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Title: The Emperor, Part 1, Volume 3.

Author: Georg Ebers

Release Date: April, 2004 [EBook #5485]
[Yes, we are more than one year ahead of schedule]
[This file was first posted on May 28, 2002]

Edition: 10

Language: English

Character set encoding: ASCII

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE EMPEROR, BY GEORG EBERS, V3 ***

This eBook was produced by David Widger <widger@cecomet.net>

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THE EMPEROR, Part 1.

By Georg Ebers

Volume 3.

CHAPTER X.

While anxiety and trouble were brooding over the steward's dwelling, while dismay and disappointment were clouding the souls of its inhabitants, the hall of the Muses was merry with feasting and laughter.

Julia, the prefect's wife, had supplied the architect at Lochias with a carefully-prepared meal,--sufficient to fill six hungry maws, and Pontius' slave--who had received it on its arrival and had unpacked it dish after dish, and set them out on the humblest possible table had then hastened to fetch his master to inspect all these marvels of the cook's art. The architect shook his head as he contemplated the superabundant blessing, and muttered to himself:

"Titianus must take me for a crocodile, or rather for two crocodiles," and he went to the sculptor's little tabernacle, where Papias the master was also, to invite the two men to share his supper.

Besides them he asked two painters, and the chief mosaic worker of the city, who all day long had been busied in restoring the old and faded pictures on the ceilings and pavements, and under the influence of good wine and cheerful chat they soon emptied the dishes and bowls and trenchers. A man who for several hours has been using his hands or his mind, or both together, waxes hungry, and all the artists whom Pontius had brought together at Lochias had now been working for several days almost to the verge of exhaustion. Each had done his best, in the first place, no doubt, to give satisfaction to Pontius, whom all esteemed, and to himself; but also in the hope of giving proof of his powers to the Emperor and of showing him how things could be done in Alexandria. When the dishes had been removed and the replete feasters had washed and dried their hands, they filled their cups out of a jar of mixed wine, of which the dimensions answered worthily to the meal they had eaten. One of the painters then proposed that they should hold a regular drinking-bout, and elect Papias, who was as well known as a good table orator as he was as an artist, to be the leader of the feast. However, the master declared that he could not accept the honor, for that it was due to the worthiest of their company; to the man namely, who, only a few days since, had entered this empty palace and like a second Deucalion had raised up

illustrious artists, such as he then saw around him in great numbers, and skilled workmen by hundreds, not out of plastic stone but out of nothing. And then--while declaring that he understood the use of the hammer and chisel better than that of the tongue, and that he had never studied the art of making speeches--he expressed his wish that Pontius would lead the revel, in the most approved form.

But he was not allowed to get to the end of this evidence of his skill, for Euphorion the door-keeper of the palace, Euphorion the father of Pollux, ran hastily into the hall of the Muses with a letter in his hand which he gave to the architect.

"To be read without an instant's delay," he added, bowing with theatrical dignity to the assembled artists. "One of the prefect's lictors brought this letter, which, if my wishes be granted, brings nothing that is unwelcome. Hold your noise you little blackguards or I will be the death of you."

These words, which so far as the tone was concerned, formed a somewhat inharmonious termination to a speech intended for the ears of great artists, were addressed to his wife's four-footed Graces who had followed him against his wish, and were leaping round the table barking for the slender remains of the consumed food.

Pontius was fond of animals and had made friends with the old woman's pets, so, as he opened the prefect's letter, he said:

"I invite the three little guests to the remains of our feast. Give them anything that is fit for them, Euphorion, and whatever seems to you most suitable to your own stomach you may put into it."

While the architect first rapidly glanced through the letter and then read it carefully, the singer had collected a variety of good morsels for his wife's favorites on a plate, and finally carried the last remaining pasty, with the dish on which it reposed, to the vicinity of his own hooked nose.

"For men or for dogs?" he asked his son, as he pointed to it with a rigid finger.

"For the gods!" replied Pollux. "Take it to mother; she will like to eat ambrosia for once."

"A jolly evening to you!" cried the singer, bowing to the artists who were emptying their cups, and he quitted the hall with his pasty and his dogs. Before he had fairly left the hall with his long strides, Papias, whose speech had been interrupted, once more raised his wine-cup and began again:

"Our Deucalion, our more than Deucalion--"

"Pardon me," interrupted Pontius. "If I once more stop your discourse which began so promisingly; this letter contains important news and our

revels must be over for the night. We must postpone our symposium and your drinking-speech."

"It was not a drinking-speech, for if ever there was a moderate man--" Papias began. But Pontius stopped him again, saying:

"Titianus writes me word that he proposes coming to Lochias this evening. He may arrive at any moment; and not alone, but with my fellow-artist, Claudius Venator from Rome, who is to assist me with his advice."

"I never even heard his name," said Papias, who was wont to trouble himself as little about the persons as about the works of other artists.

"I wonder at that," said Pontius, closing the double tablets which announced the Emperor's advent.

"Can he do anything?" asked Pollux.

"More than any one of us," replied Pontius. "He is a mighty man."

"That is splendid!" exclaimed Pollux. "I like to see great men. When one looks me in the eye I always feel as if some of his superabundance overflowed into me, and irresistibly I draw myself up and think how fine it would be if one day I might reach as high as that man's chin."

"Beware of morbid ambition," said Papias to his pupil in a warning voice. "It is not the man who stands on tiptoe, but he who does his duty diligently, that can attain anything great."

"He honestly does his," said the architect rising, and he laid his hand on the young sculptor's shoulder. "We all do; to-morrow by sunrise each must be at his post again. For my colleague's sake it will be well that you should all be there in good time."

The artists rose, expressing their thanks and regrets. "You will not escape the continuation of this evening's entertainment," cried one of the painters, and Papias, as he parted from Pontius, said:

"When we next meet I will show you what I understand by a drinking-speech. It will do perhaps for your Roman guest. I am curious to hear what he will say about our Urania. Pollux has done his share of the work very well, and I have already devoted an hour's work to it, which has improved it. The more humble our material, the better I shall be pleased if the work satisfies Caesar; he himself has tried his hand at sculpture."

"If only Hadrian could hear that!" cried one of the painters. "He likes to think himself a great artist--one of the foremost of our time. It is said that he caused the life of the great architect, Apollodorus--who carried out such noble works for Trajan--to be extinguished--and why? because formerly that illustrious man had treated the imperial bungler as a mere dabbler, and would not accept his plan for the temple of Venus at Rome."

"Mere talk!" answered Pontius to this accusation. "Apollodorus died in prison, but his incarceration had little enough to do with the Emperor's productions--excuse me, gentlemen, I must once more look through the sketches and plans."

The architect went away, but Pollux continued the conversation that had been begun by saying:

"Only I cannot understand how a man who practises so many arts at once as Hadrian does, and at the same time looks after the state and its government, who is a passionate huntsman and who dabbles in every kind of miscellaneous learning, contrives, when he wants to practise one particular form of art, to recall all his five senses into the nest from which he has let them fly, here, there, and everywhere. The inside of his head must be like that salad-bowl--which we have reduced to emptiness--in which Papias discovered three sorts of fish, brown and white meat, oysters and five other substances."

"And who can deny," added Papias, "that if talent is the father, and meat the mother of all productiveness, practice must be the artist's teacher! Since Hadrian took to sculpture and painting it has become the universal fashion here to practise these arts, and among the wealthier youth who come to my workroom, many have very good abilities; but not one of them brings anything to any good issue, because so much of their time is taken up by the gymnasium, the bath, the quail-fights, the suppers, and I know not what besides, so that they do nothing by way of practice."

"True," said a painter. "Without the restraint and worry of apprenticeship no one can ever rise to happy and independent creativeness; and in the schools of rhetoric or in hunting or fighting no one can study drawing. It is not till a pupil has learned to sit steady and worry himself over his work for six hours on end that I begin to believe he will ever do any good work. Have you any of you seen the Emperor's work?"

"I have," answered a mosaic worker. "Many years ago Hadrian sent a picture to me that he had painted; I was to make a mosaic from it. It was a fruit piece. Melons, gourds, apples, and green leaves. The drawing was but so-so, and the color impossibly vivid, still the composition was pleasing from its solidity and richness. And after all, when one sees it, one cannot but feel that such superfluity is better than meagreness and feebleness. The larger fruits, especially under the exuberant sappy foliage, were so huge that they might have been grown in the garden of luxury itself, still the whole had a look of reality. I mitigated the colors somewhat in my transcript; you may still see a copy of the picture at my house, it hangs in the studio where my men draw. Nealkes, the rich hanging-maker, has had a tapestry woven from it which Pontius proposes to use as a hanging for a wall of the work-room, but I have made a fine frame on purpose for it."

"Say rather for its designer."

"Or yet rather," added the most loquacious of the painters, "for the visit he may possibly pay your workshops."

"I only wish the Emperor may come to ours too! I should like to sell him my picture of Alexander saluted by the priests in the temple of Jupiter Ammon."

"I hope that when you agree about the price you will remember we are partners," said his fellow-artist smugly.

"I will follow your example strictly," replied the other.

"Then you will certainly not be a loser," cried Papias, "for Eustorgius is fully aware of the worth of his works. And if Hadrian is to order works from every master whose art he dabbles in, he will require a fleet on purpose to carry his purchases to Rome."

"It is said," continued Eustorgius, laughing, "that he is a painter among poets, a sculptor among painters, an astronomer among musicians, and a sophist among artists--that is to say, that he pursues every art and science with some success as his secondary occupation."

As he spoke the last words Pontius returned to the table where the artists were standing round the winejar; he had heard the painter's last remark and interrupted him by saying:

"But my friend you forget that he is a monarch among monarchs--and not merely among those of today--in the fullest meaning of the word. Each of us separately can produce something better and more perfect in his own line; but how great is the man who by earnestness and skill can even apprehend everything that the mind has ever been able to conceive of, or the creative spirit of the artist to embody! I know him, and I know that he loves a really thorough master, and tries to encourage him with princely liberality. But his ears are everywhere, and he promptly becomes the implacable enemy of those who provoke his resentment. So bridle your restive Alexandrian tongues, and let me tell you that my colleague from Rome is in the closest intimacy with Hadrian. He is of the same age, resembles him greatly, and repeats to him everything that he hears said about him. So cease talking about Caesar and pass no severer judgments on dilettanti in the purple than on your wealthy pupils, who paint and chisel for the mere love of it, and for whom you find it so easy to lisp out 'charming,' or 'wonderfully pretty,' or 'remarkably nice.' Take my warning in good part, you know I mean it well."

He spoke the last words with a cordial, manly feeling, of which his voice was peculiarly capable, and which was always certain to secure him the confidence even of the recalcitrant.

The artists exchanged greetings and hand-shakings and left the hall; a slave carried away the wine-jar and wiped the table, on which Pontius proceeded to lay out his sketches and plans. But he was not alone, for Pollux was soon at his side, and with a comical expression of pathos and

laying his finger on his nose, he said:

"I have come out of my cage to say something more to you."

"Well?"

"The hour is approaching when I may hope to repay the beneficent deeds, which, at various times, you have done to my interior. My mother will to-morrow morning, set before you that dish of cabbage. It could not be done sooner, because the only perfect sausage-maker, the very king of his trade, prepares these savory cylinders only once a week. A few hours ago he completed the making of the sausages, and to-morrow morning my mother will warm up for our breakfasts the noble mess, which she is preparing for us this evening--for, as I have told you, it is in its warmed-up state that it is the ideal of its kind. What will follow by way of sweets we shall owe again to my mother's art; but the cheering and invigorating element--I mean the wine that I drives dull care away, we owe to my sister."

"I will come," said Pontius, "if my guest leaves me an hour free, and I shall enjoy the excellent dish. But what does a gay bird like you know of dull care?"

"The words fit into the metre," replied Pollux. "I inherit from my father--who, when he is not gate-keeping, sings and recites--a troublesome tendency whenever anything incites me to drift into rhythm."

"But to-day you have been more silent than usual, and yet you seemed to me to be extraordinarily content. Not your face only, but your whole length--a good measure--from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head was like a brimming cask of satisfaction."

"Well, there is much that is lovely in this world!" cried Pollux, stretching himself comfortably and lifting his arms with his hands clasped far above his head towards heaven.

"Has anything specially pleasant happened to you?"

"There is no need for that! Here I live in excellent company, the work progresses, and--well, why should I deny it? There was something specially to mark to-day; I met an old acquaintance again."

"An old one?"

"I have already known her sixteen years; but when I first saw her she was in swaddling clothes."

"Then this venerable damsel friend is more than sixteen, perhaps seventeen! Is Eros the friend of the happy, or does happiness only follow in his train?" As the architect thoughtfully said these words to himself, Pollux listened attentively to a noise outside, and said:

"Who can be passing out there at this hour? Do you not hear the bark of a big dog mingle with the snapping of the three Graces?"

"It is Titianus conducting the architect from Rome," replied Pontius excitedly.

"I will go to meet him. But one thing more my friend, you too have an Alexandrian tongue. Beware of laughing at the Emperor's artistic efforts in the presence of this Roman. I repeat it: the man who is now coming is superior to us all, and there is nothing more repellant to me than when a small man assumes a strutting air of importance because he fancies he has discovered in some great man a weak spot where his own little body happens to be sound. The artist I am expecting is a grand man, but the Emperor Hadrian is a grander. Now retire behind your screens, and tomorrow morning I will be your guest."

CHAPTER XI.

Pontius threw his pallium over the chiton he commonly wore at his work and went forward to meet the sovereign of the world, whose arrival had been announced to him in the prefect's letter. He was perfectly calm, and if his heart beat a little faster than usual, it was only because he was pleased once more to meet the wonderful man whose personality had made a deep impression on him before.

In the happy consciousness of having done all that lay in his power and of deserving no blame, he went through the ante-chambers and chief entrance of the palace into the fore-court, where a crowd of slaves were busied by torch-light in laying new marble slabs. Neither these workmen nor their overseers had paid any heed to the barking of the dogs and the loud talking which had for some little time been audible in the vicinity of the gate-keeper's lodge; for a special rate of payment had been promised to the laborers and their foremen if they should have finished a set piece of the new pavement by a certain hour, to the satisfaction of the architect. No one who heard the deep man's-voice ring through the court from the doorway guessed to whom it belonged.

The Emperor had been delayed by adverse winds and had not run into the harbor till a little before midnight.

Titianus, who was watching for him, he greeted as an old friend with heartfelt warmth, and with him and Antinous he stepped into the prefect's chariot, while Phlegon the secretary, Hermogenes his physician, and Mastor with the luggage, among which were their campbeds, were to follow in another vehicle. The harbor watchmen hastened to array themselves indignantly to oppose the chariot, as it rolled noisily along the street, and the huge dog that destroyed the peace of the night with its baying; but as soon as they recognized Titianus they respectfully made way. The gate-keeper and his wife, obedient to the prefect's warning, had remained up, and as soon as the singer heard the chariot approaching which bore

the Emperor, he hastened to open the palace-gates. The broken-up pavement and the swarms of men engaged in repairing it, obliged Titianus and his companions to quit the chariot here and to pass close to the little gate-house. Hadrian, whose observation nothing ever escaped which came in his way and seemed worth noticing, stood still before Euphorion's door and looked into the comfortable little room, with its decoration of flowers and birds and the statue of Apollo; while dame Doris in her newest garments, stood on the threshold to watch for the prefect. And Titianus greeted her warmly, for he was wont whenever he came to Lochias to exchange a few merry or wise words with her. The little dogs had already crept into their basket, but as soon as they caught sight of a strange dog they rushed past their mistress into the open air, and dame Doris found herself obliged, while she returned the kindly greeting of her patron, to shout at Euphrosyne, Thalia and Aglaia more than once by their pretty names.

"Splendid, splendid!" cried Hadrian, pointing into the little house.

"An idyl, a perfect idyl. Who would have expected to find such a smiling nook of peace in the most restless and busy town in the empire."

"I and Pontius were equally surprised at this little nest, and we therefore left it untouched," said the prefect.

"Intelligent people understand each other, and I owe you thanks for preserving this little home," answered the Emperor. "What an omen, what a favorable, in every way favorable augury, it offers me. The Graces receive me here into these old walls, Aglaia, Thalia and Euphrosyne!"

"Good luck to you, Master," old Doris called out to the prefect.

"We come late," said Hadrian.

"That does not matter," said the old woman. "Here at Lochias for the last week we have quite forgotten to distinguish day from night, and a blessing can never come too late."

"I have brought with me to-day an illustrious guest," said Titianus.

"The great Roman architect Claudius Venator. He only disembarked a few minutes since."

"Then a draught of wine will do him good. We have in the house some good white Mareotic from my daughter's garden by the lake. If your friend will do us humble folks so much honor, I beg he will step into our room; it is clean, is it not sir? and the cup I will give him to drink it out of would not disgrace the Emperor himself. Who knows what you will find up in the midst of all the muddle yonder?"

"I will accept your invitation with pleasure," answered Hadrian. "I can see by your face that you have a pleasure in entertaining us, and any one might envy you your little house."

"When the climbing-rose and the honey-suckle are out it is much prettier," said Doris, as she filled the cup. "Here is some water for

mixing."

The Emperor took the cup carved by Pollux, looked at it with admiration, and before putting it to his lips said:

"A masterpiece, dame; what would Caesar find to drink out of here where the gate-keeper uses such a treasure? Who executed this admirable work, pray?"

"My son carved it for me in his spare time."

"He is a highly-skilled sculptor," Titianus explained.

When the Emperor had half emptied the cup with much satisfaction he set it on the table, and said:

"A very noble drink! I thank you, mother."

"And I you, for styling me mother: there is no better title a woman can have who has brought up good children; and I have three who need never be ashamed to be seen."

"I wish you all luck with them, good little mother," replied the Emperor.

"We shall meet again, for I am going to spend some days at Lochias."

"Now, in all this bustle?" asked Doris.

"This great architect," said Titianus, in explanation, "is to advise and help our Pontius."

"He needs no help!" cried the old woman. "He is a man of the best stamp. His foresight and energy, my son says, are incomparable. I have seen him giving his orders myself, and I know a man when I see him!"

"And what particularly pleased you in him?" asked Hadrian, who was much amused with the shrewd old woman's freedom.

"He never for a moment loses his temper in all the hurry, never speaks a word too much or too little; he can be stern when it is necessary, but he is kind to his inferiors. What his merits are as an artist I am not capable of judging, but I am quite certain that he is a just and able man."

"I know him myself," replied Caesar, "and you describe him rightly; but he seemed to me sterner than he has shown himself to you."

"Being a man he must be able to be severe; but he is so only when it is necessary, and how kind he can be he shows himself every day. A man grows to the mould of his own mind when he is a great deal alone; and this I have noticed, that a man who is repellent and sharp to those beneath him is not in himself anything really great; for it shows that he considers it necessary to guard against the danger of being looked upon

as of no more consequence than the poorer folks he deals with. Now, a man of real worth knows that it can be seen in his bearing, even when he treats one of us as an equal. Pontius does so, and Titianus, and you who are his friend, no less. It is a good thing that you should have come-- but, as I said before, the architect up there can do very well without you."

"You do not seem to rate my capacity very highly, and I regret it, for you have lived with your eyes open and have learned to judge men keenly."

Doris looked shrewdly at the Emperor with her kindly glance, as if taking his mental measure, and then answered confidently:

"You--you are a great man too--it is quite possible that you might see things that would escape Pontius. There are a few choice souls whom the Muses particularly love and you are one of them."

"What leads you to suppose so?"

"I see it in your gaze--in your brow."

"You have the gift of divination, then?"

"No, I am not one of that sort; but I am the mother of two sons on whom also the Immortals have bestowed the special gift, which I cannot exactly describe. It was in them I first saw it, and wherever I have met with it since in other men and artists--they have been the elect of their circle. And you too--I could swear to it, that you are foremost of the men among whom you live."

"Do not swear lightly," laughed the Emperor. "We will meet and talk together again little mother, and when I depart I will ask you again whether you have not been deceived in me. Come now, Telemachus, the dame's birds seem to delight you very much."

These words were addressed to Antinous, who had been going from cage to cage contemplating the feathered pets, all sleeping snugly, with much curiosity and pleasure.

"Is that your son?" asked Doris.

"No, dame, he is only my pupil; but I feel as if he were my son."

"He is a beautiful lad!"

"Why, the old lady still looks after the young men!"

"We do not give that up till we are a hundred or till the Parcae cut the thread of life."

"What a confession!"

"Let me finish my speech.--We never cease to take pleasure in seeing a

handsome young fellow, but so long as we are young we ask ourselves what he may have in store for us, and as we grow old we are perfectly satisfied to be able to show him kindness. Listen young master. You will always find me here if you want anything in which I can serve you. I am like a snail and very rarely leave my shell."

"Till our next meeting," cried Hadrian, and he and his companions went out into the court.

There the difficulty was to find a footing on the disjointed pavement. Titianus went on in front of the Emperor and Antinous, and so but few words of friendly pleasure could be exchanged by the monarch and his vicegerent on the occasion of their meeting again. Hadrian stepped cautiously forward, his face wearing meanwhile a satisfied smile. The verdict passed by the simple shrewd woman of the people had given him far greater pleasure than the turgid verse in which Mesomedes and his compeers were wont to sing his praises, or the flattering speeches with which he was loaded by the sophists and rhetoricians.

The old woman had taken him for no more than an artist; she could not know who he was, and yet she had recognized--or had Titianus been indiscreet? Did she know or suspect whom she was talking to? Hadrian's deeply suspicious nature was more and more roused; he began to fancy that the gate-keeper's wife had learnt her speech by heart, and that her welcome had been preconcerted; he suddenly paused and desired the prefect to wait for him, and Antinous to remain behind with the clog. He turned round, retraced his steps to the gatehouse and slipped close up to it in a very unprincely way. He stood still by the door of the little house which was still open, and listened to the conversation between Doris and her husband.

"A fine tall man," said Euphorion, "he is a little like the Emperor."

"Not a bit," replied Doris. "Only think of the full-length statue of Hadrian in the garden of the Paneum; it has a dissatisfied satirical expression, and the architect has a grave brow, it is true, but pure friendly kindness lights up his features. It is only the beard that reminds you of the one when you look at the other. Hadrian might be very glad if he were like the prefect's guest."

"Yes, he is handsomer--how shall I say it--more like the gods than that cold marble figure," Euphorion declared. "A grand noble, he is no doubt, but still an artist too; I wonder whether he could be induced by Pontius or Papias or Aristeas or one of the great painters to take the part of Calchas the soothsayer in our group at the festival? He would perform it in quite another way than that dry stick Philemon the ivory carver. Hand me my lute; I have already forgotten again the beginning of the last verse. Oh! my wretched memory! Thank you."

Euphorion loudly struck the strings and sang in a voice that was still tolerably sweet and very well trained:

"Sabina hail! Oh Sabina!--Hail; victorious hail to the conquering

goddess Sabina!' If only Pollux were here he would remind me of the right words. 'Hail; victorious hail, to the thousand-fold Sabina!'--That is nonsense. 'Hail, hail! divine hail to thee O all-conquering Sabina.' No it was not that either. If a crocodile would only swallow this Sabina I would give him that hot cake in yonder dish with pleasure, for his pudding. But stay--I have it. 'Hail, a thousand-fold hail to the conquering goddess Sabina!'"

Hadrian had heard all he wanted; while Euphorion went on repeating his line a score or more of times to impress it on his recalcitrant memory. Caesar turned his back on the gate-house, and while he and his companions picked their way not without difficulty through the workmen who squatted here and there and everywhere on the ground, he clapped Titianus more than once on his shoulder, and after he had been received and welcomed by Pontius, he exclaimed:

"I bless my decision to come here now! I have had a good evening, a quite delightful evening."

The Emperor had not felt so cheerful and free from care for years as on this occasion, and when in spite of the late hour he found the workmen still busy everywhere, and saw all that had already been restored in the old palace and what was being done for its renovation, the restless man could not resist expressing his satisfaction, and exclaimed to Antinous:

"Here we may see that even in our sordid times miracles may be wrought by good-will, industry, and skill. Explain to me my good Pontius how you were able to construct that enormous scaffold."

CHAPTER XII.

More pleasant hours were to follow on the amusing arrival of the Emperor at his half-finished residence at Lochias that night. Pontius proposed to him to inspect several well-preserved rooms, which had in the first instance been reserved for the gentlemen of his suite; and one of these with an open outlook on the harbor, the town, and the island of Antirrhodus he suggested should be provisionally furnished for the Emperor's reception. Thanks to the architect's foresight, to Mastor's practised hand, and to the numbers of men employed in the palace who were accustomed to all kinds of service--provision was soon made for the night, for Hadrian and his companions. The comfortable couch which the prefect had sent to Lochias for Pontius was carried into the Emperor's sleeping-room, and the camp-beds for Antinous and the suite were soon set up in the other rooms. Tables, pillows, and various household vessels which had already been sent in from the manufactories of Alexandria, and which stood packed in bales and cases in the large central court of the palace were soon taken out, and so far as they were applicable for use were carried into the hastily-arranged rooms. Even before Hadrian, under the prefect's guidance, had reached the last room in which restorations were being carried out, Pontius was ready with his arrangements, and

could assure the Emperor that to-night he would find a good bed and very tolerable quarters, and that by to-morrow he should have a really elegantly-furnished room.

"Charming, quite delightful," cried the Emperor, as he entered his room.

"One might fancy you had some industrious demons at your command. Pour some water over my hands, Mastor, and then to supper! I am as hungry as a beggar's clog."

"I think we shall find all you need," replied Titianus, while Hadrian washed his hands and his bearded face.

"Have you eaten all that I sent down to Lochias to-day, my dear Pontius?"

"Alas! we have," sighed Pontius.

"But I gave orders that a supper for five should be sent."

"It sufficed for six hungry artists," answered the architect, "if only I could have guessed for whom the food was intended! And now what is to be done? There are wine and bread still in the hall of the Muses, meanwhile"

"That must satisfy us," said the Emperor, as he wiped his face. "In the Dacian war, in Numidia, and often when out hunting, I have been glad if only one or the other was to be obtained."

Antinous, who was very hungry and tired, made a melancholy face at these words of his master, and Hadrian perceiving it, added with a smile:

"But youth needs something more to live upon than bread and wine. You pointed out to me just now the residence of the palace-steward. Might we not find there a morsel of meat or cheese, or something of the kind?"

"Hardly," replied Pontius. "For the man stuffs his fat stomach and his eight children with bread and porridge. But an attempt will at any rate be worth making."

"Then send to him; but conduct us at once to the hall where the Muses have preserved some bread and wine for me and these good fellows, though they do not always provide them for their disciples."

Pontius at once conducted the Emperor into the hall. On the way thither, Hadrian asked:

"Is the steward so miserably paid that he is forced to content himself with such meagre fare?"

"He has a residence rent free, and two hundred drachmae a month."

"That is not so very little. What is the man's name, and of what kith and kin is he?"

"He is called Keraunus, and is of ancient Macedonian descent. His ancestors from time immemorial have held the office he now fills, and he even supposes himself to be related to the extinct royal dynasty through the mistress of some one of the Lagides. Keraunus sits in the town council and never stirs out in the streets without his slave, who is one of the sort which the merchants in the slave market throw into the bargain with the buyer. He is as fat as a stuffed pig, dresses like a senator, loves antiquities and curiosities, for which he will let himself be cheated of his last coin, and bears his poverty with more of pride than of dignity; and still he is an honorable man, and can be made useful, if he is taken on the right side."

"Altogether a queer fellow. And you say he is fat, is he jolly?"

"As far from it as possible."

"Ah, people who are fat and cross are my aversion. What is this by way of an erection?"

"Behind that screen works Papias' best scholar. His name is Pollux, and he is the son of the couple who keep the gate-house. You will be pleased with him."

"Call him here," said the Emperor.

But before the architect could comply with his desire the sculptor's head had appeared above the screen. The young man had heard the approaching voices and steps; he greeted the prefect respectfully from his elevated position, and after satisfying his curiosity was about to spring down from the stool on which he had climbed when Pontius called to him that Claudius Venator, the architect from Rome, wished to make his acquaintance.

"That is very kind in him, and still more kind in you," Pollux answered from above, "since it is only from you that he can know that I exist beneath the moon, and use the hammer and chisel. Allow me to descend from my four-legged cothurnus, for at present you are forced to look up to me, and from all I have heard of your talents from Pontius, nothing can be more absolutely the reverse of what it ought to be."

"Nay, stop where you are," answered Hadrian. "We, as fellow-artists, may waive ceremony.--What are you doing in there?"

"I will push the screen back in a moment and show you our Urania. It is very good for an artist to hear the opinion of a man who thoroughly understands the thing."

"Presently, friend-presently; first let me enjoy a scrap of bread, for the severity of my hunger might very possibly influence my judgment."

As he was speaking the architect offered the Emperor a salver with bread, salt, and a cup of wine, which his own slave had carried to him. When Pollux observed this modest meal, he called out:

"That is prisoners' fare, Pontius; have we nothing better in the house than that?"

"Possibly you yourself assisted in demolishing the dainty dishes I had sent down for the architect," cried Titianus, pretending to threaten him.

"You are defacing a fair memory," sighed the sculptor, with mock melancholy. "But, by Hercules, I did my fair share of the work of destruction. If only now--but stay! I have an idea worthy of Aristotle himself! that breakfast, to which I invited you to-morrow morning, most noble Pontius, is all ready at my mother's, and can be warmed up in a few minutes. Do not be alarmed, worthy sir, but the dish in question is cabbage with sausages--a mess which, like the soul of an Egyptian, possesses at the instant of resurrection, nobler qualities than when it first sees the light."

"Excellent," cried Hadrian. "Cabbage and sausages!" He wiped his full lips with his hand, smiling with gratification, and he broke into a hearty laugh of amusement as he heard a loud "Ah!" of satisfaction from Antinous, who drew nearer to the canvas screen. "There is another whose mouth waters and whose imagination revels in a happy future," said the Emperor to the prefect, pointing to his favorite.

But he had misinterpreted the lad's exclamation, for it was the mere name of the dish--which his mother had often set on the table of his humble home in Bithynia--which reminded him of his native country and his childhood, and transplanted him in thought back into their midst. It was a swift leap at his heart, and not merely the pleasant watering of his gums, that had forced the "Ah" to his lips. Still, he was glad to see his native dish again, and would not have exchanged it against the richest banquet. Pollux had meanwhile come out of his nook, and said:

"In a quarter of an hour I shall set before you the breakfast which has been turned into a supper. Mitigate your worst hunger with some bread and salt, and then my mother's cabbage-stew will not only satisfy you, but will be enjoyed with calm appreciation."

"Greet dame Doris from me," Hadrian called after the sculptor; and when Pollux had quitted the hall he turned to Titianus and Pontius and said:

"What a splendid young fellow. I am curious to see what he can do as an artist."

"Then follow me," replied Pontius, leading the way.

"What do you say to this Urania? Papias made the head of the Muse, but the figure and the drapery Pollux formed with his own hand in a few days."

The imperial artist stood in front of the statue, with his arms crossed, and remained there for some time in silence. Then he nodded his bearded head approvingly, and said gravely:

"A well-considered work, and carried out with remarkable freedom; this mantle drawn over the bosom would not disgrace a Phidias. All is broad, characteristic and true. Did the young artist work from the model here at Lochias?"

"I have seen no model, and I believe that he evolved the whole figure out of his head," replied Pontius.

"Impossible, perfectly impossible," cried the Emperor, in the tone of a man who knows well what he is talking about. "Such lines, such forms not Praxiteles himself could have invented. He must have seen them, have formed them as he stood face to face with the living copy. We will ask him. What is to be made out of that newly-set-up mass of clay?"

"Possibly the bust of some princess of the house of the Lagides. To-morrow you shall see a head of Berenice by our young friend, which seems to me to be one of the best things ever done in Alexandria."

"And is the lad a proficient in magic?" asked Hadrian. "It seems to me simply impossible that he should have completed this statue and a woman's bust in these few days."

Pontius explained to the Emperor that Pollux had mounted the head on a bust already to hand, and as he answered his questions without reserve, he revealed to him what stupendous exertions of the arts had been called into requisition to give the dilapidated palace a suitable and, in its kind, even brilliant appearance. He frankly confessed that here he was working only for effect, and talked to Hadrian exactly as he would have discussed the same subject with any other fellow-artist.

While the Emperor and the architect were thus eagerly conversing, and the prefect was hearing from Phlegon, the secretary, all the experience of their journey, Pollux reappeared in the hall of the Muses accompanied by his father. The singer carried before him a steaming mess, fresh cakes of bread, and the pasty which a few hours previously he had carried home to his wife from the architect's table. Pollux held to his breast a tolerably large two-handled jar full of Mareotic wine, which he had hastily wreathed with branches of ivy.

A few minutes later the Emperor was reclining on a mattress that had been laid for him, and was making his way valiantly through the savory mess. He was in the happiest humor; he called Antinous and his secretary, heaped abundant portions with his own hand on their plates, which he bade them hold out to him, declaring as he did so that it was to prevent their fishing the best of the sausages out of the cabbage for themselves. He also spoke highly of the Mareotic wine. When they came to opening the pasty the expression of his face changed; he frowned and asked the prefect in a suspicious tone, severely and sternly:

"How came these people by such a pasty as this?"

"Where did you get it from?" asked the prefect of the singer.

"From the banquet which the architect gave to the artists here," answered Euphorion. "The bones were given to the Graces and this dish, which had not been touched, to me and my wife. She devoted it with pleasure to Pontius' guest."

Titianus laughed and exclaimed:

"This then accounts for the total disappearance of the handsome supper which we sent down to the architect. This pasty--allow me to look at it--this pasty was prepared by a recipe obtained from Verus. He invited us to breakfast yesterday and instructed my cook how to prepare it."

"No Platonist ever propagated his master's doctrines with greater zeal than Verus does the merits of this dish," said the Emperor, who had recovered his good humor as soon as he perceived that no artful preparation for his arrival was to be suspected in this matter. "What follies that spoilt child of fortune can commit! Does he still insist on cooking with his own hands?"

"No, not quite that," replied the prefect. "But he had a couch placed for him in the kitchen on which he stretched himself at full length and told my cook exactly how to prepare the pasty, of which you are--I should say, of which the Emperor is particularly fond. It consists of pheasant, ham, cow's udder and a baked crust."

"I am quite of Hadrian's opinion," laughed the Emperor; doing all justice to the excellent pie. "You entertain me splendidly my friend, and I am very much your debtor. What did you say your name is young man?"

"Pollux."

"Your Urania, Pollux, is a fine piece of work, and Pontius says you executed the drapery without a model. I said, and I repeat, that it is simply impossible."

"You judge rightly, a young girl stood for it."

The Emperor glanced at the architect, as much as to say, I knew it!

Pontius asked in astonishment:

"When? I have never seen a female form within these walls."

"Recently."

"But I have never quitted Lochias for a minute. I have never gone to rest before midnight, and have been on my legs again long before sunrise."

"But still there were several hours between your going to sleep, and waking up again," replied Pollux. "Ah, youth--youth!" exclaimed the Emperor, and a satirical smile played upon his lips.

"Part Damon and Phyllis by iron doors, and they will find their way to each other through the key-hole."

Euphorion looked seriously at his son, the architect shook his head and refrained from further questions, but Hadrian rose from his couch, dismissed Antinous and his secretary to bed, requested Titianus to go home and to give his wife his kindly greetings, and then desired Pollux to conduct him within this screen, since he himself was not tired and was accustomed to do with only a few hours sleep.

The young sculptor was strongly attracted by this commanding personage. It had not escaped him that the gray-bearded stranger greatly resembled the Emperor; but Pontius had prepared him for the likeness, and in fact there was much in the eyes and mouth of the Roman architect that he had never traced in any portrait of Hadrian 'Imperator.' And as they stood before his scarcely-finished statue his respect increased for the new visitor to Lochias; for, with earnest frankness, he pointed out to him certain faults, and while praising the merits of the rapidly-executed figure he explained in a few brief and pithy phrases his own conception of the ideal Urania. Then shortly but clearly, he stated his views as to how the plastic artist must deal with the problems of his art.

The young man's heart beat faster, and more than once he turned hot and cold by turns as he heard things uttered by the bearded lips of this imposing man, in a rich voice and in lucid phrases, which he had often divined or vaguely felt, but for which, while learning, observing, and working, he had never sought expression in words. And how kindly the great master took up his timid observations, how convincingly he answered them. Such a man as this he had never met, never had he bowed with such full consent before the superiority and sovereign power of another mind.

The second hour after midnight had begun, when Hadrian, standing before the rough-cast clay bust, asked Pollux:

"What is this to be?"

"A portrait of a girl."

"Probably of the complaisant model who ventures into Lochias at night?"

"No; a lady of rank will sit to me."

"An Alexandrian?"

"Oh, no. A beauty in the train of the Empress."

"What is her name? I know all the Roman ladies."

"Balbilla."

"Balbilla? There are many of that name. What is she like, the lady you mean?" asked Hadrian, with a cunning glance of amusement.

"That is easier to ask than to answer," replied the artist, who, seeing his gray-bearded companion smile, recovered his gay vivacity, "But stay--you have seen a peacock spread its tail--now only imagine that every eye in the train of Hera's bird was a graceful round curl, and that in the middle of the circle there was a charming, intelligent girl's face, with a merry little nose, and a rather too high forehead, and you will have the portrait of the young damsel who has graciously permitted me to model from her person."

Hadrian laughed heartily, threw off his cloak, and exclaimed:

"Stand aside--I know your maiden--and if I mean a different one you shall tell me."

While he was still speaking he had plunged his powerful hands into the yielding clay, and kneading and pinching like a practised modeller, wiping off and pressing on, he formed a woman's face with a towering structure of curls, which resembled Balbilla, but which reproduced every conspicuous peculiarity with such whimsical exaggeration that Pollux could not contain his delight. When at last Hadrian stepped back from the happy caricature and called upon him to say whether that were not indeed the Roman lady, Pollux exclaimed:

"It is as surely she, as you are not merely a great architect, but an admirable sculptor. The thing is coarse, but unmistakably characteristic."

The Emperor himself seemed to enjoy his artistic joke hugely, for he looked at it, and laughed again and again. Pontius, however, seemed to view it differently; he had listened with eager sympathy to the conversation between Hadrian and the sculptor, and had watched the former as he began his work; but as it went on he turned away, for he hated that distortion of fine forms, which he often found that the Egyptians took a special delight in. It was positively painful to him to see a graceful, highly-gifted and defenceless creature, to whom, too, he felt himself bound by ties of gratitude, mocked at in this way by such a man as Hadrian. He had only to-day met Balbilla for the first time, but he had heard from Titianus that she was staying at the Caesareum with the Empress, and the prefect had also told him that she was the granddaughter of that same governor, Claudius Balbillus, who had granted freedom to his own grandfather, a learned Greek slave.

He had met her with grateful sympathy and devotion; her bright and lively nature had delighted him, and at each thoughtless word she uttered he would have liked to give her some warning sign, as though she were near to him through some tie of blood, or some old established friendship that might warrant his right to do so. The defiant, half gallant way in which Verus, the dissipated lady-killer, had spoken to her had enraged him and filled him with anxiety, and long after the illustrious visitors had left Lochias he had thought of her again and again, and had resolved, if it were possible, to keep a watchful eye on the descendant of the benefactor of his family. He felt it as a sacred duty to shelter and protect her,

seeming to him as she did, an airy, pretty, defenceless song-bird.

The Emperor's caricature had the same effect on his feelings as though some one had insulted and scorned, before his eyes, something that ought to be regarded as sacred. And there stood the monarch, a man no longer young, gazing at his performance and never weary of the amusement it afforded him. It pained Pontius keenly, for like all noble natures, he could not bear to discover anything mean or vulgar in a man to whom he had always looked up as to a strong exceptional character. As an artist Hadrian ought not to have vilified beauty, as a man he ought not to have insulted unprotected innocence.

In the soul of the architect, who had hitherto been one of the Emperor's warmest admirers, a slight aversion began to dawn, and he was glad, when, at last, Hadrian decided to withdraw to rest.

The Emperor found in his room every requisite he was accustomed to use, and while his slave undressed him, lighted his night-lamp and adjusted his pillows, he said:

"This is the best evening I have enjoyed for years. Is Antinous comfortably in bed?"

"As much so as in Rome."

"And the big dog?"

"I will lay his rug in the passage at your door."

"Has he had any food?"

"Bones, bread and water."

"I hope you have had something to eat this evening."

"I was not hungry, and there was plenty of bread and wine."

"To-morrow we shall be better supplied. Now, good-night. Weigh your words for fear you should betray me. A few days here undisturbed would be delightful!"

With these words the Emperor turned over on his couch and was soon asleep.

Mastor, too, lay down to rest after he had spread a rug for the dog in the corridor outside the Emperor's sleeping-room. His head rested on a curved shield of stout cowhide under which lay his short sword; the bed was but a hard one, but Mastor had for years been used to rest on nothing better, and still had enjoyed the dreamless slumbers of a child; but to-night sleep avoided him, and from time to time he pressed his hand on his wearily open eyes to wipe away the salt dew which rose to them again and again. For a long time he had restrained these tears bravely enough, for the Emperor liked to see none but cheerful faces among his servants; nay,

he had once said that it was in consequence of his bright eyes that he had entrusted to him the care of his person. Poor, cheerful Mastor! He was nothing but a slave, still he had a heart which lay open to joy and suffering, to pleasure and trouble, to hatred and to love.

In his childhood his native village had fallen into the hands of the foes of his race. He and his brother had been carried away as slaves, first into Asia Minor, and then as they were both particularly pretty fair-haired boys, to Rome. There they had been bought for the Emperor; Mastor had been chosen to wait on Hadrian's person, his brother had been put to work in the gardens. Nothing was lacking to either except his liberty; nothing tormented them but their longing for their native home, and even this altogether faded away after he had married the pretty little daughter of a superintendent of the gardens, a slave like himself. She was a lively little woman with sparkling eyes, whom no one could pass by without noticing.

The slave's duties left him but little time to enjoy the society of his pretty partner and of the two children she bore him, but the consciousness of possessing them made him happy when he followed his master to the chase, or in the journeys through the empire. Now, for seven months he had heard nothing of his family; but a short letter had reached him at Pelusium, which had been sent with the despatches for the Emperor from Ostia to Egypt. He could not read, and in consequence of the Emperor's rapid travelling, it was not till he reached Lochias, that he was put in possession of its contents.

Before going to rest Antinous had read him the letter, which had been written for his brother by a public scribe, and its contents were enough to wreck the heart even of a slave. His pretty little wife had fled from her home and from the Emperor's service to follow a Greek ship's captain across the world; his eldest child, a boy, the darling of his heart, was dead; and his fair-haired tender little Tullia, with her pearly teeth, her round little arms, and her pretty tiny fingers that had often tried to pull his close-cropped hair, and had fondly stroked and patted it, had been carried off to the miserable refuge, under whose squalid roof the children of deceased slaves were reared. Only two hours since, and in fancy he had possessed a home, and a group of human beings, whom he could love. Now, this was all over and with however hard a hand the deepest woes might fall on him, he might not sob or groan aloud, or even roll from side to side as again and again he was violently prompted to do, for his lord slept lightly and the least noise might wake him. At sunrise he must appear before the Emperor as cheerful as usual, and yet he felt as if he must himself perish miserably as his happiness had done. His heart was bursting with anguish, still he neither groaned nor stirred.

CHAPTER XIII.

The night had been almost as sleepless to Keraunus' daughter Selene as

it had been to the hapless slave. Her father's vain wish to let Arsinoe take a part with the daughters of the wealthier citizens had filled the girl's heart with fresh terrors. It was the final blow which would demolish the structure of their social existence, standing as it did on quaking ground, and which must fling her family and herself into disgrace and want. When their last treasure of any value was sold, and the creditors could no longer be put off, particularly during the Emperor's presence in the city, when they should try to sell up all her father's little property, or to carry him off to a debtor's prison, was it not then as good as certain that some one else would be appointed to fill his place, and that she and the other children would fall into misery? And there lay Arsinoe by her side, and slept with as calm and deep a breath as blind Helios and the other little ones.

Before going to bed she had tried with all the fervency and eloquence of which she was mistress, to persuade, entreat, and implore the heedless girl to refuse as positively as she herself had refused to take any part in the processions; but Arsinoe had at first repulsed her crossly, and finally had defiantly declared that means might yet very likely be found, and that what her father permitted, Selene had no right to interfere in, still less to forbid. And when afterwards she saw Arsinoe sleeping so calmly by her side, she felt as if she would like to shake her; but she was so accustomed to bear all the troubles of the family alone, and to be unkindly repelled by her sister whenever she attempted to admonish her, that she forbore.

Arsinoe had a good and tender heart, but she was young, pretty, and vain. With affectionate persuasion she might be won over to anything, but Selene, when ever she remonstrated with her, made her feel her superiority over herself, acquired from her care of the family and her maternal character. Thus, not a day passed without some quarrelling and tears between these two sisters who were so dissimilar, and yet, both so well disposed. Arsinoe was always the first to offer her hand for a reconciliation, but Selene would rarely have a kinder answer ready to her affectionate advances than, "Let be," or "Oh yes, I know!" and their outward intercourse bore an aspect of coolness, which was easily worked up to an outbreak of hostile speeches. Hundreds of times they would go to bed without wishing each other 'good-night,' and still more often would they avoid any morning greeting when they first met in the day.

Arsinoe liked talking, but in Selene's presence she was taciturn; there were few things in which Selene took pleasure, while her sister delighted in every thing which can charm youth. It was the steward's eldest daughter who attended to the daily needs of the children, their food and clothes; it was the second who superintended their games, and their dolls. The eldest watched and taught them with anxious care, detecting in every little fault the germ of some evil tendency in the future, while the other enticed them into follies, it is true, but opened their minds to joyous impressions, and attained more by kisses and kind words than Selene could by fault-finding. The children would call Selene when they wanted her, but would fly to Arsinoe as soon as they saw her. Their hearts were hers, and Selene felt this bitterly; it seemed to her to be unjust, for she saw clearly that her sister could reap, from mere

frivolous play in her idle hours, a sweeter reward than she could earn by the anxiety, trouble and exhausting toil, in which she often spent her nights.

But children are not unjust in this way. It is true that they keep an account in their heart and not in their head. Those who give them the warmth of affection they pay back most honestly.

On this particular night it was not, it is certain, with very sisterly feelings that Selene looked at the sleeping Arsinoe, and the words on the girl's lips as she had dropped asleep, had sounded very unkind; but, nevertheless, they felt warmly towards each other, and any one who should have attempted to say a word against the one in the presence of the other would soon have found out how close a bond held together these two hearts, dissimilar as they were. But no girl of nineteen can pass a night altogether without sleeping, however sadly she may turn and turn over and over again in her bed. So slumber overmastered Selene every now and then for a quarter of an hour, and each time she dreamed of her sister.

Once she saw Arsinoe dressed out like a queen, followed by beggar children and pelted with bad words--then she saw her on the rotunda below the balcony romping with Pollux, and in their bold sport they broke her mother's bust. At last she dreamed that she herself was playing--as in the days of her childhood--in the gate-keeper's garden with the sculptor. They were making cakes of sand together, and Arsinoe jumped on the cakes as soon as they were made, and trod them all into dust.

The pretty pale girl had for a long time ceased to know the refreshing, dreamless, sound sleep of youth, for the sweetest slumbers are more apt to seek out those who by day have some rest, than those who are worn out by fatigue, and evening after evening Selene was one of these. Every night she had dreams, but tonight they were almost exclusively sad in character, and so terrifying that she woke herself repeatedly with her own groaning, or disturbed Arsinoe's peaceful sleep by loud cries.

These cries did not disturb her father, he--to-night, as every night--had begun to snore soon after he had gone to rest, never to cease till it was time to rise again.

Selene was always busy in the house before any one, even before the slaves; and the approach of day this time seemed to the sleepless girl a real release. When she rose it was still perfectly dark, but she knew that the rising of the December sun could not be long to wait for.

Without paying any heed to the sleepers, or making any special effort to tread noiselessly, or to do what she had to do without disturbing them, she lighted her little lamp, at the night-lamp, washed herself, arranged her hair, and then knocked at the doors of the old slaves.

As soon as they had yawned out "directly," or a sleepy "very well," she went into her father's room and took his jug to fetch him fresh water in it. The best well in the palace was on a small terrace on the west side;

it was supplied by the city aqueducts, and was constructed of five marble monsters, bearing up on twisted fishtails a huge shell, in which sat a bearded river-god. Their horse-shaped heads poured water into a vast basin, which, in the lapse of centuries, had grown full of a green and filmy vegetation.

In order to reach this fountain, Selene had to go along the corridor where lay the rooms occupied by the Emperor and his followers. She only knew that an architect from Rome had taken up his quarters at Lochias, for, some time after midnight, she had been to get out meat and salt for him, but in what rooms the strangers had been lodged no one had told her. But this morning as she followed the path she was accustomed to tread day by day at the same hour, she felt an anxious shiver. She felt as if everything were not quite the same as usual, and just as she had set her foot on the cop step of the flight leading to the corridor, she raised her lamp to discover whence came the sound she thought she could hear, she perceived in the gloom a fearful something. which as she approached it resembled a dog, and which was larger--much larger--than a dog should be.

Her blood ran cold with terror; for a few moments she stood as if spellbound, and was only conscious that the growling and snarling that she heard meant mischief and threatening to herself. At last she found strength to turn to fly, but at the same instant a loud and furious bark echoed behind her and she heard the monster's quick leaps as he flew after her along the stone pavement.

She felt a violent shock, the pitcher flew out of her hand and was shattered into a thousand fragments, and she sank to the ground under the weight of a warm, rough, heavy mass. Her loud cries of alarm resounded from the hard bare walls, and roused the sleepers and brought them to her side.

"See what it is," cried Hadrian to his slave, who had immediately sprung up and seized his shield and sword.

"The dog has attacked a woman who wanted to come this way," replied Mastor.

"Hold him off, but do not beat him," the Emperor shouted after him.

"Argus has only done his duty." The slave hastened down the passage as fast as possible, loudly calling the dog by his name. But another had been beforehand and had dragged him off his victim, and this was Antinous, whose room was close to the scene of action, and who, as soon as he had heard the dog's bark and Selene's scream, had hurried to hold back the brute which was really dangerous when on guard and in the dark.

When Mastor appeared the lad had just succeeded in dragging the dog away from Selene, who was lying on the stairs leading to the corridor. Before Antinous could reach her Argus was standing over her gnashing his teeth and growling. Argus, who was quickly quieted by his friends' tone of kindly admonition, stood aside silent and with his head down while Antinous knelt by the senseless girl on whom the pale light of early dawn

fell through--wide window. The boy looked with alarm on her pale face, lifted her helpless arm, and sought on her light-colored dress for any trace of blood that might have been drawn, but in vain. After he had assured himself that she still breathed, and that her lips moved, he called to Mastor:

"Argus seems only to have pulled her down, not to have wounded her; she has lost consciousness however. Go quickly into my room and bring me the blue phial out of my medicine-case and a cup of water."

The slave whistled to the hound and obeyed the order as quickly as possible.

Meanwhile Antinous remained on his knees by the senseless girl, and ventured to raise her head with its long soft weight of hair. How beautiful were those marble-white, and nobly-cut features! How touching did the silent accent of pain that lay on her lips seem to him, and how happy was the spoilt darling of the Emperor, who was loved by all who saw him, to be able to be tender and helpful, unasked!

"Wake up, oh! wake up!" he cried to Selene--and when still she did not move, he repeated more urgently and tenderly, "Pray, pray wake up."

But she did not hear him, and remained motionless even when, with a slight blush, he drew over her shoulder her peplum, which the dog had torn away. Now Mastor returned with the water and the blue phial, and gave them to the Bithynian. While Antinous laid the girl's head in his lap, the slave was hurrying away, saying: "Caesar called me."

The lad moistened Selene's forehead with the reviving fluid, made her inhale the strong essence which the phial contained, and cried again loud and earnestly, "Wake, wake."--And presently her lips parted, showing her small, white teeth, and then she slowly raised the lids which had veiled her eyes. With a deep sigh of relief he set the cup and the phial on the ground so as to support her when she slowly began to raise herself; but, scarcely had he turned his face towards her, when she sprang up suddenly and violently, and flinging both her arms round his neck, cried out:

"Save me, Pollux, save me! The monster is devouring me." Antinous much startled, seized the girl's arms to release himself from their embrace, but, she had already freed him and sunk back on to the ground. The next moment she was shivering violently as if from an attack of fever; again she threw up her hands, pressed them to her temples, and gazed with terror and bewilderment into the face that bent above her.

"What is it? Who are you?" she asked, in a low voice.

He rose quickly, and while he supported her as she attempted to rise and stand upon her feet, he said:

"The gods be praised that you are still alive. Our big hound threw you down--and he has terrible teeth." Selene was now standing up, and face to face with the boy at whose last words she shuddered again.

"Do, you feel any pain?" asked Antinous, anxiously.

"Yes," she said, dully.

"Did he bite you?"

"I think not--pick up that pin, it has fallen out of my dress."

The Bithynian obeyed her behest, and while the girl re-fastened her peplum over her shoulders she asked him again:

"Who are you? How came the dog in our palace?"

"He belongs--he belongs to us. We arrived late last night, and Pontius put us--"

"Then you are with the architect from Rome?"

"Yes, but who are you?"

"Selene is my name, I am the daughter of the palace-steward."

"And who is Pollux, whom you were calling to help you when you recovered your senses?"

"What does that matter to you?"

Antinous colored, and answered in confusion:

"I was startled when you suddenly roused up, with his name so loudly on your lips, when I brought you back to life with water and this essence."

"Well, I was roused--and now I can walk again. People who bring furious dogs into a strange place, should know how to take better care of them. Tie the dog up safely, for the children--my little brothers and sisters--come this way when they want to go out. Thank you for your help--and my pitcher?"

As she spoke she looked down on the remains of the pretty jar, which was one her mother had particularly valued. When she saw the fragments lying on the ground, she gave a deep sob, but she shed no tears. Then she exclaimed angrily: "It is infamous!"

With these words she turned her back on Antinous and returned to her father's room, using her left foot, however, with caution, for it was very painful.

The young Bithynian gazed in silence at Selene's tall, slight form, he felt prompted to follow her, to say to her how very sorry he was for the mischance that had befallen her, and that the hound belonged not to him but to another man; but he dared not. Long after she had disappeared from sight he stood on the same spot. At last he collected his senses,

and slowly went back to his room, where he sat on his couch with his eyes fixed dreamily on the ground, till the Emperor's call roused him from his reverie.

Selene had hardly vouchsafed Antinous a glance. She was in pain not merely in her left foot, but also in the back of her head where she found there was a deep cut; but her thick hair had staunched the blood that flowed from the wound. She felt very tired, and the loss of her pretty jug, which must also be replaced by another, vexed her far more than the beauty of the favorite had charmed her.

She slowly and wearily entered the sitting-room, where her father was by this time waiting for her and his water. He was accustomed to have it regularly at the same hour, and as Selene was absent longer than usual, he could think of no better way of filling up the time than by grumbling and scolding to himself; when, at last, his daughter appeared on the threshold, he at once perceived that she had no jug, and said crossly:

"And am I to have no water to-day?"

Selene shook her head, sank into a seat, and began to cry softly.

"What is the matter?" asked her father.

"The pitcher is broken," she said sadly.

"You should take better care of such expensive things," scolded her father. "You are always complaining of want of money, and at the same time you break half our belongings."

"I was thrown down," answered Selene, drying her eyes.

"Thrown down! by whom?" asked the steward, slowly rising.

"By the architect's big dog--the architect who came last night from Rome, and to whom we gave that meat and salt in the middle of the night. He slept here, at Lochias."

"And he set his clog on my child!" shouted Keraunus, with an angry glare.

"The hound was alone in the passage when I went there."

"Did it bite you?"

"No, but it pulled me down, and stood over me, and gnashed its teeth--oh! it was horrible."

"The cursed, vagabond scoundrel!" growled the steward, "I will teach him how to behave in a strange house!"

"Let him be," said Selene, as she saw her father about to don the saffron cloak.

"What is done cannot be undone, and if quarrels and dissensions come of it, it will make you ill."

"Vagabonds! impudent rascals! who fill my palace with quarrelsome curs," muttered Keraunus without listening to his daughter, and as he settled the folds of his pallium he growled "Arsinoe! why is it that girl never hears me."

When she appeared he desired her to heat the irons to curl his hair.

"They are ready by the fire," answered Arsinoe. "Come into the kitchen with me."

Keraunus followed her, and had his locks curled and scented, while his younger children stood round him waiting for the porridge which Selene usually prepared for them at this hour.

Keraunus responded to their morning greetings with nods as friendly as Arsinoe's tongs, which held his head tightly by the hair, would allow. It was only the blind Helios, a pretty boy of six, that he drew to his side and gave a kiss on his cheek. He loved this child, who, though deprived of the noblest of the senses, was always merry and contented, with peculiar tenderness. Once he even laughed aloud when the child clung to his sister, as she brandished the tongs, and said:

"Father, do you know why I am sorry I cannot see?"

"Well?" said his father.

"Because I should so like to see you for once with the beautiful curls which Arsinoe makes with the irons." But the steward's mirth was checked when his daughter, pausing in her labors, said half in jest, but half in earnest:

"Have you thought any more about the Emperor's arrival, father? I smarten and dress you so fine every day--but to-day you ought to think of dressing me."

"We will see about it," said Keraunus evasively. "Do you know," said Arsinoe, after a short pause, as she twisted the last lock in the freshly-heated tongs, "I thought it all over last night again. If we cannot succeed any way in scraping together the money for my dress, we can still--"

"Well?"

"Even Selene can say nothing against it."

"Against what?"

"But, you will be angry!"

"Speak out."

"You pay taxes like the rest of the citizens."

"What has that to do with it?"

"Well then, we are justified in expecting something from the city,"

"What for?"

"To pay for my dress for the festival which is got up for the Emperor, not by an individual, but by the citizens as a body. We could not accept alone, but it is folly to refuse what a rich municipality offers. That is neither more nor less than making them a present."

"You be silent," cried Keraunus, really furious, and trying in vain to remember the argument with which, only yesterday, he had refused the same suggestion. "Be silent, and wait till I begin to talk about such matters."

Arsinoe flung the tongs on the hearth with so much annoyance that they fell on the stone with a loud clatter; but her father quitted the kitchen and returned to the sitting-room. There he found Selene lying on a couch, and the old slave-woman, who had tied a wet handkerchief round the girl's head, pressing another to her bare left foot.

"Wounded!" cried Keraunus, and his eyes rolled slowly from right to left and from left to right.

"Look at the swelling!" cried the old woman in broken Greek, raising Selene's snow-white foot in her black hands for her father to see.

"Thousands of fine ladies have hands that are not so small. Poor, poor little foot," and as she spoke the old woman pressed it to her lips.

Selene pushed her aside, and said, turning to her father:

"The cut on my head is nothing to speak of, but the muscles and veins here at the ankle are swelled and my leg hurts me rather when I tread. When the dog threw me down I must have hit it against the stone step."

"It is outrageous!" cried Keraunus, the blood again mounting to his head, "only wait and I will show them what I think of their goings on."

"No, no," entreated Selene, "only beg them politely to shut up the dog, or to chain it, so that it may not hurt the children."

Her voice trembled with anxiety as she spoke the words, for the dread, which, she knew not why, had so long been tormenting her lest her father should lose his place, seemed to affect her more than ever to-day.

"What! civil words after what has now happened?" cried Keraunus indignantly, and as if something quite unheard of had been suggested to him.

"Nay, nay, say what you mean," shrieked the old woman. "If such a thing had occurred to your father he would have fallen on the strange builder with a good thrashing."

"And his son Keraunus will not let him off," declared the steward, quitting the room without heeding Selene's entreaty not to let himself be provoked.

In the ante-chamber he found his old slave whom he ordered to take a stick and go before him to announce him to Pontius' guest, the architect, who was lodging in the rooms in the wing near the fountain. This was the elegant thing to do, and by this means the black slave would meet the big dog before his master who held him and all dogs in the utmost abhorrence. As he approached his destination he found himself quite in the humor to speak his mind to the stranger who had come here with a ferocious hound to tear the members of his family.

CHAPTER XIV.

Hadrian had slept most comfortably; only a few hours it is true, but they had sufficed to refresh his spirit. He was now in his sitting-room and had gone to the window, which took up more than half the extent of the long west wall of the room, and opened on the sea. The wide opening, which extended downwards to within a few spans of the floor, was finished at either side by a tall pillar of fine reddish-brown porphyry, flecked with white, and crowned with gilt Corinthian capitals.

Against one of these the Emperor was leaning stroking the blood-hound, whose prompt and vigorous watchfulness had pleased him greatly. What did he care for the terrors the dog might have caused a mere girl?

By the other pillar stood Antinous; he had placed his right foot on the low window-sill, and with his chin resting on his hand and his elbow on his knee, his figure was well within the room.

"This, Pontius, is really a first-rate man," said Hadrian, pointing to a tapestry hanging across the narrow end of the room. "This hanging was copied from a fruit-piece that I painted some time since, and had executed here in mosaic. Yesterday this room was not even intended for my use, thus the hanging must have been put up between our arrival and this morning. And how many other beautiful things I see around me! The whole place looks habitable, and the eye finds an abundance of objects on which it can rest with pleasure."

"Have you examined that magnificent cushion?" asked Antinous; "and the bronze figures, there in the corner, look to me far from bad."

"They are admirable works," said Hadrian. "Still, I would do without them with pleasure rather than miss this window. Which is the bluer, the sky or the sea? And what a delicious spring breeze fans us here, in the

middle of December. Which are the more delightful to contemplate, the innumerable ships in the harbor, which communicate between this flowery land and other countries, and bless it with wealth, or the buildings which attract the eye in whichever direction it turns. It is difficult to know whether most to admire their stately dimensions or the beauty of their forms."

"And what is that long, huge dyke, which connects the island with the mainland? Only look! There is a huge trireme passing under one of the wide arches, on which it is supported--and there comes another."

"That is the great viaduct, called by the Alexandrians the Heptastadion, because it is said to be seven stadia in length; and in the upper portion it carries a stone water-course--as an elder tree has in it a vein of pith-which supplies water to the island of Pharos."

"What a pity it is," said Antinous, "that we cannot overlook from here the whole of the structure with the men and the vehicles that swarm upon it like busy ants. That little island and the narrow tongue of land that runs out into the harbor with the tall slender building at the end of it, half hide it."

"But they serve to vary the picture," replied the Emperor. "Cleopatra often dwelt in the little castle on the island with its harbor, and in that tall tower on the northern side of the peninsula, round which, just now, the blue waves are playing, while the gulls and pigeons fly happily over it--there Antony retreated after the fight of Actium."

"To forget his disgrace!" exclaimed Antinous.

"He named it his Timonareum, because he hoped there to remain unmolested by other human beings, like the wise misanthrope of Athens. How would it be if I called Lochias my Timonareum?"

"No man need try to hide fame and greatness."

"Who told you that it was shame that led Antony to hide himself in that place?" asked the imperial sophist; "he proved often enough, at the head of his cavalry, that he was a brave soldier; and though at Actium, when all was still going well, he let his ship be turned, it was out of no fear of swords and spears, but because Fate compelled him to subjugate his strong will to the wishes of a woman with whose destiny his was linked."

"Then do you excuse his conduct?"

"I only seek to account for it, and never, for a moment, could allow myself to believe that shame ever prompted a single act in Antony. I--do you suppose I could ever blush? Nay, we cease to feel shame when we have lived to feel such profound contempt for the world."

"But why then should Marc Antony have shut himself up, in yonder sea-washed prison?"

"Because, to every true man, who has dissipated whole years of his life with women, jesters and flatterers, a moment comes of satiety and loathing. In such an hour he feels that of all the men under the lights of heaven, he, himself, is the only one with whom it is worth his while to commune. After Actium, this was what Antony felt, and he quitted the society of men in order to find himself for once in good company."

"It is that, no doubt, which drives you now and again into solitude."

"No doubt-but you are always allowed to follow me."

"Then you regard me as better than others," exclaimed Antinous joyfully.

"As more beautiful at any rate," replied Hadrian kindly. "Ask me some more questions."

But Antinous needed a few minutes pause before he could comply with this desire. At last he recollected himself and proceeded to inquire why most of the vessels were moored in the harbor beyond the Heptastadion, known as Eunostus. The entrance there was less dangerous than that between the Pharos and the point of Lochias which led into the eastern landing-places. And then Hadrian could give him information as to every building in the city about which his companion evinced any curiosity. But when the Emperor had pointed out the Soma, under which rested the remains of Alexander the Great, he became thoughtful, and said, as if to himself:

"The Great--We may well envy the young Macedonian; not the mere name of Great, for many of small worth have had it bestowed on them, but because he really earned it!"

There was not a question put by the handsome Bithynian that Hadrian could not answer; Antinous followed all his explanations with growing astonishment, exclaiming at last:

"How perfectly well you know this place--and yet you never were here before."

"It is one of the greatest pleasures of travelling," replied Hadrian, "that on our journeys we come to know many things in their actuality of which we have formed an idea from books and narratives. This requires us to compare the reality with the pictures in our own minds, seen with the inward eye, before we saw the reality. It is to me a far smaller pleasure to be surprised by something new and unexpected than to make myself more closely acquainted with something I know already sufficiently to deem it worthy to be known better. Do you understand what I mean?"

"To be sure I do. We hear of a thing, and when we afterwards see it we ask ourselves whether we have conceived of it rightly. But I always picture people or places which I hear much praised, as much more beautiful than I ever find the reality."

"The balance of difference, which is to the disadvantage of reality,"

answered Hadrian, "stands not so much to its discredit, as to the credit of the eager and beautifying power of your youthful imagination. I--I--" and the Emperor stroked his beard and gazed out into the distance. "I learn by experience that the older I grow, the more often I find it possible so to imagine men, places, and things that I have not seen as that when I meet them in real life for the first time, I feel justified in fancying that I have known them long since, visited them, and beheld them with my bodily eyes. Here, for instance, I feel as if I saw nothing new, but only gazed once more at what has long been familiar. But that is no wonder, for I know my Strabo, and have heard and read a hundred accounts of this city. Still there are many things which are quite strange to me, and yet as they come before me make me feel as if I had seen or known them long ago."

"I have felt something like that," said Antinous. "Can our souls have ever lived in other bodies, and sometimes recall the impressions made in that former existence?"

"Favorinus once told me that some great philosopher, Plato, I think, asserts that before we are born our souls are wafted about in the firmament that they may contemplate the earth on which they are destined subsequently to dwell. Favorinus says too--"

"Favorinus!" cried Hadrian, evasively. "That graceful elocutionist has plenty of skill in giving new and captivating forms to the thoughts of the great philosophers; but he has not been able to surprise the secret of his own soul--besides, he talks too much, and he cannot dispense with the excitement of life."

"Still you have recognized the phenomenon, but you disapprove of Favorinus' explanation of it?"

"Yes, for I have met men and things as old acquaintances which never saw the light till long after I was born. Possibly my own interpretation may not adapt itself to the consciousness of all--but in myself, I know for certain, there dwells a mysterious something which stirs and works in me independently of myself, which enters into me, and takes its departure at its will. Call it as you will, my Daimon, or even my Genius--the name matters not. Nor will this 'something' always come at my bidding, while it often possesses me when I least expect it. In those moments when it stirs within me, I am master of much which is peculiar to the experience and potentiality of that hour. What is known to that Daimon always appears to me the very same when I actually meet it. Thus Alexandria is not unknown to me, because my Genius has seen it in his flights. It has learnt and done much, both in me and for me; a hundred times, face to face with my own finished works I have asked myself: 'Is it possible that you--Hadrian--your mother's son--can have achieved this? What then is the mysterious power that aided you to do it?' Now I also recognize it, and can see it work in others. The man in whom it dwells soon excels his fellows, and it is most manifest in artists. Or is it that mere common men become great artists simply because the Genius selects them as his temple to dwell in? Do you follow me, boy?"

"Not altogether," replied Antinous, and his large eyes which had sparkled brightly so long as he gazed with the Emperor on the city, were now cast down and fixed wearily on the ground. "Do not be angry with me, my Lord, but I shall never understand such things as these, for there is no man with whom your Genius, as you term it, has less concern than with me. Thoughts of my own have I none, and it is difficult to me to follow the thoughts of others; indeed I should like to know how I am ever to do anything right. When I want to work, to work something out, no Daimon helps my soul; no--it feels quite helpless, and drifts into dreaminess. And if I ever do complete anything, I am obliged to own to myself that I certainly might have been able to do it better."

"Self-knowledge," laughed Hadrian, "is the climax of wisdom. A man has done something if he has only added a 'thing of beauty' to the joys of a friend's imagination; what others do by hard work you do by mere existence. Be quiet, Argus!" For, while he was speaking, the hound had risen, and had gone snarling to the door. In spite of his master's orders he broke into a loud bark when he heard a steady knock at the door. Hadrian looked round in bewilderment, and asked: "Where is Mastor?"

Antinous shouted the slave's name into the Emperor's bedroom, which was next to the living-room, but in vain. "He generally is always at hand, and as brisk as a lark, but to-day he looked as if in a dream, and while he was dressing me he first let my shoe fall out of his hand and then my brooch."

"I read him yesterday a letter from Rome. His young wife has gone away with a ship's captain."

"We may wish him joy of being free again."

"It does not seem to afford him any satisfaction."

"Oh! a handsome lad like my body-slave can find as many substitutes as he likes."

"But he has not done so. For the present he is still smarting under his loss."

"How wise! There, some one is knocking again. Just see who ventures-- but to be sure any one has a right to knock, for at Lochias I am not the Emperor, but a simple private gentleman. Lie down Argus, are you crazy, old fellow? Why the dog maintains my dignity better than I do, and he does not seem altogether to like the architect's part I am playing."

Antinous had already raised his hand to lift the handle, when the door was gently opened from outside, and the steward's slave stood on the threshold. The old negro presented a lamentable spectacle. The Emperor's dignified and awe-compelling figure, and his favorite's rich garments made him feel embarrassed, and the hound's threatening growl filled him with such terror that he huddled his lean negro-legs together, and, as far as its length would allow, tried to cover them for protection

with his threadbare tunic.

Hadrian gazed in astonishment at this image of fear, and then asked:

"Well! what do you want, fellow?"

The slave attempted to advance a step or two, but at a loud command from Hadrian he stood still, and as he looked down at his flat feet, he ruefully scratched his short-cropped grey hair, some of which had fallen off and left a bald patch.

"Well," repeated Hadrian, in a tone which was anything rather than encouraging, as he relaxed his hold on the hound's collar in a somewhat suspicious manner. The slave's bent knees began to quake, and holding out his broad palm to the grey-bearded gentleman, who seemed to him hardly less alarming than the dog, he began to stammer out in fearfully-mutilated Greek the speech which his master had repeated to him several times, and which set forth that he had come "into the presence of the architect, Claudius Venator, of Rome, to announce the visit of his master, a member of the town-council, a Macedonian, and a Roman citizen, Keraunus, the son of Ptolemy, steward of the once royal but now imperial palace at Lochias."

Hadrian unrelentingly allowed the poor wretch to finish his speech, rubbing his hands with amusement, while the sweat of anguish stood on the old slave's face, and to prolong the delightful joke, he took good care not to help the miserable old man when his unaccustomed tongue came to some insuperable difficulty. When, at length, the negro had finished the pompous announcement, Hadrian said, kindly:

"Tell your master he may come in."

Scarcely had the slave left the room, when the sovereign, turning to his favorite, exclaimed:

"This is a delicious joke! What will the Jupiter be like, when the eagle is such a bird as this!"

Keraunus was not long to wait for. While pacing up and down the passage outside the Emperor's room, his bad humor had risen considerably, for he took it as a slight on the part of the architect, that he should allow him--whose birth and dignities he would have learnt from his slave--to wait several minutes, each of which seemed to him a quarter of an hour. His expectation too, that the Roman would come to conduct him in person into his apartment was by no means fulfilled, for the slave's message was briefly--"He may come in."

"Did he say may? Did he not say "please to come in, or have the goodness to come in?" asked the steward.

"He may come in--was what he said," replied the slave.

Keraunus grunted out, "Well!" set his gold circlet straight on his head

which he held very upright, crossed his arms over his broad chest with a sigh, and ordered the black man:

"Open the door."

The steward crossed the threshold with much dignity: then, not to commit any breach of courtesy, he bowed low, and was about to begin to utter his reprimand in cutting terms, when a glance at the Emperor and at the splendid decoration which the room had undergone since the day previous, not to mention the very unpleasant growling of the big dog, prompted him to strike a milder string. His slave had followed him and had sought a safe corner near the door, between the wall of the room and a couch, but he himself, conquering his alarm at the dog, went forward some distance into the room. The Emperor had seated himself on the window-sill; he pressed his foot lightly on the head of the dog, and gazed at Keraunus as at some remarkable curiosity. His eye thus met that of the steward and made him clearly understand that he had to do with a greater personage than he had expected. There was something imposing in the person of the man who sat before him; for this very reason, however, his pride stood on tiptoe, and he asked in a tone of swaggering dignity, though not so sharply and abruptly as he had intended.

"Am I standing before the new visitor to Lochias, the architect Claudius Venator of Rome?"

"You are--standing--" replied the Emperor, with a roguish side glance at Antinous.

"You have met with a friendly reception to this palace. Like my fathers, who have enjoyed the stewardship of it for centuries, I know how to exercise the sacred duties of hospitality."

"I am surprised to hear of the high antiquity of your family and bow to your pious sentiments," answered Hadrian, in the same tone as the steward. "What farther may I learn from you?"

"I did not come here to relate history," said Keraunus, whose gall rose as he thought he detected a mocking smile on the stranger's lips. "I did not come here to tell stories, but to complain that you, as a warmly-welcomed guest, show so little anxiety to protect your host from injury."

"How is that?" asked Hadrian, rising from his seat and signing to Antinous to hold back the hound, which manifested a peculiar aversion to the steward. It no doubt detected that he had come to show no special friendliness to his owner.

"Is that dangerous dog, gnashing its teeth there, your property?" asked Keraunus.

"Yes."

This morning it threw down my daughter and smashed a costly pitcher, which she is fond of carrying to fetch water in the dawn."

"I heard of that misadventure," said Hadrian, "and I would give much if I could undo it. The vessel shall be amply made good to you."

"I beg you not to add insult to the injury, we have suffered by your fault. A father whose daughter has been knocked down and hurt--"

"Then, Argus actually bit her?" cried Antinous, horrified.

"No," Keraunus replied. "But as she fell her head and foot have been injured, and she is suffering much pain."

"That is very sad," said Hadrian, "and as I am not ignorant of the healing art, I will gladly try to help the poor girl."

"I pay a professional leech, who attends me and mine," replied the steward, in a repellant tone, "and I came hither to request--or, to be frank with you--to require--"

"What?"

"First, that my pardon shall be asked."

"That, the artist, Claudius Venator, is always ready to do when any one has suffered damage by his fault. What has happened--I repeat it--grieves me sincerely, and I beg you tell the maiden to whom the accident happened, that her pain is mine. What more do you desire?"

The steward's features had calmed down at these last words, and he answered with less excitement than before:

"I must request you to chain up your dog, or to shut it up, or in some way to keep it from mischief."

"That is pretty strong!" cried the Emperor.

"It is only a reasonable demand, and I must stand by it," replied Keraunus decidedly. "Neither I--nor my children's lives are safe, so long as this wild beast is prowling about at pleasure."

Hadrian had, ere now, erected monuments to deceased favorites, both dogs and horses, and his faithful Argus was no less dear to him, than other four-footed companions have been to other childless men; hence the queer fat man's demand seemed to him so audacious and monstrous, that he indignantly exclaimed:

"Folly!--the dog shall be watched, but nothing farther."

"You will chain him up," replied Keraunus, with an angry glare, "or someone will be found who will make him harmless forever."

"That will be an evil attempt for the cowardly murderer!" cried Hadrian. "Eh! Argus, what do you think?"

At these words the dog drew himself up, and would have sprung at the steward's throat if his master and Antinous had not held him back.

Keraunus felt that the dog had threatened him, but at this instant he would have let himself be torn by him without wincing, so completely was he overmastered by the fury born of his injured pride.

"And am I--I too, to be hunted down by a dog, in this house?" he cried defiantly, setting his left fist on his hip. "Every thing has its limits, and so has my patience with a guest who, in spite of his ripe age forgets due consideration. I will inform the prefect Titianus of your proceedings here, and when the Emperor arrives he shall know--"

"What?" laughed Hadrian.

"The way you behave to me."

"Till then the dog shall stay where it is, and really under due restraint. But I can tell you man, that Hadrian is as much a friend of dogs as I am--and fonder of me than even of dogs."

"We will see," growled Keraunus, "I or the dog!"

"I am afraid it will be the dog then."

"And Rome will see a fresh revolt," cried Keraunus, rolling his eyes.

"You took Egypt from the Ptolemies."

"And with very good reason--besides that is a stale old story."

"Justice is never stale, like a bad debt."

"At any rate it perishes with persons it concerns; there have been no Lagides left here--how many years?"

"So you believe, because it suits your ends to believe it," replied the steward. "In the man who stands before you flows the blood of the Macedonian rulers of this country. My eldest son bears the name of Ptolemaeus Helios--that borne by the last of the Lagides, who perished as you pretend."

"Dear, good, blind Helios!" interrupted the black slave; for he was accustomed to avail himself of the hapless child's name as a protection, when Keraunus was in a doubtful humor.

"Then the last descendant of the Ptolemies is blind!" laughed the Emperor. "Rome may ignore his claims. But I will inform the Emperor how dangerous a pretender this roof yet harbors."

"Denounce me, accuse me, calumniate me!" cried the steward, contemptuously. "But I will not let myself be trodden on. Patience--patience! you will live to know me yet."

"And you, the blood-hound," replied Hadrian, "if you do not this instant quit the room with your mouthing crow--"

Keraunus signed to his slave and without greeting his foe in any way, turned his back upon him. He paused for a moment at the door of the room and cried out to Hadrian:

"Rely upon this, I shall complain to the Council and write to Caesar how you presume to behave to a Macedonian citizen."

As soon as the steward had quitted the room, Hadrian freed the dog, which flew raging at the door which was closed between him and the object of his aversion. Hadrian ordered him to be quiet, and then turning to his companion, he exclaimed:

"A perfect monster of a man! to the last degree ridiculous, and at the same time repulsive. How his rage seethed in him, and yet could not break out fairly and thoroughly. I am always on my guard with such obstinate fools. Pay attention to my Argus, and remember, we are in Egypt, the land of poison, as Homer long since said. Mastor must keep his eyes open--Here he is at last."

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Have lived to feel such profound contempt for the world
In order to find himself for once in good company--(Solitude)
Never speaks a word too much or too little
They keep an account in their heart and not in their head

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