which she could usually recover her equanimity of mind had lost their efficacy, and Sappho's longing hymn, which she began to sing, had only served to bring the fervid longing of her own heart to light—to set it, as it were, in the full glare of the sun. She had become aware that every fibre, every nerve of her being

yearned for the man she loved; she would have thrown away her life like a hollow nut for one single hour of perfect joy with him and in him. The faith in the old gods, the heathen world which contained the ideal of her young soul, her detestation of Christianity, her beautiful art—everything, in short, that had filled the spiritual side of her life, was cast into the shade by the one absorbing passion that possessed her soul. Every feeling,

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every instinct, urged her to abandon herself entirely to her lover, and yet she never for one instant doubted which side she would take in the approaching conflict of the great powers that ruled the world. The last few hours had only confirmed her conviction that the end of all things was at hand. The world was on the eve of destruction; she foresaw that she must perish—perish with Constantine, and that, in her eyes, was a grace from the gods.

While Damia was vainly struggling to liberate her soul from the bondage of the flesh, Gorgo had been wandering uneasily about the house; now going to the slaves, encouraging them with brave words, and giving them employment to keep them from utter desperation, and then stealing up to see whether her grandmother might not by this time be in need of her. As it grew dark she observed that several of the women, and even some of the men, had made their escape. These were such as had already shown a leaning towards the new faith, and who now made off to join their fellow-Christians, or to seek refuge in the churches under the protection of the crucified God whose supreme power might, perhaps, even yet, avert the impending catastrophe.

Twice had Porphyrius sent a messenger to assure his mother and daughter that all was well with him, that a powerful party was prepared to defend the Serapeum, and that he should pass the night in the temple. The Romans were evidently hesitating to attack it, and if, next morning, the heathen should succeed in repelling the first onset, reinforcements might yet be brought up in time. Gorgo could not share these hopes; a client of her father's had brought in a rumor that the Biamites, after advancing as far as Naucratis, had been dispersed by a few of the Imperial maniples. Fate was stalking on its way, and no one could give it pause.

The evening brought no coolness, and when it was already quite dark, as her grandmother had not yet called her, Gorgo could no longer control her increasing anxiety, so, after knocking in vain at the door of the observatory, she went in. Her old nurse preceded her with a lamp, and the two women stood dumb with consternation, for the old lady lay senseless on the ground. Her head was thrown back against the seat of the chair off which she had slipped, and her pale face was lifeless and horrible to look at, with its half-closed eyes and dropped jaw. Wine, water, and strong essences were all at hand, and they laid the unconscious woman on a couch intended for the occasional use of the wearied observer. In a few minutes they had succeeded in reviving the old lady; but her eyes rested without recognition on the girl who knelt by her side, and she murmured to herself: "The ravens—where are they gone? Ravens!"

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Her glance wandered round the room, to the tablets and rolls which had been tossed off the couch and the table to make room for her, and for the lamps and medicaments. They lay in disorder on the floor, and the sight of this confusion produced a favorable excitement and reaction; she succeeded in expressing herself in husky accents and broken, hardly intelligible sentences, so far as to scold them sharply for their irreverence for the precious documents, and for the disorder they had created. The waiting-woman proceeded to pick them up: but Damia again became unconscious. Gorgo bathed her brow and tried to pour some wine between her teeth, but she clenched them too firmly, till the slave-woman came to her assistance and they succeeded in making Damia swallow a few drops. The old woman opened her eyes, smacking her tongue feebly; but she took the cup into her own hand to hold it to her lips; and though she trembled so that half the contents were spilt, she drank eagerly till it was quite empty. "More," she gasped with the eagerness of intense thirst, "more—I want drink!"

Gorgo gave her a second and a third draught which Damia drank with equal eagerness; then, with a deep breath, she looked up fully conscious, at her granddaughter.

"Thank you, child," she said. "Now I shall do very well for a little while. The material world and all that belongs to it weighs us down and clings to us like iron fetters. We may long and strive to be free, but it pursues us and holds us fast. Only those who are content with their miserable humanity can enjoy it. They laugh, as you know, at Praxilla, the poetess, because she makes the dying Adonis lament, when face to face with death, that he is forced to leave the apples and pears behind him. But is not that subtly true? Yes, yes; Praxilla is right! We fast, we mortify ourselves—I have felt it all myself—to partake of divinity. We almost perish of hunger and thirst, when we might be so happy if only we would be satisfied with apples and pears! No man has ever yet succeeded in the great effort; those who would be truly happy must be content with small things. That is what makes children so happy. Apples and pears! Well, everything will be at an end for me ere long—even those. But if the great First Cause spares himself in the universal crash, there is still the grand idea of Apples and Pears; and who knows but that it may please Him, when this world is destroyed, to frame another to come after it. Will He then once more embody the ideas of Man—and Apples and Pears? It would be plagiarism from himself. Nay, if He is merciful, He will never again give substance to that hybrid idea called Man; or, if He does, He will let the poor wretch be happy with apples and pears—I mean trivial joys; for all higher joys, be they what they may, are vanity and vexation. . . . Give me another draught. Ah, that is good! And to-morrow is the end. I could find it in my heart to regret the good gifts of Dionysus myself; it is

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better than apples and pears; next to that comes the joy that Eros bestows on mortals, and there must be an end to all that, too. That, however, is above the level of apples and pears. It is great, very great happiness, and mingled therefor with bitter sorrow. Rapture and anguish—who can lay down the border line that divides them? Smiles and tears alike belong to both. And you are weeping? Aye, aye—poor child! Come here and kiss me." Damia drew the head of the kneeling girl close to her bosom and pressed her lips to Gorge's brow. Presently, however, she relaxed her embrace and, looking about the room, she exclaimed:

"How you have mixed and upset the book-rolls! If only I could show you how clearly everything agrees and coincides. We know now exactly how it will all happen. By the day after to-morrow there will be no more earth, no more sky; and I will tell you this, child: If, when Serapis falls, the universe does not crumble to pieces like a ruinous hovel, then the wisdom of the Magians is a lie, the course of the stars has nothing to do with the destinies of the earth and its inhabitants, the planets are mere lamps, the sun is no more than a luminous furnace, the old gods are marsh-fires, emanations from the dark bog of men's minds—and the great Serapis. . . . But why be angry with him? There is no doubt—no if nor but. . . . Give me the diptychon and I will show you our doom. There—just here—my sight is so dazzled, I cannot make it out.—And if I could, what matter? Who can alter here below what has been decided above? Leave me to sleep now, and I will explain it all to you to-morrow if there is still time. Poor child, when I think how we have tormented you to learn what you know, and how industrious you have been! And now—to what end? I ask you, to what end? The great gulf will swallow up one and all."

"So be it, so be it!" cried Gorgo interrupting her. "Then, at any rate, nothing that I love on earth will be lost to me before I die!"

"And the enemy will perish in the same ruin!" continued Damia, her eyes sparkling with revived fire. "But where shall we go to—where? The soul is divine by nature and cannot be destroyed. It must return—say, am I right or wrong?—It will return to its first fount and cause; for like attracts and absorbs like, and thus our deification, our union with the god will be accomplished."

"I believe it—I am sure of it!" replied Gorgo with conviction.

"You are sure of it?" retorted the old woman. "But I am not. For our clearest knowledge is but guesswork when it is not based on numbers. Nothing is proved or provable but by numbers, but they are surer than the rocks in the sea; that is why I believe in our coming doom, for, on those tablets, we have calculated it to a certainty. But who can calculate evidence of the future fate of the soul? If, indeed, the old order should not

pass away—if the depths should remain below and the empyrean still keep its place above—then,

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to be sure, your studies would not be in vain; for then your soul, which is fixed on spiritual, supernatural and sublime conceptions, would be drawn upwards to the great Intelligence of which it is the offspring, to the very god, and become one with him—-absorbed into him, as the rain-drop fallen from a cloud rises again and is reunited to its parent vapor. Then—for there may be a metempsychosis—your songful spirit might revive to inform a nightingale, then . . .”

Damia paused; and gazed upwards as if in ecstasy, and it was not till a few minutes later that she went on, with a changed expression in her face: “Then my son’s widow, Mary, would be hatched out of a serpent’s egg and would creep a writhing asp. . . . Great gods! the ravens! What can they mean? They come again. Air, air! Wine! I cannot—I am choking—take it away!—To-morrow—to-day. . . . Everything is going; do you see—do you feel? It is all black—no, red; and now black again. Everything is sinking; hold me, save me; the floor is going from under me.—Where is Porphyrius? Where is my son?—My feet are so cold; rub them. It is the water! rising—it is up to my knees. I am sinking—help! save me! help!” The dying woman fought with her arms as if she were drowning; her cries for help grew fainter, her head drooped on her laboring chest, and in a few minutes she had breathed her last in her grandchild’s arms, and her restless, suffering soul was free.

Never before had Gorgo seen death. She could not persuade herself that the heart which had been so cold for others, but had throbbed so warmly and tenderly for her, was now stilled for ever; that the spirit which, even in sleep, had never been at rest, had now found eternal peace. The slave-woman had hastily taken her place, had closed the dead woman’s eyes and mouth, and done all she could to diminish the horror of the scene, and the terrible aspect of the dead in the sight of the girl who had been her one darling. But Gorgo had remained by her side, and, while she did everything in her power to revive the stiffening body, the overwhelming might of Death had come home to her with appalling clearness. She felt the limbs of one she had loved growing cold and rigid under her hands, and her spirit rose in obstinate rebellion against the idea that annihilation stood between her and the woman who had so amply filled a mother’s place. She insisted on having every method of resuscitation tried that had ever been heard of, and made her nurse send for physicians, though the woman solemnly assured her that human help was of no avail: then she sent for the priest of Saturn who—as the dead woman herself had told her—knew mighty spells which had called back many a departed spirit to the body it had quitted.

When, at last, she was alone and gazed on the hard, set features of the dead, though she shuddered with horror, she so far controlled herself as to press her lips in sorrow and gratitude to the thin hand whose caresses she had been wont to accept as a mere matter of course. How cold and heavy it was! She shivered and dropped it, and the

large rings on the fingers rattled on the wooden frame of the couch. There was no hope; she understood that her friend and mother was indeed dead and silent forever.

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Deep and bitter grief overwhelmed her completely, with the sense of abandoned loneliness, the humiliating feeling of helplessness against a brutal power that marches on, scorning humanity, as a warrior treads down the grass and flowers in his path. She fell on her knees by the corpse, sobbing passionately, and crying like an indignant child when a stronger companion has robbed it of some precious possession. She wept with rage at her own impotence; and her tears flowed faster and faster as she more fully realized how lonely she was, and what a blow this must be to her father. In this hour no pleasant reminiscences of past family happiness came to infuse a drop of sweetness into the bitterness of her grief. Only one reflection brought her any comfort, and that was the thought that the grave which had yawned already for her grandmother would soon, very soon, open for herself and all living souls. On the table, close at hand, lay the evidence of their impending doom, and a longing for that end gradually took complete possession of her, excluding every other feeling. Thinking of this she rose from her knees and ceased to weep.

When, presently, her waiting-woman should return, she was resolved to leave the house at once; she could not bear to stay; her feelings and duty alike indicated the place where she might find the last hour's happiness that she expected or desired of life. Her father must learn from herself, and not from a stranger, of the loss that had befallen them, and she knew that he was in the Serapeum—on the very spot where she might hope next morning to meet Constantine. It would be her lover's duty to open the gate to destruction, and she would be there to pass through it at his side.

She waited a long, long time, but at last there was a noise on the stairs. That was her nurse's step, but she was not alone. Had she brought the leech and the exorciser? The door opened and the old steward came in, carrying a three-branched lamp; then followed the slave-woman, and then—her heart stood still then came Constantine and his mother.

Gorgo, pale and speechless, received her unexpected visitors. The nurse had failed to find the physician, whose aid would, at any rate, have come too late; and as the housekeeper had taken herself off with others of the Christian slaves, the faithful soul had said to herself that "her child" would want some womanly help and comfort in her trouble, and had gone to the house of their neighbor Clemens, to entreat his wife to come with her to see the dead, and visit her forlorn young mistress. Constantine, who had come home a short time previously, had said nothing, but had accompanied the two women.

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While Constantine gazed with no unkindly feelings at the still face of Damia—to whom, after all, he owed many a little debt of kindness—and then turned to look at Gorgo who stood downcast, pale, and struggling to breathe calmly, Dame Marianne tried to proffer a few words of consolation. She warmly praised everything in the dead woman which was not in her estimation absolutely reprobate and godless, and brought forward all the comforting arguments which a pious Christian can command for the edification and encouragement of those who mourn a beloved friend; but to Gorgo all this well-meant discourse was as the babble of an unknown tongue; and it was only when, at length, Marianne went up to her and drew her to her motherly bosom, to kiss her, and bid her be welcome under Clelnens' roof till Porphyrius should be at home again, that she understood that the good woman meant kindly, and honestly desired to help and comfort her.

But the allusion to her father reminded her of the first duty in her path; she roused her energies, thanked Marianne warmly, and begged her only to assist her in carrying the corpse into the thalamos, and then to take charge of the keys. She herself, she explained, meant at once to seek her father, since he ought to learn from no one but herself of his mother's death. Nor would she listen for a moment to her friend's pressing entreaties that she would put off this task, and pass the night, at any rate, under her roof.

Constantine had kept in the background; it was not till Gorgo approached the dead and gave the order to carry the body down into the house that he came forward, and with simple feeling offered her his hand. The girl looked frankly in his face, and, as she put her hand in his, she said in a low voice: "I was unjust to you, Constantine. I insulted and hurt you; but I repented sincerely, even before you had left the house. And you owe me no grudge, I know, for you understood how forlorn I must be and came to see me. There is no ill-feeling, is there, nothing to come between us?"

"Nothing, nothing!" he eagerly exclaimed, seizing her other hand with passionate fervor.

She felt as if all the blood in her body had rushed in a full tide to her heart—as if he were some part of her very being, that had been torn out, snatched from her, and that she must have back again, even if it cost them both their life and happiness. The impulse was irresistible; she drew away her hands from his grasp and flung them round his neck, clinging to him as a weary child clings to its mother. She did not know how it had come about—how such a thing was possible, but it was done; and without paying any heed to Marianne, who looked on in dismay while her son's lips were pressed to the brow and lips of the lovely idolatress, she wept upon her lover's shoulders, feeling a thousand roses blossoming in her soul and a thousand thorns piercing and tearing her heart.

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It had to be, that she felt; it was at once their union and their parting. Their common destiny was but for a moment, and that moment had come and gone. All that now retrained for them was death—destruction, with all things living; and she looked forward to this, as a man watches for the dawn after a sleepless night. Marianne stood aside; she dimly perceived that something vital was going on, that something inevitable had happened which would admit of no interference. Gorgo, as she freed herself from Constantine's embrace, stood strangely solemn and unapproachable. To the simple matron she was an inscrutable riddle to which she could find no clue; but she was pleased, nevertheless, when Gorgo came up to her and kissed her hand. She could not utter a word, for she felt that whatever she might say, it would not be the right thing; and it was a real relief to her to busy herself over the removal of the body, in which she could be helpful.

Gorgo had covered the dead face; and when old Damia had been carried down to the thalamos and laid in state on the bridal bed, she strewed the couch with flowers.

Meanwhile, the priest of Saturn had been found, and he declared in all confidence that no power on earth could have recalled this departed soul. Damia's sudden end and the girl's great grief went to his faithful heart, and he gladly acceded to Gorgo's request that he would wait for her by the garden-gate and escort her to the Serapeum. When he had left them she gave the keys of her grandmother's chests and cupboards into Marianne's keeping; then she went into the adjoining room, where Constantine had been waiting while she decked the bed of death, and bid him a solemn, but apparently calm, farewell. He put out his arm to clasp her to his heart, but this she would not permit; and when he besought her to go home with them she answered sadly, "No, my dearest . . . I must not; I have other duties to fulfil."

"Yes," he replied emphatically, "and I, too—I have mine. But you have given yourself to me. You are my very own; you belong to me only, and not to yourself; and I desire, I command you to yield to my first request. Go with my mother, or stay here, if you will, with the dead. Wherever your father may be, it is not, cannot be, the right place for you—my betrothed bride. I can guess where he is. Oh! Gorgo, be warned.

"The fate of the old gods is sealed. We are the stronger and to-morrow, yes to-morrow—by your own head, by all I hold dear and sacred!—Serapis will fall!"

"I know it," she said firmly. "And you are charged to lay hands on the god?"

"I am, and I shall do it."

She nodded approbation and then said submissively and sweetly: "It is your duty, and you cannot do otherwise. And come what may we are one, Constantine, forever one. Nothing can part us. Whatever the future may bring, we belong to each other, to stand or fall together. I with you, you with me, till the end of time." She gave him her hand

and looked lovingly into his eyes; then she threw herself into his mother's arms and kissed her fondly.

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“Come, come with me, my child,” said Marianne; but Gorgo freed herself, exclaiming: “Go, go; if you love me leave me; go and let me be alone.”

She went back into the thalamos where the dead lay at peace, and before the others could follow her she had opened a door hidden behind some tapestry near the bed, and fled into the garden.

CHAPTER XXI.

The night was hot and gloomy. Heavy clouds gathered in the north, and wreaths of mist, like a hot vapor-bath, swayed over the crisply-foaming wavelets that curled the lustreless waters of the Mareotis Lake. The moon peeped, pale and shrouded, out of a russet halo, and ghostly twilight reigned in the streets, still heated by the baked walls of the houses.

To the west, over the desert, a dull sulphurous yellow streaked the black clouds, and from time to time the sultry air was rent by a blinding flash sent across the firmament from the north. There was a hot, sluggish wind blowing from the southwest, which drove the sand across the lake into the streets; the fine grit stung: and burnt the face of the wanderer who hurried on with half-closed eyes and tightly-shut lips. A deep oppression seemed to have fallen on nature and on man; the sudden gusts of the heated breeze, the arrow-like shafts of lightning, the weird shapes and colors of the clouds, all combined to give a sinister, baleful and portentous aspect to this night, as though skies and waters, earth and air were brooding over some tremendous catastrophe.

Gorgo had thrown a veil and handkerchief round her head and followed the priest with an aching brow and throbbing heart. When she heard a step behind her she started-for it might be Constantine following her up; when a gust of wind flung the stinging sand in her face, or the storm-flash threw a lurid light on the sky, her heart stood still, for was not this the prelude to the final crash.

She was familiar with the way they were going, but its length seemed to have stretched tenfold. At last, however, they reached their destination. She gave the pass-word at the gate of her father’s timber-yard and exchanged the signs agreed upon; in a few minutes she had made her way through the piles of beams and planks that screened the entrance to the aqueduct—a slave who knew her leading the way with a light—and she and her companion entered the underground passage.

It was hot and close; bats, scared by the flare of the torch, fluttered round her with a ghostly rustle, startling and disgusting her; still, she felt less alarm here than outside; and when, as she went forward she thought of the great temple she was coming to, of its wonderful beauty and solemn majesty, she only cared to press onward to that refuge

of ineffable splendor where all would be peace. To die there, to perish there with her lover, did not seem hard; nay, she felt proud to think that she might await death in the noblest edifice ever raised to a god by mortal hands. Here Fate might have its way; she had known the highest joy she had ever dreamed of, and where on earth was there a sublimer tomb than this sanctuary of the sovereign of the universe, whose supremacy even the other gods acknowledged with trembling!

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She had known the sacred halls of the temple from her childhood, and she pictured them as filled with thousands of lofty souls, united in this supreme hour by one feeling and one purpose. She even fancied she could hear the inspired and heartfelt strains of the enthusiasts who were prepared to give their lives for the god of their fathers, that she breathed the odor of incense and burnt sacrifices, that she saw the chorus of youths and maidens, led by priests and dancing with solemn grace in mazy circles round the flower-decked altars. There among the elders who had gathered round Olympius to meditate devoutly on the coming doom and on the inmost meaning of the mysteries—among the adepts who were anxiously noting, in the observatories of the Serapeum, the fateful courses of the stars, the swirling of the clouds and the flight of birds, she would doubtless find her father; and the fresh wound bled anew as she remembered that she was the bearer of news which must deeply shock and grieve him. Still, no doubt, she would find him wrapped in dignified readiness for the worst, sorrowing serenely for the doomed world, and so her melancholy message would come to a prepared and resigned heart.

She had no fear of the crowd of men she would find in the Serapeum. Her father and Olympius were there to protect her, and Dame Herse, too, would be a support and comfort; but even without those three, on such a night as this—the last perhaps that they might ever see—she would have ventured without hesitation among thousands, for she firmly believed that every votary of the gods was awaiting his own end and the crash of falling skies with devout expectancy, and perhaps with not less terror than herself.

These were her thoughts as she and her guide stopped at a strong door. This was presently opened and they found themselves in an underground chamber, devoted to the mysteries of the worship of Serapis, in which the adepts were required to go through certain severe ordeals before they were esteemed worthy to be received into the highest order of the initiated—the Esoterics. The halls and corridors which she now went through, and which she had never before seen, were meagrely lighted with lamps and torches, and all that met her eye filled her with reverent awe while it excited her imagination. Everything, in fact—every room and every image—was as unlike nature, and as far removed from ordinary types as possible, in arrangement and appearance. After passing through a pyramidal room, with triangular sides that sloped to a point, she came to one in the shape of a polygonal prism. In a long, broad corridor she had to walk on a narrow path, bordered by sphinxes; and there she clung tightly to her guide, for on one side of the foot-way yawned a gulf of great depth. In another place she heard, above her head, the sound of rushing waters, which then fell into the abyss beneath with a loud roar. After this she came upon a large grotto, hewn in the living rock and defended

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by a row of staring crocodiles' heads, plated with gold; the heavy smell of stale incense and acrid resins choked her, and her way now lay over iron gratings and past strangely contrived furnaces. The walls were decorated with colored reliefs: Tantalus, Ixion, and Sisyphus toiling at his stone, looked down on her in hideous realism as she went. Rock chambers, fast closed with iron doors, as though they enclosed inestimable treasures or inscrutable secrets, lay on either hand, and her dress swept against numerous images and vessels closely shrouded in hangings.

When she ventured to look round, her eye fell on monstrous forms and mystical signs and figures; if she glanced upwards, she saw human and animal forms, and mixed with these the various constellations, sailing in boats—the Egyptian notion of their motions—along the back of a woman stretched out to an enormous length; or, again, figures by some Greek artist: the Pleiades, Castor and Pollux as horsemen with stars on their heads, and Berenice's star-gemmed hair.

The effect on the girl was bewildering, overpowering, as she made her way through this underground world. The things she had glimpses of were very sparely illuminated, nay scarcely discernible, and yet appallingly real; what mysteries, what spells might not be hidden in all she did not see! She felt as if the end of life, which she was looking for, had already begun, as if she had already gone down, alive, into Hades.

The path gradually sloped upwards and at last she ascended, by a spiral staircase, to the ground-floor of the temple. Once or twice she had met a few men, but solemn silence reigned in those subterranean chambers.

The sound of their approaching and receding steps had only served to make her aware of the complete stillness. This was just as it should be—just as she would have it. This peace reminded her of the profound silence of nature before a tempest bursts and rages.

Gorgo took off her veil as she went up the stairs, shook out the folds of her dress, and assumed the dignified and reverent demeanor which became a young girl of rank and position when approaching the altars of the divinity. But as she reached the top a loud medley of noises and voices met her ear-flutes, drums?—The sacred dance, she supposed, must be going on.

She came out into a room on one side of the hypostyle; her companion opened a high door, plated with gilt bronze and silver, and Gorgo followed him, walking gravely with her head held high and her eyes fixed on the ground, into the magnificent hall where the sacred image sat enthroned in veiled majesty. They crossed the colonnade at the side of the hypostyle and went down two steps into the vast nave of the temple.

The wild tumult that she had heard on first opening the door had surprised and puzzled her; but now, as she timidly looked up and around her, she felt a shock of horror and revulsion such as might come over a man who, walking by night and believing that he is treading on flowers, suddenly finds that the slimy slope of a bottomless bog is leading him to perdition. She tottered and clutched at a statue, gazing about her, listening to the uproar, and wondering whether she were awake or dreaming.

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She tried not to see and hear what was going on there; it was revolting, loathsome, horrible; but it was too manifest to be overlooked or ignored; its vulgarity and horror forced it on her attention. For some time she stood spell-bound, paralyzed; but then she covered her face with her hands; maidenly shame, bitter disillusion, and pious indignation at the gross desecration of all that she deemed most sacred and inviolable surged up in her stricken soul, and she burst into tears, weeping as she had never wept in all her life before. Sobbing bitterly, she wrapped her face in her veil, as though to protect herself from storm and chill.

No one heeded her; her companion had left her to seek her father. She could only await his return, and she looked round for a hiding place. Then she observed a woman in mourning garb sitting huddled at the foot of the statue of justice; she recognized her as the widow of Asclepiodorus and breathed more freely as she went up to her and said, between her sobs “Let me sit by you; we can mourn together.”

“Yes, yes, come,” said the other; and without enquiring what Gorgo’s trouble might be, moved only by the mysterious charm of finding another in like sorrow with herself, she drew the girl to her and bending over her, at length found relief in tears.

The two weeping women sat in silence, side by side, while in front of them the orgy went on its frantic course. A party of men and women were dancing down the hall, singing and shouting. Flutes yelled, cymbals clanged, drums rattled and droned, without either time or tune. Drunken pastophori had flung open the rooms where the vestments and sacred vessels were kept, and from these treasuries the ribald mob had dragged forth panther-skins such as the priests wore when performing the sacred functions, brass cars for carrying sacrifices, wooden biers on which the images of the gods were borne in solemn processions, and other precious objects. In a large room adjoining, a party of students and girls were concocting some grand scheme for which they needed much time and large supplies of wine; but most of those who had possessed themselves of the plunder had taken it into the hypostyle and were vying with each other in extravagant travesties.

A burly wine-grower was elected to represent Dionysus and was seated with nothing but some wreaths of flowers to cover his naked limbs, in a four-wheeled sacrificial car of beaten brass. An alabaster wine-jar stood between his fat knees, and his heavy body rolled with laughter as he was drawn in triumph through the sacred arcades by a shouting rabble, as fast as they could run. Numbers of the intoxicated crew, mad with excitement and wine, had cast off their clothes which lay in heaps between the pillars, soaking in puddles of spilt wine. In their wild dance the girls’ hair had fallen about their heated faces, tangled with withered leaves and faded flowers, and the men, young and old alike, leaped and waltzed like possessed creatures, flourishing thyrsus-staves and the emblems of the lusty wine-god.

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A small band of priests and philosophers ventured into the chaos in the hope of quelling the riot, but a tipsy flute-player placed himself in front of them and throwing back his head blew a furious blast to heaven on his double pipe, shrill enough to wake the dead, while a girl seconded him by flinging her tambourine in the face of the intruding pacificators. It bounced against the shaft of a column, and then fell on the shaven head of a priestling, who seized it and tossed it back. The game was soon taken up, and before long, one tambourine after another was flying over the heads of the frenzied crew. Every one was eager to have one, and sprung to catch them, scuffling and struggling and making the parchment sound on his neighbor's head.

Some of the women had jumped on to the processional biers and were being carried round the hall by staggering youths, screaming with alarm and laughter; if one of them lost her balance and fell she was captured with shrieks of merriment and forced to mount her insecure eminence again. Presently the car of Dionysus came to wreck over the body of an unconscious toper, but no one stopped to set it right; and though the hapless representative of the god howled loudly to them to stop while he extricated himself from the machine, in which he had stuck, it was in vain; the score or so of youths who were dragging it tore on, passing close by Gorgo, who noted with indignation, that the brasswork of the axles was cutting deeply into the splendid mosaic of the pavement. At last the burly god fell out by his sheer weight, and his followers restored him to consciousness by taking him by the heels and dipping his towzled and bleeding head into a huge jar of wine and water. Then some hundreds of his drunken votaries danced madly round the rescued god; and as all the tambourines were split and the flute-players had no breath left, time was kept by beating with thyrsus-staves against the pillars, while three men, who had found the brazen tubas among the temple vessels, blew with all their might and main.

Strong opposition, however, was roused by this mad uproar. A party of worshippers, in the first place, rebelled against it; these had been standing with veiled heads, near the statue of Serapis, muttering exorcisms after a Magian and howling lamentably at intervals; then a preacher, who had succeeded in collecting a little knot of listeners, bid the trumpeters cease; and finally, a party of actors and singers, who had assembled in the outer hall to perform a satira play, tried to stop them, though they themselves were making such a noise that the trumpet-blast could have affected them but little. When the players found that remonstrance had no effect they rushed into the hypostyle and tried to reduce the musicians to silence by force.

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Then a frenzied contest began; but the combatants were soon separated; the actors and their antagonists fell on each other's necks, and a Homeric poet, who had compiled an elegy for the evening on the "Gods coerced by the hosts of the new superstition," made up simply of lines culled from the Iliad and Odyssey, seized this favorable opportunity. He had begun to read it at the top of his voice, screaming down the general din, when everything was forgotten in the excitement caused by the entrance of a procession which was the successful result of many raids on the temple-treasuries and lumber-rooms.

A storm of applause greeted its appearance; the tipsiest stammered out his approval, and the picture presented to drunken eyes was indeed a beautiful and gorgeous one. On a high platform-intended for the display of a small image of Serapis and certain symbols of the god, at great festivals—Glycera, the loveliest hetaira of the town, was drawn in triumph through the temple. She reclined in a sort of bowl representing a shell, placed at the top of the platform, and on the lower stages sat groups of fair girls, swaying gently with luxurious grace, and flinging flowers down to the crowd who, with jealous rivalry, strove to catch them. Everyone recognized the beautiful hetaira as Aphrodite, and she was hailed, as with one voice, the Queen of the World. The men rushed forward to pour libations in her honor, and to join hands and dance in a giddy maze round her car.

"Take her to Serapis!" shouted a drunken student. "Marry her to the god. Heavenly Love should be his bride!"

"Yes—take her to Serapis," yelled another. "It is the wedding of Serapis and Glycera."

The crazy rabble pushed the machine towards the curtain, with the beautiful, laughing woman on the top, and her bevy of languishing attendants.

Until this instant the vivid lightning outside, and the growling of distant thunder had not been heeded by the revellers, but now a blinding flash lighted up the hall and, at the same instant, a tremendous peal crashed and rattled just above them, and shook the desecrated shrine. A sulphurous vapor came rolling in at the openings just below the roof, and this first flash was immediately followed by another which seemed to have rent the vault of heaven, for it was accompanied by a deafening and stunning roar and a terrific rumbling and creaking, as though the metal walls of the firmament had burst asunder and fallen in on the earth—on Alexandria—on the Serapeum.

The whole awful force of an African tempest came crashing down upon them; the wild revel was stilled; the trembling topers dropped their cups, fevered checks turned pale, the dancers parted and threw up their hands in agonized supplication, words of lust and blasphemy died on their lips and turned to prayers and muttered charms. The terrified nymphs that surrounded Venus sprang from the car, and the foam-born goddess in the shell tried to free herself from the garlands and gauzes in which she was involved,

shrieking aloud when she perceived that she could not descend unaided from her elevated position. Other voices mingled with hers—lamenting, cursing, and entreating; for now the rainclouds burst, and through the window-openings poured a cold flood, chilling and wetting the drunken mob within.

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The storm raved through the halls and corridors; lightning and thunder raged fiercely overhead; and the terrified wretches, suddenly sobered, rushed about or huddled together, like ants whose nest has been upturned. And into the midst of this dismayed throng rushed Orpheus, the son of Karnis, who had been till now on guard on the roof, crying out: "The world is coming to an end, the heavens are opening! Father—where is my father?"

And everyone believed him; they snatched off their garlands, tore their hair and gave themselves up to the utmost despair. Wailing, sobbing, howling-furious, but impotent, they appealed to each other; and though they had no hope of living to see another morning, or perhaps another hour, each one thought only of himself, of his garments, and of how he might best cover his limbs that shivered with terror and cold. From the Scuffling mob round the heaps of cast-off clothes came deep groans, piteous weeping, the shrieks of women, and the despairing moans of the panic-stricken wretches.

It was a fearful scene, at once heart-rending and revolting; Gorgo looked on, gnashing her teeth with rage and disgust, and only wishing for the end of the world and of her own life as a respite from it all. These crazed and miserable wretches, cowardly fools, these beasts in the guise of human beings, deserved no better than to perish; but was it conceivable that the supreme being should destroy the whole of the beautiful and wisely-planned world for the sake of this base and loathsome rabble.

It thundered, it lightened, the foundations of the temple shook—but she no longer looked for the final crash; she had ceased to believe in the majesty, the power and the purity of the divinity behind the veil. Her cheeks burnt with shame, she felt it a disgrace ever to have been numbered among his adherents; and, as the howling of the terrified crowd grew every moment louder and wilder, the memory of Constantine's grave and fearless manliness rose before her, in all its strength and beauty. She was his, his wholly and forever; and for the future all that was his should be hers: his love, his home, his noble purpose—and his God.

CHAPTER XXII.

The doubtful light of dawn was beginning to break through the storm-clouds as they exhausted their fury on the Serapeum, but the terrified heathen did not notice it. No captain, no prophet, no comforter had come to revive their courage and hopes; for Olympius and his guests, the leaders of the intellectual life of Alexandria—and among them the chief priests of the sanctuary—were tardy in making their appearance.

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The lightning-flash which had fallen on the brassplated cupola, and then discharged its force along a flagstaff, had alarmed even the sages and philosophers; and the Symposium had come to an abrupt end but little more dignified than the orgy in the temple-halls. Few, to be sure, of the high-priest's friends had allowed themselves to be so far scared as to betray their terrors frankly; on the contrary, when the crack of doom really seemed to have sounded, rhetoric and argument grew even more eager than before round Olympius' table; and Gorgo's opinion of her fellow-heathen might not have been much raised if she could have heard Helladius, the famous philologist and biographer, reciting verses from "Prometheus bound," his knees quaking and lips quivering as he heard the thunder; or seen Ammonius, another grammarian who had written a celebrated work on "The Differences of Synonyms," rending his robe and presenting his bared breast as a target to the lightning, with a glance round at the company to challenge their admiration. His heroic display was, unfortunately, observed by few; for most of them, including Eunapius, a neo-platonic philosopher distinguished as a historian and an implacable foe of the Christians, had wrapped their heads in their robes and were awaiting the end in sullen resignation. Some had dropped on their knees and were praying with uplifted hands, or murmuring incantations; and a poet, who had been crowned for a poem entitled: "Man the Lord and Master of the Gods," had fainted with fear, and his laurel-wreath had fallen into a dish of oysters.

Olympius had risen from his place as Symposiarch and was leaning against a door-post awaiting death with manly composure. Father Karnis, who had made rather too free with the wine-cup, but had been completely sobered by the sudden fury of the storm, had sprung up and hastened past the high-priest to seek his wife and son; he knew they could not be far off, and desired to perish with them.

Porphyrius and his next neighbor, Apuleius, the great physician, were among those who had covered their faces. Porphyrius could look forward more calmly than many to the approaching crisis; for, as a cautious man and far-seeing merchant, he had made provision for every contingency. If, in spite of a Christian victory, the world should still roll on, and if the law which declared invalid the will of an apostate should be enforced against him, a princely fortune, out of the reach of Church or State, lay safe in the hands of a wealthy and trustworthy friend for his daughter's use; if, on the other hand, heaven and earth met in a common doom, he had by him an infallible remedy against a lingering and agonizing death.

The whole party had sat during some long and anxious minutes, listening to the appalling thunder-claps, when Orpheus rushed into the banqueting-room, with the same frenzied and terror-stricken haste as before, among the revellers, crying: "It is the end-all is over! The world is falling asunder! Fire is come down from heaven! The earth is in flames already—I saw it with my own eyes! I have come down from the roof. . . .

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“Father! Where is my father?”

At this news the company started up in fresh alarm, Pappus, the mathematician, cried out: “The conflagration has begun! Flame and fire are falling from the skies!”

“Lost-lost!” wailed Eunapius; while Porphyrius hastily felt in the folds of his purple garment, took out a small crystal phial and went, pale but calm, up to the high-priest. He laid his hand on the arm of the friend whom he had looked up to all his life with affectionate admiration, and said with an expression of tender regret:

“Farewell. We have often disputed over the death of Cato—you disapproving and I approving it. Now I follow his example. Look—there is enough for us both.”

He hastily put the phial to his mouth, and part of the liquid had passed his lips before Olympius understood the situation and seized his arm. The effect of the deadly fluid was instantly manifest; but Porphyrius had hardly lost consciousness when Apuleius had rushed to his side. The physician had succumbed to the universal panic and resigned himself doggedly to Fate; but as soon as an appeal was made to his medical skill and he heard a cry for help, he had thrown off the wrapper from his head and hastened to the merchant’s side to combat the effects of the poison, as clear-headed and decisive as in his best hours by the bed of sickness or in the lecture-room.

When the very backbone of the soul seems to be broken, a sense of duty is the one and last thing that holds it together and keeps it upright; and nature has implanted in us such a strong and instinctive regard for life—which we are so apt to contemn—that even within a few paces of the grave we cherish and foster it as carefully as in its prime, when the end seems still remote.

The merchant’s desperate deed had been done under the very eyes of Orpheus, and the newer horror so completely overshadowed the older, that he hastened unbidden to help the physician lay the unconscious man on the nearest couch; but then he went off again in search of his parents. Olympius, however, who at the sight of his friend’s weakness had suddenly comprehended how much depended, in these last hours, on his own resolute demeanor, detained the youth, and sternly desired him to give an exact and clear account of what had happened on the roof. The young musician obeyed; and his report was certainly far from reassuring.

A ball of fire had fallen with a terrific noise on the cupola, mingling with flames that seemed to rise like streams of fire from the earth. Then, again the heavens had opened with a blinding flash and Orpheus had seen—with his own eyes seen—a gigantic monster—an uprooted mountain perhaps—which had slowly moved towards the back-wall of the Serapeum with an appalling clatter; and not rain, but rivers, rushing torrents of water, had poured down on the men on guard.

“It is Poseidon,” cried the lad, “bringing up the ocean against the temple, and I heard the neighing of his horses. It was not an illusion, I heard it with my own ears. . . .”

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“The horses of Poseidon!” interrupted Olympius. “The horses of the Imperial cavalry were what you heard!”

He ran to the window with the activity of a younger man and, lifting the curtain, looked out to the eastward. The storm had vanished as rapidly as it had come up and it was day. Over the rosy skirts of Eos hung a full and heavy robe of swelling grey and black clouds, edged with a fringe of sheeny gold. To the north a sullen flash now and then zigzagged across the dark sky, and the roll of the thunder was faint and distant; but the horses whose neighing had affrighted Orpheus were already near; they were standing close to the southern or back-wall of the temple, in which there was no gate or entrance of any kind. What object could the Imperial cavalry have in placing themselves by that strong and impenetrable spot?

But there was no time for much consideration, for at this instant the gong, which was sounded to call the defenders of the Serapeum together, rang through the precincts.

Olympius needed no spur or encouragement. He turned to his guests with the passion and fire of a fanatical leader, of the champion of a great but imperilled cause, and bid them be men and stand by him to resist the foe till death. His voice was husky with excitement as he spoke his brief but vehement call to arms, and the effect was immense, precisely because the speaker, carried away by the tide of feeling, had not tried to impress the learned and eloquent men whom he addressed by any tricks of elocution or choice of words. They, too, were fired by the spark of the old man’s enthusiasm; they gathered round him, and followed him at once to the rooms where the weapons had been deposited for use.

Breastplates girt on to their bodies, and swords wielded in their hands made soldiers of the sages at once, and inspired them with martial ardor. Little was spoken among these heroes of “the mighty word.” They were bent on action. Olympius Had desired Apuleius to go into his private room adjoining the hypostyle with Porphyrius, on whose senseless and rigid state no treatment had as yet had any effect. Some of the temple-servants carried the merchant down a back staircase, while Olympius hastily and silently led his comrades in arms up the main steps into the great halls of the temple.

Here the chivalrous host were doomed to surprise and disappointment greater than the most hopeless of them was prepared to meet. Olympius himself for a moment despaired; for his ecstatic adherents had during the night turned to poltroons and tipplers, and the sacred precincts of the sanctuary looked as if a battle had been fought and lost there. Broken and bruised furniture, smashed instruments, garments torn and wet, draggled wreaths, and faded flowers were strewn in every direction. The red wine lay in pools like blood on the scarred beauties of the inlaid pavement; here and there, at the foot of a column, lay an inert body—whether dead or merely senseless who could guess?—and the sickening reek of hundreds of dying lamps filled the air, for in the confusion they had been left to burn or die as they might.

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And how wretched was the aspect of the sobered, terror-stricken, worn-out men and women. An obscure consciousness of having insulted the god and incurred his wrath lurked in every soul. To many a one prompt death would have seemed most welcome, and one man—a promising pupil of Helladius, had actually taken the leap from existence into the non-existence which, as he believed, he should find beyond the grave; he had run his had violently against a pillar, and lay at the foot of it with a broken skull.

With reeling brains, aching brows, and dejected hearts, the unhappy creatures had got so far as to curse the present; and those who dared to contemplate the future thought of it only as a bottomless abyss, towards which the flying hours were dragging them with unfelt but irresistible force. Time was passing—each could feel and see that; night was gone, it would soon be day; the storm had passed over, but instead of the inexorable powers of nature a new terror now hung over them: the no less inexorable power of Caesar. To the struggle of man against the gods there was but one possible end: Annihilation. In the conflict of man against man there might yet be, if not victory, at least escape. The veteran Memnon, with his one arm, had kept watch on the temple-roof during that night's orgy, planning measures for repulsing the enemy's attack, till the storm had burst on him and his adherents with the "artillery of heaven." Then the greater portion of the garrison had taken refuge in the lower galleries of the Serapeum, and the old general was left alone at his post, in the blinding and deafening tempest. He threw his remaining arm round a statue that graced the parapet of the roof to save himself from being swept or washed away; and he would still have shouted his orders, but that the hurricane drowned his voice, and none of his few remaining adherents could have heard him speak. He, too, had heard the champing of horses and had seen the moving mountain which Orpheus had described. It was in fact a Roman engine of war; and, faithful though he was to the cause he had undertaken, something like a feeling of joy stirred his warrior's soul, as he looked down on the fine and well-drilled men who followed the Imperial standards under which he had, ere now, shed his best blood. His old comrades in arms had not forgotten how to defy the tempest, and their captains had been well advised in preparing to attack first what seemed the securest side of the temple. The struggle, he foresaw, would be against tried soldiers, and it was with a deep curse and a smile of bitter scorn that he thought of the inexperienced novices under his command. It was only yesterday that he had tried to moderate Olympius' sanguine dreams, and had said to him: "It is not by enthusiasm but by tactics that we defeat a foe!"

The skill and experience he had to contend with were in no respect inferior to his own; and he would know, only too soon, what the practical worth might be of the daring and enthusiastic youths whom he had undertaken to command, and of whom he still had secret hopes for the best.

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The one thing to do was to prevent the Christians from effecting the breach which they evidently intended to make in the back-wall, before the Libyan army of relief should arrive; and, at the same time, to defend the front of the temple from the roof. There was a use for every one who could heave a stone or flourish a sword; and when he thought over the number of his troops he believed he might succeed in holding the building for some considerable time. But he was counting on false premises, for he did not know how attractive the races had proved to his “enthusiastic youth” and how great a change had come over most of them.

As soon as the wind had so far subsided that he could stand alone, he went to collect those that still remained, and to have the brass gong sounded which was to summon the combatants to their posts. Its metallic clang rang loud and far through the dim dawn; a deaf man might have heard it in the deepest recess of the sanctuary—and yet the minutes slipped by—a quarter of an hour—and no one had come at its call. The old captain’s impatience turned to surprise, his surprise became wrath. The messengers he sent down did not return and the great moving shed of the Romans was brought nearer and nearer to the southern side of the temple, screening the miners from the rare missiles which the few men remaining with him cast clown by his orders.

The enemy were evidently making a suitable foundation on which to place the storming engine—a beam with a ram’s head of iron-to make a breach in the temple-wall. Every minute’s delay on the part of the besieged was an advantage to the enemy. A hundred-two hundred more hands on the roof, and their tactics might yet be defeated.

Tears of rage, of the bitter sense of impotence, started to the old soldier’s eyes; and when, at length, one of his messengers came back and told him that the men and women alike seemed quite demented, and all and each refused to come up on the roof, he uttered a wrathful curse and rushed down-stairs himself.

He stormed in on the trembling wretches; and when he beheld with his own eyes all that his volunteers had done dining that fateful night, he raved and thundered; asked them, rather confusedly perhaps, if they knew what it was to be expected to command and find no obedience; scolded the refractory, driving some on in front of him; and then, as he perceived that some of them were making off with the girls through the door leading to the secret passage, he placed himself on guard with his sword drawn, and threatened to cut down any who attempted to escape.

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In the midst of all this Olympius and his party had come into the ball and seeing the commander struggling, sword in hand, with the recalcitrant fugitives, where the noise was loudest, he and his guests hastened to the rescue and defended the door against the hundreds who were crowding to fly. The old man was grieved to turn the weapons they had seized in their sacred ardor, against the seceders from their own cause; but it had to be. While the loyal party—among them Karnis and Orpheus—guarded the passage to the underground rooms with shield and lance, Olympius took council of the veteran captain, and they rapidly decided to allow all the women to depart at once and to divide the men into two parties-one to be sent to fight on the roof, and the other to defend the wall where the Roman battering-ram was by this time almost ready to attack.

The high-priest took his stand boldly between his adherents and the would-be runaways and appealed to them in loud and emphatic tones to do their duty. They listened to him silently and respectfully; but when he ended by stating that the women were commanded to withdraw, a terrific outcry was raised, some of the girls clung to their lovers, while others urged the men to fight their way out.

Several, however, and among them the fair Glycera who a few hours since had smiled down triumphantly on her worshippers as Aphrodite, availed themselves at once of the permission to quit this scene of horrors, and made their way without delay to the subterranean passages. They had adorers in plenty in the city. But they did not get far; they were met by a temple-servant flying towards the great hall, who warned them to return thither at once: the Imperial soldiers had discovered the entrance to the aqueduct and posted sentries in the timber-yard. They turned and followed him with loud lamentations, and hardly had they got back into the temple when a new terror came upon them: the iron battering-ram came with a first heavy shock, thundering against the southern wall.

The Imperial troops were in fact masters of the secret passage; and they had begun the attack on the Serapeum in earnest. It was serious—but all was not yet lost; and in this fateful hour Olympius and Memnon proved their mettle. The high-priest commanded that the great stone trap-doors should be dropped into their places, and that the bridges across the gulfs, in the underground rooms reserved for the initiated, should be destroyed; and this there was yet time to do, for the soldiers had not yet ventured into those mysterious corridors, where there could not fail to be traps and men in ambush. Memnon meanwhile had hurried to the spot where the battering-ram had by this time dealt a second blow, shouting as he went to every man who was not a coward to follow him.

Karnis, Orpheus and the rest of the high-priest's guests obeyed his call and gathered round him; he commanded that everything portable should be brought out of the temple to be built into a barricade behind the point of attack, and that neither the most precious and beautiful statues, nor the brass and marble stelae and altar-slabs should be spared. Screened by this barricade, and armed with lances and bows—of which there

were plenty at hand—he proposed, when the breach was made, to check the further advance of the foe.

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He was not ill-pleased that the only way of escape was cut off; and as soon as he had seen the statues dragged from their pedestals, the altar-stones removed from the sacred places they had filled for half a century, benches and jars piled together and a stone barricade thus fairly advanced towards completion, he drafted off a small force for the defences on the roof. There was no escape now; and many a one who, to the very last, had hoped to find himself free, mounted the stairs reluctantly, because he would there be more immediately in the face of the foe than when defending the breach.

Olympius distributed weapons, and went from one to another, speaking words of encouragement; presently he found Gorgo who, with the bereaved widow, was still sitting at the foot of the statue of justice. He told her that her father was ill, and desired a servant to show her the way to his private room, that she might help the leech in attending on him. Berenice could not be induced to stir; she longed only for the end and was persuaded that it could not be far off. She listened eagerly to the blows of the battering-engine; each one sounded to her like a shock to the very structure of the universe. Another—and another—and at last the ancient masonry must give way and the grave that had already opened for her husband and her son would yawn to swallow her up with her sorrows. She shuddered and drew her hood over her face to screen it from the sun which now began to shine in. Its light was a grievance to her; she had hoped never to see another day.

The women, and with them a few helpless weaklings, had withdrawn to the rotunda, and before long they were laughing as saucily as ever.

From the roof blocks of stone and broken statues were hailing down on the besiegers, and in the halls below, the toiler who paused to wipe the sweat from his brow would brook no idleness in his comrade; the most recalcitrant were forced to bestir themselves, and the barricade inside the southern wall soon rose to a goodly height. No rampart was ever built of nobler materials; each stone was a work of art and had been reverenced for centuries as something sacred, or bore in an elegant inscription the memorial of noble deeds. This wall was to protect the highest of the gods, and among the detachment told off to defend it, were Karnis, his son, and his wife.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Gorgo sat by the bed of her apparently lifeless father, gazing fondly at the worn and wax-like features, and listening to his breathing, now soft and easy and again painful and convulsive, as it fluttered through his nostrils. She held his cold damp hand tightly clasped, or stroked it gently, or now and then, when his closed eyelids quivered, raised it tenderly to her lips.

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The room in which they were lay on one side of the hypostyle and behind the right-hand—or western—colonnade; more forward, therefore, than the veiled statue and to its left hand. The noise of the toilers at the barricade and the crash of the blows of the battering-ram came up from just below, and at each thud of the engine the senseless man started convulsively and a look of intense pain crossed his face. But, though it was indeed grievous to Gorgo to see her father suffering, though she told herself again and again that, ere long, the sanctuary must fall into the hands of the Christians, she felt safe, thankful and sheltered up here, in her old friend's half-lighted and barely-furnished room, shut off, at any rate, from the frenzied wretches of whom she thought only with loathing and fear.

She was wearied out with her night of unrest, but the agitation and excitement she had gone through were still vividly present to her mind, and even on the comfortable couch in her own snug room at home her perturbed spirit would have prevented her sleeping. Her brain was still in a ferment, and here, in comparative peace, she had time to think over all she had gone through during the last few hours, and the catastrophes that had befallen her grandmother and her father. She had exchanged but few words with the physician, who was still unceasingly busy in trying to restore his patient to consciousness, and who had assured her that he had every hope of her father's recovery.

But at length the girl looked up with an eager gaze and said, sadly enough: "You said something about an antidote to poison, Apuleius? Then my father tried to escape the final destruction by attempting to kill himself.—Is it so?"

The leech looked at her keenly, and after confirming her suspicion and explaining to her exactly how the fateful deed had been accomplished, he went on:

"The storm had completely unnerved him—it unmanned us all—and yet that was only the prelude to the tremendous doom which is hanging over the universe. It is at hand; we can hear its approach; the stones are yielding! the Christian's engines are opening the way for it to enter!"

Apuleius spoke in a tone of sinister foreboding, and the falling stones dislodged by the battering-ram thundered a solemn accompaniment to his prophecy. Gorgo, turned pale; but it was not the physician's ominous speech that alarmed her, but the quaking of the walls of the room. Still, the Serapeum was built for eternity; the ram might bring down a wall, but it could not destroy or even shake the building itself.

Outside, the hubbub of fighting men grew louder and louder every minute, and Apuleius, increasingly anxious, went to the door to listen. Gorgo could see that his hands trembled! he—a man—was frightened, while she felt no anxiety but for her suffering father! Through that breach Constantine would enter—and where he commanded she was safe. As to the destruction of the universe—she

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no longer believed in it. When the physician turned round and saw her calmly and quietly wiping the cold drops from the sick man's brow, he said gloomily: "Of what use is it to shut our eyes like the ostrich. They are fighting down there for life or death—we had better prepare for the end. If they venture—and they will—to lay a sacrilegious hand on the god, besiegers and besieged alike—the whole world together, must perish."

But Gorgo shook her head. "No, no," she cried, with zealous confidence. "No, Apuleius, Serapis is not what you believe him to be; for, if he were, would he suffer his enemies to overthrow his temple and his image? Why does he not, at this supreme moment, inspire his worshippers with courage? I have seen the men—mere boys—and the women who have assembled here to fight for him. They are nothing but drivellers and triflers. If the master is like his men it serves him right if he is overthrown; to weep for him would be waste of woe!"

"And can the daughter of Porphyrius say this?" exclaimed the leech.

"Yes, Apuleius, yes. After what I have seen, and heard, and endured this night, I cannot speak otherwise. It was shameful, horrible, sickening; I could rage at the mere thought of being supposed to be one of that debased crew. It is disgrace and ignominy even to be named in the same breath! A god who is served as this god has been is no god of mine! And you—you are learned—a sage and a philosopher—how can you believe that the God of the Christians when he has conquered and crippled yours, will ever permit Serapis to destroy His world and the men He created?"

Apuleius drew himself up. "Are you then a Christian?" he asked swiftly and sternly.

But Gorgo could not reply; she colored deeply and Apuleius vehemently repeated his question: "Then you really are a Christian?"

She looked frankly in his face: "No," she said, "I am not; but I wish I were."

The physician turned away with a shrug; but Gorgo drew a breath of relief, feeling that her avowal had lifted a heavy burthen from her soul. She hardly knew how the bold and momentous confession had got itself spoken, but she felt that it was the only veracious answer to the physician's question.

They spoke no more; she was better pleased to remain silent, for her own utterance had opened out to her a new land of promise—of feeling and of thought.

Her lover henceforth was no longer her enemy; and as the tumult of the struggle by the breach fell on her ear, she could think with joy of his victorious arms. She felt that this was the purer, the nobler, the better cause; and she rejoiced in the love of which he had spoken as the support and the stay of their future life together—as sheltering them like

a tower of strength and a mighty refuge. Compared with that love all that she had hitherto held dear or indispensable as gracing life, now seemed vain and worthless; and as she looked at her father's

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still face, and remembered how he had lived and what he had suffered, she applied those words of Paul which Constantine had spoken at their meeting after his return, to him, too; and her heart overflowed with affection towards her hapless parent. She knew full well the meaning of the deep lines that marked his lips and brow; for Porphyrius had never made any secret of his distress and vexation whenever he found himself compelled to confess a creed in which he did not honestly believe. This great falsehood and constant duplicity, this divided allegiance to two masters, had poisoned the existence of a man by nature truthful; and Gorgo knew for whose sake and for what reasons he had subjected himself to this moral martyrdom. It was a lesson to her to see him lying there, and his look of anguish warned her to become, heart and soul, a Christian as she felt prompted. She would confess Christ for love's sake-aye, for love's sake; for in this hour the thing she saw most clearly in the faith which she purposed to adopt, and of which Constantine had so often spoken to her with affectionate enthusiasm, was Everlasting Love.

Never in her life had she felt so much at peace, so open to all that was good and beautiful; and yet, outside, the strife grew louder and more furious; the Imperial tuba sounded above the battle-cry of the heathen, and the uproar of the struggle came nearer and nearer.

The battering-ram had made a large breach in the southern wall, and, protected by their shed, the heavy-armed infantry of the twenty-second legion had forced their way up; but many a veteran had paid for his rashness with his life, for the storming party had been met by a perfect shower of arrows and javelins. Still, the great shield had turned many a spear, and many an arrow had glanced harmless from the brazen armor and helmets; the men that had escaped pressed onwards, while fresh ranks of soldiers made their way in, over the bodies of the fallen. The well-drilled foe came creeping up to the barricade on their knees, and protected by bronze bucklers, while others, in the rear, flung lances and arrows over their heads at the besieged. A few of the heathen fell, and the sight of their blood had a wonderful effect on their comrades. Rage surged up in the breasts of the most timid, and fear vanished before the passion for revenge; cowardice turned to martial ardor, and philosophers and artists thirsted for blood. The red glare of strife danced before the eyes of the veriest book-worm; fired by the terrible impulse to kill, to subdue, to destroy the foe, they fought desperately and blindly, staking their lives on the issue.

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Karnis, that zealous votary of the Muses, stood with Orpheus, on the very top of the barricade throwing lance after lance, while he sang at the top of his voice snatches of the verses of Tyrtaeus, in the teeth, as it were, of the foe who were crowding through the breach; the sweat streamed from his bald head and his eye flashed fire. By his side stood his son, sending swift arrows from an enormous bow. The heavy curls of his hair had come unbound and fell over his flushed face. When he hit one of the Imperial soldiers his father applauded him eagerly; then, collecting all his strength, flung another lance, chanting a hexameter or a verse of an ode. Herse crouched half hidden behind a sacrificial stone which lay at the top of the hastily-constructed rampart, and handed weapons to the combatants as they needed them. Her dress was torn and blood-stained, her grey hair had come loose from the ribbands and crescent that should have confined it; the worthy matron had become a Megaera and shrieked to the men: "Kill the dogs! Stand steady! Spare never a Christian!"

But the little garrison needed no incitement; the fevered zeal which possessed them wholly, seconded their thirst for blood and doubled their strength.

An arrow, shot by Orpheus, had just glanced over the breastplate and into the throat of a centurion who had already set foot on the lowest step, when Karnis suddenly dropped the spear he was preparing to fling and fell without a cry. A Roman lance had hit him, and he lay transfixed by the side of a living purple fount, like a rock in the surf from which a sapling has sprung. Orpheus saw his father's life-blood flowing and fell on his knees by his side; but the old man pointed to the bow that his son had cast aside and murmured eagerly: "Leave me—let me be. What does it matter about me? Fight—for the gods—I say. For the gods! Go on, aim truly!"

But the lad would not leave the dying man, and seeing how deeply the spear had struck to the old man's heart he groaned aloud, throwing up his arms in despair. Then an arrow hit his shoulder, another pierced his neck, and he, too, fell gasping for breath. Karnis saw him drop, and painfully raised himself a little to help him; but it was too much for him; he could only clench his fist in helpless fury and chant, half-singing, half-speaking, as loud he was able, Electra's curse:

> "This my last prayer, ye gods, do not disdain!
> For them turn day to night and joy to pain!"

But the heavy infantry, who by this time were crowding through the breach, neither heard nor heeded his curse. He lost consciousness and did not recover it till Herse, after lifting up her son and propping him against a plinth, pressed a cloth against the stump of the lance still remaining in the wound to staunch the swiftly flowing blood, and sprinkled his brow with wine. He felt her warm tears on his face, and as he looked up into her kind, faithful eyes, brimming

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over with tears of sympathy and regret, his heart melted to tenderness. All the happiest hours of the life they had spent together crowded on his memory; he answered her glance with a loving and grateful gaze and painfully held out his hand. Herse pressed it to her lips, weeping bitterly; but he smiled up at her, nodding his head and repeating again and again the line from Lucian: "Be comforted: you, too, must soon follow."

"Yes, yes—I shall follow soon," she repeated with sobs. "Without you, without either of you, without the gods—what would become of me here."

And she turned to her son who, fully conscious, had followed every word and every gesture of his parents and tried himself to say something. But the arrow in his neck choked his breath, and it was such agony to speak that he could only say hoarsely: "Father mother!" But these poor words were full of deep love and gratitude, and Karnis and Herse understood all he longed to express.

Tears choked the poor woman's utterance so that neither of the three could say another word, but they were at any rate close together, and could look lovingly in each other's eyes. Thus passed some few minutes of peace for them, in spite of the blare of trumpets, and shrieks and butchery; but Herse's kerchief was dyed and soaked with her husband's blood, and the old man's eyes were glazed and staring as they wandered feebly on the scene, as though to get a last general picture of the world in which they had always sought to see only what was fair. Suddenly they remained fixed on the face of a statue of Apollo, which had been flung on to the barricade; and the longer they dwelt on the beautiful countenance of the god the more they sparkled with a clear transfigured gleam. Once more, with a final effort, he raised his heavy hand and pointed to the sun-crowned head of the immortal youth while he softly murmured:

"He—he—all that was fair in existence—Orpheus, Herse—we owe it all to him. He dies with us.—They—the enemy—in conquering us conquer thee! They dream of a Paradise beyond death; but where thou reignest, O Phoebus, there is bliss even on earth! They boast that they love death and hate life; and when they are the victors they will destroy lute and pipe, nay, if they could, would exterminate beauty and extinguish the sun. This beautiful happy world they would have dark, gloomy, melancholy, hideous; thy kingdom, great Phoebus, is sunny, joyful and bright . . . !" Here his strength failed him; but presently he rallied once more and went on, with eager eyes: "We crave for light, for music, lutes and pipes—for perfumed flowers on careless brows—we—hold me up Herse—and thou, heal me, O Phoebus Apollo!—Hail, all hail! I thank thee—thou hast accepted much from me and hast given me all! Come, thou joy of my soul! Come in thy glorious chariot, attended by Muses and Hours! See, Orpheus, Herse—do you see Him coming?"

He pointed with a confident gesture to the distance; and his anxious eyes followed the indication of his hand; he raised himself a little by a last supreme effort; but instantly fell back; his head sank on the bosom of his faithful partner and a stream of blood flowed from his quivering lips. The votary of the Muses was dead; and a few minutes after Orpheus, too, fell senseless.

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War-cries and trumpet-calls rang and echoed through the Serapeum. The battle was now a hand-to-hand fight; the besiegers had surmounted the barricade and stood face to face with the heathen. Herse saw them coming; she snatched the dart from her husband's wound, and fired by hatred and a wild thirst for vengeance, she rushed upon the besiegers with frantic and helpless fury, cursing them loudly. She met the death she craved; a javelin struck her and she fell close to her husband and son. Her death struggle was a short one; she had only time and strength to extend a hand to lay on each before she herself was a corpse.

The battle raged round the heap of dead; the Imperial troops drove the garrison backwards into the temple-halls, and the plan of attack which had been agreed upon at a council of war held in the palace of the Comes, was carried out, point by point, with cool courage and irresistible force. A few maniples pursued the fugitives into the main entrance hall, helped them to force the gates open, and then drove them down the slope and steps, over the stones that had been heaped up for protection, and into the very arms of the division placed in front of the temple. These at once surrounded them and took them prisoners, as the hunter traps the game that rushes down upon him when driven by the dogs and beaters. Foremost to fly were the women from the rotunda, who were welcomed with acclamations by the soldiers.

But those who now tried to defend themselves found no quarter. Berenice had picked up a sword that was lying on the ground and had opened a vein with the point of it; her body, bathed in blood, was found at the foot of the statue of justice.

No sooner had the Christians mastered the barricade than a few maniples had been sent up to the roof, and the defenders had been compelled to surrender or to throw themselves from the parapet. Old Memnon, who had been fighting against his Imperial master and could hope for no mercy, sprang at once into the gulf below, and others followed his example; for the end of all things was now close at hand, and to the nobler souls to die voluntarily in battle for great Serapis seemed finer and worthier than to languish in the enemy's chains.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The terrific storm of the preceding night had thrown the whole city into dismay. Everyone knew the danger that threatened Serapis, and what must ensue if he were overthrown; and everyone had thought that the end of the world had indeed come. But the tempest died away; the sun's bright glow dispersed the clouds and mist; sea and sky smiled radiantly blue, and the trees and herbage glistened in revived freshness.

Not yet had the Romans dared to lay hands on the chief of the gods, the patron and protector of the city. Serapis had perhaps sent the lightning, thunder and rain as a

message to warn his foes. If only they might abstain from the last, worst crime of desecrating his image!

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Nor was this the hope of the heathen only; on the contrary: Jews and Christians no less dreaded the fall of the god and of his temple. He was the pride, the monumental glory of the city of Alexander; the centre of foundations and schools which benefited thousands. The learning which was the boast of Alexandria dwelt under his protection; to the Serapeum was attached a medical Faculty which enjoyed the reputation of being the first in the world; from its observatory the course of the year was forecast and the calendar was promulgated. An hour's slumber in its halls brought prophetic dreams, and the future must remain undivined if Serapis were to fall, for the god revealed it to his priests, not merely by the courses and positions of the stars, but by many other signs; and it was a delight and a privilege to look forward from the certain, tangible present to the mysteries of the morrow.

Even Christian seers answered the questionings of their followers in a way which portended the worst, and it was a grief to many of the baptized to think of their native city without Serapis and the Serapeum, just as we cannot bear to cut down a tree planted by the hand of an ancestor, even though it may darken our home. The temple ought to be closed, bloody sacrifices to the god should be prohibited—but his image—-the noblest work of Bryaxis—to mutilate, or even to touch that would be a rash, a fateful deed, treason to the city and an outrage on the world.

Thus thought the citizens; thus, too, thought the soldiers, who were required by military discipline to draw the sword against the god in whom many of them believed.

As the news spread that the troops were to attack the Serapeum early next morning, thousands of spectators collected, and filled the temple itself in breathless anxiety to watch the issue of the struggle.

The sky was as clear and blue as on any other fine day; but over the sea to the north lay a light stratum of clouds—the harbingers perhaps of the appalling blackness which the god would presently bring up against his enemies.

The men who had defended the Serapeum were led away; it had been determined in a council of war that they should be treated with clemency, and Cynegius had proclaimed free and full pardon to every prisoner who would swear never, for the future, to sacrifice to the god or worship in his temple.

Not one of the hundreds who had fallen into the hands of the Romans had refused to take the oath; they dispersed at once, though with suppressed fury, many of them joining the crowd who stood waiting and watching for the next step to be taken by the Romans—for the final crash of the universe, perhaps.

The doors of the temple were thrown wide open; the temple-servants and hundreds of soldiers were busied in clearing the steps and approaches of the stones and fragments of statuary with which the heathen had encumbered them. As soon as this task was

finished the dead and wounded were removed; among those who still breathed was Orpheus, the son of Karnis. Those who had been so happy as to escape in the defence of the sanctuary and had mingled with the crowd were besieged with questions, and all agreed that the statue of the god was as yet inviolate.

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The citizens were relieved, but ere long were startled by a new alarm; an Ala of heavy cavalry came upon the scene, opening a way for an immensely long procession whose chanted psalms rang out from afar, loud above the cries and murmurs of the mob, the clatter of harness, and stamping of horses. It was clear now where the monks had been. They were not usually absent when there was a skirmish with the heathen; but, till this moment, they had been seen only in twos or threes about the Serapeum. Now they came forward shouting a psalm of triumph, their eyes glaring, wilder and more ruthless than ever.

The Bishop marched at their head, in his vestments, under a magnificent canopy; his lofty stature was drawn to its full height and his lips were firmly closed.

He looked like a stern judge about to mount the tribunal to pronounce sentence with inexorable severity on some execrable crime.

The crowd quailed.

The Bishop and the monks in the Serapeum, meant the overthrow of the statue of the sovereign god—death and destruction. The boldest turned pale; many who had left wife and children at home stole away to await the end of the world with those they loved; others remained to watch the menaced sanctuary, cursing or praying; but the greater number, men and women alike, crowded into the temple, risking their lives to be present at the stupendous events about to be enacted there and which promised to be a drama of unequalled interest.

At the bottom of the ascent the Comes rode forth to meet the Bishop, leaped from his saddle and greeted him with reverence. The Imperial legate had not made his appearance; he had preferred to remain for the present at the prefect's house, intending to preside, later in the day, at the races as the Emperor's representative, side by side with the Prefect Evagrius—who also kept aloof during the attack on the Serapeum. After a brief colloquy, Romanus signed to Constantine, the captain of the cavalry; the troop dismounted, and, led by their officer, marched up the slope that led to the great gate of the Serapeum. They were followed by the Comes with his staff; next to him pale and somewhat tremulous came some of the city officials and a few Christian members of the senate; and then the Bishop—who had preferred to come last—with all the Christian priesthood and a crowd of chanting monks. The train was closed by a division of heavy-armed infantry; and after them the populace rushed in, unchecked by the soldiers who stood outside the temple.

The great halls of the Serapeum had been put in order as well as possible in so short a time. Of all those who, the day before, had crowded in to defend the god and his house, none were left but Porphyrius and those who were nursing him. After a long and agonizing period of silence heavy fists came thundering at the door. Gorgo started up to unbolt it, but Apuleius held her back; so it was forced off its hinges and thing into the

temple-aisle on which the room opened. At the same instant a party of soldiers entered the room and glanced round it enquiringly.

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The physician turned as pale as death, and sank incapable of speech on a seat by his patient's couch; but Gorgo turned with calm dignity to the centurion who led the intruders, and explained to him who she was, and that she was here under the protection of the leech to tend her suffering father. She concluded by asking to speak with Constantine the prefect of cavalry, or with the Comes Romanus, to whom she and her father were well known.

There was nothing unusual in a sick man being brought into the Serapeum for treatment, and the calm, undoubting superiority of Gorgo's tone as well as the high rank of the men whose protection she appealed to, commanded the centurion's respectful consideration; however, his orders were to send every one out of the temple who was not a Roman soldier, so he begged her to wait a few minutes, and soon returned with the legate Volcatius, the captain of his legion. This knightly patrician well knew—as did every lover of horses—the owner of the finest stable in Alexandria, and was quite willing to allow Gorgo and Apuleius to remain with their patient; at the same time he warned them that a great catastrophe was imminent. Gorgo, however, persisted in her wish to be by her father's side, so he left her a guard to protect them.

The soldiers were too busy to linger; instead of replacing the door they had torn down, they pushed it out of their way; and Gorgo, seeing that her father remained in precisely the same condition, drew back the curtain which was all that now divided them from the hypostyle, and looked out over the heads of a double row of soldiers. They were posted close round the lower step of the platform that raised the hypostyle above the nave and the colonnades on each side of it.

In the distance Gorgo could see a vast body of men slowly approaching in detachments, and with long pauses at intervals. They stopped for some time in the outer hall, and before they entered the basilica twenty Christian priests came in with strange gestures and a still stranger chant; these were exorcists, come to bann the evil spirits and daemons that must surely haunt this high place of idolatry and abominations. They carried crosses which they flourished like weapons against an unseen foe, and touched the columns with them, the pavement and the few remaining statues; they fell on their knees, making the sign of the cross with the left hand; and, finally, they ranged themselves like soldiers in three ranks in front of the niche containing the statue, pointed their crosses at the god, and recited in loud, angry, and commanding tones the potent anathemas and mysterious formulas which they thought calculated to expel the most reprobate and obdurate of all the heathen devils. A host of acolytes, following at their heels, swung their censers about the plague-spot—the shrine of the king of idols; while the exorcists dipped wands into a cauldron carried by their attendants, and sprinkled the mystical figures on the hanging and on the mosaic pavement.

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All this occupied several minutes. Then—and Gorgo's heart beat high—then Constantine came in, armed and equipped, and behind him an Ala of picked men, the elite of his troop; bearded men with tanned and scarred faces. Instead of swords they carried axes, and they were followed by sappers bearing tall ladders which, by Constantine's orders, they leaned up against the niche. The infantry ranged under the colonnades at the sides were evidently startled at the sight of these ladders, and Gorgo could perceive by the trembling of the curtain near which she and Apuleius were standing, how deeply the physician was agitated. It was as though the axe had been displayed with which a king was about to be decapitated.

Now the Bishop came in with the municipal dignitaries; priests and monks, chanting as they walked, filled the broad hall, incessantly making the sign of the cross; and the crowd that poured into the hypostyle pressed as far forward as they were allowed by the chain which the soldiers held outstretched between them and their superiors.

The populace-heathen and Christian of every sect and degree-filled the aisles, too; but the chain also kept them off the upper end, on to which the room opened in which Porphyrius lay; so that Gorgo's view of the curtain and apse remained unhindered.

The psalm rang loudly through the temple-courts above the murmur and grumble of the angry, terrified and expectant mob. They were prepared for the worst; each one knew the crime which was to be perpetrated, and yet few, perhaps, really believed that any one would dare to commit it. Whichever way she looked Gorgo saw only white faces, stamped with passion, dismay, and dread. The very priests and soldiers themselves had turned pale, and stood with bloodless cheeks and set teeth, staring at the ground; some, to disguise their alarm, cast wrathful and defiant glances at the rebellious mob, who tried to drown the psalm-singing in loud menaces and curses, and the echoes of the great building doubled their thousand voices.

A strange unrest seethed in this dense mass of humanity. The heathen were trembling with rage, clutching their amulets and charms, or shaking angry fists; the Christians thrilled with anxiety and pious zeal, and used their hands to lift the cross or to ward off the evil one with outstretched fingers. Every face and every gesture, the muttered curses and pious hymns—all showed that some terrible and fateful event was impending over all. Gorgo herself felt as though she were standing on the brink of a crater, while air and earth heaved around her; she felt and saw the eruption of the volcano threatening, every instant, to burst at her feet, and to choke and ruin every living thing.

The uproar among the heathen grew louder and louder; fragments of stone and wood came flying towards the spot where the Bishop and officials were standing; but, suddenly, the tumult ceased, and, as if by a miracle, there was silence—perfect silence—in the temple. It was as though at a sign from the Omnipotent Ruler the storm-lashed ocean had turned to the calm of a land-locked lake. At a nod from the Bishop some

acolytes had stepped up to the niche where the statue of the god was shrouded and the curtain, which till now had hidden it, slowly began to fall.

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There sat Serapis, looking down in majestic indifference, as cold and unapproachable as if his sublime dignity was far removed above the petty doings of the crawling humanity at his feet; and the effect was as impressive now as it had been the evening before. How beautiful—how marvellously grand and lofty was this work of human hands! Even the Christians could not repress a low, long-drawn murmur of surprise, admiration, and astonishment. The heathen were at first silent, overcome by pious awe and ecstasy; but then they broke out in a loud and triumphant shout, and their cries of "Hail to Serapis!" "Serapis, reign forever!" rang from pillar to pillar and echoed from the stony vault of the apse and ceiling.

Gorgo crossed her hands over her bosom as she saw the god revealed in his glorious beauty. Spotlessly pure, complete and perfect, the noble statue stood before her; an idol indeed, and perishable—but still divine as a matchless work, wrought by the loving hands of a votary of the god, inspired by the immortals. She gazed spell-bound on the form which, though human, transcended humanity as eternity transcends time, as the light of the sun transcended the blazing beacon on Pharos; and she said to herself that it was impossible that an irreverent hand should be laid on this supremely lovely statue, crowned with the might of undying beauty.

She saw that even the Bishop drew back a step when the curtain had fallen, and his lips parted involuntarily to utter a cry of admiration like the others; but she saw, too, that he closed them again and pressed them more firmly together; that his eye sparkled with a fiercer light as the shout of the heathen rose to heaven, that the knotted veins on his high forehead swelled with rage as he heard the cry of "Serapis, Hail, all hail!" Then she noted the Comes, as he whispered soothing words in the prelate's ear, praying him perhaps to spare the statue—not as an idol, but as a work of art; as he turned from Theophilus with a shrug; and then—her heart stood still, and she had to cling to the curtain—he pointed to the statue, with a nod of intelligence to Constantine. The young officer bowed with military formality and gave a word of command to his men, which was drowned by the wild cries of the heathen as soon as they apprehended with dismay what its import was.

The veterans were stirred. A subaltern officer, putting the standard he bore into the hands of the man next to him and taking his axe from him instead, rushed towards the statue, gazed up at it—and then, letting the axe sink, withdrew slowly to rejoin the others who still stood hesitating, looking at each other with doubting and defiant eyes.

Once more Constantine shouted his order, louder and more positively than before; but the men did not move. The subaltern flung his axe on the ground and the rest followed his example, pointing eagerly to the god, and vehemently adjuring their prefect—-refusing apparently to obey his commands—for he went to the recalcitrant standard-bearer, a grey-haired veteran, and laying his hand on the man's shoulder shook him angrily, evidently threatening him and his comrades.

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In these brave souls a struggle was going on, between their sense of discipline and devotion to their fine young leader, and their awe of the god; it was visible in their puzzled faces, in their hands raised in supplication. Constantine, however, relentlessly repeated his order; and, when they still refused to obey, he turned his back on their ranks with a gesture of bitter contempt, and shouted his commands to the infantry posted by the colonnade behind which Gorgo was watching all these proceedings.

But these also were refractory. The heathen were triumphant, and encouraged the soldiers with loud cries to persist.

Constantine turned once more to his own men, and finding them obstinate in their disobedience, he went forward himself to where the ladders were standing, moved one of them from the wall and leaned it up against the body of the statue, seized the axe that lay nearest, and mounted from rung to rung. The murmurs of the heathen were suddenly silenced; the multitude were so still that the least sound of one plate of armor against another was audible, that each man could hear his neighbor breathe, and that Gorgo fancied she could hear her own heart throb.

The man and the god stood face to face, and the man who was about to lay hands on the god was her lover. She watched his movements with breathless interest; she longed to call out to him, to follow him as he mounted the ladder, to fall on his neck and keep him from committing such sacrilege—not out of fear of the ruin he might bring upon the world, but only because she felt that the first blow he should deal to this beautiful and unique work of art might wreck her love for him, as his axe would wreck the ivory. She was not afraid for him; he seemed to her inviolable and invulnerable; but her whole soul shuddered at the deed which he was steeling himself to perpetrate. She remembered their happy childhood together, his own artistic attempts, the admiration with which he had gazed at the great works of the ancient sculptors—and it seemed impossible that he, of all men he, should lay hands on that masterpiece, that he, of all men, should be the one to insult, mutilate and ruin it. It was not—could not be true!

But there he was, at the top of the ladder; he passed the axe from his left hand to his right, and leaning back a little, looked at the head of the god from one side. She could see his face plainly, and note every movement and look; she watched him keenly, and saw the loving and compassionate expression with which he fixed his gaze on the noble features of Serapis, saw him clutch his left hand to his heart as if in pain. The crowd below might fancy that he lacked courage, that he was absorbed in prayer, or that his soul shrank from dealing the fateful blow to the great divinity; but she could see that he was bidding a silent farewell, as it were, to the sublime work of an inspired artist, which it pained and shocked him to destroy.

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And this comforted her; it gave her views of the situation a new direction, and suggested the question whether he, a soldier and a Christian, when commanded by his superior to do this deed ought to shrink or hesitate, if he were indeed, heart and soul, what, after all, he was. Her eyes clung to him, as a frightened child clings to its mother's neck; and the expectant thousands, in an agony of suspense, like her, saw nothing but him.

Stillness more profound never reigned in the heart of the desert than now in this vast and densely-crowded hall. Of all man's five senses only one was active: that of sight; and that was concentrated on a single object a man's hand holding an axe. The hearts of thousands stood still, their breath was suspended, there was a singing in their ears, a dazzling light in their eyes—eyes that longed to see, that must see—and that could not; thousands stood there like condemned criminals, whose heads are on the block, who hear the executioner behind them, and who still, on the very threshold of death, hope for respite and release.

Gorgo found no answer to her own questionings; but she, too, wanted to see—must see. And she saw Constantine close his eyes, as though he dared not contemplate the deed that Fate had condemned him to do; she saw him lay his left hand on the god's sacred beard, saw him raise his right for the fatal blow—saw, heard, felt the axe crash again and again on the cheek of Serapis—saw the polished ivory fall in chips and shavings, large and small, on the stone floor, and leap up with an elastic rebound or shiver into splinters. She covered her face with her hands and hid her head in the curtain, weeping aloud. She could only moan and sob, and feel nothing, think nothing but that a momentous and sinister act had been perpetrated. An appalling uproar like the noise of thunder and the beating of surf rose up on every side, but she heeded it not; and when at length the physician called her by her name, when she turned from the curtain and once more looked out, instead of the sublime image of the god she saw in the niche a shapeless log of wood, a hideous mass against which several ladders were propped, while the ground was heaped and strewed with scraps of ivory, fragments of gold-plate, and chips of marble. Constantine had disappeared; the ladders and the plinth of the statue were covered with a swarm of soldiers and monks who were finishing the work of destruction. As soon as the young officer had struck the first blow, and the god had submitted in abject impotence, they had rushed upon him and saved their captain the trouble of ending the task he had begun.

The great idol was desecrated. Serapis was no more—the heaven of the heathen had lost its king. The worshippers of the deposed god, sullen, furious, and bitterly disabused, made their way out of the temple and looked up at the serene blue sky, the unclouded sunshine, for some symptoms of an avenging tempest; but in vain.

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Theophilus had also quitted the scene with the Comes, leaving the work of devastation in the competent hands of the monks. He knew his skin-clad adherents well; and he knew that within a very few days not an idol, not a picture, not a token would remain intact to preserve the memory of the old gods; a thousand slaves charged to sweep the Serapeum from the face of the earth would have given his impatience twenty times as long to wait. The Comes went off at once to the Hippodrome, preceded by hundreds who had hurried off to tell the assembled multitude that Alexandria had lost her god.

Constantine, however, had not left the temple; he had withdrawn into one of the aisles and seated himself on the steps, where he remained, sunk in thought and gazing at the ground. He was a soldier and took service and discipline in earnest. What he had done he had been forced to do; but no one could guess how hard it had been to him to fulfil this terrible duty. His own act was abominable in his eyes, and yet he would have done it again to-morrow, if it had again been required of him under similar circumstances. He bewailed the beautiful statue as a lost treasure of art; but he felt that it was indispensable that it should perish out of the world. And at the same time he thought of Gorgo, wondering how she—who had only the day before pledged herself to him, whom he loved with fervent passion, to whom, as he well knew, his faith was something monstrous in its contempt for beauty—would bear to learn that he, her lover, was the man who, like some coarse barbarian, had defaced this noble work and ruined this vision of beauty, no less dear to him than it was to her. Still, as he sat brooding and searching the very depths of his soul, he could not help feeling that he had certainly acted rightly and would do the same again, even at the risk of losing her. To him Gorgo, was the noblest of God's creatures, and how could he have borne to go through life at her side with a stain on his honor? But he did not conceal from himself the fact that his deed had opened a wide gulf between them; and it was with deep pathos that his thoughts recurred to the antique conception of tragedy—of fate which pursues its innocent victims as though they were guilty. This day perhaps would witness the sunset of his life's joy, would drive him forth once more to war—to fight, and do nothing but fight, till death should meet him on the battle-field. And as he sat there his eyes grew dim and heavy and his head fell on his heaving breast.

Suddenly he felt a light touch on his shoulder, and turning round, he saw Gorgo standing with her hand outstretched; he started to his feet, seized it with eager passion and looking sadly into the young girl's eyes said, with deep emotion:

"I would I might hold this hand forever—but you will leave me, you will turn from me when I tell you of the deed that mine has done."

"I know it," she said firmly. "And it was a hard task even for you—a painful duty—was it not?"

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“Terrible! horrible!” he exclaimed with a shudder, as he recalled the feelings of that momentous instant. She looked sympathetically into his eyes.

“And you did it,” she cried, “because you felt that you must and will be wholly what you profess to be? It is right—the only right; I feel it so. I will try to imitate you, and rise above the half-heartedness which is the bane of existence, and which makes the firm path of life a trembling, swaying bridge. I am yours, wholly yours; I have none other gods but yours, and for love of you I will learn to love your God—for you have often and often called him a God of Love.”

“And He is a God of Love!” cried Constantine, “and you will know him and confess him even without teaching; for our Saviour lives in every heart that is filled with love. Oh! Gorgo, I have destroyed that beautiful idol, but I will let you see that even a Christian can duly value and cherish beauty in his home and in his heart.”

“I am sure of it,” she exclaimed joyfully. “The world goes on its way and does not quake, in spite of the fall of Serapis; but I feel as though in my inmost soul a world had perished and a new one was created, nobler and purer, and perhaps even more lovely than the old one!”

He pressed her hand to his lips; she signed to him to follow her and led the way to her father’s couch. Porphyrius was sitting up, supported in the physician’s arms; his eyes were open, and as they entered he greeted them with a faint smile.

ETEXT *editor’s bookmarks*:

Great happiness, and mingled therefor with bitter sorrow
It is not by enthusiasm but by tactics that we defeat a foe
Rapture and anguish—who can lay down the border line

SERAPIS

By Georg Ebers

Volume 6.

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.

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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 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 agitatores, 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.

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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 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.

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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!

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.

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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.

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.

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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.

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.

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“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.

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

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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.

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.

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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 agitatores 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.

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.

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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, 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.

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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.

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 charioter 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.

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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 agitatores 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.

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

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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.

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.

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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.

"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

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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 Serapeumn, 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 Sera peum. 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 truth of his story, which—clearing him

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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.

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

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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.

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.

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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.

"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:

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“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.”

“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."

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“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 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. . . .

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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.

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.

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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.

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. . ."

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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. 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

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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."

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.

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“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.

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:

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“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.”

“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.”

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“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.

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:

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“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.

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.

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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 whole 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.

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.

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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 lead 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.

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.

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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.

ETEXT *editor's bookmarks for the entire Serapis*:

Christian hypocrites who pretend to hate life and love death
Christianity had ceased to be the creed of the poor
Great happiness, and mingled therefor with bitter sorrow
He may talk about the soul—what he is after is the girl
He spoke with pompous exaggeration
It is not by enthusiasm but by tactics that we defeat a foe
Love means suffering—those who love drag a chain with them
People who have nothing to do always lack time
Perish all those who do not think as we do
Pretended to see nothing in the old woman's taunts
Rapture and anguish—who can lay down the border line
Reason is a feeble weapon in contending with a woman
To her it was not a belief but a certainty
Trifling incident gains importance when undue emphasis is laid
Very hard to imagine nothingness
Whether man were the best or the worst of created beings
Words that sounded kindly, but with a cold, unloving heart