

Arachne — Volume 08 eBook

Arachne — Volume 08 by Georg Ebers

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ARACHNE

By Georg Ebers

Volume 8.

Hermon, filled with longing, went down toward evening to the shore.

The sun was setting, and the riot of colours in the western horizon seemed like a mockery of the torturing anxiety which had mastered his soul.

He did not notice the boat that was approaching the land; many travellers who intended to go through Arabia Petrea landed here, and for several days—he knew why—there had been more stir in these quiet waters.

Suddenly he was surprised by the ringing shout with which he had formerly announced his approach to Myrtilus.

Unconsciously agitated by joy, as if the sunset glow before him had suddenly been transformed into the dawn of a happy day, he answered by a loud cry glad with hope. Although his dim eyes did not yet permit him to distinguish who was standing erect in the boat, waving greetings to him, he thought he knew whom this exquisite evening was bringing.

Soon his own name reached him. It was his “wise Bias” who shouted, and soon, with a throbbing heart, he held out both hands to him.

The freedman had performed his commission in the best possible manner, and was now no longer bound to silence by oath.

Ledscha had left him and Myrtilus to themselves and, as Bias thought he had heard, had sailed with the Gaul Lutarius for Paraetonium, the frontier city between the kingdom of Egypt and that of Cyrene.

Myrtilus felt stronger than he had done for a long time, and had sent him back to the blind friend who would need him more than he did.

But worthy Bias also brought messages from Archias and Daphne. They were well, and his uncle now had scarcely any cause to fear pursuers.

Before the landing of the boat, the shade had covered Hermon’s eyes; but when, after the freedman’s first timid question about his sight, he raised it again, at the same time reporting and showing what progress he had already made toward recovery, the excess of joy overpowered the freedman, and sometimes laughing, sometimes weeping, he



kissed the convalescent's hands and simple robe. It was some time before he calmed himself again, then laying his forefinger on the side of his nose, he said: "Therein the immortals differ from human beings. We sculptors can only create good work with good tools, but the immortals often use the very poorest of all to accomplish the best things. You owe your sight to the hate of this old witch and mother of pirates, so may she find peace in the grave. She is dead. I heard it from a fellow-countryman whom I met in Heropolis. Her end came soon after our visit."

Then Bias related what he knew of Hermon's uncle, of Daphne, and Myrtilus.

Two letters were to give him further particulars.

They came from the woman he loved and from his friend, and as soon as Bias had lighted the lamp in the tent, at the same time telling his master in advance many items of news they contained, he set about the difficult task of reading.

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He had certainly scarcely become a master of this art on board the Hydra, yet his slow performance did all honour to the patience of his teacher Myrtilus.

He began with Daphne's letter, but by the desire of prudent Archias it communicated few facts. But the protestations of love and expressions of longing which filled it pierced the freedman's soul so deeply that his voice more than once failed while reading them.

Myrtilus's letter, on the contrary, gave a minute description of his mode of life, and informed his friend what he expected for him and himself in the future. The contents of both relieved Hermon's sorely troubled heart, made life with those who were dearest to him possible, and explained many things which the reports of the slave had not rendered perfectly clear.

Archias had gone with Daphne to the island of Lesbos, his mother's native city. The ships which conveyed travellers to Pergamus, where Myrtilus was living, touched at this port, and Bias, to whom Hermon had confided the refuge of the father and daughter, had sought them there, and found them in a beautiful villa.

After being released from his oath, Myrtilus had put himself into communication with his uncle, and just before Bias's departure the merchant had come to Pergamus with his daughter. As he had the most cordial reception from the Regent Philetaerus, he seemed inclined to settle permanently there.

As for Myrtilus, he had cast anchor with Ledscha in the little Mysian seaport town of Pitane, near the mouth of the Caicus River, on which, farther inland, was the rapidly growing city of Pergamus.

She had found a hospitable welcome in the family of a seafarer who were relatives, while the Gaul continued his voyage to obtain information about his tribe in Syria. But he had already returned when Bias reached Pitane with the two talents intended for him. Myrtilus had availed himself of Ledscha's permission long before and gone to Pergamus, where he had lived and worked in secrecy until, after the freedman's return from Ledscha, who at once left Pitane with the Gaul, he was released from his oath.

During the absence of Bias he had modelled a large relief, a triumphal procession of Dionysus, and as the renown of his name had previously reached Pergamus, the artists and the most distinguished men in the city flocked to his studio to admire the work of the famous Alexandrian.

Soon Philetoerus, who had founded the Pergamenian kingdom seven years before, and governed it with great wisdom, came to Myrtilus.



Like his nephew and heir Eumenes, he was a friend to art, and induced the laurel-crowned Alexandrian to execute the relief, modelled in clay, in marble for the Temple of Dionysus at Pergamus.

The heir to the throne of Philetaerus, who was now advancing in years, was especially friendly to Myrtilus, and did everything in his power to bind him to Pergamus.



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He succeeded, for in the beautiful house, located in an extremely healthful site, which Eumenes had assigned for a residence and studio to the Alexandrian artist, whose work he most ardently admired, and whom he regarded as the most welcome of guests, Myrtilus felt better physically than he had for years. Besides, he thought that, for many reasons, his friend would be less willing to settle in Alexandria, and that the presence of his uncle and Daphne would attract him to Pergamus.

Moreover, Hermon surely knew that if he came to him as a blind man he would find a brother; if he came restored to sight, he would also find a brother, and likewise a fellow-artist with whom he could live and work.

Myrtilus had told the heir to the throne of Pergamus of his richly gifted blind relative, and of the peculiarity of his art, and Eumenes eagerly endeavoured to induce his beloved guest to persuade his friend to remove to his capital, where there was no lack of distinguished leeches.

If Hermon remained blind, he would honour him; if he recovered his sight, he would give him large commissions.

How deeply these letters moved the heart of the recovering man! What prospects they opened for his future life, for love, friendship, and, not least, for his art!

If he could see—if he could only see again! This exclamation blended with everything he thought, felt, and uttered. Even in sleep it haunted him. To regain the clearness of vision he needed for his work, he would willingly have submitted to the severest tortures.

In Alexandria alone lived the great leeches who could complete the work which the salve of an ignorant old woman had begun. Thither he must go, though it cost him liberty and life. The most famous surgeon of the Museum at the capital had refused his aid under other circumstances. Perhaps he would relent if Philippus, a friend of Erasistratus, smoothed the way for him, and the old hero was now living very near. The ships, whose number on the sea at his feet was constantly increasing, were attracted hither by the presence of the Egyptian King and Queen on the isthmus which connects Asia and Africa. The priest of Apollo at Clysma, and other distinguished Greeks whom he met there, had told him the day before yesterday, and on two former visits to the place, what was going on in the world, and informed him how great an honour awaited the eastern frontier in these days. The appearance of their Majesties in person must not only mean the founding of a city, the reception of a victorious naval commander, and the consecration of a restored temple, but also have still deeper causes.

During the last few years severe physical suffering had brought the unfortunate second king of the house of Ptolemy to this place to seek the aid of the ancient Egyptian gods,

and, besides the philosophy, busy himself with the mystic teachings and magic arts of their priesthood.

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Only a short period of life seemed allotted to the invalid ruler, and the service of the time-honoured god of the dead, to whom he had erected one of the most magnificent temples in the world at Alexandria, to which Egyptians and Hellenes repaired with equal devotion, opened hopes for the life after death which seemed to him worthy of examination.

For this reason also he desired to secure the favour of the Egyptian priesthood.

For this purpose, for the execution of his wise and beneficent arrangements, as well as for the gratification of his expensive tastes, large sums of money were required; therefore he devoted himself with especial zeal to enlarging the resources of his country, already so rich by nature.

In all these things he had found an admirable assistant in his sister Arsinoe. As the daughter of the father and mother to whom he himself owed existence, he could claim for her unassailable legitimacy the same recognition from the priesthood, and the same submission from the people rendered to his own person, whom the religion of the country commanded them to revere as the representative of the sun god.

As marriages between brothers and sisters had been customary from ancient times, and were sanctioned by religion and myth, he had married the second Arsinoe, his sister, immediately after the banishment of the first Queen of this name.

After the union with her, he called himself Philadelphus—brotherly love—and honoured his sister and wife with the same name.

True, this led the sarcastic Alexandrians to utter many a biting, more or less witty jest, but he never had cause to regret his choice; in spite of her forty years, and more than one bloody deed which before her marriage to him she had committed as Queen of Thrace and as a widow, the second Arsinoe was always a pattern of regally aristocratic, dignified bearing and haughty womanly beauty.

Though the first Philadelphus could expect no descendants from her, he had provided for securing them through her, for he had induced her to adopt the first Arsinoe's three children, who had been taken from their exiled mother.

Arsinoe was now accompanying her royal husband Philadelphus to the eastern frontier. There the latter expected to name the city to be newly founded "Arsinoe" for her, and to show his esteem for the priesthood—to consecrate in person the new Temple of Tum in the city of Pithom, near Heroopolis.

Lastly, the monarch had been endeavouring to form new connections with the coast countries of eastern Africa, and open them to Egyptian commerce.



Admiral Eumedes, the oldest son of Philippus and Thyone, had succeeded in doing this most admirably, for the distinguished commander had not only founded on the Ethiopian shore of the Red Sea a city which he named for the King "Ptolemais," but also won over the princes and tribes of that region to Egypt.

He was now returning from Ethiopia with a wealth of treasures.



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After the brilliant festivals the invalid King, with his new wife, was to give himself up to complete rest for a month in the healthful air of the desert region which surrounded Pithom, far from the tumult of the capital and the exhausting duties of government.

The magnificent shows which were to be expected, and the presence of the royal pair, had attracted thousands of spectators on foot or horseback, and by water, and the morning after Bias's return the sea near Clysma was swarming with vessels of all kinds and sizes.

It was more than probable that Philippus, the father, and Thyone, the mother of the famous returning Admiral Eumedes, would not fail to be present at his reception on his native soil, and therefore Hermon wished to seek out his dear old friends in Heroopolis, where the greeting was to take place, and obtain their advice.

The boat on which the freedman had come was at the disposal of his master and himself. Before Hermon entered it, he took leave, with an agitated heart and open hand, of his Amalekite friends and, in spite of the mist which still obscured everything he beheld, he perceived how reluctantly the simple dwellers in the wilderness saw him depart.

When the master and servant entered the boat, in spite of the sturdy sailors who manned it, it proved even more difficult than they had feared to make any progress; for the whole narrow end of the arm of the sea, which here extended between Egypt and Arabia Petrea, was covered with war galleys and transports, boats and skiffs. The two most magnificent state galleys from Heroopolis were coming here, bearing the ambassadors who, in the King's name, were to receive the fleet and its commander. Other large and small, richly equipped, or unpretending ships and boats were filled with curious spectators.

What a gay, animated scene! What brilliant, varied, strange, hitherto unseen objects were gathered here: vessels of every form and size, sails white, brown, and black, and on the state galleys and boats purple, blue, and every colour, adorned with more or less costly embroidery! What rising and falling of swiftly or slowly moving oars!

"From Alexandria!" cried Bias, pointing to a state galley which the King was sending to the commander of the southern fleet.

"And there," remarked Hermon, proud of his regained power of distinguishing one thing from another, and letting his eyes rest on one of the returning transports, on whose deck stood six huge African elephants, whose trumpeting mingled with the roaring of the lions and tigers on the huge freight vessels, and the exulting shouts of the men and women in the ships and boats.



“After the King’s heart!” exclaimed Bias. “He probably never received at one time before so large an accession to his collection of rare animals. What is the transport with the huge lotus flower on the prow probably bringing?”

“Oh, and the monkeys and parrots over yonder!” joyously exclaimed the Amalekite boy who had been Hermon’s guide, and had accompanied him into the boat. Then he suddenly lowered his voice and, fearing that his delight might give pain to the less keensighted man whom he loved, he asked, “You can see them, my lord, can’t you?”

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“Certainly, my boy, though less plainly than you do,” replied Hermon, stroking the lad’s dark hair.

Meanwhile the admiral’s ship had approached the shore.

Bias pointed to the poop, where the commander Eumedes was standing directing the course of the fleet.

As if moulded in bronze, a man thoroughly equal to his office, he seemed, in spite of the shouts, greetings, and acclamations thundering around him, to close his eyes and ears to the vessels thronging about his ship and devote himself body and soul to the fulfilment of his duty. He had just embraced his father and mother, who had come here to meet him.

“The King undoubtedly sent by his father the laurel wreath on his helmet,” observed Bias, pointing to the admiral. “So many honours while he is still so young! When you went to the wrestling school in Alexandria, Eumedes was scarcely eight years older than you, and I remember how he preferred you to the others. A sign, and he will notice us and allow you to go on his ship, or, at any rate, send us a boat in which we can enter the canal.”

“No, no,” replied Hermon. “My call would disturb him now.”

“Then let us make ourselves known to the Lady Thyone or her husband,” the freedman continued. “They will certainly take us on their large state galley, from which, though your eyes do not yet see as far as a falcon’s, not a ship, not a man, not a movement will escape them.”

But Hermon added one more surprise to the many which he had already given, for he kindly declined Bias’s well-meant counsel, and, resting his hand on the Amalekite boy’s shoulder, said modestly: “I am no longer the Hermon whom Eumedes preferred to the others. And the Lady Thyone must not be reminded of anything sad in this festal hour for the mother’s heart. I shall meet her to-morrow, or the day after, and yet I had intended to let no one who is loyal to me look into my healing eyes before Daphne.”

Then he felt the freedman’s hand secretly press his, and it comforted him, after the sorrowful thoughts to which he had yielded, amid the shouts of joy ringing around him. How quietly, with what calm dignity, Eumedes received the well-merited homage, and how disgracefully the false fame had bewildered his own senses!

Yet he had not passed through the purifying fire of misfortune in vain! The past should not cloud the glad anticipation of brighter days!



Drawing a long breath, he straightened himself into a more erect posture, and ordered the men to push the boat from the shore. Then he pressed a farewell kiss on the Amalekite boy's forehead, the lad sprang ashore, and the journey northward began.

At first the sailors feared that the crowd would be too great, and the boat would be refused admission to the canal; but the helmsman succeeded in keeping close behind a vessel of medium size, and the Macedonian guards of the channel put no obstacle in their countryman's way, while boats occupied by Egyptians and other barbarians were kept back.



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In the Bitter Lakes, whose entire length was to be traversed, the ships had more room, and after a long voyage through dazzling sunlight, and along desolate shores, the boat anchored at nightfall at Heroopolis.

Hermon and Bias obtained shelter on one of the ships which the sovereign had placed at the disposal of the Greeks who came to participate in the festivals to be celebrated.

Before his master went to rest, the freedman—whom he had sent out to look for a vessel bound to Pelusium and Alexandria the next day or the following one—returned to the ship.

He had talked with the Lady Thyone, and told Hermon from her that she would visit or send for him the next day, after the festival.

His own mother, the freedman protested, could not have rejoiced more warmly over the commencement of his recovery, and she would have come with him at once had not Philippus prevented his aged wife, who was exhausted by the long journey.

The next morning the sun poured a wealth of radiant light upon the desert, the green water of the harbour, and the gray and yellow walls of the border fortress.

Three worlds held out their hands to one another on this water way surrounded by the barren wilderness—Egypt, Hellas, and Semitic Asia.

To the first belonged the processions of priests, who, with images of the gods, consecrated vessels, and caskets of relics, took their places at the edge of the harbour. The tawny and black, half-naked soldiers who, with high shields, lances, battle-axes and bows, gathered around strangely shaped standards, joined them, amid the beating of drums and blare of trumpets, as if for their protection. Behind them surged a vast multitude of Egyptians and dark-skinned Africans.

On the other side of the canal the Asiatics were moving to and fro. The best places for spectators had been assigned to the petty kings and princes of tribes, Phoenician and Syrian merchants, and well-equipped, richly armed warriors. Among them thronged owners of herds and seafarers from the coast. Until the reception began, fresh parties of bearded sons of the desert, in floating white bernouse, mounted on noble steeds, were constantly joining the other Asiatics.

The centre was occupied by the Greeks. The appearance of every individual showed that they were rulers of the land, and that they deserved to be. How free and bold was their bearing! how brightly and joyously sparkled the eyes of these men, whose wreaths of green leaves and bright-hued flowers adorned locks anointed for the festivals! Strong and slender, they were conspicuous in their stately grace among the lean Egyptians, unbridled in their jests and jeers, and the excitable Asiatics.



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Now the blare of trumpets and the roll of drums shook the air like echoing lightning and heavy peals of thunder; the Egyptian priests sang a hymn of praise to the God King and Goddess Queen, and the aristocratic priestesses of the deity tinkled the brass rings on the sistrum. Then a chorus of Hellenic singers began a polyphonous hymn, and amid its full, melodious notes, which rose above the enthusiastic shouts of "Hail!" from the multitude, King Ptolemy and his sister-wife showed themselves to the waiting throng. Seated on golden thrones borne on the broad shoulders of gigantic black Ethiopians, and shaded by lofty canopies, both were raised above the crowd, whom they saluted by gracious gestures.

The athletic young bearers of the large round ostrich-feather fans which protected them from the sunbeams were followed in ranks by the monarch's "relatives" and "friends," the dignitaries, the dark and fair-haired bands of the guards of Grecian youths and boys, as well as divisions of the picked corps of the Hetairoi, Diadochi, and Epigoni, in beautiful plain Macedonian armour.

They were followed in the most informal manner by scholars from the Museum, many Hellenic artists, and wealthy gentlemen of Alexandria of Greek and Jewish origin, whom the King had invited to the festival.

In his train they went on board the huge galley on which the reception was to take place. Scarcely had the last one stepped on the deck when it began.

Eumedes came from the admiral's galley to the King's. Ptolemy embraced him like a friend, and Arsinoe added a wreath of fresh roses to the laurel crown which the sovereign had sent the day before.

At the same time thundering plaudits echoed from the walls of the fortifications and broke, sometimes rising, sometimes falling, against the ships and masts in the calm water of the harbour.

The King had little time to lose. Even festal joy must move swiftly. There were many and varied things to be seen and done; but in the course of an hour—so ran the order—this portion of the festivities must be over, and it was fully obeyed.

The hands and feet of the woolly-headed blacks who, amid loud acclamations, carried on shore the cages in which lions, panthers, and leopards shook the bars with savage fury, moved as if they were winged. The slender, dark-brown Ethiopians who led giraffes, apes, gazelles, and greyhounds past the royal pair rushed along as if they were under the lash; and the sixty elephants which Eumedes and his men had caught in the land of Chatyth moved at a rapid pace past the royal state galley.



At the sight of them the King joined in the cheers of thousands of voices on the shore; these giant animals were to him auxiliaries who could put to flight a whole corps of hostile cavalry, and Arsinoe-Philadelphus, the Queen, sympathized with his pleasure.

She raised her voice with her royal husband, and it seemed to the spectators on the shore as if they had a share in the narrative when she listened to Eumedes's first brief report.



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Only specimens of the gold and ivory, spices and rare woods, juniper trees and skins of animals which the ships brought home could be borne past their Majesties, and the black and brown men who carried them moved at a breathless rate.

The sun was still far from the meridian when the royal couple and their train withdrew from the scene of the reception ceremonial, and drove, in a magnificent chariot drawn by four horses, to the neighbouring city of Pithoin, where new entertainments and a long period of rest awaited them. Hermon had seen, as if through a veil of white mists, the objects that aroused the enthusiasm of the throng, and so, he said to himself, it had been during the whole course of his life. Only the surface of the phenomena on which he fixed his eyes had been visible to him; he had not learned to penetrate further into their nature, fathom them to their depths, until he became blind.

If the gods fulfilled his hope, if he regained his vision entirely, and even the last mists had vanished, he would hold firmly to the capacity he had gained, and use it in life as well as in art.

CHAPTER XIV.

The messenger from Philippus appeared in the afternoon. It was the young hipparch who had studied in Athens and accompanied the commandant of Pelusium to Tennis the year before. He came charged with the commission to convey the artist, in the carriage of the gray-haired comrade of Alexander, to the neighbouring city of Pithom, where Philippus, by the King's command, was now residing.

On the way the hipparch told the sculptor that the Lady Thyone had recently done things unprecedented for a woman of her age.

She had been present at the founding of the city of Arsinoe, as well as at the laying of the corner stone of the temple which was to be consecrated to the new god Serapis in the neighbourhood. The day before she had welcomed her returning son before the entry of the fleet into the canal, and to-day had remained from the beginning to the end of his reception by the King, without being unduly wearied.

Her first thought, after the close of the ceremony, had concerned her convalescing young friend. New entertainments, in which the Queen commanded her to participate, awaited her in Pithom, but pleasure at the return of her famous son appeared to double her power of endurance.

Pithom was the sacred name of the temple precincts of the desert city of Thekut—[The biblical Suchot]—near Heroopolis, where the citizens lived and pursued their business.

The travellers reached the place very speedily. Garlands of flowers and hangings adorned the houses. The sacred precinct Pithom, above which towered the



magnificently restored temple of the god Turn, was also still adorned with many superb ones, as well as lofty masts, banners, and triumphal arches.

Before they reached it the equipage passed the sumptuous tents which had been erected for the royal pair and their attendants. If Hermon had not known how long the monarch intended to remain here, their size and number would have surprised him.

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A regular messenger and carrier-dove service had been established between Alexandria and Pithom for the period of Ptolemy's relaxation; and the sovereign was accompanied not only by several of the chief councillors and secretaries, but artists and some of the Museum scientists with whom he was on specially intimate terms, who were to adorn the festival on the frontier with their presence, and cheer the invalid King, who needed entertainment. Singers and actors also belonged to the train.

As they passed the encampment of the troops who accompanied the sovereign, the hipparch could show Hermon a magnificent military spectacle.

Heroopolis was fortified, and belonged to the military colonies which Alexander the Great had established throughout all Egypt in order to win it over more quickly to Grecian customs. A Hellenic phalanx and Libyan mercenaries formed the garrison there, but at Pithom the King had gathered the flower of his troops around him, and this circumstance showed how little serious consideration the cautious ruler, who usually carefully regarded every detail, gave to the war with Cyrene, in which he took no personal part. The four thousand Gauls whom he had sent across the frontier as auxiliary troops promised to become perilous to the foe, who was also threatened in the rear by one of the most powerful Libyan tribes.

Therefore, the artist was assured by his military companion, Philadelphus could let the campaign take its course, and permit himself the brief period of rest in this strangely chosen place, which the leeches had advised.

The house where the aged couple lived with their son, Admiral Eumedes, was on the edge of the precincts of the temple. It belonged to the most distinguished merchant in the place, and consisted of a large open courtyard in the form of a square, surrounded by the building and its communicating wings.

When the hipparch led Hermon into this place a number of people had already assembled there. Soldiers and sailors stood in groups in the centre, awaiting the orders of the old general and his subordinate officers. Messengers and slaves, coming and going on various errands, were crossing it, and on the shady side benches and chairs stood under a light awning. Most of these were occupied by visitors who came to congratulate the mother of the fame-crowned admiral.

Thyone was reclining on a divan in their midst, submitting with a sigh to the social duties which her high position imposed upon her.

Her face was turned toward the large doorway of the main entrance, while she sometimes greeted newly introduced guests, sometimes bade farewell to departing ones, and meanwhile answered and asked questions.

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She had been more wearied by the exertions of the last few days than her animated manner revealed. Yet as soon as Hermon, leaning on the young hipparch's arm, approached her, she rose and cordially extended both hands to him. True, the recovering man was still unable to see her features distinctly, but he felt the maternal kindness with which she received him, and what his eyes could not distinguish his ears taught him in her warm greetings. His heart dilated and, after he had kissed her dear old hand more than once with affectionate devotion, she led him among her guests and presented him to them as the son of her dearest friend.

A strange stir ran through the assembled group, nearly all whose members belonged to the King's train, and the low whispers and murmurs around him revealed to Hermon that the false wreaths he wore had by no means been forgotten in this circle.

A painful feeling of discomfort overwhelmed the man accustomed to the silence of the desert, and a voice within cried with earnest insistence, "Away from here!"

But he had no time to obey it; an unusually tall, broad-shouldered man, with a thick gray beard and grave, well-formed features, in whom he thought he recognised the great physician Erasistratus, approached Thyone, and asked, "The recluse from the desert with restored sight?"

"The same," replied the matron, and whispered to the other, who was really the famous scientist and leech whom Hermon had desired to seek in Alexandria. "Exhaustion will soon overcome me, and how many important matters I had to discuss with you and the poor fellow yonder!"

The physician laid his hand on the matron's temples, and, raising his voice, said in a tone of grave anxiety: "Exhaustion! It would be better for you, honoured lady, to keep your bed."

"Surely and certainly!" the wife of the chief huntsman instantly assented. "We have already taxed your strength far too long, my noble friend."

This welcome confession produced a wonderful effect upon the other visitors, and very soon the last one had vanished from the space under the awning and the courtyard. Not a single person had vouchsafed Hermon a greeting; for the artist, divested of the highest esteem, had been involved in the ugly suspicion of having driven his uncle from Alexandria, and the monarch was said to have spoken unfavourably of him.

When the last one had left the courtyard, the leech exchanged a quick glance of understanding, which also included Hermon, with Thyone, and the majordomo received orders to admit no more visitors, while Erasistratus exclaimed gaily, "It is one of the physician's principal duties to keep all harmful things—including living ones—from his patient."



Then he turned to Hermon and had already begun to question him about his health, when the majordomo announced another visitor. "A very distinguished gentleman, apparently," he said hastily; "Herophilus of Chalcedon, who would not be denied admittance."

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Again the eyes of Erasistratus and the matron met, and the former hastened toward his professional colleague.

The two physicians stopped in the middle of the courtyard and talked eagerly together, while Thyone, with cordial interest, asked Hermon to tell her what she had already partially learned through the freedman Bias.

Finally Erasistratus persuaded the matron, who seemed to have forgotten her previous exhaustion, to share the consultation, but the convalescent's heart throbbed faster as he watched the famous leeches.

If these two men took charge of his case, the most ardent desire of his soul might be fulfilled, and Thyone was certainly trying to induce them to undertake his treatment; what else would have drawn her away from him before she had said even one word about Daphne?

The sculptor saw, as if through a cloud of dust, the three consulting together in the centre of the courtyard, away from the soldiers and messengers.

Hermon had only seen Erasistratus indistinctly, but before his eyes were blinded he had met him beside the sick-bed of Myrtilus, and no one who had once beheld it could forget the manly bearded face, with the grave, thoughtful eyes, whose gaze deliberately sought their goal.

The other also belonged to the great men in the realm of intellect. Hermon knew him well, for he had listened eagerly in the Museum to the lectures of the famous Herophilus, and his image also had stamped itself upon his soul.

Even at that time the long, smooth hair of the famous investigator had turned gray. From the oval of his closely shaven, well-formed face, with the long, thin, slightly hooked nose, a pair of sparkling eyes had gazed with penetrating keenness at the listeners. Hermon had imagined Aristotle like him, while the bust of Pythagoras, with which he was familiar, resembled Erasistratus.

The convalescent could scarcely expect anything more than beneficial advice from Herophilus; for this tireless investigator rarely rendered assistance to the sick in the city, because the lion's share of his time and strength were devoted to difficult researches. The King favoured these by placing at his disposal the criminals sentenced to death. In his work of dissection he had found that the human brain was the seat of the soul, and the nerves originated in it.

Erasistratus, on the contrary, devoted himself to a large medical practice, though science owed him no less important discoveries.



The circle of artists had heard what he taught concerning the blood in the veins and the air bubbles in the arteries, how he explained the process of breathing, and what he had found in the investigation of the beating of the heart.

But he performed his most wonderful work with the knife in his hand as a surgeon. He had opened the body of one of Archias's slaves, who had been nursed by Daphne, and cured him after all other physicians had given him up.



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When this man's voice reached Hermon, he repeated to himself the words of refusal with which the great physician had formerly declined to devote his time and skill to him. Perhaps he was right then—and how differently he treated him to-day!

Thyone had informed the famous scientist of everything which she knew from Hermon, and had learned of the last period of his life through Bias.

She now listened with eager interest, sometimes completing Hermon's acknowledgments by an explanatory or propitiating word, as the leeches subjected him to a rigid examination, but the latter felt that his statements were not to serve curiosity, but an honest desire to aid him. So he spoke to them with absolute frankness.

When the examination was over, Erasistratus exclaimed to his professional colleague: "This old woman! Precisely as I would have prescribed. She ordered the strictest diet with the treatment. She rejected every strong internal remedy, and forbade him wine, much meat, and all kinds of seasoning. Our patient was directed to live on milk and the same simple gifts of Nature which I would have ordered for him. The herb juice in the clever sorceress's salve proved the best remedy. The incantations could do no harm. On the contrary, they often produce a wonderful effect on the mind, and from it proceed further."

Here Erasistratus asked to have a description of the troubles which still affected Hermon's vision, and the passionate eagerness with which the leeches gazed into his eyes strengthened the artist's budding hope. Never had he wished more ardently that Daphne was back at his side.

He also listened with keen attention when the scientists finally discussed in low tones what they had perceived, and caught the words, "White scar on the cornea," "leucoma," and "operation." He also heard Herophilus declare that an injury of the cornea by the flame of the torch was the cause of the blindness. In the work which led him to the discovery of the retina in the eye he had devoted himself sedulously to the organs of sight. This case seemed as if it had been created for his friend's keen knife.

What expectations this assurance aroused in the half-cured man, who felt as if the goal was already gained, when, shortly after, Erasistratus, the greatest physician of his time, offered to make the attempt in Alexandria to remove, by a few little incisions, what still dimmed his impaired vision!

Hermon, deeply agitated, thanked the leech, and when Thyone perceived what was passing in his mind she ventured to ask the question whether it would not be feasible to perform the beneficent work here, and, if possible, the next day, and the surgeon was ready to fulfil the wish of the matron and the sufferer speedily. He would bring the necessary instruments with him. It only depended upon whether a suitable room could

be found in the crowded city, and Thyone believed that such a one could not be lacking in the great building at her disposal.

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A short conversation with the steward confirmed this opinion.

Then Erasistratus appointed the next morning for the operation. During the ceremony of consecrating the temple it would be quiet in the house and its vicinity. The preliminary fasting which he imposed upon his patients Hermon had already undergone.

“The pure desert air here,” he added, “will be of the utmost assistance in recovery. The operation is slight, and free from danger. A few days will determine its success. I shall remain here with their Majesties, only—” and here he hesitated doubtfully—“where shall I find a competent assistant?”

Herophilus looked his colleague in the face with a sly smile, saying, “If you credit the old man of Chalcedon with the needful skill, he is at your disposal.”

“Herophilus!” cried Thyone, and tears of emotion wet her aged eyes, which easily overflowed; but when Hermon tried to give expression to his fervent gratitude in words, Erasistratus interrupted him, exclaiming, as he grasped his comrade’s hand, “It honours the general in his purple robe, when he uses the spade in the work of intrenchment.”

Many other matters were discussed before the professional friends withdrew, promising to go to work early the next morning.

They kept their word, and while the temple of the god Turn resounded with music and the chanting of hymns by the priests, whose dying notes entered the windows of the sick-room, while Queen Arsinoe-Philadelphus led the procession, and the King, who was prevented by the gout from entering and passing around the sanctuary at her side, ordered a monument to be erected in commemoration of this festival, the famous leeches toiled busily.

When the music and the acclamations of the crowd died away, their task was accomplished. The great Herophilus had rendered his equally distinguished colleague the aid of an apprentice. When Hermon’s lips again tried to pour forth his gratitude, Herophilus interrupted him with the exclamation: “Use the sight you have regained, young master, in creating superb works of art, and I shall be in your debt, since, with little trouble, I was permitted to render a service to the whole Grecian world.”

Hermon spent seven long days and nights full of anxious expectation in a darkened room. Bias and a careful old female slave of the Lady Thyone watched him faithfully. Philippus, his wife, and his famous son Eumedes were allowed to pay him only brief visits; but Erasistratus watched the success of the operation every morning. True, it had been by no means dangerous, and certainly would not have required his frequent visits, but it pleased the investigator, reared in the school of Stoics, to watch how this warm-blooded young artist voluntarily submitted to live in accord with reason and Nature—the guiding stars of his own existence.



But Hermon opened his soul to his learned friend, and what Erasistratus thus learned strengthened the conviction of this great alleviator of physical pain that suffering and knowledge of self were the best physicians for the human soul. The scientist, who saw in the arts the noblest ornament of mortal life, anticipated with eager interest Hermon's future creative work.



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On the seventh day the leech removed the bandage from his patient's eyes, and the cry of rapture with which Hermon clasped him in his arms richly rewarded him for his trouble and solicitude.

The restored man beheld in sharp, clear, undimmed outlines everything at which the physician desired him to look.

Now Erasistratus could write to his friend Herophilus in Alexandria that the operation was successful.

The sculptor was ordered to avoid the dazzling sunlight a fortnight longer, then he might once more use his eyes without restriction, and appeal to the Muse to help in creating works of art.

Thyone was present at this explanation. After she had conquered the great emotion which for a time sealed her lips, her first question, after the physician's departure, was: "And Nemesis? She too, I think, has fled before the new light?"

Hermon pressed her hand still more warmly, exclaiming with joyous confidence: "No, Thyone! True, I now have little reason to fear the avenging goddess who pursues the criminal, but all the more the other Nemesis, who limits the excess of happiness. Will she not turn her swift wheel, when I again, with clear eyes, see Daphne, and am permitted to work in my studio once more with keen eyes and steady hand?"

Now the barriers which had hitherto restricted Hermon's social intercourse also fell. Eumedes, the commander of the fleet, often visited him, and while exchanging tales of their experiences they became friends.

When Hermon was alone with Thyone and her gray-haired husband, the conversation frequently turned upon Daphne and her father.

Then the recovered artist learned to whom Archias owed his escape from being sentenced to death and having his property confiscated. Papers, undeniably genuine, had proved what large sums had been advanced by the merchant during the period of the first Queen Arsinoe's conspiracy, and envious foes had done their best to prejudice the King and his sister-wife against Archias. Then the gray-haired hero fearlessly interceded for his friend, and the monarch did not remain deaf to his representations. King Ptolemy was writing the history of the conqueror of the world, and needed the aged comrade of Alexander, the sole survivor who had held a prominent position in the great Macedonian's campaigns. It might be detrimental to his work, on which he set great value, if he angered the old warrior, who was a living source of history. Yet the King was still ill-disposed to the merchant, for while he destroyed Archias's death sentence which had been laid before him for his signature, he said to Philippos: "The



money-bag whose life I give you was the friend of my foe. Let him beware that my arm does not yet reach him from afar!"

Nay, his resentment went so far that he refused to receive Hermon, when Eumedes begged permission to present the artist whose sight had been so wonderfully restored.



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“To me he is still the unjustly crowned conspirator,” Philadelphus replied. “Let him create the remarkable work which I formerly expected from him, and perhaps I shall have a somewhat better opinion of him, deem him more worthy of our favour.”

Under these circumstances it was advisable for Archias and Daphne to remain absent from Alexandria, and the experienced couple could only approve Hermon’s decision to go to Pergamus as soon as Erasistratus dismissed him. A letter from Daphne, which reached Thyone’s hands at this time, increased the convalescent’s already ardent yearning to the highest pitch. The girl entreated her maternal friend to tell her frankly the condition of her lover’s health. If he had recovered, he would know how to find her speedily; if the blindness was incurable, she would come herself to help him bear the burden of his darkened existence. Chrysilla would accompany her, but she could leave her father alone in Pergamus a few months without anxiety, for he had a second son there in his nephew Myrtilus, and had found a kind friend in Philetaerus, the ruler of the country.

From this time Hermon daily urged Erasistratus to grant him entire liberty, but the leech steadfastly refused, though he knew whither his young friend longed to go.

Not until the beginning of the fourth week after the operation did he himself lead Hermon into the full sunlight, and when the recovered artist came out of the house he raised his hands in mute prayer, gushing from the inmost depths of his heart.

The King was to return to Alexandria in a few days, and at the same time Philippus and Thyone were going back to Pelusium. Hermon wished to accompany them there and sail thence on a ship bound for Pergamus.

With Eumedes he visited the unfamiliar scenes around him, and his newly restored gift of sight presented to him here many things that formerly he would scarcely have noticed, but which now filled him with grateful joy. Gratitude, intense gratitude, had taken possession of his whole being. This feeling mastered him completely and seemed to be fostered and strengthened by every breath, every heart throb, every glance into his own soul and the future.

Besides, many beauties, nay, even many marvels, presented themselves to his restored eyes. The whole wealth of the magic of beauty, intellect, and pleasure in life, characteristic of the Greek nature, appeared to have followed King Ptolemy and Queen Arsinoe-Philadelphus hither. Gardens had been created on the arid, sandy soil, whose gray and yellow surface extended in every direction, the water on the shore of the canal which united Pithom with the Nile not sufficing to render it possible to make even a narrow strip of arable land. Fresh water flowed from beautiful fountains adorned with rich carvings, and the pure fluid filled large porphyry and marble basins. Statues, single and in groups, stood forth in harmonious arrangement against green masses of leafage, and Grecian temples, halls, and even a theatre, rapidly constructed in the noblest forms

from light material, invited the people to devotion, to the enjoyment of the most exquisite music, and to witness the perfect performance of many a tragedy and comedy.

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Statues surrounded the hurriedly erected palaestra where the Ephebi every morning practised their nude, anointed bodies in racing, wrestling, and throwing the discus. What a delight it was to Hermon to feast his eyes upon these spectacles! What a stimulus to the artist, so long absorbed in his own thoughts, who had so recently returned from the wilderness to the world of active life, when he was permitted, in Erasistratus's tent, to listen to the great scholars who had accompanied the King to the desert! Only the regret that Daphne was not present to share his pleasure clouded Hermon's enjoyment, when Eumedes related to his parents, himself, and a few chosen friends the adventures encountered, and the experiences gathered in distant Ethiopia, on land and water, in battle and the chase, as investigator and commander.

The utmost degree of variety had entered into the simplicity of the monotonous desert, the most refined abundance for the intellect and the need of beauty appeared amid its barrenness.

The poet Callimachus had just arrived with a new chorus of singers, tablets by Antiphilus and Nicias had come to beautify the last days of the residence in the desert—when doves, the birds of Aphrodite, flew with the speed of lightning into Pithom, but instead of bringing a new message of love and announcing the approach of fresh pleasure, they bore terrible tidings which put joy to flight and stifled mirthfulness.

The unbridled greed of rude barbarians had chosen Alexandria for its goal, and startled the royal pair and their chosen companions from the sea of pleasure where they would probably have remained for weeks.

The four thousand Gauls who had been obtained to fight against Cyrene were in the act of rushing rapaciously upon the richest city in the world. The most terrible danger hung like a black cloud over the capital founded by Alexander, whose growth had been so rapid. True, General Satvrus asserted that he was strong enough, with the troops at his disposal, to defeat the formidable hordes; but a second dove, sent by the epitropus who had remained in Alexandria, alluded to serious disaster which it would scarcely be possible to avert.

The doves now flew swiftly to and fro; but before the third arrived, Eumedes, the commander of the fleet just from Ethiopia, was already on the way to Alexandria with all the troops assembled on the frontier.

The King and Queen, with the corps of pages and the corps of youths, entered the boats waiting for them to return, drawn by teams of four swift horses, to Memphis, to await within the impregnable fortress of the White Castle the restoration of security in the capital.

The Greeks prized the most valiant fearlessness so highly that no shadow could be suffered to rest upon the King's, and therefore the monarch's hurried departure was

made in a way which permitted no thought of flight, and merely resembled impatient yearning for new festivals and the earnest desire to fulfil grave duties in another portion of the kingdom.



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Many of the companions of the royal pair, among them Erasistratus, accompanied them. Hermon bade him farewell with a troubled heart, and the leech, too, parted with regret from the artist to whom, a year before, he had refused his aid.

CHAPTER XV.

Hermon went, with Philippus and Thyone, on board the ship which was to convey them through the new canal to Pelusium, where the old commandant had to plan all sorts of measures. In the border fortress the artist was again obliged to exercise patience, for no ship bound to Pergamus or Lesbos could be found in the harbour. Philippus had as much work as he could do, but all his arrangements were made when carrier doves announced that the surprise intended by the Gauls had been completely thwarted, and his son Eumedes was empowered to punish them.

The admiral would take his fleet to the Sebennytic mouth of the Nile.

Another dove came from King Ptolemy, and summoned the old general at once to the capital. Philippus resolved to set off without delay and, as the way led past that mouth of the Nile, met his son on the voyage.

Hermon must accompany him and his wife to Alexandria, whence, without entering the city, he could sail for Pergamus; ships bound to all the ports in the Mediterranean were always in one of the harbours of the capital. A galley ready to weigh anchor was constantly at the disposal of the commandant of the fortress, and the next noon the noble pair, with Hermon and his faithful Bias, went on board the Galatea.

The weather was dull, and gray clouds were sweeping across the sky over the swift vessel, which hugged the coast, and, unless the wind shifted, would reach the narrow tongue of land pierced by the Sebennytic mouth of the Nile before sunrise.

Though the general and his wife went to rest early, Hermon could not endure the close air of the cabin. Wrapped in his cloak he went on deck. The moon, almost full, was sailing in the sky, sometimes covered by dark clouds, sometimes leaving them behind. Like a swan emerging from the shadow of the thickets along the shore upon the pure bosom of the lake, it finally floated into the deep azure of the radiant firmament. Hermon's heart swelled.

How he rejoiced that he was again permitted to behold the starry sky, and satiate his soul with the beauty of creation! What delight it gave him that the eternal wanderers above were no longer soulless forms, that he again saw in the pure silver disk above friendly Selene, in the rolling salt waves the kingdom of Poseidon! To-morrow, when the deep blue water was calm, he would greet the sea-god Glaucus, and when snowy foam crowned the crests of the waves, white-armed Thetis. The wind was no longer an



empty sound to him; no, it, too, came from a deity. All Nature had regained a new, divine life. Doubtless he felt much nearer to his childhood than before, but he was infinitely less distant from the eternal divinity. And all the forms, so full of meaning, which appeared to him from Nature, and from every powerful emotion of his own soul, were waiting to be represented by his art in the noblest of forms, those of human beings. There were few with whose nature he had not become familiar in the darkness and solitude that once surrounded him.



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When he began to create again, he had only to summon them, and he awaited, with the suspense of the general who is in command of new troops on the eve of battle, the success of his own work after the great transformation which had taken place in him.

What a stress and tumult!

He had controlled it since the first hour when he regained his full vision. He would fain have transformed the moon into the sun, the ship into the studio, and begun to model.

He knew, too, what he desired to create.

He would model an Apollo trampling under foot the slain dragon of darkness.

He would succeed in this work now. And as he looked up and saw Selene just emerging again from the black cloud island, the thought entered his mind that it was a moonlight night like this when all the unspeakably terrible misfortune occurred—which was now past.

Yet neither the calm wanderer above nor a resentful woman had exposed him to the persecution of Nemesis. In the stillness of the desert he had perceived what had brought all this terrible suffering upon him; but he would not repeat it to himself now, for he felt within his soul the power to remain faithful to his best self in the future.

With clear eyes he gazed keenly and blithely at the new life. Nothing, least of all, futile self-torturing regret for faults committed, should cloud the fair morning dawning anew for him, which summoned him to active work, to gratitude and love.

Uttering a sigh of relief, he paced the deck—now brilliantly illuminated by silvery light—with long strides.

The moon above his head reminded him of Ledscha. He was no longer angry with her. The means by which she had intended to destroy him had been transformed into a benefit, and while in the desert he had perceived how often man finally blesses, as the highest gain, what he at first regarded as the most cruel affliction.

How distinctly the image of the Biamite again stood before his agitated soul!

Had he not loved her once?

Or how had it happened that, though his heart was Daphne's, and hers alone, he had felt wounded and insulted when his Bias, who was leaning over the railing of the deck yonder, gazing at the glittering waves, had informed him that Ledscha had been accompanied in her flight from her unloved husband by the Gaul whose life he, Hermon, had saved? Was this due to jealousy or merely wounded vanity at being supplanted in a heart which he firmly believed belonged, though only in bitter hate, solely to him?



She certainly had not forgotten him, and while the remembrance of her blended with the yearning for Daphne which never left him, he sat down and gazed out into the darkness till his head drooped on his breast.

Then a dream showed the Biamite to the slumbering man, yet no longer in the guise of a woman, but as the spider Arachne. She increased before his eyes to an enormous size and alighted upon the pharos erected by Sostratus. Uninjured by the flames of the lighthouse, above which she hovered, she wove a net of endlessly long gray threads over the whole city of Alexandria, with its temples, palaces, and halls, harbours and ships, until Daphne suddenly appeared with a light step and quietly cut one after the other.



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Suddenly a shrill whistle aroused him. It was the signal of the flute-player to relieve the rowers.

A faint yellow line was now tingeing the eastern horizon of the gray, cloudy sky. At his left extended the flat, dull-brown coast line, which seemed to be lower than the turbid waves of the restless sea. The cold morning wind was blowing light mists over the absolutely barren shore. Not a tree, not a bush, not a human dwelling was to be seen in this dreary wilderness. Wherever the eye turned, there was nothing but sand and water, which united at the edge of the land. Long lines of surf poured over the arid desert, and, as if repelled by the desolation of this strand, returned to the wide sea whence they came.

The shrill screams of the sea-gulls behind the ship, and the hoarse, hungry croaking of the ravens on the shore blended with the roaring of the waves. Hermon shuddered at this scene. Shivering, he wrapped his cloak closer around him, yet he did not go to the protecting cabin, but followed the nauarch, who pointed out to him the numerous vessels which, in a wide curve, surrounded the place where the Sebennyitic arm of the Nile pierced the tongue of land to empty into the sea.

The experienced seaman did not know what ships were doing there, but it was hardly anything good; for ravens in a countless multitude were to be seen on the shore and all moved toward the left.

Philippus's appearance on deck interrupted the nauarch. He anxiously showed the birds to the old hero also, and the latter's only reply was, "Watch the helm and sails!"

Yonder squadron, Philippus said to the artist, was a part of his son's fleet; what brought it there was a mystery to him too.

After the early meal, the galley of Eumedes approached his father's trireme. Two other galleys, not much inferior in size, were behind, and probably fifty smaller vessels were moving about the mouth of the Nile and the whole dreary tongue of land.

All belonged to the royal war fleet, and the deck of every one was crowded with armed soldiers.

On one a forest of lances bristled in the murky air, and upon its southward side a row of archers, each man holding his bow in his hand, stood shoulder to shoulder.

At what mark were their arrows to be aimed? The men on board the Galatea saw it distinctly, for the shore was swarming with human figures, here standing crowded closely together, like horses attacked by a pack of wolves; yonder running, singly or in groups, toward the sea or into the land. Dark spots on the light sand marked the places



where others had thrown themselves on the ground, or, kneeling, stretched out their arms as if in defence.

Who were the people who populated this usually uninhabited, inhospitable place so densely and in so strange a manner?

This could not be distinguished from the Galatea with the naked eye, but Philippus thought that they were the Gauls whose punishment had been intrusted to his son, and it soon proved that the old general was right; for just as the Galatea was approaching the shore, a band of twenty or thirty men plunged into the sea. They were Gauls. The light complexions and fair and red bristling hair showed this—Philippus knew them, and Hermon remembered the hordes of men who had rushed past him on the ride to Tennis.



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But the watchers were allowed only a short time for observation; brief shouts of command rang from the ships near them, long bows were raised in the air, and one after another of the light-hued forms in the water threw up its arms, sprang up, or sank motionless into the waves around them, which were dyed with a crimson stain.

The artist shuddered; the gray-haired general covered his head with his cloak, and the Lady Thyone followed his example, uttering her son's name in a tone of loud lamentation.

The nauarch pointed to the black birds in the air and close above the shore and the water; but the shout, "A boat from the admiral's galley!" soon attracted the attention of the voyagers on the Galatea in a new direction.

Thirty powerful rowers were urging the long, narrow boat toward them. Sometimes raised high on the crest of a mountain wave, sometimes sinking into the hollow, it completed its trip, and Eumedes mounted a swinging rope ladder to the Galatea's deck as nimbly as a boy.

Here the young commander of the fleet hastened toward his parents. His mother sobbed aloud at his anything but cheerful greeting; Philippus said mournfully, "I have heard nothing yet, but I know all."

"Father," replied the admiral, and raising the helmet from his head, covered with brown curls, he added mournfully: "First as to these men here. It will teach you to understand the other terrible things. Your Uncle Archias's house was destroyed; yonder men were the criminals."

"In the capital!" Philippus exclaimed furiously, and Hermon cried in no less vehement excitement: "How did my uncle get the ill will of these monsters? But as the vengeance is in your hands, they will atone for this breach of the peace!"

"Severely, perhaps too severely," replied Eumedes gloomily, and Philippus asked his son how this evil deed could have happened, and the purport of the King's command.

The admiral related what had occurred in the capital since his departure from Pithom.

The four thousand Gauls who had been sent by King Antiochus to the Egyptian army as auxiliary troops against Cyrene refused, before reaching Paraetionium, on the western frontier of the Egyptian kingdom, to obey their Greek commanders. As they tried to force them to continue their march, the barbarians left them bound in the road. They spared their lives, but rushed with loud shouts of exultation toward Alexandria, which was close at hand.

They had learned that the city was almost stripped of troops, and the most savage instinct urged them toward the wealthy capital.



Without encountering any resistance, they broke through the necropolis into Alexandria, crossed the Draco canal, and marched past the unfinished Temple of Serapis through the Rhakotis. At the Canopic Way they turned eastward and rushed through this main artery of traffic till, in the Brucheium, they hastened in a northerly direction toward the sea.



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South of the Theatre of Dionysus they halted. One division turned toward the market-place, another toward the royal palaces.

Until they reached the Brucheium the hordes, so eager for booty, had refrained from plunder and pillage.

Their whole strength was to be reserved, as the examination proved, for the attack upon the royal palaces. Several people who were thoroughly familiar with Alexandria had acted as guides.

The instigator of the mutiny was said to be a Gallic captain who had taken part in the surprise of Delphi, but, having ventured to punish disobedient soldiers, he was killed. A bridge-builder from the ranks, and his wife, who was not of Gallic blood, had taken his place.

This woman, a resolute and obstinate but rarely beautiful creature, when the division that was to attack the royal palaces was marching past the house which Hermon had occupied as the heir of Myrtilus, pressed forward herself across the threshold, to order the mutineers who followed her to destroy and steal whatever came in their way. The bridge-builder went to the market-place, and in pillaging the wealthy merchants' houses began with Archias's. Meanwhile it was set on fire and, with the large warehouses adjoining it, was burned to the foundation walls.

But the robbers were to obtain no permanent success, either in the market-place or in Myrtilus's house, which was diagonally opposite to the palaestra; for General Satyrus, at the first tidings of their approach, had collected all the troops at his disposal and the crews of several war galleys, and imprisoned the division in the market-place as though in a mouse-trap. The bands to which the woman belonged were forced by the cavalry into the palaestra and the neighbouring Maander, and kept there until Eumedes brought re-enforcements and compelled the Gauls to surrender.

The King sent from Memphis the order to take the vanquished men to the tongue of land where they now were, and could easily be imprisoned between the sea and the Sebennytic inland lake. They were guilty of death to the last man, and starvation was to perform the executioner's office upon them.

He, Eumedes, the admiral concluded, was in the King's service, and must do what his commander in chief ordered.

"Duty," sighed Philippus; "yet what a punishment!"

He held out his hand to his son as he spoke, but the Lady Thyone shook her head mournfully, saying: "There are four thousand over yonder; and the philosopher and historian on the throne, the admirable art critic who bestows upon his capital and Egypt



all the gifts of peace, who understands how to guard and develop it better than any one else—yet what influence the gloomy powers exert upon him!”

Here she hesitated, and went on in a low whisper: “The blood of two brothers stains his hand and his conscience. The oldest, to whom the throne would have belonged, he exiled. And our friend, Demetrius Phalereus, his father’s noble councillor! Because you, Philippus, interceded for him—though you were in a position of command, because Ptolemy knows your ability—you were sent to distant Pelusium, and there we should be still—”



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“Guard your tongue, wife!” interrupted the old general in a tone of grave rebuke. “The vipers on the crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt symbolize the King’s swift power over life and death. To the Egyptians the Philadelphi, Ptolemy and Arsinoe, are gods, and what cause have we to reproach them except that they use their omnipotence?”

“And, mother,” Eumedes eagerly added, “do not the royal pair on the throne merely follow the example of far greater ones among the immortal gods? When the very Gauls who are devoted to death yonder, greedy for booty, attacked Delphi, four years ago, it was the august brother and sister, Apollo and Artemis, who sent them to Hades with their arrows, while Zeus hurled his thunderbolts at them and ordered heavy boulders to fall upon them from the shaken mountains. Many of the men over there fled from destruction at Delphi. Unconverted, they added new crimes to the old ones, but now retribution will overtake them. The worse the crime, the more bloody the vengeance.

“Even the last must die, as my sovereign commands; only I shall determine the mode of death according to my own judgment, and at the same time, mother, feel sure of your approval. Instead of lingering starvation, I shall use swift arrows. Now you know what you were obliged to learn. It would be wise, mother, for you to leave this abode of misery. Duty summons me to my ship.” He held out his hand to his parents and Hermon as he spoke, but the latter clasped it firmly, exclaiming in a tone of passionate emotion, “What is the name of the woman to whom, though she is not of their race, the lawless barbarians yielded?”

“Ledscha,” replied the admiral.

Hermon started as if stung by a scorpion, and asked, “Where is she?”

“On my ship,” was the reply, “if she has not yet been taken ashore with the others.”

“To be killed with the pitiable band there?” cried Thyone angrily, looking her son reproachfully in the face.

“No, mother,” replied Eumedes. “She will be taken to the others under the escort of trustworthy men in order, perhaps, to induce her to speak. It must be ascertained whether there were accomplices in the attack on the royal palaces, and lastly whence the woman comes.”

“I can tell you that myself,” replied Hermon. “Allow me to accompany you. I must see and speak to her.”

“The Arachne of Tennis?” asked Thyone. Hermon’s mute nod of assent answered the question, but she exclaimed: “The unhappy woman, who called down the wrath of Nemesis upon you, and who has now herself fallen a prey to the avenging goddess. What do you want from her?”



Hermon bent down to his old friend and whispered, "To lighten her terrible fate, if it is in my power."

"Go, then," replied the matron, and turned to her son, saying, "Let Hermon tell you how deeply this woman has influenced his life, and, when her turn comes, think of your mother."



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"She is a woman," replied Eumedes, "and the King's mandate only commands me to punish men. Besides, I promised her indulgence if she would make a confession."

"And she?" asked Hermon.

"Neither by threats nor promises," answered the admiral, "can this sinister, beautiful creature be induced to speak."

"Certainly not," said the artist, and a smile of satisfaction flitted over his face.

CHAPTER XVI.

A short row took Hermon and Eumedes the admiral's galley. Ledscha had already been carried ashore. There she was to be confronted with the men who were suspected of having showed the mutineers the way to the city.

Absorbed in his own thoughts, Hermon waited for the admiral, who at first was claimed by one official duty after another. The artist's thoughts lingered with Daphne. To her father the loss of his house, nay, perhaps of his wealth, would seem almost unendurable, yet even were he beggared, provision was made for him and his daughter. He, Hermon, could again create, as in former days, and what happiness it would be if he were permitted to repay the man to whom he owed so much for the kindness bestowed upon him!

He longed to give to the woman he loved again and again, and it would have seemed to him a favour of fortune if the flames had consumed even the last drachm of her wealthy father.

Completely engrossed by these reflections, he forgot the horrors before him, but when he raised his eyes and saw the archers continuing their terrible work he shuddered.

The admiral's galley lay so near the shore that he distinguished the figures of the Gauls separately. Some, obeying the instinct of self preservation, fled from the places which could be reached by the arrows of the archers on the ships, but others pressed toward the shafts. A frightful, heart-rending spectacle, yet how rich in food for the long-darkened eyes of the artist! Two brothers of unusual height, who, nude like all their comrades in death, offered their broad, beautifully arched chests to the arrows, would not leave his memory. It was a terrible sight, yet grand and worthy of being wrested from oblivion by art, and it impressed itself firmly on his mind.

After noon Eumedes could at last devote himself to his young friend. Although the wind drove showers of fine rain before it, the admiral remained on deck with the sculptor. What cared they for the inclement weather, while one was recalling to mind and telling his friend how the hate of an offended woman had unchained the gloomy spirits of



revenge upon him, the other, who had defied death on land water, listened to his story, sometimes in surprise, sometimes with silent horror?

After the examination to which she had been subjected, Eumedes had believed Ledscha to be as Hermon described her. He found nothing petty in this beautiful, passionate creature who avenged the injustice inflicted upon her as Fate took vengeance, who, with unsparing energy, anticipated the Nemesis to whom she appealed, compelled men's obedience, and instead of enriching herself cast away the talents extorted to bring down fresh ruin upon the man who had transformed her love to hate.

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While the friends consulted together with lowered voices, their conjecture became conviction that it was the Biamite's inextinguishable hate which had led her to the Gauls and induced her to share the attack upon the capital.

The assault upon the houses of Archias and Myrtilus was a proof of this, for the latter was still believed to be Hermon's property. She had probably supposed that the merchant's palace sheltered Daphne, in whom, even at Tennis, she had seen and hated her successful rival.

Only the undeniable fact that Ledscha was the bridge-builder's companion presented an enigma difficult to solve. The freedman Bias had remained on Philippus's galley, and could not now be appealed to for a confirmation of his assertions, but Hermon distinctly remembered his statement that Ledscha had allowed the Gaul, after he had received the money intended for him, to take her from Pitane to Africa.

When the short November day was drawing to a close, and the friends had strengthened themselves with food and drink, the rain ceased and, as the sun set, its after-glow broke through the rifts and fissures in the black wall of clouds in the western horizon like blazing flames in the conflagration of a solid stone building. Yet the glow vanished swiftly enough. The darkness of night spread over the sea and the arid strip of land in the south, but the greedy croaking of the ravens and vultures echoed more and more loudly from the upper air. From time to time the outbursts of rage and agony of despairing men, and horrible jeering laughter, drowned the voices of the flocks of birds and the roaring of the tempestuous sea. Sometimes, too, a sharp word of command, or a signal heard for a long distance, pierced through the awful sounds.

Here and there, and at last everywhere on the squadron, which surrounded the tongue of land in a shallow curve, dim lights began to appear on the masts and prows of the ships; but darkness brooded over the coast. Only in the three fortified guardhouses, which had been hastily erected here, the feeble light of a lantern illumined the gloom.

Twinkling lights also appeared in the night heavens between the swiftly flying clouds. One star after another began to adorn the blue islands in the cloudy firmament, and at last the full moon burst through the heavy banks of dark clouds, and shone in pure brilliancy above their heads, like a huge silver vessel in the black catafalque of a giant.

At the end of the first hour after sunset Eumedes ordered the boat to be manned.

Armed as if for battle, he prepared for the row to the scene of misery, and requested Hermon to buckle a coat of mail under his chlamys and put on the sword he gave him. True, a division of reliable Macedonian warriors was to accompany them, and Ledscha was in a well-guarded place, yet it might perhaps be necessary to defend themselves against an outburst of despair among the condemned prisoners. On the short trip, the crests of the tossing waves sometimes shone with a flickering light, while elsewhere



long shadows spread like dark sails over the sea. The flat coast on which both men soon stepped was brightly illumined by the moonbeams, and the forms of the doomed men stood forth, like the black figures on the red background of a vase, upon the yellowish-brown sand on which they were standing, running, walking, or lying.

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At the western end of the tongue of land a sand hill had been surrounded by a wall and moat, guarded by heavily armed soldiers and several archers. The level ground below had been made secure against any attack, and on the right side was a roof supported by pillars.

The officials intrusted with the examination of the ringleaders had remained during the day in this hastily erected open hut. The latter, bound to posts, awaited their sentence.

The only woman among them was Ledscha, who crouched, unfettered, on the ground behind the enclosure, which consisted of short stakes fastened by a rope.

Without presenting any serious obstacle, it merely indicated how far the prisoners might venture to go. Whoever crossed it must expect to be struck down by an arrow from the wall. This earthwork, it is true, menaced those held captive here, but they also owed it a debt of gratitude, for it shut from their eyes the horrible incidents on the sandy plain between the sea and the inland lake.

This spot was now made as light as day by the rays of the full moon which floated in the pure azure sky far above the black cloud mountains, like a white lotus flower on clear waters, and poured floods of silvery radiance upon the earth.

Eumedes commanded the Macedonians who formed his escort to remain at the fortress on the dune, and, pointing out Ledscha by a wave of the hand, he whispered to Hermon: "By the girdle of Aphrodite! she is terribly beautiful! For whom is the Medea probably brewing in imagination the poisoned draught?"

Then he gave the sculptor permission to promise her immunity from punishment if she would consent at least to explain the Gauls' connection with the royal palaces; but Hermon strenuously refused to undertake this or a similar commission to Ledscha.

Eumedes had expected the denial, and merely expressed to his friend his desire to speak to the Biamite after his interview was over. However refractory she might be, his mother's intercession should benefit her. Hermon might assure her that he, the commander, meant to deal leniently. He pressed the artist's hand as he spoke, and walked rapidly away to ascertain the condition of affairs in the other guardhouses.

Never had the brave artist's heart throbbed faster in any danger than on the eve of this meeting; but it was no longer love that thrilled it so passionately, far less hate or the desire to let his foe feel that her revenge was baffled.

It was easy for the victor to exercise magnanimity, and easiest of all for the sculptor in the presence of so beautiful an enemy, and Hermon thought he had never seen the Biamite look fairer. How exquisitely rounded was the oval, how delicately cut the profile of her face, how large were the widely separated, sparkling eyes, above which, even in

the pale moonlight, the thick black brows were visible, united under the forehead as if for a dark deed to be performed in common!



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Time had rather enhanced than lessened the spell of this wonderful young creature. Now she rose from the ground where she had been crouching and paced several times up and down the short path at her disposal; but she started suddenly, for one of the Gauls bound to the posts, in whom Hermon recognised the bridge-builder, Lutarius, called her name, and when she turned her face toward him, panted in broken Greek like one overwhelmed by despair: "Once more—it shall be the last time—I beseech you! Lay your hand upon my brow, and if that is too much, speak but one kind word to me before all is over! I only want to hear that you do not hate me like a foe and despise me like a dog. What can it cost you? You need only tell me in two words that you are sorry for your harshness."

"The same fate awaits us both," cried Ledscha curtly and firmly. "Let each take care of himself. When my turn comes and my eyes grow dim in death, I will thank them that they will not show you to me again, base wretch, throughout eternity."

Lutarius shrieked aloud in savage fury, and tore so frantically at the strong ropes which bound him that the firm posts shook, but Ledscha turned away and approached the hut.

She leaned thoughtfully against one of the pillars that supported the roof, and the artist's eyes watched her intently; every movement seemed to him noble and worth remembering.

With her hand shading her brow, she gazed upward to the full moon.

Hermon had already delayed speaking to her too long, but he would have deemed it criminal to startle her from this attitude. So must Arachne have stood when the goddess, in unjust anger, raised the weaver's shuttle against the more skilful mortal; for while Ledscha's brow frowned angrily, a triumphant smile hovered around her mouth. At the same time she slightly opened her exquisitely formed lips, and the little white teeth which Hermon had once thought so bewitchingly beautiful glittered between them.

Like the astronomer who fixes his gaze and tries to imprint upon his memory some rare star in the firmament which a cloud is threatening to obscure, he now strove to obtain Ledscha's image. He would and could model her in this attitude, exactly as she stood there, without her veil, which had been torn from her during the hand-to-hand conflict when she was captured, with her thick, half-loosened tresses falling over her left shoulder; nay, even with the slightly hooked nose, which was opposed to the old rule of art that permitted only the straight bridge of the nose to be given to beautiful women. Her nature harmonized with the ideal. even in the smallest detail; here any deviation from reality must tend to injure the work.

She remained motionless for minutes in the same attitude, as if she knew that she was posing to an artist; but Hermon gazed at her as if spell bound till the fettered Gaul again called her name.

Then she left the supporting pillar, approached the barrier, stopped at the rope which extended from one short stake to another, and gazed at the man who was following her outside of the rope.



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It was a Greek who stood directly opposite to her. A black beard adorned his grave, handsome countenance. He, too, had a chlamys, such as she had formerly seen on another. Only the short sword, which he wore suspended at his right side in the Hellenic fashion, would not suit that other; but suddenly a rush of hot blood crimsoned her face. As if to save herself from falling, she flung out both arms and clutched a stake with her right and her left hand, thrusting her head and the upper portion of her body across the rope toward the man whose appearance had created so wild a tumult in her whole being.

At last she called Hermon's name in such keen suspense that it fell upon his ear like a shrill cry.

"Ledscha," he answered warmly, extending both hands to her in sincere sympathy; but she did not heed the movement, and her tone of calm self-satisfaction surprised him as she answered: "So you seek me in misfortune? Even the blind man knows how to find me here."

"I would far rather have met you again in the greatest happiness!" he interrupted gently. "But I am no longer blind. The immortals again permit me, as in former days, to feast my eyes upon your marvellous beauty."

A shrill laugh cut short his words, and the "Not blind!" which fell again and again from her lips sounded more like laughter than speech.

There are tears of grief and of joy, and the laugh which is an accompaniment of pleasure is also heard on the narrow boundary between suffering and despair.

It pierced the artist's heart more deeply than the most savage outburst of fury, and when Ledscha gasped: "Not blind! Cured! Rich and possessed of sight, perfect sight!" he understood her fully for the first time, and could account for the smile of satisfaction which had just surprised him on her lips.

He gazed at her, absolutely unable to utter a word; but she went on speaking, while a low, sinister laugh mingled with her tones: "So this is avenging justice! It allows us women to be trampled under foot, and holds its hands in its lap! My vengeance! How I have lauded Nemesis! How exquisitely my retaliation seemed to have succeeded! And now? It was mere delusion and deception. He who was blind sees. He who was to perish in misery is permitted, with a sword at his side, to gloat over our destruction. Listen, if the good news has not already reached you! I, too, am condemned to death. But what do I care for myself? Even less than those to whom we pray and offer sacrifices for the betrayed woman. Now I am learning to know them! Thus Nemesis thanks me for the lavish gifts I have bestowed upon her? Just before my end she throws you, the rewarded traitor, into my way! I must submit to have the hated foe,



whose blinding was the sole pleasure in my ruined life, look me in the face with insolent joy.”

Hermon’s quick blood boiled.

With fierce resentment he grasped her hand, which lay on the rope, pressed it violently in his strong clasp, and exclaimed, “Stop, mad woman, that I may not be forced to think of you as a poisonous serpent and repulsive spider!”



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Ledscha had vainly endeavoured to withdraw her hand while he was speaking. Now he himself released it; but she looked up at him in bewilderment, as if seeking aid, and said sadly: "Once—you know that yourself—I was different—even as long as I supposed my vengeance had succeeded. But now? The false goddess has baffled every means with which I sought to punish you. Who averted the sorest ill treatment from my head? And I was even defrauded of the revenge which it was my right, nay, my duty, to exercise."

She finished the sentence with drooping head, as if utterly crushed, and this time she did not laugh, but Hermon felt his wrath transformed to sympathy, and he asked warmly and kindly if she would let nothing appease her, not even if he begged her forgiveness for the wrong he had done her, and promised to obtain her life, nay, also her liberty.

Ledscha shook her head gently, and gravely answered: "What is left me without hate? What are the things which others deem best and highest to a miserable wretch like me?"

Here Hermon pointed to the bridge-builder, bound to the post, saying, "Yonder man led you away from the husband whom you had wedded, and from him you received compensation for the love you had lost."

"From him?" she cried furiously, and, raising her voice in a tone of the most intense loathing: "Ask yonder scoundrel himself! Because I needed a guide, I permitted him to take me away from my unloved husband and from the Hydra. Because he would help me to shatter the new and undeserved good fortune which you—yes, you—do you hear?—enjoyed, I remained with him among the Gauls. More than one Alexandrian brought me the news that you were revelling in golden wealth, and the wretch promised to make you and your uncle beggars if the surprise succeeded. He did this, though he knew that it was you who took him up from the road and saved his life; for nothing good and noble dwells in his knavish soul. He yearned for me, and still more ardently for the Alexandrians' gold. Worse than the wolf that licked the hand of the man who bandaged its wounds, he would have shown his teeth to the preserver of his life. I have learned this, and if he dies here of starvation and thirst he will receive only what he deserves. He knows, too, what I think of him. The greedy beast of prey was not permitted even to touch my hand. Just ask him! There he is. Let him tell you how I listened to his vows of love. Before I would have permitted yonder wretch to recall to life what you crushed in this heart—"

Here Lutarius interrupted her with a flood of savage, scarcely intelligible curses, but very soon one of the guards, who came out of the hut, stopped him with a lash.

When the Gaul, howling under the blows, was silenced, Hermon asked, "So your mad thirst for vengeance also caused this suicidal attack?"



“No,” she answered simply; “but when they determined upon the assault, and had killed their leader, Belgius, yonder monster stole to their head. So it happened—I myself do not know how—that they also obeyed me, and I took advantage of it and induced them to begin with your house and Archias’s. When they had captured the royal palaces, they intended to assail the Temple of Demeter also.”



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“Then you thought that even the terrible affliction of blindness would not suffice to punish the man you hated?” asked Hermon.

“No,” she answered firmly; “for you could buy with your gold everything life offers except sight, while in me—yes, in me—gloom darker than the blackest night shrouded my soul. Through your fault I was robbed of all, all that is clear to woman’s heart: my father’s house, his love, my sister. Even the pleasure in myself which had been awakened by your sweet flatteries was transformed by you into loathing.”

“By me?” cried Hermon, amazed by the injustice of this severe reproach; but Ledscha answered his question with the resolute assertion, “By you and you alone!” and then impatiently added: “You, who, by your art, could transform mortal women into goddesses, wished to make me a humiliated creature, with the rope which was to strangle her about her neck, and at the same time the most repulsive of creeping insects. ‘The hideous, gray, eight-legged spider!’ I exclaimed to myself, when I raised my arms and saw my shadow on the sunlit ground. ‘The spider!’ I thought, when I shook the distaff to draw threads from the flax in leisure hours. ‘Your image!’ I said, when I saw spiders hanging in dusty corners, and catching flies and gnats. All these things made me a horror to myself. And at the same time to know that the Demeter, on whom you bestowed the features of the daughter of Archias, was kindling the whole great city of Alexandria with enthusiasm, and drawing countless worshippers to her sanctuary! She, an object of adoration to thousands, I—the much-praised beauty—a horror to myself! This is what fed my desire for vengeance with fresh food by day and night; this urged me to remain with yonder wretch; for he had promised, after pillaging the royal palaces, to shatter your Demeter, the image of the daughter of Archias, which they lauded and which brought you fame and honour—it was to be done before my eyes—into fragments.”

“Mad woman!” Hermon again broke forth indignantly, and hastily told her how she had been misinformed.

Ledscha’s large black eyes dilated as if some hideous spectre was rising from the ground before her, while she heard that the Demeter was the work of Myrtilus and not his; that his friend’s legacy had long since ceased to belong to him, and that he was again as poor as when he was in Tennis during the time of their love.

“And the blindness?” she asked sadly.

“It transformed life for me into one long night, illumined by no single ray of light,” was the reply; “but, the immortals be praised, I was cured of it, and it was old Tabus, on the Owl’s Nest at Tennis, whose wisdom and magic arts you so often lauded, who gave the remedy and advice to which I owe my recovery.”



Here he hesitated, for Ledscha had seized the rope with one hand and the stake at her right with the other, in order not to fall upon her knees; but Hermon perceived how terribly his words agitated her, and spoke to her soothingly. Ledscha did not seem to hear him, for while still clinging to the rope she looked sometimes at the sand at her feet, sometimes up to the full moon, which was now flooding both sky and earth with light.



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At last she dropped it, and said in a hollow tone: "Now I understand everything. You met her when Bias gave her the bridal dowry which was to purchase my release from my husband. How it must have enraged her! I thought of it all, pondered and pondered how to spare her; but through whom, except Tabus, could I return to Hanno the property, won in battle by his blood, which he had thrown away for me? Tabus kept the family wealth. And she—the marriage bond which two persons formed was sacred and unassailable—the woman who broke her faith with her husband and turned from him—was an abomination to her. How she loved her sons and grandsons! I knew that she would never forgive the wrong I did Hanno. From resentment to me she cured the man whom I hated."

"Yet probably also," said Hermon, "because my blighted youth aroused her pity."

"Perhaps so," replied Ledscha hesitatingly, gazing thoughtfully into vacancy. "She was what her demons made her. Hard as steel and gentle as a tender girl. I have experienced it. Oh, that she should die with rancour against me in her faithful old heart! She could be so kind!— even when I confessed that you had won my love, she still held me dear. But there are many great and small demons, and most of them were probably subject to her. Tabus must have learned through them how deeply I offended her son Satabus, and how greatly his son Hanno's life was darkened through me. That is why she thwarted my vengeance, and her spirits aided her. Thus all these things happened. I suspected it when I heard that she had succumbed to death, which I—yes, I here—had held back from her with severe toil through many a sleepless night. O these demons! They will continue to act in the service of the dead. Wherever I may go, they will pursue me and, at their mistress's bidding, baffle what I hope and desire. I have learned this only too distinctly!"

"No, Ledscha, no," Hermon protested. "Every power ceases with death, even that of the sorceress over spirits. You shall be freed, poor woman! You will be permitted to go wherever you desire; and I shall model no spider after your person, but the fairest of women. Thousands will see and admire her, and—if the Muse aids me—whoever, enraptured by her beauty, asks, 'Who was the model for this work which inflames the most obdurate heart?' will be told, 'It was Ledscha, the daughter of Shalit, the Biamite, whom Hermon of Alexandria found worthy of carving in costly marble.'"

Ledscha uttered a deep sigh of relief, and asked: "Is that true? May I believe it?"

"As true," he answered warmly, "as that Selene, who promised to grant you in her full radiance the greatest happiness, is now shedding her mild, forgiving light upon us both."

"The full moon," she murmured softly, gazing upward at the shining disk.

Then she added in a louder tone: "Old Tabus's demons promised me happiness—you know. It was the spider which so cruelly shadowed it for me on every full moon, every



day, and every night. Will you now swear to model a statue from me, the statue of a beautiful human being that will arouse the delight of all who see it? Delight—do you hear?—not loathing—I ask again, will you?”



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"I will, and I shall succeed," he said earnestly, holding out his hand across the rope. She clasped it, looked up to the full moon again, and whispered: "This time—I will believe it—you will keep your promise better than when you were in Tennis. And I—I will cease to wish you evil, and I will tell you why. Bend your ear nearer, that I may confess it openly." Hermon willingly obeyed the request, but she leaned her head against his, and he felt her laboured breathing and the warm tears that coursed silently down her cheeks as she said, in a low whisper: "Because the moon is full, and will yet bring me what the demons promised, and because, though strong, I am still a woman. Happiness! How long ago I ceased to expect it!—but now—yes, it is what I now feel! I am happy, and yet can not tell why. My love—oh, yes! It was more ardent than the burning hate. Now you know it, too, Hermon. And I—I shall be free, you say? And Tabus, how she lauded rest—eternal rest! Oh dearest—this sorely tortured heart, too—you can not even imagine how weary I am!"

Here she was silent, but the man into whose face she was gazing with loving devotion felt a sudden movement at his side as she uttered the exclamation.

He did not notice it, for the sweet tone of her voice was penetrating the inmost depths of his heart. It sounded as though she was speaking from the happiest of dreams.

"Ledscha!" he exclaimed warmly, extending his arm toward her—but she had already stepped back from his side, and he now perceived the terrible object—she had snatched his sword from its sheath, and as, seized by sudden terror, he gazed at her, he saw the shining blade glitter in the moonlight and suddenly vanish.

In an instant he swung his agile body over the rope and rushed to her. But she had already sunk to her knees, and while he clasped her in his arms to support her, he heard her call his own name tenderly, then murmur it in a lower tone, and the words "Full moon" and "Happiness" escape her lips.

Then she was silent, and her beautiful head dropped on her breast like a flower broken by a tempest.

CHAPTER XVII.

"It was best so for her and for us," said Eumedes, after gazing long at Ledscha's touchingly beautiful, still, dead face.

Then he ordered her to be buried at once and shouted to the guards: "Everything must be over on this strip of land early to-morrow morning! Let all who bear arms begin at once. Selene will light the men brightly enough for the work."

The terrible order given in mercy was fulfilled, and hunger and thirst were robbed of their numerous prey. When the new day dawned the friends were still on deck,



engaged in grave conversation. The cloudless sky now arched in radiant light above the azure sea. White seagulls came flying from the right across the ship, and sportive dolphins gambolled around her keel.

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The flutes of the musicians, marking time for the rowers, echoed gaily up from the hold, and, obedient to quick words of command, the seamen were spreading the sails.

The voyage began with a favourable wind. As Hermon looked back for the last time, the flat, desolate tongue of land appeared like a line of gray mist in the southeastern horizon; but over it hovered, like a gloomy thundercloud, the flocks of vultures and ravens, whose numbers were constantly increasing. Their greedy screaming could still be heard, though but faintly, yet the eye could no longer distinguish anything in the fast-vanishing abode of horror, save the hovering whirl of dark spots—ravens and vultures, vultures and ravens.

Whatever human life had moved there yesterday, now rested from bloody greed for booty, after victory and defeat, mortal terror, fury, and despair.

Eumedes pointed out the quiet grave by the sea to his parents, saying: "The King's command is fulfilled. Not even the one man who is usually spared to carry the news remains out of the four thousand."

"I thank you," exclaimed Alexander's gray-haired comrade, shaking his son's right hand, but Thyone laid her hand on Hermon's arm, saying: "Where the birds are darkening the air behind us lies buried what incensed Nemesis against you. You must leave the soil of Egypt. True, it is said that to live in foreign lands, far from the beloved home, darkens the existence; yet Pergamus, too, is Grecian soil, and there I see the two noblest of stars illumine your path with their pure light -art and love."

And his old friend's premonition was fulfilled.

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The story of Arachne is ended. It closed on the Nile. Hermon's new life began in Pergamus.

As Daphne's husband, under the same roof with the wonderfully invigorated Myrtilus, his Uncle Archias, and faithful Bias, Hermon found in the new home what had hovered before the blind man as the fairest goal of existence in art, love, and friendship.

He did not long miss the gay varied life of Alexandria, because he found a rich compensation for it, and because Pergamus, too, was a rapidly growing city, whose artistic decoration was inferior to no other in Greece.

Of the numerous works which Hermon completed in the service of the first three art-loving rulers of the new Pergamenian kingdom, Philetaerus, Eumenes, and Attalus, nothing was preserved except the head of a Gaul. This noble masterpiece proves how



faithful Hermon remained to truth, which he had early chosen for the guiding star of his art. It is the modest remnant of the group in which Hermon perpetuated in marble the two Gallic brothers whom he saw before his last meeting with Ledscha, as they offered their breasts to the fatal shafts.

One had gazed defiantly at the arrows of the conquerors; the other, whose head has been preserved, feeling the inevitable approach of death, anticipates, with sorrowful emotion, the end so close at hand. Philetaerus had sent this touching work to King Ptolemy to thank him for the severity with which he had chastised the daring of the barbarians, who had not spared his kingdom also. The Gaul's head was again found on Egyptian soil.



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[Copied in Th. Schrieber's *The Head of the Gaul in the Museum of Ghizeh in Cairo*. Leipsic, 1896. With appendix. By H. Curschmann.]

Hermon also took other subjects in Pergamus from the domain of real life, though, in most of his work he crossed the limits which he had formerly imposed upon himself. But one barrier, often as he rushed forward to its outermost verge, he never dared to pass—moderation, the noblest demand, to which his liberty-loving race subjected themselves willingly in life as well as in art. The whole infinite, limitless world of the ideal had opened itself to the blind man.

He made himself at home in it by remaining faithful to the rule which he had found in the desert for his creative work, and the genuine happiness which he enjoyed through Daphne's love and the great fame his sculptures brought him increased the strong individuality of his power.

The fruits of his tireless industry, the much-admired god of light, Phoebus Apollo, slaying the dragons of darkness, as well as his bewitching Arachne, gazing proudly at the fabric with which she thinks she has surpassed the skill of the goddess, were overtaken by destruction. In this statue Bias recognised his countrywoman Ledscha, and often gazed long at it with devout ecstasy. Even Hermon's works of colossal size vanished from the earth: the Battle of the Amazons and the relief containing numerous figures: the Sea Gods, which the Regent Eumenes ordered for the Temple of Poseidon in Pergamus.

The works of his grandson and grandson's pupils, however, are preserved on the great altar of victory in Pergamus.

The power and energy natural to Hermon, the skill he had acquired in Rhodes, everything in the changeful life of Alexandria which had induced him to consecrate his art to reality, and to that alone, and whatever he had, finally, in quiet seclusion, recognised as right and in harmony with the Greek nature and his own, blend in those works of his successor, which a gracious dispensation of Providence permits us still to admire at the present day, and which we call in its entirety, the art of Pergamus.

The city was a second beloved home to him, as well as to his wife and Myrtilus. The rulers of the country took the old Alexandrian Archias into their confidence and knew how to honour him by many a distinction. He understood how to value the happiness of his only daughter, the beautiful development of his grandchildren, and the high place that Hermon and Myrtilus, whom he loved as if they were his own sons, attained among the artists of their time. Yet he struggled vainly against the longing for his dear old home. Therefore Hermon deemed it one of the best days of his life when his turn came to make Daphne's father a happy man.

King Ptolemy Philadelphus had sent laurel to the artist who had fallen under suspicion in Egypt, and his messenger invited him and Myrtilus, and with them also the exiled

merchant, to return to his presence. In gratitude for the pleasure which Hermon's creation afforded him and his wife, the cause that kept the fugitive Archias from his home should be forgiven and forgotten.



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The gray-haired son of the capital returned with the Bithynian Gras to his beloved Alexandria, as if his lost youth was again restored. There he found unchanged the busy, active life, the Macedonian Council, the bath, the marketplace, the bewitching conversation, the biting wit, the exquisite feasts of the eyes—in short, everything for which his heart had longed even amid the happiness and love of his dear ones in Pergamus.

For two years he endeavoured to enjoy everything as before; but when the works of the Pergamenian artists, obtained by Ptolemy, had been exhibited in the royal palaces, he returned home with a troubled mind. Like the rest of the world, he thought that the reliefs of Myrtilus, representing scenes of rural life, were wonderful.

The Capture of Proserpina, a life-size marble group by his son-in-law Hermon, seemed to him no less perfect; but it exerted a peculiar influence upon his paternal heart, for, in the Demeter, he recognised Daphne, in the Proserpina her oldest daughter Erigone, who bore the name of Hermon's mother and resembled her in womanly charm. How lovely this budding girl, who was his grand-daughter, seemed to the grandfather! How graceful, in spite of the womanly dignity peculiar to her, was the mother, encircling her imperilled child with her protecting arm!

No work of sculpture had ever produced such an effect upon the old patron of art.

Gras heard him, in his bedroom, murmur the names "Daphne" and "Erigone," and therefore it did not surprise him when, the next morning, he received the command to prepare everything for the return to Pergamus. It pleased the Bithynian, for he cared more for Daphne, Hermon, and their children than all the pleasures of the capital.

A few weeks later Archias found himself again in Pergamus with his family, and he never left it, though he reached extreme old age, and was even permitted to gaze in wondering admiration at the first attempts of the oldest son of Hermon and Daphne, and to hear them praised by others.

This grandson of the Alexandrian Archias afterward became the master who taught the generation of artists who created the Pergamenian works, in examining which the question forced itself upon the narrator of this story: How do these sculptures possess the qualities which distinguish them so strongly from the other statues of later Hellenic antiquity?

Did the great weaver Imagination err when she blended them, through the mighty wrestler Hermon, with a tendency of Alexandrian science and art, which we see appearing again among us children of a period so much later?

Science, which is now once more pursuing similar paths, ought and will follow them further, but Hermon's words remain applicable to the present day: "We will remain loyal



servants of the truth; yet it alone does not hold the key to the holy of holies of art. To him for whom Apollo, the pure among the gods, and the Muses, friends of beauty, do not open it at the same time with truth, its gates will remain closed, no matter how strongly and persistently he shakes them.”



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ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Regular messenger and carrier-dove service had been established

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