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QUINTUS
CLAUDIUS,
VOLUME 1

Ernst Eckstein

Quintus Claudius, Volume 1

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Ernst Eckstein

Quintus Claudius, Volume 1 / A Romance of Imperial Rome

PREFACE TO THE FIRST GERMAN EDITION

It was in Rome itself, in the sublime solemnity of the Colosseum, among the ruins of the palaces of the Caesars and crumbling pillars of the temples of the gods, that the first dreamy outlines rose before my fancy of the figures here offered to the reader's contemplation. Each visit added strength to the mysterious impulse, to conjure up from their tombs these shadows of a mighty past, and afterwards, at home, where the throng of impressions sorted and grouped themselves at leisure, my impulse ripened to fulfilment.

I will not pause here to dwell on the fact, that the period of Imperial rule in Rome bears, in its whole aspect, a stronger resemblance to the XIXth century than perhaps any other epoch before the Reformation; for, without reference to this internal affinity, we should be justified in using it for the purpose of Romance simply by the fact, that hardly another period has ever been equally full of the stirring conflict of purely human interest, and of dramatic contrasts in thought, feeling and purpose.

I must be permitted to add a word as to the notes.¹

I purposely avoided disturbing the reader of the story by references in the text, and indeed the narrative is perfectly intelligible without any explanation. The notes, in short, are not intended as explanatory, but merely to instruct the reader, and complete the picture; they also supply the sources, and give the evidence on which I have drawn. From this point of view they may have some interest for the general public, unfamiliar with the authorities.

Leipzig, June 15, 1881.

ERNST ECKSTEIN.

¹ The publisher of this translation has, for the reader's convenience, placed all the notes at the foot of the pages containing the corresponding text.

CHAPTER I

It was the morning of the 12th of September in the Year of Our Lord 95; the first cold gleam of dawn was shining on the steel-grey surface of the Tyrrhenian sea. To the east, over the gently undulating coast of Campania, the sky was tinged with that tender dewy-green which follows on the paling of the stars; to the west the waters still lay in impenetrable darkness. Their almost unruffled face was swiftly parted by a large trireme,² just now making its way from the south and opposite to Salernum, between the Posidium³ promontory and the Island of Capreae.⁴ The oars of the crew, who sat in rows on three ranks of benches, rose and fell in rhythm to a melancholy chant; the steersman yawned as he looked into the distance, hoping for the moment of release.

A small hatchway – fitted with silver ornaments – now opened on to the deck from the cabin between decks; a fat round head with short hair showed itself in the opening, and a pair of blinking eyes looked curiously round in every direction. Presently the head was followed by a body, of which the squat rotundity matched the odd head.

“Well, Chrysostomus, is Puteoli⁵ in sight yet?” asked the stout man, stepping on to the deck and looking across to the blue-black rocks of Capreae.

“Ask again in three hours time,” replied the steersman. “Unless you can succeed in looking round the corner, like the magician of Tyana,⁶ you must need wait till we have the island yonder behind us.”

“What!” exclaimed the other, drawing a little ivory map⁷ from his tunic.⁸ “Are those rocks only Capreae?”

“Thou sayest, O Herodianus! Out there on the heights to the right, hardly visible yet, stands the palace of the glorified Caesar Tiberius.⁹ Do you see that steep cliff, straight down to the sea? That was where such useless fellows as you were dropped over into the water by Caesar’s slaves.”

“Chrysostomus, do not be impudent! How dare you, a common ship’s-mate, make so bold as to scoff at me, the companion and confidential friend of the illustrious Caius Aurelius? By the gods!¹⁰ but it is beneath me to hold conversation with you, an ignorant seaman – a man who carries no wax-tablets¹¹ about him, who only knows how to handle the tiller and not the stylus – a common Gaul who is ignorant of all history of the gods – such a man ought not even to exist, so far as the friend of Aurelius is concerned.”

“Oho! you are dreaming! you are not his friend, but his freedman.”¹²

² Trireme. “Three-oared;” a vessel with three ranks of rowers, one above another. The time was given by the beats of a hammer or by word of command; not unfrequently by an air played on a flute or a sailor’s chant (*cantus nauticus*).

³ Posidium, now called the Punta della Licosa, south of the Gulf of Salerno.

⁴ Capreae, (Isle of goats) now Capri.

⁵ Puteoli. An important port in Campania, now Pozzuoli. Concerning Puteoli’s commerce, see Stat. *Silv.* III, 5, 75.

⁶ Apollonius of Tyana in Cappadocia. An ascetic and ecstatic philosopher and miracle-worker (A.D. 50) often compared with Christ by heathen writers. (Philostratus wrote his life.)

⁷ Ivory map. Sketch-maps of various routes were common in ancient times, and were often engraved on wine-jars, cups, etc.

⁸ Tunic. The short-sleeved under-garment worn by both sexes, the house costume, over which men, when they went out, threw the toga, women the stola or palla. During the period of the empire a second garment, the *tunica interior*, corresponding to the shirt of modern times, was worn under the tunic.

⁹ The palace of Tiberius. For an account of the cruel and extravagant proceedings of Tiberius at Capri, see Tacitus *Ann.* I, 67, Suet. *Tib.* 40, Juv. *Sat.* X, 72 and 93. Insignificant remains of this palace are visible at the present day: *Villa di Timberio*; the perpendicular cliff 700 feet high is called *il salto* (the leap.)

¹⁰ Castor and Pollux. Leda’s twins, the Dioscuri, were the patrons of sea-faring men.

¹¹ Wax-tablet (*tabula cerata*). A little tablet covered with wax, on which memoranda were written with the stylus. In the schools the wax-tablet supplied the place of the slate, and in daily life was a substitute for our note-book.

¹² Freedman. The institution of slavery (*servitium*) which existed from ancient times, was an extremely important factor in the organization of Roman society. The slaves (*servi*) were the absolute property of their masters, who had unlimited control over their

Herodianus bit his lip; as he stood there, his face flushed with anger and turned to the growing day, he might have been taken for an ill-natured and vindictive man. But good temper and a genial nature soon reasserted themselves.

“You are an insolent fellow,” he said laughing, “but I know you mean no harm. You sea-folks are a rough race. I will burn a thank-offering to all the gods when this accursed sea-saw on the waves is over at last. Was there ever such a voyage! from Trajectum¹³ to Gades¹⁴ without landing once! And at Gades hardly had we set foot on shore, when we were ordered on board again! And if Aurelius, our noble master, had not had business to settle in Panormus¹⁵ with his deceased father’s host, I believe we should have made the whole voyage from Hispania to Rome without a break. I will dance like the Corybantes,¹⁶ when I am once more allowed to feel like a man among men! How long will it be yet before we reach Ostia?”¹⁷

“Two days, not more,” replied Chrysostomus.

“Aphrodite Euploia be most fervently thanked!”

“What are you talking about? Who is that you are blessing?”

“To be sure, my good Chrysostomus,” replied the other with a triumphant smile, “I was forgetting that a seaman from the land of the Gauls is not likely to understand Greek. Euploia, being interpreted, means the goddess who grants us a good voyage. Do not take my observation ill, but surely you might have picked up so much Greek as that in the course of your many voyages with the lamented father of our lord Aurelius.”

“Silly stuff!” retorted Chrysostomus. “Besides, I never sailed in the Greek seas. Ten times to Ostia, eight times to Massilia,¹⁸ twelve times to Panormus and a score of times northwards to the seas of the Goths up by the land of the Rugii¹⁹— that is the sum total of my annals. But Latin is spoken everywhere; even the Frisii²⁰ can make themselves understood more or less in the language of Rome; among the Rugii, to be sure, we talked in Gothic.”

“A poor excuse!” said Herodianus pathetically. “However I have talked till I am thirsty! I will be on the spot again when the master appears.”

He carefully replaced his little ivory map in the bosom of his under-garment, and was about to withdraw, when a tall youth, followed by two or three slaves, appeared on the steps from below. The ship’s crew hailed their master with a loud shout, and Caius Aurelius, thanking them for their greeting, went forward while the slaves prepared breakfast²¹ under an awning over the cabin roof; only one of them followed him.

destinies and lives. (This right was not withdrawn until A.D. 61, when the law of Petronius prohibited the arbitrary condemnation of slaves to combats with wild beasts, etc.) The slave could then be released by the so-called *manumissio*, and was styled *libertus* or *libertinus*. His position depended upon the greater or less degree of formality with which the *manumissio* was granted. The most solemn manner bestowed all the rights of the free-born citizen, but even in this case he was socially burdened with the same stigma that rests upon the emancipated slaves in the United States. If a freedman attained power and influence – which under the emperors was very common – the haughty representatives of the ancient noble families paid him external respect, it is true, but the man’s origin was never forgotten.

¹³ Trajectum. A Batavian city in the Roman province Germania, now Utrecht.

¹⁴ Gades. A city in southern Spain, the modern Cadiz.

¹⁵ Panormus. A city on the north coast of Sicily, the modern Palermo.

¹⁶ Corybas. In the plural *Corybantes*; priests of Cybele. Their worship was a wild orgy with war-dances and noisy music. (Horace, *Od.* I, 16, 8: *non acuta si geminant Corybantes aera, etc.*)

¹⁷ Ostia. The port of Rome, situated at the mouth of the Tiber.

¹⁸ Massilia. An important city founded by the Greeks on the southern coast of Gaul, now called Marseilles.

¹⁹ Rugii. A German race occupying a considerable part of the coast of the Baltic – the present Pomerania and island of Rügen.

²⁰ Frisii. A German race settled in the northern part of what is now Holland and farther east beyond Ems (*Amisia*).

²¹ Breakfast. The first meal after rising was called *jentaculum*. In the time of the republic (and still later among the poorer classes) it consisted principally of pulse. Among the wealthy luxury intruded even here; but in comparison with the second breakfast (*prandium*) and especially with the principal repast (*coena*) the *jentaculum* always remained frugal.

It was by this time broad daylight; the whole eastern sky glowed with flame behind the blue Campanian hills, a light breeze curled the no less glowing sea into a thousand waves and ripples, and the prow of the galley, which was decorated with a colossal ram's-head²² in brass, threw up the water in sparks of liquid gold. The palace of Tiberius on the top of the rocky isle seemed caught in sudden fire, at every instant the glory spread lower, kindling fresh peaks and towers, and up rose the sun in all the majesty and splendor of his southern might from behind the heights of Salernum.

Herodianus, who had taken his place officiously close to his master, appeared to promise himself immense satisfaction in interpreting the young man's mood of devout admiration by a long quotation of Greek poetry. He had already thrown himself into a pathetic attitude and laid his finger meditatively on his cheek, when Aurelius signed to him that he wished to be left undisturbed. The freedman, somewhat offended, drew back a step or two while Aurelius, standing by the side of his favorite slave Magus,²³ who preserved a discreet silence, leaned over the bulwark for a long space lost in thought, letting his eye wander over the open sea and linger for a while on the fantastic shapes of the rocks and mountains, which constantly shifted in form and grouping as the swift galley flew onwards.

Capreae was already on their right hand, and the broad bay of Parthenope,²⁴ with its endless perspective of towns and villas, opened before them like a huge pearly shell; the dark ashy cone of Vesuvius²⁵ stood up defiantly over the plain where, a short time since, it had engulfed the blooming towns of Herculaneum, Pompeii and Stabiae. Now there rose from its summit only a filmy cloud of smoke, ruddy in the light of the mounting sun. Farther on, the quays of Puteoli were discernible, the stately buildings of Baiae²⁶ and the islands of Aenaria and Prochyta.²⁷ On the left hand the distance was unlimited; vessels laden with provisions from Alexandria²⁸ and merchant-ships from Massilia slowly crossed the horizon like visions; others, with every sail set, flew across the bay to disembark their precious freight in the emporium of Puteoli, whence it would be carried to lay at the feet of Rome, the all-absorbing and insatiable mistress of the world.

Meanwhile the slaves had laid the table under the awning with fine cloths, had arranged couches and seats and strewn the spot with a few flowers, and were now standing ready to serve the morning meal at a sign from their young master. The weary night-rowers had half an hour ago been relieved by a fresh crew, and the fine boat flew on with double rapidity, for a fresh breeze had risen and filled the sails. In an instant the whole face of the waters had changed, and as far as the eye could reach danced crest on crest of foam.

Aurelius wrapped himself more closely in his Tarentine travelling-cloak²⁹ and involuntarily glanced at Magus, the Gothic slave who stood by his side; but Magus did not seem to see his master's look, he was gazing motionless and with knitted brows in the direction of Baiae. Then he shaded his eyes from the glare with his right hand.

"*Hva gasaihvis*."³⁰ What do you see?" asked Aurelius, who sometimes spoke in Gothic to the man.

²² Ram's-head at the prow. These ornaments were usually carved in wood on the prow. They must not be confounded with the ship's beaks (*rostra*, ἔμβολα). These beaks – two strong iron-cased beams – were on the fore-part of the ships of war and also on vessels intended for long voyages, where they would be exposed to danger from pirates. They were beneath the surface of the water, and were destined to bore holes in the enemy's ships. See vol. 2, Chap IX.

²³ Magus. A Gothic word – (not the Latin *Magus*, Greek μάγος – magician, sorcerer,) – means a boy, or knave in the old sense of servant.

²⁴ Parthenope. The ancient name of Naples, from the siren Parthenope, who is said to be buried there.

²⁵ Vesuvius. The famous eruption, which buried the three cities mentioned, took place A.D. 79, that is, sixteen years before the commencement of this story.

²⁶ Baiae, now Baja, the most famous watering-place of ancient times. See Horace, *Ep.* I, 1, 83.

²⁷ Aenaria and Prochyta, now Ischia and Procida.

²⁸ Alexandria in Egypt was, in point of commerce, the London of ancient times.

²⁹ Tarentine travelling-cloak. The woollen stuffs from Tarentum, now called Taranto, were famous.

³⁰ "Hva gasaihvis?" – "Gasaihva leitil skip." Literally: What do you see? (I) see (a) little ship. The earliest existing specimens of

“*Gasaihva leitil skipκύβιον*,” answered the Goth. “A little boat out there not far from the point. If it is the same in your southern seas, as in our northern ones, these good folks would be wise to get their cockleshell to shore as fast as may be. When the sea is covered with eider-down in such a short time, it generally means mischief.”

“You have eyes like a northern sea-eagle. It is indeed, a small boat, hardly visible among the tossing waves, it cannot have more than eight oarsmen at most.”

“There are but four, my lord,” said the Goth. “And with them three ladies.”

The wind was rising every instant; the trireme parted the water like an arrow, and the prow, now rising and now sinking on the billows, dipped in them far above the large metal ornaments.

“It may indeed be a serious matter,” said Aurelius; “not for us – it must be something worse than this that puts the proud ‘Batavia’³¹ in peril – but for the ladies in that little bark...”

He turned round. “Amsivarius,” he cried to the head oarsman. “Tell your men to give way with a will; and you, Magus, go and desire Chrysostomus to alter our course.”

In a few seconds the vessel’s head was turned round a quarter of a circle and was making her way straight into the bay. The accelerated thud of the time-keeper’s hammer sounded a dull accompaniment to the piping wind; the sea surged and tossed, and the deep-blue sky, where there still was not a cloud to be seen, beamed incongruously bright over the stormy main. They were now within a hundred yards of the small boat, which was one of the elegant pleasure-barks used by the gay visitors to Baiae for short excursions in the bay. As the trireme came up with them, the rowers gave up their futile struggle with the raging elements and only tried to avoid being capsized. The ladies, it could be seen were much agitated; two of them, a richly-dressed woman of about forty and a young and blooming girl sat clinging to each other, while the third, tumbled into a heap at the bottom of the boat, held an amulet³² in her hand, which she again and again pressed fervently to her lips.

Aurelius gave a shout from the trireme, which the boatmen eagerly answered, and a sailor on board the Batavia flung a rope with a practised hand to the fore[Pg 15]most of the men in the smaller vessel – the slave hastily tied it fast and cried out “ready,” the sailor pulled firmly and steadily, the rope stretched taut, the little boat came on and in a few minutes lay under the lee of the galley like a fish judiciously hooked and landed. In two minutes more it was fast to the side of the trireme, and the ladies and the crew were placed in safety.

Aurelius, leaning against the stern-bulwark, had watched the proceedings with anxious interest and now, as the ladies, exhausted by the tossing they had had, sank on to the couches under the canopy, he politely went forward and invited his unexpected visitors to go down into the more sheltered cabin rooms of the trireme. The younger lady rose at once, and with a dignified eagerness expressed their thanks. Nor was it long before the elder had quite recovered herself; only the old woman who held the amulet hid her pale face in the pillows as if she were stunned, while she trembled and quaked in every limb.

“Come, stand up, Baucis,” said the young girl kindly. “The danger is over.”

“Merciful Isis³³ save and defend us!” groaned the old woman, turning the amulet in her fingers. “Preserve us from sudden death and deliver us in danger! I will offer thee a waxen ship,³⁴ and sacrifice lambs and fruits as much as thou canst desire!”

Gothic date from several centuries later than the time of this story, namely the period when the Goths left their original settlements on the lower Vistula and settled farther to the southeast on the Black Sea. I thought it permissible, however, to make a Goth of the first century speak the language of Ulfilas, since there is nothing against it in the general analogies of language, and Gothic, in the form in which it remains to us, is so concrete and logical in its structure, that it is hardly credible that it should have varied to any great extent within a period of two or three centuries.

³¹ Batavia. It was the custom at a very early date to name vessels after towns, persons, or countries, etc.

³² Amulet. A faith in the protecting power of charms and amulets was universal among Roman women, and children were always provided with amulets against the evil eye.

³³ Isis. The Egyptian goddess Isis was originally a personification of the Nile country, and as such was the wife of Osiris, the god of the Nile, who is slain by Typhon and longingly sought by the deserted goddess. She was afterwards confounded with every

“Oh, you superstitious simpleton!” said the girl in her ear. “How am I to bring you to your senses? Pray rather to the almighty Jupiter, that he may enlighten your ignorance! But come now – the noble stranger who has taken us on board his ship is growing impatient.”

A shrill cry was the only answer, for the vessel had given a sudden lurch and the old woman, who was sitting with her legs under her on the couch, was thrown off somewhat roughly.

“Oh, Isis of a thousand names!” she whimpered piteously. “That has cost me two or three ribs at least and a score of weeks on a sick-bed! Barbillus – you false priest – is that all the good your amulet is? Was it for this that I had my forehead sprinkled with water out of the sacred Nile,³⁵ and paid fifty sesterces³⁶ for each sprinkling? Was it for this that I laid fresh bread on the altars? Oh woe is me, what pain I am in!”

While she was thus besieging heaven with complaints, Magus the Goth had with a strong hand picked up the little woman and set her on her feet.

“There, leave off crying, mother,” said he good-humoredly. “Roman bones are not so easily broken! But make haste and get below; the storm is increasing fast. See, my master is leading your ladies down now.” And as Baucis gave no sign of acting on the slave’s advice, she suddenly found herself lifted up like a feather in his strong and sinewy arms and carried to the hatchway, to the great amusement of the bystanders.

“Madam,” said Aurelius to the elder lady, when his guests were snugly under shelter in the eating-room, “I am a Roman knight³⁷ from the town of Trajectum in Batavia, far north of this, not far from the frontier of the Belgae. My name is Caius Aurelius Menapius, and I am on my way to Rome as being the centre of the inhabited world, in order to improve and extend my knowledge and perhaps to serve my mother-country. May I venture now to ask you and your fair companion, to tell me who you are that kind fortune has thus thrown in my way?”

“My lord,”³⁸ said the matron, with a gravity that was almost solemn, “we can boast of senatorial rank. I am Octavia, the wife of Titus Claudius Mucianus,³⁹ the priest of Jupiter, and this is our

conceivable form of Greek (See Appuleius. *Met.* XI, 5.) and Roman Mythology and thus in the first century after Christ became the principal goddess. Her worship was chiefly by women.

³⁴ Waxen Ship. Such votive offerings are commonly mentioned. They were generally painted pictures, but models in wax or metal were also given.

³⁵ Nile-Water. The worshippers of Isis ascribed a special power to the waters of the Nile.

³⁶ Sesterces. A Roman silver coin worth about 4 or 5 cents. The second order, the knights (*equites*), was scattered over the whole empire. A class specially designated for military service, it became in the time of the Gracchi, a body of rich men, each of whom possessed a fortune of 400,000 sesterces, and also fulfilled the conditions of being of free birth and descent, blameless reputation, and refraining from dishonorable or indecorous methods of making money. Loss of this fortune, whether by their own fault or otherwise, entailed loss of rank. In consequence of the confusion and dissolution of all legal regulations through the civil war, these conditions were largely abrogated. While many who had formerly been entitled to belong to the order of knights, lost their rank through loss of fortune, others, who though possessing the needful property, had none of the other requisites, assumed without opposition the external distinctions of the knights, especially the gold ring and the seat of honor in the theatre. (Friedlander.) There were various degrees of rank in the order of knights, and also great diversity of fortune. Besides the poor titular knights, there were bankers, wholesale merchants, and the directors and members of great commercial companies and societies for mercantile enterprises of every kind. The third order comprised mechanics, small tradesmen, tavern-keepers, learned men, artists, etc., etc., – except in cases where those who followed these pursuits were slaves, – and also the immense body of proletarians, who subsisted almost exclusively on public alms.

³⁷ Roman Knight. During the reign of the emperors the free population of Rome was divided into three orders: senators, knights, and people (third order). The order of senators was limited to Rome, and in its hands lay the real political power, which in the time of the republic had been exercised by the assembled populace. To the senate belonged the right of conferring and recalling sovereign power, that is, by appointing and deposing the emperors, a right rarely exercised, it is true, but which the emperors formally recognized by allowing themselves to be confirmed by the senate. In their relation to this body, the emperors were only first among their peers, the members of this order being really their equals; a relation which, with the exception of Caligula, Nero, Domitian, and Commodus, the emperors during the first two centuries, more or less earnestly endeavored to maintain. (Friedlander. *Rom. Sittengesch.* I, 3.) The number of the old senatorial families was comparatively small.

³⁸ My Lord Said the Matron. Concerning the address “lord” (*domine*), see the minute discussions in Friedlander’s *Sittengeschichte*, I, appendix. It was not so common as the modern “sir,” but was used as an expression of special courtesy in the most varied relations of life. The emperors themselves used it in intercourse with persons to whom they wished to show attention. Thus Marcus Antoninus writes to Fronto: “*Have, mi domine magister.*” According to Seneca (Ep. III, 1.) it was already customary under Nero to greet persons, whose names could not be instantly remembered, by this title, in order not to appear uncourteous under any circumstances. The Fronto

daughter. We have been staying at Baiae since the end of April for the sake of my health. The sea-air, the aromatic breath of the woods and the delightful quiet of our country-house, which is somewhat secluded, soon restored my strength, and I take a particular pleasure in morning excursions on the bay. We started to-day in lovely weather to sail as far as Prochyta; then the storm overtook us, as you know, at some distance from the shore, and we owe it to you and to your good ship, that we are so well out of the danger. Accept once more our warmest thanks, and pray give us the opportunity of returning in our villa at Baiae the hospitality you have shown us on board your galley.”

“With the greatest pleasure,” said Aurelius eagerly, “and all the more so, as I purposed remaining to rest at Baiae – ” but he colored as he spoke, for this was not the truth – he looked round in some embarrassment at Magus, who was standing humbly in a corner of the room and preparing to serve some refreshment. The eyes of the master and the slave met, and the master colored more deeply, while the slave laughed to himself with a certain satisfaction. Two other servants placed seats round the table in the old Roman fashion, for the custom of lying on a couch at meals was by no means universal in the provinces, and Aurelius knew that even in Rome women of high rank and strict conduct contemned this luxurious habit.

The rocking of the vessel had ceased, for it had been steered into a sheltered cove of the bay, and before long a tempting breakfast was spread on the embroidered cloth; fish, milk, honey, eggs, fruit and a dish of boiled cray-fish, of which the scarlet mail contrasted picturesquely with the artistically-embossed silver-platter on which they were served.

Aurelius begged his guests to be seated and led Octavia to the seat of honor at the upper end of the table. On her left hand her daughter, the fair Claudia, took her seat; Aurelius sat on the other hand and at the side of the table. Herodianus and Baucis, who was still very much discomposed, took their places at the other end of the table and at a respectful distance.

“You must take what little I can offer you, ladies,” said the Batavian. “We Northmen are plain folks...”

“You are joking!” interrupted Octavia. “Do you imagine, that all the inhabitants of the imperial city are gourmands after the fashion of Gavius Apicius?”⁴⁰

“Well,” said Aurelius in some confusion, “we know at any rate that Rome is the acknowledged mistress of all the arts of refined enjoyment, and above all of the most extravagant luxury in food...”

“Not half so much so as you believe,” said Octavia. “You gentlemen from the provinces fall, without exception, into that strange mistake. A Roman lady in the same way is to you the type of all that is atrocious, because a few reckless women have made themselves talked about. You forget that it is in the very nature of virtue to remain concealed and ignored. But tell me, my lord, whence do you procure this delicious honey?”

“It comes from Hymettus,”⁴¹ replied Aurelius, who was somewhat disconcerted by the lady’s airs and manners. “My friend here, the worthy Herodianus, procured it at Panormus.”

just mentioned calls a son-in-law “*domine*,” and when Nero once played the cithara in public, he addressed the spectators as “*mei domini*.” Nay, the association of domine with the name, which to our ears has a very modern sound, is often found. Thus in Appuleius (Met. II.) we read: “*Luci domine*,” – “Lord Lucius.” In this story, however, this association is avoided, as it might have produced the semblance of an anachronism. In accosting women *domina* (lady) corresponds with *domine*. The French, when referring to subjects connected with ancient Rome, reproduce the sound as well as the meaning of the word correctly by their *madame* (meam *dominam*).

³⁹ Titus Claudius Mucianus. The Romans usually had three names. Titus is here the first name (*praenomen*) which was given sons on the ninth day after their birth. Claudius is the name of the gens, the family in the wider sense of the word (*nomen gentilicium*). Mucianus is the cognomen, the surname, the name of the immediate family (*stirps or familia*). Thus several stirpes belonged to a single gens. Daughters bore only the name of the gens; for instance the daughter of Titus Claudius Mucianus was called Claudia. If there were two of them, they were distinguished by the words major (the elder) and minor (the younger); if there were several, by numbers. The *Claudia Gens* was a very ancient and famous one. The principal characters of the story, belonging to the *stirps Muciana*, are purely imaginary.

⁴⁰ Gavius Apicius, the famous Roman gourmand (Tac. *Ann.* IV, 1) who finding that he had only two million and a half denari left in the world (about 400,000 dollars) killed himself, thinking it impossible to live on so little.

⁴¹ Hymettus. A mountain in Attica, famed for its delicious honey. (Horace, *Od.* II, 6, 14).

“Ah!” said Octavia, raising a polished emerald⁴² mounted in gold to her eye, for she was short-sighted: “Your friend understands the subject, that I must confess – do you not think so, Claudia my love?”

The young lady answered with vague abstraction, for some minutes she had sat lost in thought. She had hardly touched the delicacies that had been set before her, and she now silently waved a refusal to the slave who offered the much-praised honey. Even the vigorous struggle in which Herodianus was engaged with an enormous lobster⁴³ failed to bring a smile to her lips, and yet her expression had never been brighter or more radiant. Once and again her eyes rested on the face of the young Batavian, who was engaged in such eager conversation with her mother, and then they returned to the loop-hole in the cabin roof, where the pane of crystal⁴⁴ shone like a diamond in the sunshine.

Octavia was talking of Rome, while Herodianus entertained Baucis with an account of Menander’s⁴⁵ comedies; thus Claudia could pursue her day-dream at her pleasure. She was in fancy again living through the events of the last hour – she pictured herself in the small open boat tossed on the angry waves; far away across the seething waters she saw the tall trireme – saw it tack to enter the bay. It was all vividly before her. And then the moment when the slave flung the rescuing rope! who was the man who stood, calm and proud, leaning over the bulwarks, undisturbed by the wrath of Nature? She remembered exactly how he had looked – how at the sight of that noble figure, which seemed as though it could rule the storm, a sudden sense of safety had come over her, like a magical spell. Then, when she found herself on board! At first she had felt ready to sob and cry like Baucis; but the sound of his voice, the wonderful look of gentle strength that shone in his face, controlled her to composure. Only once in her life had she ever felt like this before; it was two or three years since, when she was out on an excursion to Tibur⁴⁶ with her illustrious father. Their Cappadocian horses⁴⁷ had shied, reared, and then galloped off like the whirlwind. The driver was flung from his seat – the chariot was being torn along close to the edge of a towering cliff – her father had seized the floating reins just in time, and quietly saying: “Do not be frightened, my child,” in five seconds the horses were standing still as if rooted to the spot. The feeling she had had then, had to-day been vividly revived – and yet, how dissimilar were the two men in age, appearance and position! – It was strange. And once more she glanced at the face of their host, which was glowing with animation as he talked.

Suddenly the head oarsman’s time-marking hammer ceased; the bright spot of light cast by the sun through the glass skylight on to the panelled wall, described a brief orbit and then vanished; the vessel had swung round and was at anchor.

“Madam,” said Aurelius to Octavia, “allow me to offer you my services. We Northmen rarely use litters,⁴⁸ still – on the principle that a wise man should be ready for all emergencies – Herodianus has provided my galley with that convenience.”

“And the litters are already awaiting your commands on deck,” added the freedman.

“You have surpassed yourself, Herodianus! Well, then, whenever it is your pleasure...”

⁴² Polished emerald. (Plin. *Hist. Nat.* XXXVII, 64) where it is stated that the emperor Nero used such an eye-glass at the public games.

⁴³ The lobster, (*cammarus*), was less highly esteemed by the Romans than among ourselves. See Plin. *Ep.* II, 17. "The sea, it is true, has no superabundance of delicious fish; yet it gives us excellent soles and lobsters" – a passage in which lobsters are contrasted with delicious fish.

⁴⁴ Cut Crystal. Window panes of glass (*vitrum*) mica plates (*lapis specularis*) and similar materials were by no means rare in ancient times.

⁴⁵ Menander, son of the general Diopieithes, B.C. 342. The most distinguished poet of the New Comedy; fragments of his comedies have come down to us.

⁴⁶ Tibur. A favorite summer resort of the Roman aristocracy, now Tivoli.

⁴⁷ Cappadocian horses. The province of Cappadocia in Asia Minor was famed for its horses.

⁴⁸ Litters (*lectica*). The usual conveyance, somewhat resembling the Oriental palanquin, were supplied with rich curtains (*vela*) and in other respects became the object of luxurious decorations. The number of litter-bearers (*lecticarii, calones*) varied from two to eight. In the city of Rome itself, where riding in carriages was not allowed during the day-time, the *lecticae* took the place of our carriages and hacks, for they could also be hired by the hour, and there were stands of them (*castra lecticariorum*) in several frequented quarters.

“Then it is settled,” said Octavia, going to the door. “For a few days you will be my guest.”

“For as long as you will allow,” Aurelius would have said; but he thought better of it and only bowed in answer.

CHAPTER II

The squall had completely died away; the waves were still tossing and tumbling in the bay, but the streamers of the crowd of barks, which lay under the shore, hardly fluttered in the breeze, and the fishing-boats were putting out to sea in little fleets.

Gay and busy was the scene on the quays of Baiae; distinguished visitors from every part of the vast empire were driving, riding or walking on the lava-paved⁴⁹ sea-wall, and the long roads round the harbor. Elegantly-dressed ladies in magnificent litters were borne by Sicambri⁵⁰ in red livery,⁵¹ or by woolly-headed Ethiopians.⁵² Lower down a crowd of sailors shouted and struggled, and weather-beaten porters in Phrygian caps urgently offered their services, while vendors of cakes and fruit shrilly advertised the quality of their fragrant goods. Behind this bustling foreground of unresting and eager activity rose the amphitheatre of buildings that composed the town. Aurelius had been charmed with Panormus and Gades, but he now had to confess that they both must yield the palm in comparison with this, the finest pleasure-resort and bathing-place in the world. Palace was ranged above palace, villa beyond villa, temple above temple. Amid an ocean of greenery stood statues, halls, theatres and baths;⁵³ as far round as the promontory of Misenum the shores of the bay were one long town of villas, gorgeous with the combined splendors of wealth, and of natural beauty.

The two ladies and their cortège proceeded for some distance along the shore of the harbor, and then turned up-hill in the direction of Cumae.⁵⁴ In front walked eight or ten slaves⁵⁵ who cleared the way; then came Octavia, her litter borne by six bronze-hued Lusitanians.⁵⁶ Claudia shared her litter with Baucis, while Herodianus, Magus, Octavia's rowers, and a few servants with various bundles followed on foot. Aurelius had mounted his Hispanian horse and rode by the side of the little caravan, sometimes in front, sometimes behind, and enquiring the way, now of Octavia and now of Claudia and Baucis.

"Our villa is quite at the top of the ridge," said Claudia. "There, where the holm oaks come down to the fig gardens."

"What?" cried Aurelius in surprise. "That great pillared building, half buried in the woods to the left?"

"No, no," said the girl laughing; "the gods have not housed us so magnificently. To the right – that little villa in the knoll."

"Ah!" cried the Batavian; the disappointment was evidently a very pleasant one. "And whose is that vast palace?"

"It belongs to Domitia, Caesar's wife. Since she has lived separate from her imperial lord, she always spends the summer here."

The road grew steeper as they mounted.

⁴⁹ Lava Blocks. The usual material for pavements in central and southern Italy.

⁵⁰ Sicambri. A powerful German tribe, occupying in the time of Caesar the eastern bank of the Rhine, and extending from the Sieg to the Lippe.

⁵¹ Red Livery. The usual costume of the litter-bearers in the time of the emperors.

⁵² Woolly-headed Ethiopians. The name Ethiopian Αἰθιοπες in its more restricted sense, applies to the inhabitants of Upper Egypt; in a more general meaning to the whole population of North-eastern Africa, and South-western Asia. According to Herodotus (VII, 70) the Ethiopians dwelling in the East had smooth, those in the West woolly hair.

⁵³ Baths (*thermae*, θερμὰ, that is "warm baths") were public bathing-establishments on the grandest scale, modelled after the Greek wrestling-schools. See Becker, *Gallus* III, p. 68 and following.

⁵⁴ Cumae (Κύμη) now Cuma, the oldest of the Greek colonies in Italy, beyond the mountain range that bounds the bay of Baja on the west; it is only a few thousand paces from Baja.

⁵⁵ In front walked eight or ten slaves. Such a vanguard was customary among people of distinction, even when they went on foot.

⁵⁶ Lusitanians. A people living in the region now known as Portugal, between the Tagus (*Tajo*, *Tejo*) and Durius, (*Duero*, *Douro*.)

“Oh merciful power!” sighed the worthy Baucis, “to think that these fine young men should be made to toil thus for an old woman! By Osiris! I am ashamed of myself. To carry you, sweet Claudia, is indeed a pleasure – but me, wrinkled old Baucis! If I had not sprained my ribs – as sure as I live...! But I will reward them for it; each man shall have a little jar of Nile-water.”

“Do not be uneasy on their account,” said Herodianus, wiping his brow. “Our Northmen are used to heavier burdens!” Then, turning to Magus, he went on: “By all the gods, I entreat you – a draught of Caecubum!⁵⁷ I am bound to carry this weary load,” and he slapped his round paunch, “this Erymanthian boar,⁵⁸ like a second Hercules, to the top of the hill on my own unaided legs! and I am dropping with exhaustion.”

The Goth smiled and signed to one of the slaves, who was carrying wine and other refreshments.

“The wine of Caecubus,” said Herodianus, “is especially good against fatigue. Dionysus,⁵⁹ gracious giver, I sacrifice to thee!” and as he spoke he shed a few drops as a libation⁶⁰ on the earth and then emptied the cup with the promptitude of a practised drinker.

In about twenty minutes more they reached Octavia’s house; in the vestibule⁶¹ a young girl came running out to meet them.

“Mother, dear, sweet mother!” she cried excitedly, “and Claudia, my darling! Here you are at last. Oh! we have been so dreadfully frightened, Quintus and I; that awful storm! the whole bay was churned up, as white as milk. But oh! I am glad to have you safe again! Quintus! Quintus!..”

And she flew back into the house, where they heard her fresh, happy voice still calling: “Quintus!”

“My adopted daughter,”⁶² said Octavia, in answer to an enquiring glance from Aurelius.

“Lucilia,” added Claudia, “whom I love as if she were my own real sister.”

Aurelius, who had sprung from his horse, throwing the bridle to his faithful Magus, was on the point of conducting Octavia into the atrium,⁶³ when a youth of remarkable beauty appeared in the door-way and silently clasped this lady in his arms. Then he pressed a long and loving kiss on Claudia’s lips, and it was not till after he had thus welcomed the mother and daughter, that he turned hesitatingly to Aurelius, who stood on one side blushing deeply; a sign from Octavia postponed all explanation. The whole party entered the house, and it was not till they were standing in the pillared hall, where marble seats piled with cushions invited them to repose, that Octavia said to the astonished youth with a certain solemnity of mien:

“Quintus, my son, it is to this stranger – the noble and illustrious Caius Aurelius Menapius, of Trajectum, in the land of the Batavi – that you owe it that you see us here now. He took us on board his trireme, for our boat was sinking. I declare myself his debtor henceforth forever. Do you,

⁵⁷ Caecubum. A district on the shores of the bay of Gaeta, famous for its wine. See (Horace *Od.* I, 20, 9 and I, 37, 5) where it is said, that it would be positively sinful to bring Caecubian wine from the cellar with other kinds on ordinary occasions (*ante hac nefas depromere Caecubum cellis avitis, etc.*).

⁵⁸ Erymanthian boar. So called from Mt. Erymanthus in Arcadia, where the animal lived until slain by Hercules.

⁵⁹ Dionysus. A surname of Bacchus.

⁶⁰ Libation. Wine poured as an offering to the gods.

⁶¹ Vestibulum. The space in front of the house-door (*fores*) which in the time of the imperial government was frequently covered with a portico.

⁶² Adopted Daughter. The adoption of a child in ancient Rome was regulated by very strict laws. Adoption in its narrower sense (*adoptio*) extended to persons who were still under paternal authority; with self-dependent persons the so-called *arrogatio* took place. With women this last form was entirely excluded.

⁶³ Atrium. From the door of the house a narrow passage (*ostium*) led to the first inner court, the atrium, so-called because this space, where the hearth originally was, was *blackened* by the smoke (*ater*). The atrium, which in the more ancient Roman houses possessed the character of a room with a comparatively small opening in the roof, and afterwards resembled a court-yard, was at first the central point of family life, the sitting-room, where the industrious house-keeper sat enthroned among her slaves. When republican simplicity gave way to luxury, the atrium became the hall devoted to the reception of guests, and domestic life was confined to the more retired apartments.

on your part, show him all the hospitality and regard that he deserves.” Quintus came forward and embraced Aurelius.

“I hope, my lord,” he said with an engaging smile, “that you will for some time give us the honor of your company and so give us, your debtors, the opportunity we desire of becoming your friends.”

“He has already promised to do so,” said Octavia.

Lucilia now joined them, having put on a handsomer dress in honor of the stranger, and stuck a rose into her chestnut hair; she sat down by Claudia and took her hand, leaning her head against her shoulder.

“But tell us the whole story!” cried Quintus. “I am burning to hear a full and exact account of your adventure.”

Octavia told her tale; one thing gave rise to another, and before they thought it possible, it was the hour for dinner – the first serious meal of the day, at about noon – and they adjourned to the triclinium.⁶⁴

Under no circumstances do people so soon wax intimate as at meals. Aurelius, who until now had listened more than he had spoken, soon became talkative under the cool and comfortable vaulted roof of the eating-room, and he grew quite eager and vivacious as he told of his long and dangerous voyage, of the towns he had visited, and particularly of his distant home in the north. He spoke of his distinguished father, who, as a merchant, had travelled eastwards to the remote lands east of the peninsula of the Cimbri⁶⁵ and to the fog-veiled shores of the Guttoni,⁶⁶ the Aestui⁶⁷ and the Scandii;⁶⁸ indeed Aurelius himself knew much of the wonders and peculiarities of these little-visited lands, for he had three times accompanied his father. Many a time on these expeditions had they passed the night in lonely settlements or hamlets, where not a soul among the natives understood the Roman tongue, where the bear and the aurochs fought in the neighboring woods, or eternal terrors brooded over the boundless plain.

These pictures of inhospitable and desert regions, which Aurelius so vividly brought before their fancy, were those which best pleased his hearers. Here, close to the luxurious town, and surrounded by everything that could add comfort and enjoyment to life, the idea of perils so remote seemed to double their appreciation.⁶⁹ When they rose from table the ladies withdrew, to indulge in that private repose which was customary of an afternoon. Lucilia could not forbear whispering to her companion, that she would far rather have remained with the young men – that Aurelius was a quite delightful creature, modest and frank, and at the same time upright and steady – a rock in the sea on which the Pharos of a life’s happiness might be securely founded.

“You know,” she added earnestly, while her eyes sparkled with excitement from under her thick curls, “Quintus is far handsomer – he is exactly like the Apollo in the Golden House⁷⁰ by the Esquiline. But he is also like the gods, in that he is apt to vanish suddenly behind a cloud, and is gone. Now Aurelius, or my soul deceives me, would be constant to those he loved. It is a pity that his rank is no higher than that of knight, and that he is so unlucky as to be a native of Trajectum.”

⁶⁴ Triclinium, (triple couch) really the sofa on which three, and sometimes even more persons reclined at table; the name was also given to the dining-room itself, which comprised the second inner court-yard, the so-called peristyle or cavaedium.

⁶⁵ Cimbrian Peninsula, now called Jutland.

⁶⁶ Guttoni. A German race on the lower Vistula.

⁶⁷ Aestui. A German race living on the coast of Revel.

⁶⁸ Scandii. Inhabitants of southern Sweden.

⁶⁹ The Sense of Contrast was a conspicuous trait in Roman character. They were wont to heighten their appreciation of the joys of life by images of death, and the dining-room was intentionally placed so as to afford a view of tombs.

⁷⁰ The Golden House (*domus aurea*). The name given to the magnificent palace of Nero, which extended from the Palatine Hill across the valley and up again as far as the gardens of Macaenas on the Esquiline. It contained an enormous number of the choicest works in statuary. Vespasian had a large part of this building pulled down.

“Oh! you thorough Roman!” laughed Claudia. “No one is good for anything in your eyes, that was not born within sight of the Seven Hills.”⁷¹

She put her arm round her gay companion, and carried her off half-resisting to their quiet sleeping-room.

Neither Quintus nor Aurelius cared to follow the example of the ladies – not the Roman, for he had slept on late into the day – nor the stranger, for the excitement of this eventful morning had fevered his blood. Besides, there was the temptation of an atmosphere as of Paradise, uniting the glory and plenitude of summer with the fresh transparency of autumn. During dinner Aurelius had turned again and again to look through the wide door-way at the beautiful scene without, and now he crossed the threshold and filled his spirit with the loveliness before him. Here was not – as in the formal gardens of Rome⁷² – a parterre where everything was planned by line and square; here were no trained trees and hedges, circular beds or clipped shrubs. All was free and wholesome Nature, lavish and thriving vitality. The paths alone, leading from the villa in three directions into the wood, betrayed the care of man. The whole vegetation of the happy land of Campania seemed to have been brought together on the slope below. Huge plane-trees, on which vines hung their garlands, lifted their heads above the holm-oaks and gnarled quinces. The broad-leaved fig glistened by the side of the grey-green olive; here stood a clump of stalwart pines, there wide-spreading walnuts and slender poplars. Below them was a wild confusion of brush-wood and creepers; ivy, periwinkle and acanthus entangled the giants of the wood with an inextricable network. Maiden-hair hung in luxuriant tufts above the myrtles and bays, and sombre evergreens contrasted with the brilliant centifolia. In short the whole plant-world of southern Italy here held an intoxicating orgy. Quintus seemed to divine the thoughts of the young Northman, and put his hand confidently through his guest’s arm, and so they walked on, taking the middle path of the three before them, and gently mounting the hill.

“I can see,” said Quintus, “that you are a lover of Nature; I quite understand that a garden at Baiae must seem enchanting to you, who came hither from the region of Boreas himself, where the birch and the beech can scarcely thrive. But you can only form a complete idea of it from the top of the hill; we have built a sort of temple there and the view is unequalled. . . .”

“You are greatly to be envied,” said Aurelius. “And how is it that Titus Claudius, your illustrious father, does not enjoy himself on this lovely estate, instead of living in Rome as I hear he does?”

“As priest to the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus⁷³ he is tied to the capital. The rules forbid his ever quitting it for more than a night at a time. Dignity, you see, brings its own burdens, and not even the greatest can have everything their own way. Many a time has my father longed to be away from the turbulent metropolis – but no god has broken his chains. Unfulfilled desires are the lot of all men.”

⁷¹ The Seven Hills. Contempt for all who lived in the provinces was peculiar to all Romans, even the lowest classes of the populace. Thus Cicero says: “*Cum infimo cive romano quisquam amplissimus Galliae comparandus est?*” (Can even the most distinguished Gaul be compared with the humblest Roman citizen?) This prejudice extended to later centuries, though under the first emperors numerous inhabitants of the provinces attained the rank of senator and reached the highest offices. It is very comical, when Juvenal, a freedman’s son, treats the “knights from Asia Minor,” (*Equites Asiani*) condescendingly, as if they were intruders, unworthy to unfasten the straps of his sandals. Inhabitants of the other provinces were held in higher esteem than the Greeks and Orientals. But even Tacitus (*Ann.* IV, 3.) regards it as an aggravation of the crime committed by the wife of Drusus, that Sejanus, for whom she broke her marriage-vow, was not a full-blooded Roman, but merely a knight from Volsinii.

⁷² The Formal Gardens of Rome. The taste of the Romans in regard to the art of gardening resembled that shown at Versailles. The eloquence with which individual authors urge a return to nature (Hor. *Epist.* I, 10, Prop. I, 2, Juv. *Sat.* III, etc..) only proves that the opposite course was universal. Clipping bushes and trees into artificial forms was considered specially fashionable. Thus Pliny the younger, in his description of the Tuscan villa (*Ep.* V, 6,) writes: “Before the colonnade is an open terrace, surrounded with box, the trees clipped into various shapes; below it a steep slope of lawn, at whose foot, on both sides of the path, stand bushes of box, shaped into the forms of various animals. On the level ground the acanthus grows delicately, I might almost say transparently. Around it is a hedge of thick closely-clipped bushes, and around this hedge runs an avenue of circular form, adorned with box clipped into various shapes, and small trees artistically trimmed. The whole is surrounded by a wall, concealed by box.” Then towards the end of the letter: “The box is clipped into a thousand shapes, sometimes into letters, that form the name of the owner or gardener.”

⁷³ Jupiter Capitolinus. The priests of certain divinities were called *Flamines* and the chief of these was the *Flamen Dialis* or priest of Jupiter – called Capitolinus from the hill on which the temple stood. Tacitus (*Ann.* III, 71,) tells us of the prohibition here spoken of.

He spoke with such emphasis, that the stranger glanced at him.

“What desire of yours can be unfulfilled?”

A meaning smile parted the Roman’s lips.

“If you are thinking of things which gold and silver will purchase, certainly I lack little. Everything may be had in Rome for money; everything – excepting one thing; the stilling of our craving for happiness.”

“What do you understand by that?”

“Can you ask me? I, here and as you see me, am a favorite of fortune, rich and independent by my grandfather’s will, which left me possessed of several millions at an early age – as free and healthy as a bird – strong and well-grown and expert in all that is expected of a young fellow in my position. I had hardly to do more than put out my hand, to acquire the most influential position and the highest offices and honors – to become Praetor or Consul.⁷⁴ I am well received at court, and look boldly in the face of Caesar, before whom so many tremble. I am betrothed to a maiden as fair as Aphrodite herself, and a hundred others, no less fair, would give years of their lives to call me their lover for a week – and yet – have you ever felt what it is to loathe your existence?”

“No!” said Aurelius.

“Then you are divine, among mortals. You see, weeks and months go by in the turmoil of enjoyment; the bewildered brain is incapable of following it all – then life is endurable. My cup wreathed with roses, a fiery-eyed dancer from Gades⁷⁵ by my side, floating on the giddy whirl of luxury, as mad and thoughtless as a thyrsus-bearer⁷⁶ at the feast of Dionysus – under such conditions I can bear it for a while. But here, where my unoccupied mind is thrown back upon itself...”

“But what you say,” interrupted Aurelius, “proves not that you are satiated with the joys of life, so much as – you will forgive my plainness – that you are satiated with excess. You are betrothed, you say, and yet you can feel a flame for a fiery-eyed Gaditanian. In my country a man keeps away from all other girls, when he has chosen his bride.”

“Oh yes! I know that morality has taken refuge in the provinces,” said Quintus ironically. “But the youth of Rome go to work somewhat differently, and no one thinks the worse of us for it. Of course we avoid public comment, which otherwise is anxiously courted – but we live nevertheless just as the humor takes us.”

Aurelius shook his head doubtfully.

“Well, well,” said Quintus. “You good folks in the north have a stricter code – Tacitus describes the savage Germanic tribes as almost equally severe. But Rome is Roman. – No prayers can alter that; and after all you get used to it! I believe Cornelia herself would hardly scold if she heard... Besides, it is in the air. Old Cato has long, long been forgotten, and the new Babylon by the Tiber wants pleasure – will have pleasure, for in pleasure alone can she find her vocation and the justification of her existence.”

“And does your bride live in the capital?” asked Aurelius after a pause.

“At Tibur,” replied Quintus. “Her uncle, Cornelius Cinna, avoids the neighborhood of the court on principle. The fact that Domitia resides here is quite enough to make him hate Baiae – although, as you know, Domitia has long ceased to belong to Caesar’s court.”

Aurelius was silent. Often had his worldly-wise father warned him never to speak of affairs of state or even of the throne, excepting in the narrowest circle of his most trusted friends; under the reign of terror of Domitian, the most trivial remark might prove fateful to the speaker. The numerous spies, known as delators, who had found their way everywhere, scenting their prey, had undermined

⁷⁴ The Praetorship and Consulship were still, under the emperors, an object of ardent desire, in spite of the fact that these offices had been stripped of all power.

⁷⁵ Gades, now Cadiz, was famous for its dancers of easy morality. (See *Juv. Sat.* XI, 162.)

⁷⁶ Thyrsus, (θύρσος) a pole or wand wreathed with vine and ivy leaves, and borne by Bacchus and by Bacchantes.

all mutual confidence and trust to such an extent that friends feared each other; the patron trembled before his client, and the master before his slave. Although the manner and address of his host invited confidence, caution was always on the safe side, all the more so as the young Roman was evidently an ally of the court party. So the Northman checked the utterance of that fierce patriotism, which the hated name of Domitian had so painfully stirred in his soul. "Unhappy Rome!" thought he: "What can and must become of you, if men like this Quintus have no feeling for your disgrace and needs?"

The next turn in the path brought them within sight of the little temple; marble steps, half covered with creepers, led through a Corinthian portico into the airy hall within. The panorama from this spot was indeed magnificent; far below lay the blue waters of the bay, with the stupendous bridge of Nero;⁷⁷ farther away lay Baiae with its thousand palaces and the forest of masts by Puteoli; beyond these, Parthenope, beautiful Surrentum,⁷⁸ and the shining islands bathed by the boundless sea; the vaporous cloud from Vesuvius hung like a cone of snow in the still blue atmosphere. To the north the horizon was bounded by the bay of Caieta⁷⁹ the Lucrine lake and the wooded slopes of Cumae. The foreground was no less enchanting; all round the pavilion lay a verdurous and luxuriant wilderness, and hardly a hundred paces from the spot rose the colossal palace of the Empress, shaded by venerable trees. The mysterious silence of noon brooded over the whole landscape; only a faint hum of life came up from the seaport. All else was still, not a living creature seemed to breathe within ear-shot...

Suddenly a sound came through the air, like a suppressed groan; Aurelius looked round – out there, there where the branches parted in an arch to form a vista down into the valley – there was a white object, something like a human form. The young foreigner involuntarily pointed that way.

"Look there, Quintus!" he whispered to his companion.

"That is part of the Empress's grounds," replied the Roman.

"But do you see nothing there by the trunk of that plane-tree? About six – eight paces on the other side of the laurel-hedge? Hark! there is that groan again."

"Pah! Some slave or another who has been flogged. Stephanus, Domitia's steward, is one of those who know how to make themselves obeyed."

"But it was such a deep, heartrending sigh!"

"No doubt," laughed Quintus; "Stephanus is no trifler. Where his lash falls the skin comes off; then he is apt to tie up the men he has flogged in the wood here, where the gnats..."

"Hideous!" cried Aurelius interrupting him. "Let us run down and set the poor wretch free!"

"I will take good care to do nothing of the kind. We have no right in the world to do such a thing."

"Well, at any rate, I will find out what he has done wrong. His torturer's brutality makes me hot with indignation!"

So speaking he walked straight down the hill through the brushwood. Quintus followed, not over-pleased at the incident; and he was very near giving vent to his annoyance when a swaying branch hit him sharply on the forehead. But the native courtesy, the urbanity⁸⁰ or town breeding, which distinguished every Roman, prevailed, and in a few minutes they had reached the laurel-hedge. Quintus was surprised to find himself in front of a tolerably wide gap, which could not have been made by accident; but there the young men paused, for Quintus hesitated to trespass on the Empress's grounds.

The sight which met his eyes was a common one enough to the blunted nerves of the Roman, but Aurelius was deeply moved. A pale, bearded man,⁸¹ young, but with a singularly resolute expression,

⁷⁷ Bridge of Nero. One of this emperor's mad undertakings was the construction, at an enormous expense, of a perfectly useless bridge aslant across the bay of Baiae.

⁷⁸ Surrentum, now Sorrento.

⁷⁹ Caieta, now Gaëta.

⁸⁰ Urbanitas. Literally: city training.

⁸¹ A Pale, Bearded Man. Wearing beards first became general under the Emperor Hadrian. At the time of this story it was still the

stood fettered to a wooden post, his back dreadfully lacerated by a stick or lash, while swarms of insects buzzed round his bleeding body.

“Hapless wretch!” cried Aurelius. “What have you done, that you should atone for it so cruelly?”

The slave groaned, glanced up to heaven and said in a choked voice:

“I did my duty.”

“And are men punished in your country for doing their duty?” asked the Batavian frowning, and, unable any longer to control himself, he went straight up to the victim and prepared to release him. The slave’s face lighted up with pleasure.

“I thank you, stranger,” he said with emotion, “but if you were to release me, it would be doing me an ill-turn. Fresh torture would be all that would come of it. Let me be; I have borne the like before now; I have only another hour to hold out. If you feel kindly towards me, go away, leave me! Woe is me if any one sees you here!”

Quintus now came up to him; this really heroic resignation excited his astonishment, nay, his admiration.

“Man,” said he, waving away the swarm of gnats with his hand, “are you a disciple of the Stoa,⁸² or yourself a demi-god? Who in the world has taught you thus to condemn pain?”

“My lord,” replied the slave, “many better than I have endured greater suffering.” “Greater suffering – yes, but to greater ends. A Regulus, a Scaevola have suffered for their country; but you – a wretched slave, a grain of sand among millions – you, whose sufferings are of no more account than the death of a trapped jackal – where do you find this indomitable courage? What god has endowed you with such superhuman strength?”

A beatific smile stole over the man’s drawn features.

“The one true God,” he replied with fervent emphasis, “who has pity on the feeble; the all-merciful God, who loves the poor and abject.”

A step was heard approaching.

“Leave me here alone!” the slave implored them. “It is the overseer.”

Quintus and Aurelius withdrew silently, but from the top of the copse they could see a hump-backed figure that came muttering and grumbling up to where the slave was bound, released him presently from the stake and led him away into the gardens. For a minute or two longer the young men lingered under the pavilion and then, lost in thought, returned to the house. Their conversation could not be revived.

custom among the higher classes (but not among the lower ones and the slaves) to shave off the beard after the twenty-first year.

⁸² Stoa. The school of the stoics; so named from the pillared hall (πυκνίλη στοά) at Athens, where Zeno, the founder, taught. The doctrine inculcated was the subjugation of physical and moral evil by individual heroism.

CHAPTER III

The second serious meal of the day, the *coena*⁸³ or supper had begun; the party had betaken themselves to the *cavaedium*,⁸⁴ where it was now beginning to grow dusk. This airy colonnade – the handsomest portion perhaps, of an old Roman house – was here very pleasingly decorated with flowers and plants of ornamental foliage. The arcades, which surrounded the open space in the middle, were green with ivy, while an emerald grass-plot, with cypresses and laurels, magnolias in full bloom, pomegranates and roses, filled up half the quadrangle. Twelve statues of bronze gilt served to hold lamps, and a fountain tossed its sparkling jet as high as the tallest trees.

For some time the party sat chatting in the dusk; then two slaves came in with torches and lighted the lamps of the twelve statues; two others lighted up the arcades so that the painted walls and their purplish backgrounds were visible far across the court-yard. A flute-player from Cumae now played to them in a tender mode; she stood in the entrance, dressed in the Greek fashion, with her abundant hair gathered into a knot and her slender fingers gliding up and down the stops of the instrument. Her features were sweet and pleasing, her manner soft and harmonious; only from time to time a strange expression of weariness and absence of mind passed over her face. When she had done playing, she was conducted by Baucis to the back gate. She took the piece of silver which she received in payment with an air of indifference, and then bent her way down the hill towards Cumae, which already lay in darkness.

“Allow me to ask,” said Herodianus to Quintus, “what is the name of this tunefully-gifted damsel?”

“She is called Euterpe, after the muse who presides over her art.”

“Her name is Arachne,” added Lucilia, “but Euterpe sounds more poetical.”

“Euterpe!” breathed the worthy Herodianus. “Heavenly consonance! Is she a Greek?”

“She is from Etruria, and was formerly the slave of Marcus Cocceius Nerva, who freed her. She married in Cumae not long since.”

“As strictly historical as the annals of Tacitus,” laughed Claudia.

“I heard it all from Baucis.”

“Wretched old magpie!” exclaimed Quintus, intentionally raising his voice. “If she could not gossip, she would lose the breath of life.”

“By all the gods, my lord!” exclaimed Baucis, laying her hands on her heart, “you are calumniating me greatly – do you grudge me a little harmless chat? All-merciful Isis! am I to close my lips with wax? No, by Typhon⁸⁵ the cruel! Besides, I must instruct the daughters of the house; it is for that that I eat the bitter crust of dependence in my old age. Oh! Baucis knows her duties; have I not taught Claudia to sing and play the cithara? Have I not taught Lucilia more than a dozen Egyptian formulas and charms? and now I add to this a little sprinkling of knowledge of the world and of men – and you call it gossip! You young men of the present day are polite, I must say!”

“Then you sing to the cithara?”⁸⁶ said Aurelius, turning to Claudia. “Oh, let me, I beg of you, hear one of your songs!”

⁸³ *Coena*. The second and last principal meal after the day’s work was over. Under the emperors the *coena* began about half-past two o’clock in the afternoon, in winter probably somewhat later. It corresponded in its relation to the other hours of the day, to the “dîner” of the French, for the Romans were early risers, and even among the aristocratic classes day began at sunrise.

⁸⁴ *Cavaedium* or *peristyle* was the name given to the second court-yard of the Roman house, which was connected with the first or atrium by one or two corridors. The dining-room, as well as the study of the master of the house, were in the *cavaedium*. The space between the latter and the atrium, called the *tablinum*, contained the family papers; it was the business office.

⁸⁵ Typhon. The evil genius who killed Osiris. (See [note 32](#), vol. 1.) The Greeks regarded him as a monster of original evil, the personification of the Simoom and other destructive hot winds, or of the primeval force of volcanoes.

⁸⁶ *Cithara* (κιθάρα). A favorite musical instrument. The strings, usually of gut, were sounded by means of a *plectrum* (πλῆκτρον)

“With pleasure,” said the girl coloring slightly. “With your permission, dear mother...?”

“You know my weakness,” replied Octavia. “I am always only too glad to hear you sing. If our noble guest’s request is not merely politeness...”

“It is a most heartfelt wish,” cried Aurelius. “Your daughter’s voice is music when she only speaks – in singing it must be enchanting.”

“I think so too, indeed,” added Herodianus. “Oh, we Northmen are connoisseurs in music. The Camenae visit other spots than Helicon and the seven hills of Rome; they have taken Trajectum too under their protection. Had I but been born in Hellas, where Zeus so lavishly decked the cornucopia of the arts with such pure and ideal perfection...”

“Herodianus, you are talking nonsense!” interrupted the young Batavian. “I am afraid that the old Falernian we drank at dinner, was too strong for your brain.”

“I beg your pardon! that would be very unlike me. Since Apollo first laid me in my cradle, temperance has been my most conspicuous virtue...”

A slave girl had meanwhile brought in the nine-stringed cithara and the ivory plectrum; Claudia took them from her with some eagerness, put the ribbon of the lute round her neck and sat upright on her easy-chair. She turned the pegs here and there to put the instrument in tune, struck a few chords and runs as a prelude, and began a Greek song – the delightful Spring-greeting of Ibycus the Sicilian:⁸⁷

“Spring returns, and the gnarled quince⁸⁸
Fed by purling and playful brooks
Decks its boughs with its rosy flowers
Where, beneath in the twilight gloom,
Nymph-like circles of maidens dance;
While the sprays of the budding grape
Hide ’mid shadowy vine leaves.

Ruthless Eros doth disregard
Spring’s sweet tokens and hints of peace.
Down he rushes like winter blasts —
Thracian storms with their searing flash —
Aphrodite’s resistless son
Falls on me in his fury and fire —
Racks my heart with his torments.”

Claudia ceased; the accompaniment on the cithara died away in soft full chords. Caius Aurelius sat spellbound. Never had he dreamed of the daughters of the fever-tossed metropolis as so simple, so natural, so genuine and genial. The strain almost resembled, in coy tenderness, those northern love-songs which he had been wont to hear from the lips of Gothic and Amsivaric maidens. In those, to be sure, a vein of rebellion and melancholy ran through the melody and pierced through the charm, while in this all was perfect harmony, exquisite contentment – an intoxicating concord of joy, youth and love. In this he heard the echo of the smiling waves below, of the glistening leaves, and of heart-stirring spring airs.

of wood, ivory, or metal. Music was as common an accomplishment among ladies of rank then as now, and they often composed both the words and airs of their songs. Statius tells us that his step-daughter did so, and Pliny the younger says the same of his third wife.

⁸⁷ Ibycus of Rhegion in Lower Italy (B.C. 528). A distinguished lyric poet, who is the hero of a well-known poem by Schiller. Few of his numerous lyric compositions remain to us. We here give a translation of Emanuel Geibel’s admirable German version of his Spring-greeting. (*Classisches Liederbuch*, p. 44.)

⁸⁸ Quince. Cydonia is the modern botanical name of the quince, called by the Greeks and Romans the Cydonian apple, after Cydonia, in the island of Crete.

“A second Sappho!” exclaimed Herodianus, as his master sat speechless. “I can but compare the sweetness of that voice with the luscious Falernian we drank at dinner. That was a nectar worthy of the gods! Besides, indeed – the Hispanian wine – out there, what do you call the place – you know, my lord – what is the name of it – that was delicious too – and seen against the light... What was I saying? I had an aunt, she sang too to the cithara – yes she did, why not? – She was free to do that, of course, quite free to do it – and a very good woman too was old Pris – Pris – Priscilla. Only she could not endure, that any one should talk when she blew the cithara...”

Octavia was frowning; Aurelius had turned crimson and nodded to his Gothic slave, who was standing aside under the arcade. Magus quietly came up to Herodianus and whispered a few words in his ear.

“That shows a profound, a remarkably profound power of observation!” cried the freedman excitedly. “In fact, what does music prove after all? I play the water-organ,⁸⁹ and – hold me up, Magus. This floor is remarkably slippery for a respectable cavaedium. It might be paved with eels or polished mirrors!”

“You are a very good fellow,” muttered the Goth as he led him slowly away, “but you carry it a little too far...”

“What? Ah! you have no sense of the sublime? You are not a philosopher, but only a – a – a – a man. But, by Pluto! you need not break my arm. I – take care of that, that... Will you let go, you misbegotten villain!”

But the Goth was not to be got rid of; he held the drunken man like an iron vice and so guided him in a tolerably straight course. When they disappeared in the corridor leading to the atrium, Aurelius was anxious to apologize for him, but Octavia laughed it off.

“We are at Baiae,⁹⁰ she said, “and Baiae is famous for its worship of Bacchus.”

“It is impossible to be vexed with him,” added Lucilia; “he is so exceedingly funny, and has such a confiding twinkle in his eyes.”

“I am only annoyed,” said Aurelius, “that he should have disturbed us at so delicious a moment. Indeed madam, your voice is enchantment; and what a heavenly melody! who is the musician who composed it?”

“You make me blush,” said Claudia: “I myself put the words to music, and I am delighted that you should like it. Quintus thought it detestable.”

“Nay, nay – ” murmured Quintus.

“Yes indeed!” said the saucy Lucilia. “It was too soft and womanly for your taste.”

“You are misrepresenting me; I only said, that the air did not suit the words. It is a man who is here complaining of the torments of love, while what Claudia sings does not sound like a Thracian winter storm, but like the lamentations of a love-lorn maiden.”

“Nonsense!” laughed Lucilia. “Love is love, just as air is air! whether you breathe it or I, it is all the same.”

“But with this difference, that rather more of it is needed to fill my lungs than yours. However, for aught I care the song is perfect.”

“You are most kind, to be sure! And you may thank the gods that you have nothing to do but to listen to it. I have no doubt, that at the drinking-bouts of some of your boon companions the songs have a more Titanic ring and roar.”

“You little hypocrite! Do you want to play the part now of a female Cato? Why, how often have you confessed to me, that you would give your eyes to be one of such a party if only it were permissible!”

⁸⁹ Water-organ (*Hydraulis*, ὑδραυλός). A musical instrument mentioned by Cicero, Seneca and others. Ammianus observes: “Water-organs and lyres are made so large, that they might be mistaken for coaches.”

⁹⁰ Baiae was considered from ancient times friendly to Bacchus. (Sen. *Ep.* 51).

“Mother,” said Lucilia, “do not allow him to make a laughing stock of me in this heartless way. ‘If only I were a man,’ you mean, not ‘if it were permissible.’”

“Very good!” replied Quintus.

Caius Aurelius now expressed a wish to hear Claudia sing a Latin song, and she selected one of which the words were by the much-admired poet Statius,⁹¹ who at that time was, with Martial,⁹² the reigning favorite in the taste of the highest circles. With this the stranger seemed equally delighted.

When Claudia had ended, he himself seized the instrument and plectrum, and with eager enthusiasm in a full, strong voice sang a battle-song. The powerful tones rang through the evening silence like the rush of a mountain torrent. His hearers saw in fancy the swaying struggle – the captain of the legion is in the thick of the fray – “Comrades,” cries one of the combatants, “our chief is in danger! Help! help for our chief! – One last furious onslaught, and the battle is won!”

The two girls shrank closer to each other.

As the notes slowly died away, a figure appeared high above them in the moonlight, leaning over the parapet of the upper story.

“By the gods! my lord!” cried Herodianus, “I am coming! – If only I knew where Magus has hidden my sword! Hold your own, stand steady, and we will beat them yet!”

The party burst out laughing.

“Go to bed, Herodianus!” shouted his master. “You are talking in your dreams!”

“Apollo be praised then!” stuttered the other, “but I heard you with my own ears, shouting desperately for help.” And with these words he withdrew from the parapet, still muttering and fighting the air with his arms; and Lucilia declared that she should positively die of laughing if this extraordinary sleep-walker went through any farther adventures. The moon was already high in the sky, when the party separated. Quintus led his visitor to the strangers’ rooms, wished him goodnight, and went to his own cubiculum⁹³ where his slaves stood yawning as they waited for him. For a time, however, he paced his room in meditation; then pausing in his walk, he looked undecidedly through the open doorway and asked: “What is the hour?”

“It wants half an hour of midnight,” replied Blepyrus, his body-servant.

“Very good – I do not want to sleep yet. Open the window; the air here is suffocating. Blepyrus, give me my dagger.”

“The Syrian dagger?”

“A useless question – when do I ever use any other?”

“Here, my lord,” said Blepyrus, taking the dagger out of a closet in the wall.

“It is only as a precaution. Lately all sorts of wild rabble have haunted Baiae and the neighborhood. I am going to take a walk for an hour or so,” and he went to the door. “But mind,” he added, “this late expedition is a secret.”

The slaves bowed.

“You know us, my lord!” they said with one accord.

Quintus went out again into the arcades. The colonnaded court lay white and dream-like in the moonshine, the shadows of the statues fell blackly sharp on the dewy grass-plot and the chequered outlines of the mosaic pavement. Quintus hastened noiselessly to the postern-gate, which led from the peristyle into the park; he pushed back the bolt and was out on the terrace. Complete silence reigned around; only the very tops of the trees bent to the soft night-breeze. Quintus looked down upon Baiae. Here and there a light twinkled in the harbor; otherwise it was like a city of the dead.

⁹¹ Statius. – P. Papinius Statius, born in Naples, A.D. 45, and died A.D. 96, was a lyric and epic poet, often artificial in style, but possessed of a brilliant imagination. His principal works are the epic poem “Thebais,” in which he treats of the battle of the sons of Oedipus before Thebes, and the *Silvae* (woods), a collection of short poems. He also commenced an epic poem “Achilleis.”

⁹² Martial. (See note 100, vol. 1.)

⁹³ Cubiculum. A sleeping-room. The *cubicula* were located in the atrium, peristyle, and upper stories.

Then he looked down the black darkness of the shrubby paths into the wilderness and seemed to waver, but he drew a little letter out of the belt of his tunic and studied it, meditating.

“In fact,” said he to himself, “the whole affair wears the aspect of a mad adventure; it would not be the first time that malice had assumed such a disguise! But no! Such a scheme would be too clumsy; what warranty would the traitor have, that I should come alone? Besides, if I have any knowledge of love-intrigue, these lines were undoubtedly written by a woman’s hand.”

He opened the note,⁹⁴ which was written on pale yellow Alexandrian paper with the finest ink. The red silk that tied it was sealed with yellow wax, and bore the impression of a finely-cut intaglio. The handwriting betrayed practice, and the whole thing looked as if it had come from the hands of a cultivated and distinguished fine lady. The contents answered to this supposition; the style was marked by aristocratic affectations and rhetorical grace, while it revealed that vein of eager, jealous passion, which stamps the Roman woman to this day.

“There is no doubt about it,” muttered Quintus, when he had once more carefully examined every detail. “This is in hot earnest, and she commands me to meet her with the assurance of a goddess. And with all her domineering confidence, what sweet coaxing – what inviting tenderness! It would be treason to the divine influences of Venus to hesitate. Nay, fair unknown! – for you must surely be fair – beautiful as the goddess whose inspiration fires your blood! Nothing but beauty can give a woman courage to write such words as these!”

He replaced the note in his bosom and took the same path that he had trodden a few hours since with Aurelius; listening sharply on each side as he got farther into the thicket, and keeping his hand on his dagger, he slowly mounted the hill. All nature seemed to be sleeping, and the distant cry of a night-bird sounded as if in a dream. Before long he had reached the spot where the path turned off to the pavilion. The little temple stood out in the moonlight as sharply as by day against the dark-blue sky, like an erection of gleaming silver and snow; the light seemed to ripple on the marble like living, translucent dew – and, in the middle, the goddess sat enthroned! – a tall form robed in white, her face veiled, motionless as though indeed a statue. Quintus paused for an instant; then he mounted to the top and said bowing low:

“Unknown one, I greet thee!”

“And I thee, Quintus Claudius!” answered a voice that was tremulous with agitation.

“You, madam, have commanded, and I, Quintus Claudius, have obeyed. Now, will you not reveal the secret I am burning to discover?”

The veiled lady took the young man gently by the hand and drew him tenderly to a seat.

“My secret!” she repeated with a sigh. “Can you not guess it? Quintus, divinest, most adorable Quintus – I love you!”

“Your favors confound me!” said Quintus in the tone of a man to whom such phrases were familiar. His unknown companion threw her arms round him, leaned her head on his shoulder, and burst into tears.

“Oh, happy, intoxicating hour!” she breathed in a rapturous undertone. “You, the noblest of men, my idol, whom I have thought of so long, watched with such eager eyes —*you*, Quintus, mine – mine at last! It is too much happiness!”

Quintus, under the stormy fervor of this declaration, felt an uneasy mistrust which he tried in vain to repress. This despotic “mine – mine” gave him a sensation as of the grip of a siren. He involuntarily rose.

⁹⁴ Note. The Romans wrote their letters either on wax-tablets, (See note 10, vol. 1.) or on paper (*papyrus, carta*), using in the former case the stylus, in the latter a reed-pen and Indian ink. When the letter was finished, the wax-tablets were laid one above the other, and the papyrus folded several times. A string was then wound around the whole and the ends sealed.

“My good fortune takes my breath away!” he said in flattering accents; doubly flattering to atone for the hasty impulse by which he had stood up. “But now grant my bold desire, and let me see your face. Let me know who it is, that vouchsafes me such unparalleled favors.”

“You cannot guess?” she whispered reproachfully. “And yet it is said, that the eyes of love are keen. Quintus, my beloved, Fate denies us all open and unchecked happiness; it is in secret only that your lips may ever meet mine. But you know that true love mocks at obstacles – nay more, the flowers that blossom in the very valley of death are those that smell sweetest.”

Quintus drew back a step.

“Once more,” he insisted, “tell me who you are?”

The tall figure raised a beautiful arm, that shone like Parian marble in the moonlight, and slowly lifted her veil.

“The Empress!”⁹⁵ cried Quintus dismayed.

“Not ‘the Empress’ to you, my Quintus – to you Domitia, hapless, devoted Domitia, who could die of love at your feet.”

Quintus stood immovable.

“Fear nothing,” she said smiling. “No listener is near to desecrate the perfect bliss of this moonlit night.”

“Fear?” retorted Quintus. “I am not a girl, to go into fits in a thunder-storm. What I resolve on I carry out to the end, though the end be death! Besides, I know full well, that your favors bloom in secret places – as silent and as harmless as the roses in a private garden.”

Domitia turned pale.

“And what do you mean by that?” she asked shuddering.

“You live far away from Caesar, your husband; you are served by spies; your palace is a labyrinth with a hundred impenetrable chambers...”

“Indeed!” said Domitia, controlling her excitement. “But still, I saw you start. What dismayed you so much, if it was not the suspicion of danger?”

“You know,” answered the young man hesitating, “that I am one of those who are ranked as Caesar’s friends.⁹⁶ A friend – though merely an official friend – cannot betray the man he is bound to defend.”

Domitia laughed loudly.

“Fine speeches, on my word!” she exclaimed scornfully. “Friendship, for the executioner who cuts your head off! Fidelity to a bloodthirsty ruffian! No, Quintus – I know better. You are staunch, but not from fidelity – from prudence!”

Quintus struck his breast proudly with his hand.

“You force me,” he said, “to speak the truth, in spite of my desire to spare you. You must know then, that Quintus Claudius thinks better of himself than to stoop to be the successor of an actor!”

“Mad fool! what are you saying...”

⁹⁵ The Empress Domitia. The emperor’s wife was Domitia Longina, the daughter of Corbulo, and formerly the wife of Aelius Lamia, (Suet. *Dom.* 1).

⁹⁶ Caesar’s friends. Among the “friends (*amici*) of the emperor,” were included those persons, who not only regularly shared the social pleasures of the sovereign, but were invited to consult with him on all important government business. Within this group of friends there were of course inner, outer, and outermost circles. Quintus, who had little intercourse with the court, can only be included in the outermost circle of all, and even there more on account of his father, who was one of the emperor’s most intimate “friends,” than by virtue of his own relations with the palace. He of course had a right to appear at court, like all persons of his rank, even without a special “relation of friendship” to the emperor. When inner and outer *circles* of friends are mentioned, this must not be confounded with the different *classes* of friends. Belonging to the first or second class implied a distinction of *rank*. Of course, in this sense, Quintus could only be numbered among the first class (*primi amici*).

“What I was bound to say. You thought I was afraid; I am only proud. No, and if you were Cypris⁹⁷ in person I should disdain you no less, in spite of every charm. Never will I touch the lips, that have been kissed by a buffoon – a slave.”⁹⁸

Domitia did not stir; she seemed paralyzed by the fury of this attack. – At last, however, she rose.

“You are very right, Quintus,” she said. “It was too much to expect. Go and sleep, and dream of your wedding. But the gods, you know, are envious. They often grant us joys in our dreams and deny the reality. But now, before you go, kneel to the Empress!” and as she spoke a stiletto flashed ominously in her hand. Quintus, however, had with equal swiftness drawn his dagger.

“Fair and gently!” he said drawing back. “The honor of being stabbed by the fair hand of Domitia is a temptation no doubt...” She colored and dropped the weapon.

“Leave me!” she said, going to lean against the balustrade. “I do not know what I am doing; my brain is reeling. Forgive me – forgive me!” Quintus made no reply, and casting a glance of furious hatred at him she hurried down the steps, glided through the gap in the brushwood into the deserted park, and vanished among the shrubs.

Quintus stood looking after her.

“One foe the more!” said he to himself. “Well, what does it matter? Either to be made an end of by the knife of an assassin – or to live on, my very soul sickened with it all... Pah!”

And he made his way homewards, singing a Greek drinking-song as he went.

⁹⁷ Cypris. A name given to Aphrodite, the goddess of love, from the island of Cyprus, the principal seat of her worship.

⁹⁸ A Slave. Domitia had been the mistress of Paris, a slave and actor. When Domitian discovered it, he wished to sentence the empress to death, but at the intercession of Ursus, changed the decree to exile. Paris was massacred in the open street. (See Dio Cass. LXVII 3; Suet. *Dom.* 3.) Quintus calls Paris a buffoon out of contempt, for the profession of “player” was regarded by the ancient Romans as degrading.

CHAPTER IV

Next morning Quintus was up long before the sun, while in the atrium the slaves were still busy cleaning the walls and the mosaic pavement, so he lingered for a while in the peristyle. His eye dreamily watched the soft swaying of the trees in melancholy relief against the blue-green sky; light fleecy clouds floated in the transparent air, and here and there above his head a star still twinkled fitfully. Quintus sat on a bench with his head thrown back, for he was tired and over-excited; an unwonted restlessness had brought him out of bed. How calm and pure was this early gloaming! In Rome, so thought Quintus, there was something uncanny and dreary in the early morning – the grey of dawn came as the closing effect of a wild night of revelry. Here, on the hills of Baiae, the stars winked like kindly eyes and the twilight soothed the spirit! And yet, no; for here too was the great capital; here too were storms and unrest. Rome, that monstrous polypus, stretched its greedy arms out to the uttermost ends of the world, and even into the calmest and most peaceful solitudes. Even here, by the sea, wantonness had spread its glittering snares; here too duty and truth were forsworn, and intrigue and inhumanity held their orgies. Quintus thought of the tortured slave... That pale and pain-stricken face had sunk deep into his soul; strangely enough! for his eye had long been accustomed to such sights of anguish and horror. The bloody contests of gladiators had never roused him to any other interest than that in a public entertainment. But this particular picture forced itself on his memory, though – from the point of view of any Roman of distinction – it had no interesting features whatever, for of what account in the Roman Empire was a slave? And especially in the sight of Quintus, rich, handsome and brilliant? It was in short most strange – but that white, bearded face, with its lofty, unflinching expression never faded from his memory, and his inward eye found it impossible not to gaze upon it. Then, suddenly another figure stood side by side with it: The white-armed Cypris Domitia, the passion-stirred Empress. Here were pain, misery, silent abnegation – there were feverish desires and passions, reckless, greedy, all-absorbing selfishness... By the gods – there they stood before him – the slave and the imperial woman – both so distinct that he could have touched them as it seemed. – The slave had broken his bonds and put out his hand with a smile of beatitude, while the woman shrank away and her white arms writhed like snakes of marble. She threw herself on the earth, and her fair gold hair fell loose over the bleeding feet of the slave...

Quintus started up, the murmur of the fountain had lulled him to sleep, and now, as he rubbed his hand across his eyes, a woman's figure was in fact before him, not so stately and tall as the moonlighted Domitia, but as fresh and sweet as a rose.

“Lucilia! Up so early?”

“I could not sleep and stole away softly from Claudia's side. She is still asleep, for she came to bed very late. But you, my respected friend – what has brought you out before daybreak? You, the latest sleeper of all the sons of Rome?”

“I was just like you. I think the strong liquor we drank at supper last night...”

“A vain excuse,” said Lucilia. “When ever did good wine rob you of a night's rest? Sooner could I believe that you were thinking of Cornelia!”

“What should make you think that?”

“Well, it is a natural inference. For what else are you her betrothed? To be sure you do not play the part with much zeal.”

“How so?”

“Well, do you not go to see Lycoris just as much now as ever you did?”

“Pah!”

“‘Pah!’ What need have you to say ‘Pah!’ in that way? Is that right? Is that horrid, shameless creature, who seems to turn all the men's heads, a fit companion for a man who is betrothed? I know you *love* Cornelia – but this is a spiteful world, and supposing Cornelia were to learn...”

“Well, and if she did?” said Quintus smiling. “Is it a crime to frequent gay society, to see a few leaps and turns of Gades dancers and to eat stewed muraenae?⁹⁹ Is there anything atrocious in fireworks or flute-playing?”

“How eloquent you can be! You might almost make black seem white. But I abide by my words; it is most unbecoming, and if you would but hear reason you would give this woman up.”

“But pray believe me, there never was a pretty girl for whom I cared less than for Lycoris.”

“Indeed! and that is why you are as constantly in her house as a client in that of his patron.”¹⁰⁰

“The comparison is not flattering.”

“But exact. Why should you frequent her house so constantly, if you are so indifferent to her?”

“Child, you do not understand such matters. Her house is the centre of all the wit and talent in Rome. Everything that is interesting or remarkable meets there; it is in her rooms that Martial¹⁰¹ utters his most pregnant jests, and Statius reads his finest verses. Everyone who lays any claim to talent or wit, whether statesmen or courtiers, knights or senators, uses the atrium of Lycoris as a rendezvous. Last autumn I even met Asprenas¹⁰² the consul there. Where such men as these are to be seen, Quintus Claudius, at three and twenty, may certainly be allowed to go.”

“Quite the contrary,” cried Lucilia. “If you had grey hair, like Nonius Asprenas, I would not waste words on the matter. But as it is, the Gaulish Circe will end by falling in love with you, and then you will be past praying for.” Quintus looked gaily at the girl’s smiling, mocking face.

“You mean just the reverse,” he said. “For I know you regard me as far from dangerous. Well! I can bear even that blow.”

“That is your new mood! There is no touching you in any way. If you had only half as much constancy of mind as Aurelius!”

“Ah! you like him then?”

“Particularly. Do you know it would be delightful if he could remain here a little longer – I mean for six or eight days. Then he could travel with us to Rome.”

“Indeed?” said Quintus significantly.

“Now, what are you thinking of?”

“I? of nothing at all.”

“Go, there is no doing anything with you. Do not you see that I only meant, the long days of travelling all by ourselves – Claudia turns over a book, and you, you old lazy-bones, lie on a couch like an invalid – I find it desperately dull. A travelling companion seems to me to be the most desirable thing in the world – or do you dislike Caius Aurelius?”

“Oh no. If only his trireme had wheels and could travel over land.”

“His ship will take care of itself. He can come with us in the travelling chariot, and then he will be able to see part of the Appian way.¹⁰³ It is a thousand times more interesting than a sea-voyage. – Now, do it to please me and turn the conversation on the subject at dinner to-day.”

⁹⁹ Muraenae (μύραινα). Lampreys were esteemed a delicacy (Cic., Plin., *Hist. Nat. etc.*) The best came from the Lucrine lake, near Cumae.

¹⁰⁰ A client in his patron’s house. The clients were originally protégées, faithful followers of their lords (*patroni*) who on their part were obliged to aid them by word and deed. They represented in a certain degree an enlargement of the family circle. Afterwards this relation degenerated into a mercenary connection of the most pitiful kind. Under the emperors the clients usually became only poor parasites, in comparison with their rich masters. They formed their court, paid them the usual morning-visit at a very early hour, accompanied them wherever they went in public, and received in return a ridiculously small compensation in money or goods.

¹⁰¹ Martial. M. Valerius Martialis, born at Bilbilis in Spain, about 43 A.D. was famous for his witty and clever epigrams. The 1,200 which have been preserved are the principal source of the history of manners and customs of the period in which the scene of this story is laid. He died about the year 102.

¹⁰² L. Nonius Asprenas held the office of consul with M. Arricinius Clemens in the 14th year of Domitian’s reign, (94 A.D.) and therefore was still in office “last autumn.”

¹⁰³ Appian way. The *Via Appia*, built by one of the Claudia gens (the Censor Appius Claudius Caecus, 312 B.C.) led from Rome across Capua to Brundisium (the modern Brindisi). Statius (*Silv.* II, 12), calls it the queen of roads (*regina viarum*). A large portion of its admirable pavement, as well as the ruins of the tombs on its sides, exist at the present day.

“If you like,” said Quintus.

A slave now appeared on the threshold of the passage, which led from the peristyle to the atrium.

“My lord,” he said: “Letters have arrived from Rome – and for you too, Madam...”

“Then bring them out here.”

They were three very dissimilar letters, that Blepyrus handed to the two young people. Lucilia’s was from the high-priest of Jupiter; Titus Claudius Mucianus wrote as follows to his adopted daughter:

“Health and Blessings!¹⁰⁴ I promised you lately, through Octavia, your excellent mother, that my next letter should be addressed to you, my dear daughter. I know that you value such proofs of my fatherly remembrance, and I am glad that it should be so. However, what I have to write does not concern you alone, my sweet Lucilia, but all of you. The preparations for the magnificent Centennial Festival,¹⁰⁵ which the Emperor Domitian – as you know – proposes to hold in the course of next year, have so completely taken up my time during the last few weeks, that I am sorely in need of the rest and comfort of regular family life. In addition to this, political disturbances of all kinds have occurred. Caesar has sent for me six times to Albanum,¹⁰⁶ and I assure you it has been incessant travelling to and fro. The matter is an open secret; all Rome is discussing the decrees from the Palatine¹⁰⁷ against the Nazarenes.¹⁰⁸ You may remember that superstitious sect of whom Baucis spoke to you – a revolutionary faction, who, a score or so of years since, stirred up the whole city and gave occasion for the stern enactments of the divine Nero? Now again they are stirring up revolt as if they were mad; they are shaking the very foundations of society, and threaten to overturn all that we have till now held most sacred. I must be silent as to personal affairs; enough to say that I am weary and overwrought, and that my heart longs to see you all again. I beg you therefore to make ready to start and return as soon as possible to the City of the Seven Hills. Your mother is now tolerably well again – thanks to all-merciful Jupiter – and Quintus will not be vexed to learn that Cornelia is now staying in Rome again. People are quitting their country homes somewhat early this year; it is long since I have passed the month of September so enduringly. I shall expect you then, at latest, by Tuesday in next week. Allowing three days for the journey, I thus give you two days to prepare for it.

“Pray greet your mother and your sister lovingly from me. This letter will, I hope, find you all in perfect health. I, for my part, am quite well.

“Written at Rome, on the 11th September, in the year 848 after the building of the city.”

The second letter was from Cornelia, Quintus’ betrothed, and ran as follows:

¹⁰⁴ Health and Blessings! The Romans always began their letters by mentioning the writer’s name, who wishes health and blessings to the person addressed. Thus the commencement of the letter given here, literally interpreted, should have run as follows: Titus Claudius Mucianus wishes his Lucilia, Health and Blessings. *T. Claudius Mucianus Luciliae suae, S.P. D.*

¹⁰⁵ Centennial festival. A brilliant spectacle in the arena, the amphitheatre, etc., which, as its name implies, was celebrated every hundred years. Domitian, however, disregarded the necessity of an interval of a hundred years, by reckoning, as Suetonius (*Dom. 4*) relates, from the one before the last, which took place under Augustus, instead of from the very last, that was celebrated in the reign of Claudius. In this romance the time of the Domitian centennial festivities is placed somewhat *later* than they really occurred.

¹⁰⁶ Albanum. Domitian (*Suet. Dom. 4*) had an estate at the foot of the Albanian Hills, and many rich Romans had summer villas near, forming at last the town now called Albano.

¹⁰⁷ Palatine. Palatium, the imperial palace on the Palatine Hill. The word “palace” is derived from “Palatium,” as “Kaiser” comes from “Caesar.”

¹⁰⁸ Nazarenes. The name usually given to Christians, who, for a long time were regarded by the Romans as a Jewish sect. See the words of Dio Cassius (*LXVII, 16*): “who inclined to Judaism,” where he refers to the Christians, who were persecuted under Domitian.

“Cornelia embraces her dear Quintus a thousand times. Here I am in Rome again, my beloved! My term of banishment to that odious desert at Tibur is ended. But, woe is me! Rome is dead and deserted too since you, my treasure, my idol, linger still far from the Seven Hills! Oh! how glad I am to hear from your father, that he is recalling you from Baiae sooner than was intended. Oh! Quintus, if you felt only one thousandth part of what I feel, you would fly on the wings of the storm to the arms of your love-sick Cornelia. The days at Tibur were more dreary than ever. My uncle seemed to me so depressed and tormented by gloomy thoughts. To crown my misery, old Cocceius Nerva¹⁰⁹ must come and pay us a visit of eight mortal days. I shall never forget that week as long as I live! You know that when those two old men sit together, the house is as silent as a tomb; every one goes about on tiptoe. This Cocceius Nerva has the worst effect on my uncle. Only fancy what happened on the day when he left. My uncle had accompanied him to his chariot, and when he came back into the house he happened to pass my room, where Chloe was just putting some fresh roses into my hair. When he saw this, he fell into an indescribable fit of rage. ‘You old fool!’ he exclaimed pushing my good Chloe aside: ‘Have you women nothing to think of but finery? Do you deck yourselves out like beasts for sacrifice? Away with your rubbish! the house of Cornelius Cinna is no place for roses!’ And then he turned upon me in a tone which expressed volumes – ‘Wait a while!’ he said. ‘You will soon be able to do whatever pleases your fancy!’ You understand Quintus, he meant to refer to you. His words cut me to the heart, for I have known a long time that my uncle is not pleased at our connection. If my blessed mother had not made him swear, on her deathbed, that he would leave my choice perfectly free, who knows what might not have happened. Nevertheless, it is always a fresh pang to me when I see how he cherishes a bitter feeling against you – for, in spite of everything, I respect and love him.

“Take good care of yourself, dearest Quintus, till we meet again, soon, on the shores of the Tiber. Greet your circle from me, and particularly lively Lucilia. I remember her fresh, frank nature with special affection.”

The third letter, also addressed to Quintus, was from Lucius Norbanus,¹¹⁰ the captain of the praetorian guard.¹¹¹

“Have you taken root in your horrid country villa” – so wrote the officer in his rough fun – “or have you drowned, in Vesuvian wine, all remembrance that there is such a place as the Roman Forum? How I envy you your unbridled wild-horse-like liberty! You live like the swallows, while I – it is pitiable! Day after day at my post, and for the last few weeks leading a perfect dog’s life! Almost a third of the legion are new recruits, for again every hole and corner seems haunted. Today, I breathe again for the first time, but alas! my best friends are still absent. Above all Clodianus,¹¹² who lately has never been allowed to leave Caesar’s side. I am commissioned by

¹⁰⁹ M. Cocceius Nerva from Narnia in Umbria, born 32 A.D., a senator.

¹¹⁰ Lucius Norbanus. See Dio Cass., LXVII, 15.

¹¹¹ Praetorian guard. The commander-in-chief’s tent in the Roman camp, was called the praetorium; and from this the general’s body-guard received the name of *cohors praetoria*. Augustus transferred this title to the imperial guard, and established nine Praetorian cohorts, (each consisting of a thousand men) which were stationed, some in Rome and some in the rest of Italy. The cohorts in Rome were at first quartered among the citizens; afterwards they had barracks of their own (*castra praetoria*) on the opposite side of the Quirinal Hill. They, with the Praetorian cavalry, formed the imperial guard and body-guard. Compared with the other soldiers, they had many privileges, for instance a shorter time of service, higher pay, higher rank, etc.

¹¹² Clodianus. See Suet, *Dom.* 17.

our charmer Lycoris, to inform you that Martial's recitation¹¹³ on the sixteenth of October is proceeding to admiration. A hundred epigrams, and half Rome lashed by them! The banquet, which is to close the recitation, is to be magnificent. I can take her word for it; we know our fair Gaul. Farewell!"

"That is capital!" said Quintus, folding up the letter. Lucilia retired with her adopted father's letter to the sleeping-rooms, where Claudia and Octavia must by this time be up. Quintus went into the atrium and sat down by the fountain, to wait till Caius Aurelius should appear.

¹¹³ Recitation. The custom universally prevailed of poets reciting their verses to a select circle, before they were published.

CHAPTER V

The day of their departure came. Aurelius had hailed the idea of travelling with his new friends with an eagerness, that had brought a saucy smile to the lips of the shrewd Lucilia. But he had nevertheless preferred the more comfortable sea-voyage to a journey by land, and he had urged it so pressingly and yet so modestly that Octavia, after some hesitation, had yielded.

The second hour after sunrise¹¹⁴ had been fixed for their start, and before daybreak the slaves were already busied in packing the baggage mules and preparing the litters in the forecourt. The noise and bustle aroused Quintus, and being unable to get to sleep again he rose, dressed for the journey, and went out to the pillared court, where Lucilia was overlooking the slaves at their work and urging the dilatory to haste in cheerful tones.

“Restless being!” said Quintus in Greek: “Are you pursued by the gadfly of Juno,¹¹⁵ that you set all the house in an uproar in the darkness of dawn? You must be afraid lest Aurelius’ vessel should row of without us.”

“And do you complain of my carefulness?” retorted Lucilia. “Punctuality is the first virtue of a house mistress.”

“Aha! and since Lucilia’s ambitions aim at that high dignity...”

“Laugh away! A well-ordered home is very desirable for you; and it will be a real mercy when you get married. Since you have lived alone, you have got into all sorts of mischief. But what is it that you want here, you ugly Satyr? Do you not see that you are dreadfully in the way? There, now you are treading on the travelling-cloaks! I entreat you leave the room to the household gods!”

“What! I am in your way? That is your view of the matter; but it is you who are really the spoil-peace, the eternally restless storm who have so often come sweeping down on our idyllic calm. Of all the things, which remind us here of Rome, you are the most Roman. You have nothing but your little snub-nose to redeem you a little. But, by Hercules! when I see you bustling around here, I can picture to myself all the fevered turmoil of the great city¹¹⁶ with its two million inhabitants. Well, I will taste the sea-breezes once more – once more, for a brief space, enjoy peace and quietness.”

“How?”

“I will wait for sunrise at the top of the hill, where the road turns down to Cumae. In Rome it rises through smoke and mist; while here – oh! how grandly and gloriously it mounts from behind the cone of Vesuvius...”

“And rises there through smoke and mist!” laughed Lucilia. “Well, make haste and come back again, or we shall set off without you.”

She turned once more to the slaves. Quintus wrapped himself in his ample *lacerna*,¹¹⁷ waved his hand to her, and went out.

¹¹⁴ The second hour after sunrise. The Romans divided the day, from sunrise to sunset, into twelve hours. These were of course shorter in winter than in summer. The events spoken of in this chapter are supposed to have taken place about the time of the equinox, so ‘the second hour’ would be between seven and eight. The night, between sunset and sunrise, was likewise divided into four vigils or watches of three hours each.

¹¹⁵ The gadfly of Juno. The jealous queen of heaven, Hera, (called by the Romans Juno) transformed the beautiful daughter of Inachus, Io, who was beloved by Jupiter, into a cow, and ordered her to be persecuted by a gadfly.

¹¹⁶ The great city. The population of Rome, under the emperors, was a little less than two millions, but largely exceeded one million. There are no exact statements; but calculations have been made from different standpoints, which give about the same result. The most important points to be considered here, are first the extent of surface occupied by imperial Rome, and secondly the estimates of ancient writers concerning the consumption of grain, which in the time of Josephus amounted to 60,000,000 bushels yearly. Here too, may be mentioned the somewhat hyperbolic passage, Arist. *Encom. Rom.* p. 199, where it is asserted that Rome would fill the whole width of Italy to the Adriatic Sea, if the stories of the houses, instead of being piled one above another, had been built on the ground.

¹¹⁷ *Lacerna*. A light woollen cloak, worn either in place of the toga or tunic, or, which was more customary, as an outside wrap over the toga. White *lacernae* were the most elegant.

The high-road was absolutely deserted; he drew a deep breath. It was a delicious morning. His wish to bid farewell, as it were, to the sun and air of Baiae was not affected; like all Romans he raved about the sea.¹¹⁸ Its shore was to him the one real *Museion*— as Pliny the younger¹¹⁹ had once expressed it — the true abode of the Muses, where the celestial powers seemed nearest to him; here, if anywhere, while watching the waves, he found time and opportunity for self-study and reflection. He had now been living with his family in their quiet villa ever since the end of April, and had spent many hours in serious meditation, in congenial literary pleasures and diligent study. He had once more learned the real value of retirement, which in Rome was so unattainable. A long winter of dissipation had left him satiated, and Baiae's aromatic air, a simple existence in the bosom of his family, and the spirit of Greek poetry had combined to restore his palled senses and overexcited nerves. And now, as the moment of return approached, he was seized more and more with the old spirit of unrest. He felt that the omnipotent sway of that demon called Rome would drag him back again into the vortex of aimless tragi-comedy, and now a last glance at the smiling and slumbering sea was a positive craving of his heart.

He slowly climbed the hill. At about a hundred paces up, there was a spot whence he could see over the roofs of the tallest villas and down into the valley. His eye, though his purpose was to look far away and across the sea, was irresistibly riveted by an object that was quite close at hand. To his right a by-path led down towards the palace of the Empress, and the huge portico, with its Corinthian columns, gleamed pale and visionary in the doubtful light. But what attracted the young man's attention was a little side-door, which slowly turned on its pivot¹²⁰ with a slight noise, letting a female figure in Greek dress pass out into the road. Quintus recognized Euterpe, the flute-player. Limp and weary she climbed the steep slope, her eyes fixed on the ground, and as she came closer, Quintus could see that she had been weeping bitterly.

"Good morning, all hail!" he cried, when the young woman was within a few steps of him. Euterpe gave a little cry.

"It is you, my lord!" she said with a faint smile. "Returning so late from Cumae?"

"No, my good Euterpe. I am up not late, but early. But what in the world have you been doing at this hour in Domitia's palace? Has she been giving a feast? You do not look as if you had gathered a harvest of gold or flowers."

"Indeed, my lord, no!" replied Euterpe, again melting into tears. "I have been to visit a friend, who is suffering terribly. Down in Baiae, where I was playing at night in the house of the wealthy Timotheus, Agathon the seer gave me herbs and salves — they cost me a heavy sum — and since then I have been in there... Oh! his wounds are horrible... But what am I talking about! He is only a slave, my lord; what can Quintus Claudius care...?"

"Do you think so?" said Quintus, interrupting the agitated speaker. "But I am not made of stone; I know full well, that though among slaves there is many a scamp, there are also worthy and excellent men. And if, to crown all, he is the friend¹²¹ of so charming a creature..."

¹¹⁸ He raved about the sea. The Romans' love for the sea is proved by many passages in their literature, but still more by the ruins of their villas and palaces, which bordered its most beautiful shores, and were praised by contemporaries for their views, (Friedlander, *Sittengesch.*, II, p. 129).

¹¹⁹ Pliny the Younger. C. Plinius Caecilius Secundus, a nephew and adopted son of the older Pliny, was born A.D. 62, at Novum Comum, now Como, on the Lake Larius, Lake of Como, on the banks of which he had several villas. (*Ep.* IX. 7.) He died about the year 114. A clever writer, a skilful statesman, an enthusiast for everything good and beautiful, he possessed an amiable character, but cannot be wholly absolved from the reproach of self-sufficiency. His writings, especially his letters, are an important source of information concerning the social conditions of that period. The passage in Pliny to which allusion is here made, runs: "Oh, sea! Oh, strand! Thou beloved *Museion*! How much ye compose and create for me!"

¹²⁰ On its pivot. Doors were not usually hung on hinges, as with us, but had on their upper and lower edges wedge-shaped pivots (*cardines*) which fitted into corresponding depressions in the threshold and upper part of the frame.

¹²¹ Friend. Quintus would speak of Eurymachus as the 'friend' of Euterpe with intentional double meaning, half in the usual honest sense, but partly too in the sense which the feminine form, *amica*, had acquired in the course of time; a signification so ambiguous, that the bluntest frankness was better.

“Nay, my lord, you will have your jest – but if you could only see him, poor Eurymachus! If you could know how faithful he is, and how noble!”

“Well, I call that being desperately in love!”

Euterpe colored. “No,” she said modestly. “I can accuse myself of many sins, but Eurymachus – no evil thought ever entered his mind.”

“Is love a sin then?”

“I am married.”

“Here – you were not wont to be so strict!”

“And the greater pity! If I had always known Eurymachus, as I know him now...”

“Indeed! and how do you know him now?”

“He has opened my eyes; I know now how deeply I have sinned...”

“He is a philosopher then, who converts fair sinners from their evil ways?”

“He is a hero!” exclaimed Euterpe with enthusiasm.

“You do not stint your praise. Does he belong to the Empress?”

“To her steward, Stephanus. Ah! my lord, he is a tyrant...”

“So they say.”

“How he treated the poor fellow! It beats all description. For one single word he had him flogged till he was raw, and then tied him up in the park in the noontide sun. The gnats and flies...” But at the woman’s last words Quintus had gone nearer to her.

“Listen,” he said hurriedly: “I believe I know your Eurymachus – a pale face with a dark beard – quiet, contemning pain – standing by the stake like a martyr...”

“You saw him?” cried Euterpe, smiling through her tears. “Yes, it was he indeed. No one else has that extraordinary power of defying every torment. Now he is lying half-dead on his bed; his whole back is one dreadful wound, and yet not a complaint, not a word of reproach! Fortunately the gate-keeper is my very good friend. He sent me a message; otherwise very likely Eurymachus might have died in his misery, without my knowing it. But I hope, I hope the charm may save him.”

“Listen, child,” said Quintus after a pause: “You shall see, that I know how to value courage, even in the person of a slave. Here, take this gold and spend it for the benefit of the sufferer, and by and bye, when he is well again, write to me in Rome; then we will see what can be done next.”

“Oh, my lord!” cried the flute-player vehemently, “you are like the gods for graciousness and kindness. Do I understand rightly, that we may hope from your goodness...”

“Understand all you please,” interrupted the youth kindly. “The chief point is, that you should remind me of it at the right moment. In Rome a man forgets his nearest relations.”

“I will remind you,” said Euterpe, radiant. “Sooner should I forget to eat and drink. About the middle of next month I am going to the capital with Diphilus, my husband. He is a master-carpenter, and will have work to do on the grand erections for the Centenary Festival. If you will allow me, I will myself remind you in person.”

“Do so, Euterpe.”

“Oh, my lord! I thank you from the bottom of my heart. The man who is protected by Quintus Claudius, is as safe as a child in its cradle.”

Joy lent so sweet an expression to the young creature’s face, that Quintus was irresistibly moved to stroke her cheek, and in the excess of her delight she submitted to the caress, though, as we know, she had vowed henceforth to give Diphilus no cause for complaint.

At this moment a magnificent litter, borne by eight gigantic negroes, appeared on the highest level of the road. It was escorted by four men-at-arms, and in it, leaning on the purple cushions and only half-veiled, reclined Domitia. The seething fever of her passion and anger had driven her to seek the air soon after midnight, and for hours the slaves had to carry her about the wooded ravines of the landward side of the hills, or along the deserted roads, until, wearied out at last, she was fain to turn homewards. Quintus, somewhat abashed, withdrew to one side; not so quickly, however, but that

Domitia had observed his light caress of Euterpe. She turned pale and looked away. The young man, who made ready to bow to the Empress, remained unnoticed, and Euterpe stood as if turned to stone.

Quintus looked coolly after her as she was borne away, and shrugged his shoulders; then he took Euterpe by the hand.

“It is a bargain then,” he said in distinct tones. “You will find me in Rome! Now, farewell – till we meet again.”

He turned towards home; sea and sunrise were alike forgotten. Euterpe hurried down to Cumae, and disappeared behind the ridge at the same instant as the Empress within the Corinthian portico of the palace.

In a few minutes the Claudia family were sitting in the triclinium to take a slight breakfast before starting. Octavia was thoughtful; her husband’s letter had made her anxious. She knew how stern a view Titus Claudius took of his duties, and how much would devolve upon him in these agitated times. Claudia too was graver than usual. Only Aurelius and Lucilia looked bright and contented. – Lucilia, warm and rosy from her busy exertions in the court-yard and atrium – and in her excitement she would not give herself time to do more than drink a cup of milk and swallow a morsel of sesame-cake.¹²²

The respectable Herodianus too, against his custom, was silent. What could be so absorbing to that simple and garrulous nature? From time to time he frowned and stared at the ceiling, moving his lips in silent speech like a priest of the Pythian oracle. The honey, generally his favorite dainty – he left untouched; the egg he was about to empty with a spoon¹²³ broke under his fingers. Aurelius was on the point of taking the matter seriously, when the mystery found a natural solution. When, presently, Blepyrus appeared to announce that it was time to start, the ponderous ponderer rose, went to the door, and began to exclaim with terrible pathos a valedictory poem of his own composition. It was based on the model of the world-renowned Hymenaeus¹²⁴ of Catullus;¹²⁵ and its climax was the most extravagant refrain, that the Muse of occasional verse ever hatched in mortal brain.

For a few minutes the party listened in respectful silence to the cadences of this solemn effusion; but as it went on and on, apparently endless, Lucilia, who from the first had had great difficulty in keeping countenance, broke into a fit of laughter, and Aurelius good-naturedly put a stop to the freedman’s recitation.

“I mean no offence, my excellent Herodianus; but though poetry is said to be the mirror of reality, it must not interfere too much with the progress of real events. Twelve times already have you resolutely asserted: ‘Far must we wander, far from hence!’ but our feet are still rooted to the spot. You may give us the rest of your poem on board the vessel, but for the present make way and take this ring as the prize for your effusion.”

Herodianus, who had at first been half inclined to take the interruption in ill-part, felt himself fully indemnified by his master’s gift, but his gaze lingered for a while in silent protest on Lucilia. However, he presently joined the rest of the party, who were mounting their horses or settling themselves in litters, and soon they were all fairly in motion.

They went down the hill in a long file. Baiae, now in full sunshine, seemed to nestle in a golden shell; the sea was as smooth as a mirror, and the clear atmosphere promised a prosperous voyage. They soon reached the stone quay, where the motley crowd of the harbor was already at high tide of noise and bustle. There lay the proud trireme before their surprised eyes, gaily dressed out like a bride waiting for the bridegroom. Long garlands of flowers floated from the spars, tied with purple

¹²² Sesame cake. *Sesamum* σήσαμον was a plant with pods, from whose fruit was obtained a savory meal or oil.

¹²³ The use of spoons was not so general in Rome as with us, but was certainly customary for eating eggs in good society.

¹²⁴ Hymenaeus. A well-known poem by Catullus; the burden is: “*O Hymen, Hymenae!*” (Carmen 61, *Collis o Heliconis.*)

¹²⁵ Caius (or Quintus) Valerius Catullus was a native of Verona (B.C. 77) and died at the age of thirty. His works were most popular at the period of our story. Martial frequently compares himself with Catullus as a recognized classic, and in one passage hopes that he may one day be esteemed as second only to Catullus. Herodianus takes one of Catullus’s poems as a model, just as a worthy citizen of Germany, who wished to essay lyric poetry, might copy Schiller.

knots and blue streamers; magnificent carpets from Alexandria and Massilia hung from the poop, and the crew were all dressed in holiday garments. When they had got into the boats and were fast approaching the vessel, strains of music were heard greeting the visitors. Claudia colored deeply; she recognized her own song – that impassioned address to the Spring, which she had sung the first evening in the peristyle.

In ten minutes the Batavia had weighed anchor and was being rowed in majestic style past the quays and mole. Quintus, Claudia and Lucilia leaned silently over the side, while Aurelius sat under the awning with Octavia, talking of Rome. Beautiful Baiae sank farther and farther into the background with all its palaces and temples. Still, above the trees, a corner of the snug villa they had left was visible, and to the left Domitia's palace. Then the vessel shifted its course, and the shining speck grew smaller and smaller till it was lost to sight.

Claudia wiped away a stealing tear, while Lucilia in a clear, ringing voice shouted across the waters:

“Farewell, lovely Baiae!”

CHAPTER VI

The house of Titus Claudius Mucianus, the high-priest of Jupiter, stood at no great distance from the precipitous Capitoline Hill,¹²⁶ looking over the Forum Romanum¹²⁷ and the Sacred Way.¹²⁸ Simple and yet magnificent, it showed in every detail the stamp of that quiet, self-sufficing and confident wealth, that ease of distinction, which is so unattainable to the *parvenu*.

It was now October. The sun was just appearing above the horizon. There was a motley turmoil in the house of the Flamen; the vast atrium positively swarmed with men. Most of these were professional morning visitors – waiters in the ante-chamber – known also from the gala dress in which they were expected to appear, as “Toga-wearers;” the poor relations of the house, clients and protégés.¹²⁹ Still, there were among them not a few persons of distinction, members of the senate and upper-class, court officials and magistrates. It was a scene of indescribable variety and bustle. The world of Rome in miniature. Petitioners from every point of the compass eagerly watched the slaves, on whom their admission depended. Rich farmers, who desired to bring a private offering to Jupiter Capitolinus, sat open-mouthed on the cushioned marble seats, gazing at the handsomely-dressed servants or the splendid wall-paintings and statues. Young knights from the provinces, whose ambition it was to be Tribune of a legion,¹³⁰ or to obtain some other honorable appointment, and who hoped for the high-priest’s protection, gazed with deep admiration at the endless series of ancestral images¹³¹ in wax, which adorned the hall in shrines of ebony.

And in fact these portraits were well worthy of study, for they were an epitome of a portion of the history of the world. Those stern, inexorable features were those of Appius Claudius Sabinus, who, as consul, wreaked such fearful justice on his troops. Beside him stood his brother, the haughty patrician, Caius Claudius, knitting his thick brows – an embodiment of the protest of the nobles against the rights contended for by the popular party. There was the keen, eagle face of the infamous Decemvir, the persecutor of Virginia – a villain, but a daring and imperious villain. – Claudius Crassus, the cruel, resolute foe of the plebeians – Appius Claudius Caecus, who made the Appian Way – Claudius Pulcher, the witty sceptic, who flung the sacred fowls into the sea because they warned him of evil – Claudius Cento, the conqueror of Chalcis – Claudius Caesar, and a hundred

¹²⁶ The capitoline hill. *Mons Capitolinus*, north of the Palatine and southwest of the Quirinal. Tarquinius Priscus erected on its summit the Capitolium, that is the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Juno and Minerva.

¹²⁷ Forum Romanum. The Roman forum par excellence, at the foot of the Capitoline and Palatine Hills, was the centre of public life even in the days of the republic.

¹²⁸ The sacred way (*Sacra Via*) divided the real *Sacra Via*, which led from the Capitol to the Arch of Titus, and the *Summa Sacra Via* (the upper sacred street) that extended from the Arch of Titus to the Flavian Amphitheatre. Hor. *Sat. I, 9* (*Ibam forte Via Sacra, sicut meus est mos.*) It was the most frequented street in Rome. The ancient pavement exists at the present day. “Via” was the name of the large principal streets, as it still is at the present time in Italy.

¹²⁹ Clients and protégés. These were the clients mentioned in note 99. Juvenal (*Sat. 5*) and especially Martial, in various passages, speak of their pitiable situation, the contempt in which they were held and the ill-treatment they had to endure even from their patrons’ slaves. (See Friedlander I, 247 to 252.) The usual visiting-hour was just after sunrise.

¹³⁰ Tribune of a legion. Augustus appointed the so-called *legati* or *praefecti legionum* commanders of the legions. The *legatus* thus corresponded with our colonel. The next in rank to the *legati* were the tribunes (corresponding to our majors) who, however, with special qualifications, might undertake the command of a legion. Usually the tribunes did not have the reputation of possessing remarkable military ability, as the sons of the knights and senators began their military career with this dignity. According to their age and experience, the tribunes were second lieutenants. The men next in rank to the tribunes were the centurions, the really experienced officers, who were held in high esteem on account of their superior knowledge. At the time of our story the pressure of the young men for tribuneships was so extraordinary, that the places actually at disposal were not nearly sufficient to supply the demand. The Emperor Claudius had therefore created supernumerary tribuneships (*supra numerum, imaginariae militiae genus*. Suet. *Claud. 25*) a brevet-rank, which without claiming the performance of any duty, flattered the vanity.

¹³¹ Ancestral Images. Statues of ancestors, modelled in wax (*imagines majorum*) formed one of the principal ornaments of the atrium in the houses of aristocratic Romans. The ancestors here mentioned of our (imaginary) Titus Claudius Mucianus are all historical characters.

other world-renowned names of old and modern times... What an endless chain! And just as they now looked down, head beyond head from their frames, they had been, all without exception, stiff-necked contemners of the people, and staunch defenders of their senatorial privileges. A splendid, defiant and famous race! Even the tattooed native of Britain,¹³² who came to offer fine amber chains¹³³ and broken rings of gold,¹³⁴ was sensible of an atmosphere of historic greatness.

One after another – the humbler folks in parties together – the visitors were led from the atrium into the carpeted reception-room, where the master of the house stood to welcome them in robes of dazzling whiteness¹³⁵ and wearing his priestly head-gear.¹³⁶ He had already dismissed a considerable number of important personages, when a tall officer, stout almost to clumsiness, was announced and at once admitted, interrupting as he did the strict order of succession. This was no less a person than Clodianus, the adjutant of Caesar himself. He came in noisily, embraced and kissed the priest and then, glancing round at the slaves, asked if he might be allowed a few words with Titus Claudius in private. The priest gave a sign; the slaves withdrew into a side room.

“There is no end to it all!” cried Clodianus, throwing himself into a large arm-chair. “Every day brings some fresh annoyance!”

“What am I to hear now?” sighed the high-priest.

“Oh! this time it has nothing to do with the outbreak among the Nazarenes and all the troubles of these last weeks. We can detect here and there extraordinary symptoms, and fabulous rumors ... for instance ... but, your word of honor that you will be silent...!”

“Can you doubt it?”

“Well, for instance, it sounds incredible ... but Parthenius¹³⁷ brought it all from Lycoris the fair Gaul... It is said that this Nazarene craze has seized the very highest personages... They even name...”

He stopped and looked round the room, as if he feared to be overheard.

“Well?” said the high-priest.

“They name Titus Flavius Clemens,¹³⁸ the Consul...”

“Folly! a relation of Caesar’s. The man who spreads such a report should be found out and brought to condign punishment...”

“Folly! that is what I said too! Infernal nonsense. Still the story is characteristic, and proves what the people conceive of as possible...”

“Patience, patience, noble Clodianus! Things will alter as winter approaches. The wildest torrent may be dammed up. But we are digressing – what new annoyance?”

“Ah! to be sure,” interrupted Clodianus. “Then nothing of it has reached your ears?”

“No one has mentioned anything to me.”

“They dare not.”

“And why?”

¹³² Tattooed native of Britain. The original Celtic inhabitants of England. For the impression made by Roman magnificence on the British chieftain Caractacus, see Dio Cass. LX, 33.

¹³³ Amber chains. Amber (*Electrum*) was greatly admired by the Romans for necklaces, rings and bracelets, until its value decreased by over-importation. It was chiefly brought from the shores of the Baltic.

¹³⁴ Broken rings of gold. The priest of Jupiter was only permitted to wear broken rings of gold, as closed ones were the symbols of captivity.

¹³⁵ Robes of dazzling whiteness. The white toga was the invariable gala dress worn at all ceremonious receptions, even by the emperors. Great indignation was felt against Nero, because once, when the senate paid him a visit, he wore only a flowered toga.

¹³⁶ Priestly head-gear. The Flamines were forbidden to go bare-headed. They always wore a hat (*apex*) or a sort of fillet.

¹³⁷ Parthenius. This historical personage was a man of conspicuous importance at the court of Domitian, and mentioned by many authors, particularly in Martial’s epigrams. He was *cubiculo praepositus*, (πρόκεντος in Dio Cass.) groom of the bed-chamber or high chamberlain, and a particular favorite with Caesar. His companion in office Sigerus or Sigerius, his inferior in rank, power and influence, will not be again mentioned in this story.

¹³⁸ Titus Flavius Clemens. A cousin of the emperor, was consul A.D. 95 with Domitian, (who conferred this dignity upon him seventeen times). Concerning his conversion to Christianity see Dio Cass. LXVII, 14, as well as Suet. *Dom.* 15.

“Because your views are well known. They know that you hate the populace – and the populace yesterday achieved a triumph.”

“And in what way?” asked Claudius frowning.

“In the circus.¹³⁹ I can tell you, my respected friend, it was a frightful scandal, a real storm in miniature! Caesar turned pale – nay he trembled.”

“Trembled!” cried Claudius indignantly.

“With rage of course,” said Clodianus in palliation. “The thing occurred thus. One of the charioteers¹⁴⁰ of the new party – those that wear purple – drove so magnificently, that Caesar was almost beside himself with delight. By Epona, the tutelary goddess of horses!¹⁴¹ but the fellow drove four horses that cannot be matched in the whole world. Incitatus,¹⁴² old Caligula’s charger, was an ass in comparison, and the names of those splendid steeds are in every one’s mouth to-day like a proverb: Andraemon, Adsertor, Vastator and Passerinus¹⁴³– you hear them in every market and alley; our poets might almost be envious. And the charioteer too, a free Greek in the service of Parthenius the head chamberlain, is a splendid fellow. He stood in his quadriga¹⁴⁴ like Ares rushing into battle. In short it was a stupendous sight, and then he was so far ahead of the rest – I tell you, no one has won by so great a length since Rome was a city. Scorpis¹⁴⁵ is the rascal’s name. Every one was fairly carried away. Caesar, the senators, the knights – all clapped till their hands were sore. Even strangers, the watery-eyed Sarmatians¹⁴⁶ and Hyperboreans¹⁴⁷ shouted with delight.”

“Well?” asked Titus Claudius, as the narrator paused.

“To be sure – the chief point. Well, it was known that Caesar would himself grant the winner some personal favor, and every one gazed at the imperial tribune in the greatest excitement. Caesar ordered the herald to command silence. ‘Scorpis,’ said he, when the uproar was lulled, ‘you have covered yourself with glory. Ask a favor of me,’ and Scorpis bowed his head and demanded in a firm voice, that Domitian should be reconciled to his wife.”

¹³⁹ In the circus. The Circus Maximus, between the Aventine and Palatine Hills, was the principal place for the horse and chariot races, and in Domitian’s time accommodated about a quarter of a million spectators.

¹⁴⁰ Charioteers. As the givers of entertainments could rarely furnish men and horses enough of their own for the games in the circus, companies of capitalists and owners of larger families of slaves and studs, undertook to supply them. As there were usually four chariots in each race, there were four such companies, each of which furnished a chariot for each race, and as the chariots and drivers had colors to distinguish them, each adopted one of these colors, hence they were called factions or parties. (Friedlander, II, 192.) The colors of these four parties were white, red, green and blue. Domitian added two new ones, gold and purple. Like so many of Domitian’s institutions, this circus innovation passed without leaving any trace, but the original parties, especially the green and the blue, lasted for centuries. The whole population of Rome, and afterwards that of Constantinople, divided into different parties, each of which sided with one of these circus factions. The eager, even passionate interest with which this was done, finds a feeble analogy at the present day in some phases of English and American popular life.

¹⁴¹ By Epona, the tutelary goddess of horses! Epona (from *epus-equus*, the horse) was the protecting deity of the horse, mule and donkey. (Juv. *Sat.* VIII, 157.) Stables, etc., were adorned with her statue. Roman sportsmen swore by the goddess of horses. (See Juv. *Sat.* VIII, 156: *jurat solam Eponam.*)

¹⁴² Incitatus, the swift —*equo incitato*— in a stretching gallop – a famous favorite horse of the emperor Caligula. (Suet. *Cal.* 55.) The emperor built this animal a palace, gave orders that it should feed from an ivory manger, and be attended by slaves clad in rich garments. When it was to appear in the circus, all noise in its neighborhood was prohibited during the whole of the preceding day, that the noble creature’s rest should not be disturbed. Caligula is said to have intended to make his Incitatus consul.

¹⁴³ Andraemon, Adsertor, Vastator and Passerinus. Names of horses frequently mentioned during the reign of the Roman emperors. Andraemon often won the race in Domitian’s time. Monuments with the portrait of this racer have come down to us.

¹⁴⁴ Quadriga. A carriage in front of which four horses were fastened abreast. The racing quadrigae were exactly like the old Homeric chariot – being provided with a breast-work in front while open in the rear.

¹⁴⁵ Scorpis. A famous chariot-driver in Domitian’s time, see the epitaph Martial composed for him. (Martial *Ep.* X, 53.)

¹⁴⁶ Sarmatians. A people in what is now Poland and Tartary. (See Mart. *Spect.* 3.) “I am that Scorpis, glory of the race Rome’s admired joy, but joy for a short space, Among the dead Fates early me enroll’d, Numb’ring my conquests, they did think me old.” Anon, 1695. That the name of Scorpis was on every lip appears from another passage in Martial *Ep.* XI, 1, which runs as follows: “Nor will your follies by those few Be told; but when their stories flag Of some new bet or running nag.” Hay. where the Incitatus to whom reference is made is not Caligula’s horse, already mentioned, but a racer named for it.

¹⁴⁷ Hyperboreans. People who lived above Boreas, fabulous folk dwelling in the extreme north; also Northmen in general. For instance Martial includes among the Hyperboreans, the Chatti (Hessen) and Dacians, inhabitants of eastern Hungary.

“Audacious!” cried Titus Claudius wrathfully.

“There is better still to come. Hardly had the charioteer spoken, when a thousand voices shouted from every bench: ‘Dost thou hear, oh Caesar? Leave thy intrigue with Julia!’¹⁴⁸ We want Domitia! There was quite a tumult,¹⁴⁹ a scandalous scene that defies description.”

“But what do the people mean? What has so suddenly brought them to make this demand?”

“Oh!” said Clodianus, “I see through the farce. The whole thing is merely a trick on the part of Stephanus, Domitia’s steward. That sly fox wants to regain for his mistress her lost influence. Of course he bribed Scopus, and the gods alone know how many hundred thousand sesterces the game must have cost him. The spectators’ seats were filled on all sides with bribed wretches, and even among the better classes I saw some who looked to me suspicious.”

“This is bad news,” interrupted the high-priest. “And what answer did Domitian give the people?”

“I am almost afraid to tell you of his decision.”

“His decision could not be doubtful, I should suppose. By giving Scopus leave to ask what he would, he pledged himself to grant his prayer. But how did he punish the howling mob that stormed around him? I too regret our sovereign’s connection with his niece, but what gives the populace the right to interfere in such matters?”

“You know,” replied the other, “how tenderly these theatre and circus demonstrations have always been dealt with. Domitian, too, thought it prudent to smother his just anger and to show clemency. When the herald had once more restored order, Caesar said in a loud voice: ‘Granted,’ and left his seat. But he was deeply vexed, noble Claudius.”

“Well and then?” asked the Flamen in anxious suspense.

“Well, the matter is so far carried out, that in the secretary’s¹⁵⁰ room to-day an imperial decree was drawn up, calling upon Domitia¹⁵¹ to return to her rooms on the Palatine, and granting her pardon for all past offences.”

“And Julia?”

“By Hercules!” laughed Clodianus. “With regard to Julia, Caesar made no promises.”¹⁵²

“Then I greatly fear, that this reconciliation will only prove the germ of farther complications.”

“Very possibly. It has been the source of annoyance enough to me personally. Caesar is in the worst of humors. Do what you can to soothe him, noble Claudius. We all suffer under it...”

“I will do all I can,” said the priest with a sigh. Clodianus noisily pushed back his chair. “Domitian is waiting for me,” he said as he jumped up. “Farewell, my illustrious friend. What times we live in now! How different things were only three or four years ago!”

¹⁴⁸ Julia. The daughter of the Emperor Titus, with whom Domitian for a long time had unlawful relations. Dio Cass. LXVII, 3. Suet *Dom.* 22.

¹⁴⁹ A tumult. Many things are related about such tumults. They were partly impromptu, partly carefully prepared. A striking instance of the latter style is told by Dio Cassius (LXXII, 13) where a cunningly-planned circus-riot causes the fall of the hated lord high-chamberlain Cleander. This omnipotent favorite of the Emperor Commodus had enraged the people by a series of the boldest frauds, during a period of great scarcity. Just as the horses were starting for the seventh race a throng of boys, led by a tall, formidable looking woman, rushed into the arena. The children loaded Cleander with the fiercest curses, the people joined them, all rose and rushed furiously towards the emperor’s Quintilian villa. Commodus, a very cowardly man, was so terrified, that after a short struggle he commanded Cleander and his little son to be slain. The mob dragged the corpse of the chamberlain about in triumph, mutilated it, and stuck the head on a pole as a sign of victory.

¹⁵⁰ Secretary. The modern equivalent for the office of “*ab epistulis*,” held under Domitian by the freedman Abascantus. (Stat. *Silv.* V, 1.) At a later period – under Hadrian and afterwards – such offices were held only by men of knightly rank.

¹⁵¹ Calling upon Domitia. We here follow a passage (somewhat doubtful, it is true) of Dio Cassius (LXVII, 3) which states that the emperor “*at the entreaties of the people*,” became reconciled to his wife. Suetonius (*Dom.* 3) says, he only *alleged* such a desire on the part of the people, but really received the empress again “because the separation from her became unendurable.” For special reasons our story fixes the time of this reconciliation in the year 95, while it actually occurred some time earlier.

¹⁵² With regard to Julia, Caesar made no promises. See Dio Cass. LXVII 3. He became reconciled, “but without giving up Julia.”

Claudius escorted him to the door with cool formality. The slaves and freedmen now came back again into the room, and ranged themselves silently in the background, and the “*nomenclator*,” the “namer,” whose duty it was to introduce unknown visitors, came at once to Claudius and said hesitatingly:

“My lord, your son Quintus is waiting in the atrium and craves to be admitted.”

A shade of vexation clouded the high-priest’s brow.

“My son must wait,” he said decisively; “Quintus knows full well, that these morning hours belong neither to myself nor to my family.”

And Quintus, the proud, spoilt and wilful Quintus, was forced to have patience. The Flamen went on calmly receiving his numerous friends, clients and petitioners, who retired from his presence cheerful or hanging their heads, according as they had met with a favorable or an unfavorable reception. Not till the last had vanished was his son admitted to see him.

Quintus had meanwhile conquered his annoyance at the delay he had been compelled to brook, and offered his father his hand with an affectionate gesture; but Titus Claudius took no notice of his son’s advances.

“You are unusually early,” he observed in icy tones, “or perhaps you are but just returning from some cheerful entertainment – so-called.”

“That is the case,” replied Quintus coolly. “I have been at the house of Lucius Norbanus, the prefect of the body-guard. The noble Aurelius was also there,” he added with an ironical smile. “Our excellent friend Aurelius.”

“Do you think to excuse yourself by casting reflections on another? If Aurelius shares your dissipation once or twice a month, I have no objections to raise – I have no wish to deny the right of youth to its pleasures. But you, my son, have made a rule of what ought to be the exception. Since your return from Baiae, you have led a life which is a disgrace alike to yourself and to me.”

Quintus looked at the floor. His respect and his defiant temper were evidently fighting a hard battle.

“You paint it too black, father,” he said at last, in a trembling voice. “I enjoy my life – perhaps too wildly; but I do nothing that can disgrace you or myself. Your words are too hard, father.”

“Well then, I will allow that much; but you, on your part, must allow that the son of the high-priest is to be measured by another standard than the other youths of your own rank.”

“It might be so, if I lived under the same roof with you. But since I am independent and master of my own fortune...”

“Aye, and that is your misfortune,” the priest interrupted. “Enough, you know my opinion. However, that which caused me to require your presence here to-day, was not your course of life in general. A particular instance of incredible folly has come to my ears; you are playing a wicked and dangerous game, and I sent for you to warn you.”

“Indeed, father, you excite my curiosity.”

“Your curiosity shall at once be satisfied. Is it true that you have been so rash, so audacious, as to address love-songs to Polyhymnia, the Vestal maiden?”¹⁵³

Quintus bit his lip.

“Yes,” he said, “and no. Yes, if you consider the superscription of the verses. No, if you imagine that the poem ever reached her hands.”

The priest paced the room with wide strides.

“Quintus,” he said suddenly: “Do you know what punishment is inflicted on the wretch, who tempts a Vestal virgin to break her vows?”

¹⁵³ Vestal maiden. Priestess of Vesta, the goddess of the hearth. At first they were four, afterwards six. They were chosen between the ages of six and ten, and were obliged to remain in the service of the goddess thirty years, ten as novices, ten as acting priestesses, and ten to instruct novices. Their principal task was to keep the sacred fire alive. They were vowed to chastity, and if they broke their vows were buried alive in the *campus sceleratus*, while the seducer was publicly flogged to death.

“I do.”

“You know it!” said the priest with a groan.

“But father,” said Quintus eagerly: “You are branding a jest as a crime. In a merry mood, inspired by wine, I composed a poem in the style of Catullus, and to complete the audacity of it, instead of the name of Lycoris, I placed at the beginning that of our highly-revered Polyhymnia. And now report says – Pah! it is ridiculous! I grant you it was impudent, unbecoming, in the very worst taste if you will, but not calumny itself can say worse of it than that.”

“Well, it certainly sounds less scandalous from that point of view. Quintus, I warn you. Now, if at any time, be on your guard against any deed, any expression, which may be construed as an insult to the religion of the state! Do not trust too much to the influence of my position or of my individuality. The law is mightier than the will of any one man. When what we are now planning takes form and life, severity, inexorable as iron, will decide in all such questions. That reckless jest sprang from a mind, which no longer holds dear the eternal truths of religion. Beware, Quintus, and conceal this indifference; do not come forward as a contemner of the gods. Once more I warn you.”

“Father...”

“Go now, my son, and ponder on what I have said.”

Quintus bowed and kissed the stern man’s hand. Then he left the room with a quick, firm step, and a look of devoted love, of passionate paternal pride followed him as he crossed the room, so tall, lovely and handsome.

CHAPTER VII

Lycoris, the fair Gaul, was giving a splendid entertainment. Valerius Martialis, the greatest wit of the city of the Seven Hills, had recited his newest and most poignant epigrams with loud applause, and the company – more than a hundred persons – were reclining at supper on cushioned divans in the lavishly-decorated eating-room. The young Massilian lady presided. With her neck and shoulders half-veiled in transparent gauze¹⁵⁴ from Cos, her magnificent golden-yellow hair knotted up at the back of her head and wreathed simply with ivy, she smiled radiantly from the head of the table, the object of silent worship to many, and of eager admiration to all. A number of slaves, in handsome Alexandrian dresses, moved quickly and silently about the handsome hall, while across the supper table the conversation each instant grew more lively.

Among the guests was Caius Aurelius, the young Batavian. He had yielded to the pressure of curiosity or of fashion – particularly when the name of the famous epigrammatist had weighed down the scale.

“Really,” he was saying to his neighbor Norbanus – the commandant of the Praetorian guard – “really, Norbanus, till this hour I had esteemed myself rich, but here I feel by comparison a beggar. What splendor, what lavish outlay! Pillars of alabaster, enormous gold plates,¹⁵⁵ carpets worth an estate – my senses reel. Everything which elsewhere would appear rare and choice is here in every day use. By Hermes! but the father of Lycoris must have been a favorite of fortune.”

“Not so loud!” interrupted Lucius Norbanus. “See, Stephanus is looking this way with a meaning glance.”

“Stephanus!¹⁵⁶ The Empress’s steward? What has he to do with Lycoris?”

“Ha! well, I will tell you that another time,” said the officer filling his mouth with a fine oyster,¹⁵⁷ “between ourselves, you know. Meanwhile, I strongly advise you to taste those delicious mollusks. If you are like me, laughing has made you ferociously hungry.”

“You certainly laughed most heartily,” replied Aurelius accepting some of the praised dish from a slave; “but I, for my part, cannot get up any taste for this kind of verse. Martial is full of wit and humor, but this perpetual mockery, this making a business of holding up all society to ridicule and contempt – no, my dear Norbanus, I cannot like it. More particularly does the way in which he speaks of women displease and vex me. If he is to be believed, there is not in all Rome one faithful wife, or one innocent girl.”¹⁵⁸

“Pah!” said Norbanus, with his mouth well filled: “There are some of course, but they are scarce, my dear Aurelius, remarkably scarce.”

“What is amusing you so much, Norbanus?” asked Quintus from his place opposite.

¹⁵⁴ Transparent gauze. The island of Cos (Κῶς) belonging to the Sporades, furnished garments made from a half-transparent silk gauze called *coa*. (See Hor. *Sat.* I. 2, 101.)

¹⁵⁵ Gold plates. A room has been discovered on the Aventine, whose walls were concealed by gilded bronze plates encrusted with medals; on the Palatine there was an apartment lined with plates of silver, set with precious stones. The halls and chambers in Nero’s *domus aurea* were covered with golden plates.

¹⁵⁶ Stephanus. I have taken considerable liberties in dealing with this personage in his relation to the Empress Domitia. He is, however, historical.

¹⁵⁷ The oyster, (*ostrea* or *ostreum*) was considered a great dainty in ancient times. (See note, 42, Vol. 1, “lobster.”)

¹⁵⁸ There is not in all Rome one faithful wife, or one innocent girl. See Martial *Ep.* IV, 71. “Long have I search’d, my Soph, the town, To find a damsel that would frown, But not a damsel will deny, As if a shame ’t were to be shy; As if a sin, will no one dare: I see not one denying fair. Then of the fair is no one chaste? A thousand, Soph, you urge in haste. What does the chaste? Enlarge my views. She does not grant, nor yet refuse.” Elphinston. In contrast to the hyperbolic expressions of the satirical writers, we are made acquainted in the letters of the younger Pliny, with a number of women of noble character; the historians too, especially Tacitus, as well as inscriptions on the monuments prove – if proof were required – that even in this corrupt age feminine virtue and loftiness of character were not rare. It is natural, that a satirical author should have special keenness of vision for errors and weaknesses.

“The old theme – women! Aurelius thinks, that our laurel-wreathed poet has sinned basely against the ladies of Rome, by hinting in his epigrams his doubts of their virtue.”

“Who? What?” cried the poet himself, hastily looking round. “What Ravidus¹⁵⁹ is here, to take up the cudgels against my iambs?”

This quotation from Catullus, the favorite poet and model of the epigrammatist, did not fail of its point, for every one, with the single exception of the blushing Aurelius, was reminded by it that Ravidus was, in that passage, called a “crazed and witless wretch.”

“It was I,” said Aurelius coolly. “But it was not your verse that I criticised, but ... however, you heard. If a woman is no more to you than the beetle, the snake that wriggles in the dust, I can but pity your experience.”

“Yours then has been more fortunate?” laughed Martial.

“I should hope so, indeed!”

Lycoris, who, though at some distance, must have heard every word, was chatting vehemently with Stephanus, her neighbor on her left, who kept his gaze alert, though with an air of reserve and dignity. Two of her companions, pretty but by no means maidenly personages, stared contemptuously at Aurelius as if to say: “Well, what a booby!”

“Here is to your health, worthy Cato of the North!” cried Martial mockingly. “Reveal his name to me, O Muse! and I will dedicate to you five and twenty epigrams on his virtue.”

“He has a sharp muzzle,” muttered Norbanus to Aurelius. “You will get the worst of it.”

“No doubt of that,” said Aurelius. “Fencing with words was never my strong ground.”

“Just my case; and I cannot stand his accursed ribaldry. These fellows are like eels, it is impossible to hold them. It is the city tone, my dear friend! Our Stephanus now – only see how the man is made up – now, full in the light. By Castor! he is touched up and painted like a wench – Stephanus again, is a master in the war of words. But he gives you a pebble for a gem; everything about him is false, even his hair. But beware of him; he will try to make mince-meat of you.”

“I say, Martial,” said a harsh voice: “Who is going to publish the epigrams you gave us to-day?”

“I do not yet know. Possibly Tryphon.”¹⁶⁰

“And when, my friend?”

“Well, in the course of the month.”

“So soon? Listen, when the book comes out, may I send to you to borrow a copy?”

“You are too kind, my dear Lupercus; but why should you give yourself and a slave so much trouble? I live quite high up on the Quirinal.¹⁶¹ You can get what you want much nearer to you. You pass every day by the Argiletum. There you will find a very interesting shop, exactly opposite the Forum of Caesar. Atrectus, the bookseller, will feel himself honored in selecting a beautiful copy

¹⁵⁹ What Ravidus?. The poem to which Martial here alludes is found *Cat. Carm.* XL. “Quaenam te mala mens, miselle Ravide Agit praecipitem in meos iambs?”

¹⁶⁰ Tryphon, (Lupercus). The episode described here, which seems almost like a satirical allusion to the present time, is only one of Martial’s epigrams transposed into action. (*Mart. Ep.* I, 117.) “As oft, Sir Tradewell, as we meet, You’re sure to ask me in the street, When you shall send your boy to me, To fetch my book of poetry? etc.” Oldham. The bookseller Atrectus, who had a shop on the Argiletum, a public square not far from the Forum Caesaris, is also mentioned. – Traces of a well-organized book-trade are found towards the end of the republic. The first publisher on a larger scale is Pomponius Atticus, a friend of Cicero, who formally issued a series of Cicero’s works, for instance the *Orator*, *Quaestiones Academicæ*, etc., and not only distributed them to the different bookstores in Rome, but supplied the numerous shops in Greece and Asia Minor. (See *Cic. ad. Att.* XII, 6, XV, 13, XVI, 5.) Yet Atticus was a patron of literature and an aesthetic, rather than a business man. The best-known booksellers and publishers under the emperors were: the Brothers Sosii, who issued the works of Horatius Flaccus (*Hor. Ep.* I, 20, 2, *Ars. poet.* 345); Dorus, the Phillip Reclam junior of ancient times, who in the reign of Nero introduced cheap popular editions of Livy and Cicero, (*Sen. Benef.* VII, 61) and Martial’s publisher, the Tryphon mentioned in this story. (*Mart. Ep.* IV, 72, XIII, 13.) The editions were provided by slaves, who wrote from dictation. The books were delivered in covers, the backs, glued together, being fastened in the hollow of a cylinder, through which ran a revolving stick. The volumes were cut, the edges were dyed sometimes black and sometimes purple. (See Göll: “*Book-trade of the Greeks and Romans*,” Schleiz., 1865.) Pollio Valerianus published Martial’s early poems. (*Mart. Ep.* I, 113, 5.)

¹⁶¹ Quirinal. Martial’s house was near the temple on the Quirinal. (*Mart. Ep.* X, 58.)

for you – almost given away too, as I may say, for with purple letters and smoothly pumiced it costs but five or six denarii."¹⁶²

“Six denarii!” exclaimed Lupercus. “That is too dear for me. I have to be saving with my money.”

“And I must be saving with my books.”

“It is not every one, who knows how to be obliging!”

“Nay, do not give up all hope,” retorted the epigrammatist scornfully. “Make your wants known at all the street-corners,¹⁶³ and perhaps some costermonger¹⁶⁴ will lend you a copy.”

“Why is Martial so hard upon him?” asked Aurelius of the praetorian guardsman. “This Lupercus seems to be in narrow circumstances.”

“Ha, ha!” laughed Norbanus. “With an income of two hundred thousand sesterces...”

“Impossible! how can a man be at once so rich and so mean?”

“You are in Rome, Aurelius – do not forget that you are in Rome. Here extremes meet; here everything is possible, even the impossible.”

It was now growing dusk, and in a few minutes hundreds of costly bronze lamps were lighted, some hanging in candelabra from the ceiling, some elegantly arranged round the pilasters and columns. Indeed it was not till this moment, that the banquet really assumed the aspect intended by the artistic and extravagant imagination of the hostess. The beaten silver of the massive bowls¹⁶⁵ and platters gleamed brightly under the wreaths of flowers and garlands of foliage, while the huge wine-jars and costly Murrhine vases,¹⁶⁶ the jovial and purpled faces of the guests, the splendid dresses, the pearls and gems – all were doubly effective under the artificial light.

One costly delicacy was followed by another; all the productions of the remotest ends of the earth met at the banquet of Lycoris. Fish from the Atlantic ocean, Muraenae from Lake Lucrinus, Guinea-fowls from Numidia,¹⁶⁷ young kids from the province of Thesprotis¹⁶⁸ in Epirus, pheasants from the Caspian Sea,¹⁶⁹ Egyptian dates,¹⁷⁰ dainty cakes¹⁷¹ from Picenum, figs from Chios,¹⁷² pistachio nuts¹⁷³ from Palestine – were all here of the choicest quality and elaborately prepared. Euphemus,¹⁷⁴ Caesar’s own head-cook, could have done no more. Nor could anything be more perfect, than the grace with which the handsomely-dressed slaves offered each dainty on long slices of bread. After each dish had gone round, little boys with wings brought in magnificent onyx jars filled with

¹⁶² Denarii. At the time of Domitian, the denarius (10 *as.*) was worth about 15 cents.

¹⁶³ Street-corners. Large square tablets, whitened, for the display of public notices, stood at the corners of the streets. A tablet of this description was called *album*, (albus-white).

¹⁶⁴ Costermonger. Boiled chick-peas were publicly carried about for sale. (Martial *Ep.* I, 41, I, 103.)

¹⁶⁵ Massive bowls. The crater (*crater* or *cratera*) was a large vase or bowl, in which strong wine was mixed with water. A ladle was used to fill the drinking-cups.

¹⁶⁶ Murrhine vases, (*murrhina vasa*). Vases made of *murrha*, a material with a pale sheen in it, highly valued by the ancients; probably fluor-spar.

¹⁶⁷ Guinea-fowls from Numidia, (*aves Numidicae* or merely *Numidicae*) were a favorite dish. (Plin., *Hist. Nat.* Mart. etc.)

¹⁶⁸ The province of Thesprotis in Epirus, extended from Chaonia to the Ambracian Gulf. The goats raised there were considered exceptionally good.

¹⁶⁹ Pheasants from the Caspian Sea. At the time of our story, these birds were a newly-introduced delicacy. Phasis was the name of the boundary river between Asia-Minor and Colchis; hence their name *phasianus*; (*avis Phasiana*, or merely *Phasiana*, or *Phasianus*– the pheasant.) Martial also calls them *volucres Phasides*.

¹⁷⁰ Dates. The best quality were imported into Rome from Egypt.

¹⁷¹ Dainty Cakes. Bread from Picenum is mentioned in the *menu* of a banquet given in the latter half of the century B. C., (Marquardt *Handbuch*, IV, 1.)

¹⁷² Figs from Chios. Varro, (*R. Rust.* I, 41) speaks of Chian, Lydian, Chalcedonian and African figs.

¹⁷³ Pistachio nuts. The best pistachio nuts came from Palestine and Syria, whence Lucius Vitellius introduced them into his garden at Albanum.

¹⁷⁴ Euphemus. Caesar’s head-cook or butler. (See Martial *Ep.* IV. 8.) “The tenth hour’s proper for my book and me, And Euphem, thou who dost the board o’rsee.” Anon, 1695.

perfumed water, which they poured over the hands of the guests. The long flowing hair of a female slave¹⁷⁵ served to dry them, in the place of the more usual linen or asbestos napkin. In such trifles as these Lycoris loved to be original.

During the meal an intermezzo had now and then interrupted the eager conversation. Black-haired girls from Gades and Hispalis¹⁷⁶ had come in, dancing to the cadence of castanets¹⁷⁷ and cymbals; flute-players, singers and reciters had given highly-applauded evidence of their talents. But now, when the business of eating was over and the *commissatio*, as it was called, the drinking in short, was about to begin, as was hinted by the distribution to the guests of fresh wreaths and of perfumed oils, a buffoon or jester¹⁷⁸ made his appearance, and soon filled the hall with Homeric laughter. His small and muscular form was clothed in gaily-colored scraps of raiment, and his face was painted in strong colors. Entering the room with a hop, skip and jump, he performed a series of somersaults with great skill; then leaping high over the guests' heads, actually on to the table, he placed himself in front of Lycoris and began thus in a high, shrill voice:

“Highly-esteemed friends of this illustrious house, now that your empty stomachs are duly replenished your minds too are to be no less delightfully satisfied. I offer you the feast of self-knowledge; to each one of you here I will shortly and plainly tell your fortune. If I appear to you over-bold, attribute it to the functions of my office; for audacity is my vocation, as it is that of the most honored Martial.”

A storm of applause rang through the banqueting-hall, and Martial himself even laughed heartily.

“Capital, capital!” he exclaimed to the little man. “Your beginning is admirable and promises much,” and he stroked his grizzled beard with much complacency; the jester bowed and went on with his privileged impertinences. He flung some epigrammatic and pointed remark at one and another of the company, and was each time rewarded by more or less eager applause. When he came round to the young provincial, he grinned with vicious impudence.

“Oh, noble vestal virgin!” he exclaimed, holding his hand before his face in affected coyness. “How much a hundred weight does propriety cost in Trajectum?”

His former jests had been happier and more pointed, but not one had been so readily taken; the company laughed so immoderately, that the buffoon had some difficulty in making himself heard again. Aurelius, though he was disgusted with the fellow, had discretion and tact enough not to draw attention to himself; he laughed and applauded as heartily as any one. Not so, however, Herodianus, his freedman, who reclined at the lower end of the table and had given himself up to silent and unlimited enjoyment of the Caecubum.

“What, you foul-mouthed scoundrel!” he exclaimed in a voice of thunder. “Who are you scoffing at? My dear friend Aurelius compared to a woman! Go home, and let your mother teach you manners.”

¹⁷⁵ The long flowing hair of a female slave. This fancy was not at all unusual. (See *Petron.*, 27.)

¹⁷⁶ Hispalis. A city in southern Spain, now Seville.

¹⁷⁷ Castanets. Castanet dances are often represented in pictures. (See O. Jahn, Fresco-paintings on the walls of the columbarium, in the Villa Pamfili.)

¹⁷⁸ Jester. Jesters, especially dwarfs, were very popular in ancient Rome. The scene that follows here is based upon various incidents in a description by Lucian, which has come down to modern times: “The Banquet, or The Lapithae” 18, 19. In this a hideous little fellow, who gives utterance to all sorts of jests and witticisms, appears at Aristaenetus' banquet. “Finally he addressed each person with some mischievous joke – and each laughed as his turn came. But when he accosted Alcidamas, calling him a Maltese puppy, the latter, especially as he had long been jealous of the applause and attention bestowed on the jester by the whole company, grew angry, threw off his cloak and challenged the dwarf to a boxing-match. What could the poor jester do? It was infinitely comical to see a philosopher fight with a clown. Many of the spectators were ashamed of the scene, but others laughed merrily, until Alcidamas was at last beaten black and blue.”

The company were in so jovial a mood, that they at once turned this interference into account. When the Batavian was about to reprove Herodianus, he was talked down, while the indignant freedman was spurred on by half-ironical appeals and challenges.

“Let him alone,” said the captain of the guard: “He will serve the jester’s turn well enough.”

“Aye, that he will!” exclaimed another. “Only look at him knitting his brows. Is not he just like the Silenus in Stephanus’ dining-hall?”

“Just be so good as to hold your tongues,” cried Quintus, who had been excessively amused by Herodianus’ pugnacity. “The little man on the table is going to answer him.”

“Silence for the jester!” shouted a chorus.

The buffoon stood still with his hand up to his ear.

“Did I not hear a pug-dog barking?” he said with inimitable comic gravity. “Yes, there he lies, a Maltese pug! Come, Lailaps, come! Here are Lucanian sausages!”

Looking impartially at the freedman’s face, it was impossible to deny that the resemblance was well hit, but Herodianus could hardly be expected to take this unprejudiced view of the matter. Forgetting where and with whom he was, he sprang from his couch, struck his fist on the table, and shouted out, crimson with rage:

“Come on, you braggart, if you dare! I will teach you, I will show you that ... that... By Hercules! if you do not jump down this minute, you are the most cowardly, contemptible toad under the sun.”

The little man sprang like lightning over Stephanus’ head on to the floor, turned up the sleeves of his particolored shirt and shouted in mockery:

“Come on, Lailaps, come on! I will give you a thrashing.”

For a moment Herodianus seemed to hesitate; then he suddenly flew at the jester like the storm of wind suggested by his Greek dog-name. The jester, however, slipped on one side as quick as lightning, and Herodianus, who, indeed, was not very steady on his feet, fell at full-length on the floor. In an instant the buffoon was sitting astride on his back.

“Pug, you are snappish!” he exclaimed in a triumphant tone, and he began vigorously to belabor every part of the hapless freedman, that he could reach with his powerful fists.

“The dog must be broken!” he exclaimed at each blow. “Quiet, Lailaps, down, my noble cur!”

Herodianus, who, besides, had in falling damaged his knees and elbows, roared like one possessed; in vain did he try to throw off his tormentor. The dwarf clung to him tightly with his legs. The whole scene was as irresistibly comical as though it had been planned for the delectation of a blasé and overwrought party of drinkers. But Aurelius could no longer contain himself; he rose and went up to the combatants with well-assumed coolness.

“You are going too far,” he said. “Be off with you, you little rascal.”

The jester paying no heed to these orders, found himself suddenly picked up by the girdle and with one effort lifted high into the air. His struggles and yells were of no avail; Aurelius carried him like a feather to the table, and there set him down among the cups and wine-jars. The strength and promptness of the proceeding diverted it of any vexatious interference; the dwarf, completely quelled, stood on the table like a stork that has had its wings cut, looking round half-frightened and half-angry. The young Northman’s grip had fairly taken his breath away, and a sign from Lycoris that he might withdraw was evidently welcome to him. He vanished between the crowd of slaves like a startled deer.

Aurelius had hastened to the rescue of Herodianus, who now, having been helped on his feet by some of the servants, found the greatest difficulty in keeping on them.

“Poor fellow!” he said kindly. “But you are really quite incorrigible.”

“Oh, my lord!” groaned Herodianus, “it was only on account of the Vestal virgin! I should not have cared about being called a pug! Oh ye gods! my knees.”

“I will take you in my litter. My own head aches, till it might split.”

“What! are you going?” said Quintus Claudius, coming up to him. “Do you not know that Lycoris has planned a magnificent surprise for her guests?”

“I know it, but I must beg to be excused. These sports are not to my taste. Farewell till we meet again.”

So speaking, he beckoned his Gothic slave, who took the limping freedman round the body and held him up with his usual strength of arm. The pair went first, and Aurelius followed them. All the company had by this time left their places, so his disappearance was almost unremarked; but the fair hostess kept her eye fixed on him, till she lost sight of her ungracious guest in the throng. Then, with an insidious smile, she turned to Quintus, laid her hand on his shoulder, and whispered maliciously: “What sort of foolish philosopher is that who comes here, of all places, to plead the cause of women and take up the cudgels for a freedman?”

“Your foolish philosopher,” replied Quintus, “is one of the noblest souls I ever knew, and beyond a doubt, the very noblest of the men who cross your threshold.”

“Indeed!” said Lycoris, somewhat abashed. “Well, we shall have time by and bye to discuss this paragon of merit!” And with a coquettish toss of her head she turned from Quintus and mingled with the crowd of guests, who were now streaming out into the illuminated gardens.

CHAPTER VIII

Outside, under the branches of the elm and sycamore-trees, which stretched in long avenues up the Viminal and down again on the farthest side, an ingenious intendant had devised much such an entertainment as in our days would be given under corresponding circumstances. Thousands of colored lamps hung in long festoons from tree to tree. The quaintly-clipped laurel and yew bushes, that stood between the six great avenues, were starred with semicircular lights, and the bronze and marble statues held torches and braziers of flame. The open space between the two centre avenues was screened by an immense curtain of purple stuff, which was fastened to two tall masts and waved mysteriously in the night air, casting strange reflections; to the right and left also a space was enclosed and screened from prying eyes by boards hung with tapestry.

“This promises something delightful,” said Clodianus, addressing Quintus for the first time during the evening. “She is a splendid creature, this Lycoris! Always ready to spend millions for the pleasure of her guests. Did you ever see handsomer hangings? Nero’s enormous velarium¹⁷⁹ was not more costly.”

“Oh! gold is all-powerful!” Quintus said absently. “Listen,” he went on, taking the officer on one side, “quite in confidence. – Is what I heard to-day at the baths of Titus¹⁸⁰ true? – that you had really been to Domitia?”

“As you say.”

“It is true then?”

“And why not? You know what happened in the Circus?”

“Of course; but I thought...”

“No, there was no help for it this time. I solemnly and formally offered her the hand of reconciliation in Caesar’s name.”

“And Domitia?”

“To-morrow she will return an answer to her husband’s message; but, of course, she is only too ready.”

At this moment the fair Massilian came up to them.

“Quintus, one word with you,” she begged with an engaging smile. “You will excuse him, Clodianus?”

The officer bowed.

“Listen,” said Lycoris, as she drew Quintus away, “you must tell me all you can about your provincial friend. The man is unbearable with his strictness and sobriety, and yet there is something in him – how can I explain it? – something that is wanting in every one of you others without exception; a balance of mind, a steadfast certainty – one may as well give in as soon as he opens his mouth.”

And as she spoke she laid her hand familiarly in the young man’s arm.

“Very true,” he said coldly. “Aurelius is not much like those oiled and perfumed gallants, who think themselves happy to kiss the dust on your sandals. But that boy is waiting to speak to you.”

Lycoris looked round; a young slave, who had slowly followed her, glanced at her significantly.

“Madam,” he said, “everything is ready.”

“Ah?” said the lady. “The actors are ready? Very good; then let the music begin.”

The slave bowed and vanished. Lycoris imperceptibly guided her companion into a thickly overgrown sidewalk.

¹⁷⁹ Velarium. The cloth hung across the amphitheatre, to screen it from the sun.

¹⁸⁰ The baths of Titus were located near the Cyprius Street, on the site of Nero’s *domus aurea*, which had been destroyed after its builder’s death.

“We have time to spare,” she said, “and the music sounds much better from here than up there from the terrace. What were we talking about?.. oh! the Batavian... Why did you not bring your strange specimen to my house sooner?”

“Because he has not long been in Rome.”

“In Rome...” repeated Lycoris vaguely. Her eyes were searching the shrubbery. Then, recollecting herself, she went on talking vivaciously. Thus the couple lost themselves farther and farther in the recesses of the garden; their conversation ceased, and they listened involuntarily to the Dionysiac hymn which reached them in softened tones from the distance. Out here even, in this remote alley, everything was festally illuminated; every leaf, every pebble in the path, shone in many-colored hues. And yet, how deserted, how lonely it was, in spite of the lights! there was something uncanny and ghostly in their doubtful flicker and sparkle. Suddenly Lycoris stood still.

“By the Styx!” she exclaimed. “I have lost my most valuable ring. Not two seconds since I saw it on my finger! Wait, you must have trodden on it; it cannot be twenty paces off and must be lying on the ground.” Before Quintus fairly understood what had happened, she had vanished down a side path. The young man waited. “Lycoris!” he called out presently.

No answer.

He went back to the turning – of Lycoris, not a sign.

“This is strange!” thought he. “What can it mean?”

Suddenly he stood stock-still, for in the middle of the path stood a girlish form, small, but well made and of the sweetest grace. She pressed her finger mysteriously to her rosebud lips, and then made unmistakable signs to the youth that he was to follow her.

“What do you want?” asked Quintus, going up to her.

“Above all things silence,” said the girl. “My errand is to you alone.”

“Speak on then.”

“Nay, not here, noble Quintus; consider a moment – with impenetrable hedges on each side of us! If any one came upon us, how could we escape?”

“And who are you?” asked Quintus with a meaning smile.

“Only a slave – named Polycharma. Will you come with me?”

“Certainly, Polycharma, I follow you.”

About a hundred yards farther on a small circular clearing opened to their right; the entrance to it was decorated with gold-colored festoons. Just before reaching this spot the path became so narrow, that a stout man could hardly pass along it; the wall of yew on each side had overgrown three-quarters of its width. Polycharma drew the folds of her dress more closely round her slim limbs, while the young man pushed aside the branches to the right and left. He looked round once more to see if he could discover Lycoris, but behind him all was silent and deserted. Even the sound of the music was only heard faintly and as if in a dream. Having reached the round plot, the slave girl took a letter out of her bosom. “My lord,” she said, “I must exact a solemn oath from you...”

“What about?”

“That you will keep my errand an absolute secret, and return me this letter when you have read it.”

“Good, I swear it by Jupiter!”

Polycharma handed him the note; the mere sight of it filled him with a suspicion of its origin. He hastily broke the seal and the silk thread, and by the light of the colored lamps which lighted the place, he read as follows:

“She who is wont only to command, humbles herself to the dust – so terrible is the power of love to change us. The cruel wretch who scorns me – he is the god of my aspirations! Have pity, O Quintus! have pity on the miserable woman, who is dying of love for you. Caesar, my husband, holds out his hand to me in reconciliation. It costs me but one word, and I shall be again, as I have been, the mistress of Rome

and sovereign of the world. But behold, beloved Quintus, all this might and all this splendor I will cast from me and go into the remotest banishment without a tear, if you will give me, for one second only, the happy certainty of your love. Crush me, kill me, but ere you kill me say you are mine! Quintus, I await my sentence. At a sign, a glance, from you I reject all reconciliation.”

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