

JULIAN THE APOSTATE



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Julian the **A**postate

By

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INTRODUCTION.

The present trend toward romantic fiction is the sign of a healthy reaction in literature. It sounds the death of the pseudo-realism so rampantly self-assertive during the last decade.

That realism divided itself into two camps. The pornographists, like Zola, engaged in accurate but purely pathological studies of the hog that lies couchant in all humanity, and even after twenty centuries of Christianity is still rampant in many of us. They gave us a portion of the truth. Now a portion can never be real. On the other side were the photographers, like Henry James, and W. D. Howells, who used their flashlights only upon man and woman in full-dress, smiling pleasantly and with their company-manners assumed for the occasion. Of the infinite capacities of the human heart for good or for evil these writers gave us but the vaguest intimations. Hence they, also, saw but a portion of the truth. Hence they, also, were essentially unreal.

But the advent of the new school of Stanley Weyman, Anthony Hope, and, greatest of all, Sienkiewicz and Mereshkovski, marks a return to the ever-new and ever-old, the historical and romantic fiction which pleased our forefathers and mayhap will continue to please our descendants to the end. These novelists dare to take large canvases and paint upon them stirring and splendid scenes, lit up by human passion. They do not

represent man as all dirt, nor as a deity, but render him in his aspect as he lived and lives:

**Half dirt, half deity, unfit alike
To soar or sink.**

They reproduce for us the actual heroes or villains, in high places and in low, who have stormed across the past of the world, and they kin them to the present by showing us more or less directly how they were actuated by the same mixture of noble and ignoble motives that rule the human breast of to-day.

I have mentioned Mereshkovski in the same breath with Sienkiewicz because he seems to me equal in the power of reproducing the pagan or semi-pagan past in its gorgeous decadence. His portrait of Julian the Apostate is well worthy a place besides the portrait of Nero in *Quo Vadis*, and I am not sure that it was not the more difficult task. Julian, a much more complex character than Nero, required infinitely more delicacy in the high-lights and in the shading, more chiar-oscuro, a finer technique, in short, on the part of the artist. Yet Julian in the one book stands out as boldly and intelligibly as Nero in the other.

Julian the Apostate, in fact, is one of the most interesting characters in history. Notwithstanding his early death and the shortness of his reign—it is with a start we remind ourselves that he was barely thirty when he died and had been Emperor for only a year and a half—he made a mighty impress upon his time. Historians may call him a reactionary engaged in a hopeless struggle against destiny, sociologists an atavist, strug-

gling for the restoration of the extinct civilization of which he was a laggard type, and humorists a Mrs. Partington combating the roaring onslaught of the advancing ocean with mop and broom. They would all be right. Yet the more hopeless the task he set himself, the more extraordinary was the measure of Julian's achievement. During the eighteen months when he held the mastery of the world it almost seemed that he would turn backward the wheels of progress, abolish the present, and project the past into the future. But he was struck down in battle in the very heyday of his power. The dying cry which has been put into his mouth, "Thou hast conquered, Galilean!" may be only a poetical figment, nevertheless it is an embodiment of historical truth.

With the death of him who had been shudderingly styled Antichrist by the followers of the new faith, the victory of Christ and of that new faith was made complete.

Mereshkovski has presented a brilliant and effective picture not only of this central figure but of the epoch in which he lived, when Catholics and Arians were but the largest factions in a host of contending sects which made up an inharmonious camp of Christians. He has reproduced the ever-changing moods of the period, its habits, its manners, its passions, its entire life, in short, with the rarest fidelity to history and to human nature.

Basing his work upon the eternal verities he is far more real than the self-styled "realists."

WILLIAM SHEPARD.



JULIAN THE APOSTATE.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

SCUDILO AND THE MAGICIAN.

Twenty stadia from Cesarea of Cappadocia, on the wooded spurs of the Argian hills, beside the great Roman road, was a spring of warm, healing water. A block of stone, with coarsely-graven sculptures of human figures and Greek inscriptions, bore witness that the spring had once been consecrated to the brothers Castor and Pollux, the Dioscuri. The images of the heathen gods remaining uninjured were held to be the images of the Christian saints Cosmas and Damian.

On the other side of the road, opposite the holy spring, was built a low tavern, covered with straw thatch, with a foully-kept courtyard for cattle, and a shed for fowl and geese. In the tavern could be had goat's cheese, grey bread, honey, olive oil and the sour local wine. The tavern was kept by the crafty Armenian, Syrophenix.

A partition divided the tavern in two parts,—one for the common folk,—the other for more esteemed guests. Under the ceiling, blackened by acrid smoke, hung hams and bunches of scented

mountain herbs, for Fortunata, the wife of Syrophenix, was a notable housewife.

The tavern had an evil name. Honest people did not remain there after nightfall. There were rumors of dark deeds done under that low roof. But Syrophenix was cunning, and could give a bribe when need was, and so came forth dry out of the water.

The partition consisted of two slender columns and of an old faded cloak of Fortunata's, instead of a curtain. The columns, with their naive pretension to Doric style, were the one elegance of the inn and the pride of Syrophenix. Once gilded, they were long since cracked and peeled. The once bright purple, but now dusty blue cloak, was variegated with innumerable stains, the traces of all the breakfasts, suppers and dinners that recalled to the beneficent Fortunata ten years of her family life.

In the clean half, shut off by the curtain, on the narrow couch, worn through in many places, beside a table with a pewter mixing-bowl and wine-cups on it, reclined Marcus Scudilo, the Roman military tribune of the sixteenth legion, and the ninth cohort. Marcus was a provincial dandy, with one of those faces at sight of which forward slave-girls and the cheap heterae of the suburbs cried out in simple-hearted ecstasy: "What a handsome man!" At his feet, on the same couch, in an humble and uncomfortable attitude, sat a stout man, red-faced and short of breath, with a bald head and thin, grey hair drawn forward from the nape of his neck to the temples,—Publius Aquila, the centurion of the eighth hundred. At a little distance off, on the

floor, twelve Roman legionaries were playing at knuckle-bones.

"I swear by Hercules!" exclaimed Scudilo, "I would rather be the last man in Constantinople than the first in a mouse-hole. Is this life, Publius? Come, answer with a clear conscience,—is this life? You know that nothing is coming but drill and the barracks and the camp. You rot in a foul marsh and do not see the light!"

"Yes, you may well say it, life here is not gay," assented Publius, "but then how peaceful."

The old centurion was watching the knuckle-bones. The game was an absorbing one. Pretending to listen to his superior's gossip, and nodding to his words, he watched the game under his brows, and thought: "If the red-headed fellow throws cleverly he is likely to win." Then, for the sake of appearances, Publius asked the tribune, as though the question interested him:

"Why do you say the prefect Helvidius is angry with you?"

"Because of a woman, my friend, all because of a woman."

And Marcus Scudilo, in a fit of talkative confidence, with a great show of mystery, speaking in the centurion's ear, related that the prefect, "that old he-goat Helvidius," was jealous of him on account of a newly-arrived hetera, a Lilybæum. And Scudilo wished to win back the prefect's favor at once by some considerable service. Not far from Cesarea, in the fortress of Macellum, Julian and Gallus were confined,—the cousins of the ruling Emperor Constantius, and nephews of Constantine the Great, the last scions of the ill-starred house of Flavius. On ascending the throne,

through fear of rivals, Constantius had assassinated his uncle, the father of Julian and Gallus, Constantine's brother, Julius Constantius. Many other victims fell. But Julian and Gallus they spared, sending them to the lonely fortress of Macellum. The prefect in Cesarea was in serious difficulties. Knowing that the new emperor hated the two boys, who reminded him of his crime, Helvidius wished and yet feared to divine the emperor's will. Julian and Gallus lived in perpetual dread of death. The crafty tribune, Scudilo, dreaming of the possibility of a career at court, understood from the hints of his superior that he could not decide to take the responsibility on himself, and was frightened by the rumors of the escape of Constantine's heirs. Then Marcus Scudilo decided to go with a company of legionaries to Macellum, to arrest the prisoners at his own risk, and to bring them to Cesarea, holding that he had nothing to fear from two youths, mere abandoned orphans, detested by the emperor. By this daring deed, he hoped to regain the favor of the prefect Helvidius, which he had lost for the golden-haired Lilybæum.

But he only told Publius a part of his plan, and this with the utmost caution.

"What do you wish to do, Scudilo? Have orders come from Constantinople?"

"No, there are no orders. No one knows anything for certain. But rumors, you see, a thousand different rumors, and expectations, and hints, and insinuations, and threats, and secrets,—oh, no end of secrets! For things like that you get thanks. Any fool can carry out an order. But you must guess the ruler's will without words!

Let us see, let us try, let us look out. Most of all, courage, courage, signing yourself with the sign of the cross! I depend on you, Publius. Mayhap, we shall both soon be drinking at court, and a better wine than this."

Through the small, latticed window fell the melancholy light of a gloomy evening. The rain pattered monotonously.

Further on, beyond a thin clay wall, with many holes in it, was a stable. A smell of manure came from it. The clucking of hens, the shrill piping of chickens and the grunting of pigs were mingled together.

Milk was pouring into an echoing vessel; the housewife was milking her cows. The soldiers were quarreling about the stakes, and abused each other in whispers. At the level of the ground, between the osier wattles, lightly smeared with clay, the soft pink snout of a sucking pig peeped through a crevice. He had got caught in a trap, and could not draw back his head, and squeaked piteously.

Publius thought:

"Well, that is all very well, but meanwhile we are nearer the courtyard than the court."

His excitement had passed. The tribune also, after his incautious confidences, had grown weary. He looked at the grey rainy sky, through the window, at the pig's snout, at the sour lees of the bad wine in the pewter bowl, at the dirty soldiers, and bitterness came over him.

He struck his fist on the table till it staggered on its uneven legs.

"Here, you rogue, you betrayer of Christ, Syro-

phenix! Come here. What kind of wine is that, you rascal?"

The inn-keeper ran up. He had hair as black as jet, in little curls, and a beard as black, even with a bluish tinge, and also in innumerable little ringlets. In moments of conjugal tenderness, Fortunata used to say that Syrophenix's beard was like a cluster of sweet grapes. His eyes were also black and of uncommon sweetness. A wonderfully sweet smile never left his lips, bright red lips. He was like a caricature of Dionysus, god of wine, and seemed altogether black and sweet.

The inn-keeper swore by Moses, and Dindymene, and Christ, and Hercules, that the wine was excellent; but the tribune declared that he knew in whose house Glabrio, the Pamphylian merchant, had his throat cut a short time back, and that he would bring him, Syrophenix, to trial one of these days. The terrified Armenian rushed at full speed to the cellar, and soon came back, triumphantly carrying a bottle of unusual form, wide and flat below, with a narrow neck, covered with cobwebs and moss, as if it was grey with old age. Through the cobwebs here and there appeared the glass, no longer transparent, but dull, with a slight rainbow tint. On a billet of cypress-wood, hung around the neck of the bottle, you could make out the letters "*Anthosmium*," and, further on, "*annorum centum*" (a hundred years).

But Syrophenix vowed that the wine had been a hundred years old in the time of the Emperor Diocletian.

"Dark?" asked Publius, ecstatically.

"As pitch, and perfumed like ambrosia. Ho, Fortunata, for a wine like this we need the crystal

glasses. And bring us some fresh, white snow from the ice-house."

Fortunata brought two goblets. Her face had a color of perfect health, with a pleasant yellowish bloom, like the ripest plums. It seemed that rustic freshness breathed from her, and a scent of new milk, a farmyard smell.

The inn-keeper glanced at the bottle with a sigh of adoration, and kissed the neck of it. Then he carefully removed the wax seal and uncorked it. They put snow in the bottom of the crystal cup. The wine trickled forth in a thick, black, scented stream, the snow melted from the strength of the fiery Anthosmian, and the crystal sides of the goblet were dimmed and bedewed by the cold. Then Scudilo, who had had a cheap education,—he was capable of confusing Hecuba and Hecate,—pompously repeated the single verse of Martial that he remembered:

"The crystal's whiteness darkens with old Falernian."

"Wait a moment. It will taste better yet."

And Syrophenix plunged his hand into his deep pocket and brought forth a little phial, cut from a single onyx, and with a feeling smile carefully poured into the wine a single drop of precious Arabian cinnamon. The drop fell into the black Anthosmian, like a dull, white pearl, and melted into the wine. A sweet, strange odor pervaded the room.

While the tribune drank slowly, in rapture, Syrophenix clucked his tongue:

"Byblian, or Maronian from Thrace, or Lacedonian from Chios, or Icarian wine, are all rubbish compared to this."

It grew dark. Scudilo gave the order to proceed homewards. The legionaries buckled on their breastplates and helmets, fastened the yellow greaves on their right legs, and took their shields and swords.

When they had passed beyond the partition, the Isaurian shepherds, looking like brigands, sitting round their fire, rose respectfully before the Roman tribune. He was full of the sense of his own dignity, and his head hummed, and his veins glowed with the fire of the noble wine. On the threshold, a man came up to him, in a strange eastern dress, a white robe, with red, transverse stripes and a high, many-storied headgear of felt, a Persian tiara, that looked like a tower. Scudilo stopped. The Persian's face was refined, long and thin, of a yellowish olive color. His narrow, piercing eyes were full of deep, crafty thought. In his every movement there was an expression of haughty calm. He was one of the wandering conjurers and astrologers, who proudly called themselves Chaldeans, Magians, and Mathematicians. He immediately informed the tribune that his name was Nogodares; he was staying with Syrophenix on his journey; his path lay from distant Adiabene to the shores of the Ionian Sea, to the renowned philosopher and theurgian, Maximus of Ephesus. The magian asked permission to exhibit his art and to tell the tribune's fortune.

They closed the shutters. The Persian prepared something on the floor. Suddenly a slight crackling was heard. All became silent. A ruddy flame rose in a long, thin tongue from the smoke, which filled the room with its white clouds. Nogodares put a two-stemmed, reed-pipe to his blood-

less lips and played, and the sound was sombre, pitiful and reminiscent of a Lydian funeral song. The flame, as if affected by this mournful sound, grew yellow, then faded, and then flashed up again with a faint, pale blue light. The magian threw some dried herbs into the flame. A strong, pleasant odor filled the room. The odor also seemed melancholy; like the odor of half-dried grass, on a misty evening, in the dead wilderness of Arachosia or Drangina.

And hearing the melancholy sound of the two-stemmed pipe, a large snake began to glide forth slowly from a black basket at the magician's feet, unwinding its folds with a rustling sound, and glittering with a metallic sheen. Then he began to sing in a low, monotonous voice, so that the song seemed to come from afar. And he repeated the same words: "Mara, mara, mara," many times. The snake wound itself around his lean body, and caressingly, with a soft hissing, brought its flat, green, scaly head, with eyes glowing like carbuncles, close to the magician's ear; the long-forked tongue flashed out hissing, as if it was whispering something. The magician threw the flute on the ground. The flame again filled the room with dim, white smoke, but this time with a heavy narcotic odor, as if of the tomb, and suddenly went out. It grew dark and fearsome. All were bewildered. But when they opened the shutters, and the leaden light of the rainy twilight entered the room, there was not a trace of the snake and the black basket. The faces of all seemed deadly pale.

Nogodares came close to the tribune:

"Rejoice! The great and signal favor of the

blessed Augustus awaits you; the early favor of the Emperor Constantius."

Then for some moments he examined Scudilo's hand and the lines in his palm inquisitively, and, quickly bending to his ear, so that no one could hear, said in a whisper:

"Blood, the blood of Cæsar is on this hand."

Scudilo was terrified.

"How dare you, cursed Chaldean dog? I am a loyal servant!"

But the other almost mockingly gazed into his face, with a penetrating glance of his cunning eyes, and whispered:

"What do you fear? After many years. And can you win glory without blood?"

When the soldiers left the tavern, pride and gladness filled the heart of Scudilo. He approached the holy spring, piously crossing himself, and drank some of the healing water, invoking Cosmas and Damian in heartfelt prayer, and secretly hoping that the soothsaying of Nogodares would not prove vain. Then he sprang on his splendid Cappadocian stallion, and gave the sign for the legionaries to march. The standard-bearer raised the standard of purple cloth embroidered with a dragon. The tribune was overcome by a desire to make a show before the crowd streaming out from the tavern of Syrophenix. He knew that it was dangerous, but could not restrain himself, intoxicated with wine and pride. Stretching out his sword in the direction of the mist-covered fortress, he cried out loudly and haughtily:

"To Macellum!"

A murmur of astonishment arose; the names of Julian and Gallus were uttered.



Julian 1.

A Wandering Conjuror. (P. 14.)

The trumpeter, standing in front, gave the signal, blowing his copper "buccina," twisted upward in several curves, like a ram's horn.

The long-drawn sound of the Roman trumpet echoed far up the cliff, and the mountain echo sent it back again.

CHAPTER II.

JULIAN'S DREAM.

Darkness reigned in the great sleeping-chamber of Macellum, once the palace of the Cappadocian kings.

Ten-year-old Julian's bed was hard; a bare board, covered with a leopard-skin. The boy himself desired it so. It was not in vain that his old tutor, Mardonius, deifying the wisdom of old, educated him in the stern principles of the Stoic philosophy.

Julian could not sleep. The wind rose from time to time in gusts and wailed mournfully in the crevices like some captive animal. Then came sudden stillness. And in that strange stillness he could hear the large rain-drops fall from time to time, with metallic resonance, on the stone flags, evidently from a great height. It seemed to Julian that in the dark shadow of the vaulted roof he could catch the swift rustle of a bat's wings. He could distinguish the heavy breathing of his brother, sleeping on a soft couch,—for he was a delicate and fastidious lad,—under the old-fashioned, dusty baldachin, the last remnant of the

luxury of the Cappadocian kings. The heavy snore of the pedagogue Mardonius was heard in the next room.

Suddenly the small, heavily-clamped door of the secret staircase in the wall creaked softly and opened, and a ray of light dazzled Julian's eyes. The old slave-woman, Labda, entered. She was carrying a bronze lamp in her hand.

"Nurse, I am afraid; do not take the light away."

The old woman set the lamp in the semi-circular stone niche above Julian's pillow.

"You are not asleep? Is your head aching? Are you hungry? That old sinner Mardonius half starves you. I have brought you some honey-wafers. They are good! Taste!"

To feed Julian was Labda's greatest delight. But Mardonius did not allow it, by day, so she brought him dainties secretly at night.

Labda, a half-blind old woman, who could hardly drag her feet after her, always went about in the black robe of a nun. She was considered a Thessalian witch. But she was a pious Christian. The haziest ancient and modern superstitions were mingled in her mind into a strange, wild religion. She mixed prayers and incantations, Olympian gods and goat-legged demons, the rites of the Church and witchcraft. She was hung all over with little crosses, sacreligious amulets of dead bones, and charms from the relics of saints.

The old woman loved Julian devotedly, with a superstitious love, holding the boy to be the sole lawful heir of the Emperor Constantine, and Constantius a murderer and a usurper.

Labda knew, as no one else did, the whole

genealogical tree, and all the immemorial family traditions of the house of Flavius, and remembered Julian's grandfather, Constantius Chlorus. Bloody court secrets were hidden in her memory. At night the old woman told everything to Julian, indiscriminately discerning. And though there was much which his childish mind could not understand, his heart died within him from dim dread and indignation. With dull eyes, and even monotonous voice, she related these terrible, endless stories, as people tell old tales.

Setting down the lamp, the old woman crossed Julian, looked to see whether the amber amulet on his breast was safe, and repeating two or three incantations, to drive away evil spirits, she disappeared.

Julian sank into a heavy half-sleep. He was hot, and those slow, heavy drops of water tortured him, falling through the silence, from above, as if into a resounding vessel.

And he could not tell whether he was asleep or not; whether it was the night wind blowing, or old Labda, like one of the Fates, muttering and whispering in his ear the terrible traditions of his family. What he had heard from her, and what he himself had seen in his childhood, mingled together in a confused delirium.

He saw the corpse of the great emperor on a splendid catafalque. The dead man was rouged and powdered; a many-storied head-dress of false hair had been made by skilful wig-makers. They brought little Julian to kiss his grandfather's hand for the last time. The child was afraid. He was dazzled by the purple, the diadem on the false curls and the blaze of precious stones, glittering

in the light of the funeral candles. Through the heavy Arabian incense he smelt the odor of death, the smell of decay, for the first time. But the courtiers, the bishops, the eunuchs, the generals greeted the emperor as if he was alive; ambassadors bowed before him, maintaining their pompous etiquette; the servants of the government read out edicts, laws and decrees of the senate, seeking the dead man's assent, as if he could still hear, and a whisper of flattery hovered over the crowd: people assured each other that he was so great that by the special grace of Providence he alone reigned, even after his death.

And the boy knows that he slew his own son. The young hero's whole fault lay in this, that the people loved him. The son was calumniated by his stepmother; she loved her stepson with a criminal love, and took vengeance on him, as Phædra did on Hippolytus. Afterward it was discovered that the wife of Cæsar was concerned in a criminal intrigue with one of the slaves employed in the imperial stables, and she was stifled in a bath of scalding water. Then came the turn of the noble Licinius. Corpse after corpse, victim after victim. The monarch, tortured by conscience, prayed the hierophants of the pagan mysteries to purify him, but they refused. Then Bishop Oscius assured him that in religion alone there were mysteries able to cleanse him, even from such crimes as these. And so a splendid Labarum, a standard with the monogram of the Christ, in precious stones, now glittered above the catafalque of him who slew his son.

Julian wished to wake, to open his eyes, and could not. The resounding drops fell as before,

like heavy, slow tears, and the wind whispered; but it seemed to him that it was not the wind, but that Labda was whispering, like an ancient Fate, muttering in his ear the terrible tales of the house of Flavius, with her toothless lips.

Julian dreamed that he was in the cold dampness, beside the porphyry sarcophagi, filled with the dust of kings, in the family crypt of Constantius Chlorus. Labda was covering him, and hiding him in the darkest corner, among the coffins; and was rocking sick Gallus to sleep, for he was ill with fever. Suddenly a death-like cry echoed up above in the palace, from room to room, beneath the vaulted stone roofs of the resounding, deserted arcades. Julian recognized his father's voice, and tried to cry out in answer and to run to him. But Labda held the boy back with her bony hands, and whispered: "Hush, hush, or they will come!" and covered him over from head to foot. Then slow steps sounded on the stairs, ever nearer and nearer. Labda crossed the boy and whispered incantations. A knock at the door, and by the gleam of torches were seen the soldiers of Cæsar. They were disguised as monks. The Bishop Eusebius, of Nicomedia, led them. Breast-plates gleamed under their black gowns.

"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, open! Who is here?"

Labda shrank into the corner with the children. And again reëchoed the words:

"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, who is here?" And again the third time. Then the murderers probed the corners, with their naked sword-blades. Labda

threw herself at their feet, and showed them sick Gallus and helpless Julian.

“Fear God! What can a five-year-old boy do against the emperor?” And the soldiers forced all three of them to kiss the cross in the hands of Eusebius and swear fealty to the new emperor. Julian remembered the great cross of enameled cypress wood, with the image of the Saviour; lower down, on the old, dark wood, were visible traces of fresh blood, reddening the hands of the murderer who held the cross. It might be the blood of his father, or of one of his six cousins, Dalmatius, Hannibalianus, Nepotianus, Constantine, the younger, or the others. The fratricide stepped over seven corpses to mount the throne, and all was accomplished in the name of Him who was crucified on the cross. And more and more,—many a victim to count and to remember whom was difficult.

Julian awoke from fear and from the silence. The loud, slow drops had ceased to fall. The wind was stilled. The lamp, unflickering, burned in the niche with a steady, thin, long tongue of flame. He sprang up on his bed, listening to the loud beating of his own heart. The silence was deathlike and intolerable. Suddenly, below, resounded loud voices and steps, from room to room, under the vaulted roofs of stone, along the echoing, deserted arcades, here in Macellum, as there in the crypt of the Flavii. Julian shuddered; he thought he was still delirious. The steps drew near and the voices grew clearer. Then he cried out:

“Brother! brother! are you sleeping? Mar-donius! Do you not hear?”

Gallus awoke. Mardonius, barefoot, with disheveled gray hair, in a short night tunic—a eunuch, with wrinkled, yellow and puffy face, like an old woman's,—ran to the secret door.

“The prefect's soldiers! Dress quickly! We must flee!”

But it was too late. The creak of iron was heard. The small, iron-studded door was shut from the outside. On the stone pillars of the great stairway gleamed the light of torches, and in the light appeared the purple standard and the shining cross with the monogram of the Christ on the helmet of one of the legionaries.

“In the name of the orthodox and blessed Augustus, the Emperor Constantius, I Marcus Scudilo, tribune of the legion of Fretensis, take under my ward Julian and Gallus, sons of the patrician Julius.”

Mardonius, with his sword drawn, stood, barring the path of the soldiers, before the closed door of the sleeping-chamber, in a most martial pose. His sword was dull and good for nothing. It served the old pedagogue only during the lessons of the Iliad to show his pupils, by living examples in classic pose, how Hector fought with Achilles. The scholastic Achilles could hardly have beheaded a fowl. Now he flourished the dull sword before Publius' nose, according to all the rules of the military art of Homer's time. Publius, who was drunk, grew furious at this.

“Out of the way you lard-bladder, old carrion, wind-bellows! Away, if you do not want me to pierce a hole and let the wind out of you!”

He seized Mardonius by the throat and threw him so far that he struck the wall and almost fell.

Scudilo ran to the doors of the sleeping-chamber and flung them open.

The steady flame of the bronze lamp grew pale in the red light of the torches.

And the tribune for the first time in his life beheld the last descendants of Constantius Chlorus. Gallus looked tall and strong. But his skin was fine, white and soft, like a girl's. His eyes were light blue, lazy and indifferent. His hair was fair as flax,—a common sign of the race of Constantine,—and, falling in curls, it covered his strong, healthy neck. In spite of the manly mold of his body and the light down beginning to appear on his chin, eighteen-year-old Gallus seemed a mere boy; such innocent bewilderment and childish fear were manifested in his face. His lips trembled like a little child's when it is beginning to cry, and he helplessly winked his eyelids, red and swollen with sleep, with their light lashes, and slowly crossed himself, whispering: "Lord have mercy! Lord have mercy!"

Julian was a lank child, lean and pale. His face was ugly and irregular. His hair was coarse, smooth and black. His nose was too large. His lower lip stuck out. But his eyes were remarkable; making his face one of those which once seen can never be forgotten,—large, strange, changeable, with a mature, intense and morbidly bright glitter, which sometimes seemed mad. Publius, who in his youth had often seen Constantine the Great, thought:

"That boy will be like his uncle."

Julian's fear at the presence of the soldiers vanished. He felt only anger. Clenching his teeth, he cast the leopard-skin from the bed across his

shoulders and gazed at Scudilo steadily, with knit brows, and his protruding lip trembled. In his right hand, under the leopard-skin, he grasped the hilt of a keen Persian dagger, secretly given to him by Labda. The point was poisoned with a deadly venom.

"Wolf's cub!" muttered one of the legionaries, pointing at Julian, to one of his companions.

Scudilo wished to pass the threshold of the sleeping-chamber, when a new thought came to Mardonius. He cast his useless sword away, caught the tribune by his cloak, and suddenly cried out in a piercing, unexpectedly shrill and womanish voice:

"What are you doing, knave! How dare you insult the messenger of the Emperor Constantius? I am charged to bring these imperial scions to the court. Augustus has restored them to his favor! Here is the order from Constantinople."

"What does he say? What order?"

Scudilo glanced at Mardonius. The wrinkled old-woman's face bore witness that he was really a eunuch. The tribune had never seen Mardonius before, but he well knew in what high favor the eunuchs were held at the emperor's court.

Mardonius hastily drew a packet forth from the great book-chest, with the parchment rolls of Hesiod and Homer, and gave it to the tribune.

Scudilo unrolled it and turned pale. He only read the first words, saw the name of the emperor, who called himself, in the edict, "Our Eternity," and did not notice either the year or the month. When the tribune saw the immense and familiar seal of the emperor, of dark green wax, on gilded

ribbons, a mist came before his eyes. He felt his knees trembling.

"Forgive me! This is a mistake!"

"What, you knaves! forth from here; don't leave a trace of yourselves! And drunk, too! The emperor shall know all!"

Mardonius quickly snatched the paper from Scudilo's trembling hands.

"Do not ruin me! We are all brothers; we are all sinful people. I pray you in the name of Christ."

"I know what you do in the name of Christ, rascal! Forth from here!"

The poor tribune made a sign of surrender. Then Mardonius once more raised the blunt sword and, brandishing it, took the classic pose of an ancient warrior. The drunken centurion alone struggled toward him, crying:

"Let me go, let me go! I'll stick him and see how the old lard-bladder bursts!"

They dragged the drunken man away by the arms.

When their steps had ceased, and Mardonius was satisfied that the danger was over, he laughed aloud. His whole flabby, effeminate body quivered with laughter. The old man forgot the dignity and decency of the pedagogue and hopped about on his weak, bare legs, in his night tunic, crying out exultantly:

"Children, my children! Glory be to Hermes! We cheated them cleverly! The edict is three years old. Fools, fools!"

Before sunrise Julian sank into a deep, quiet sleep. He awoke late, refreshed and gay, when the pale blue sky was gleaming through the high lattice of the window of the sleeping-chamber.

CHAPTER III.

THE MONK EUTROPIUS.

In the morning came the lesson in the catechism. The teacher of theology was the monk Eutropius, an Arian presbyter, with hands that were always damp, cold and bony; with pale, melancholy, frog-like eyes; bent, long as a pole, thin as a splinter. He had a repulsive habit of furtively licking the palm of his hand, then quickly stroking his thin, gray temples with it, and immediately clasping his fingers together and cracking his knuckles. Julian knew that the one movement would inevitably be followed by the other, and this irritated him to the verge of madness. Eutropius wore a patched black gown with many stains, asserting that he wore poor garments from humility. In reality, he was a miser.

Eusebius, of Nicomedia, Julian's spiritual guardian, had chosen this teacher.

The monk suspected in his young pupil a secret contumacy of spirit, which, if not overcome, in the teacher's opinion, threatened Julian with everlasting damnation.

The teacher was unwearying in speaking of the feelings which the boy ought to entertain toward his benefactor Constantius. Whether he was explaining the text of the New Testament, or the Arian dogmas, or the allegories of the prophets, everything led to that, to "the root of holy obedience and filial subjection." It seemed that the

religion of love, with all its martyr sacrifices, was only the flight of steps up which the triumphant Constantius had ascended to the throne. But sometimes while the monk was speaking of the emperor's benefactions heaped on Julian, the boy looked into his teacher's eyes with a deep and silent gaze. He knew the monk's thoughts at the moment, and the monk likewise knew the thoughts of his pupil. And neither of them uttered a word.

But afterward, if Julian broke down, forgetting some text, or the names of the Old Testament patriarchs, or failed to repeat some prayer, Eutropius looked at him exulting, in silence, with his frog-like eyes, and softly caught Julian's ear between his finger and thumb, as if caressing him. The boy felt the two sharp, cruel nails slowly burying themselves in his ear. Eutropius, in spite of his forbidding character, was of a mocking and even gay humor. He gave his pupil the tenderest titles: "My dear," "first-born of my soul," "my beloved son," and made sport of his imperial origin. Every time when he pinched Julian's ear, and his pupil grew white with anger rather than with pain, Eutropius said in a cringing voice:

"Is not your Majesty displeased with your humble and unlearned slave, Eutropius?"

"And, licking his palm, he stroked his temple and softly cracked his knuckles, adding that it would sometimes be a good thing, a very good thing, to give ill-tempered and idle boys a lesson with the rod, that this was even the counsel of Holy Writ, that the rod enlightened a dark and rebellious spirit. This he said only to subdue the "devilish spirit of pride" in Julian. The boy knew that Eutropius would not dare to carry out

his threats; and the monk himself was secretly convinced that the boy would rather die than allow himself to be beaten. Yet the teacher often spoke of it, and at great length.

At the end of a lesson, when a text was being explained, Julian happened to drop some hint of the antipodes, about which he had heard from Mardonius. Perhaps Julian did this intentionally to exasperate the monk. But the latter laughing a thin, crackling laugh, carefully covered his mouth with his hand.

“And who told you about the antipodes, my dear? Well, you have made me laugh, sinner that I am. I know, I know that the old fool Plato speaks of them somewhere. And so you believe that people walk upside down?”

And Eutropius set himself to confute the godless heresy of the philosophers. Was it not shameful to think that men, made in the image and likeness of the Creator, should walk on their heads, making a mockery of the firmament? And when Julian, wounded for his beloved sages, spoke of the earth's spherical form, Eutropius suddenly ceased laughing and flew into such a passion that he grew scarlet, and stamped his feet.

“You have heard this godless lie from Mardonius, from that old heathen!”

When he was angry he stuttered in his speech, and the spittle flew in flecks from his lips. It seemed to Julian that this spittle was poisonous. The monk fell savagely on all the sages of Hellas. He forgot that he was speaking to a child and launched into a whole sermon, which wounded Julian in a sensitive place. He attacked Pythagoras, as an old man fallen into his dotage, in

the most shameful terms. And Plato's ravings seemed to him not worth talking about. He simply called them abominable, and spoke of the great pupil of Socrates as an imbecile.

"Read what Diogenes Laerlius says about Socrates," he said to Julian, with malicious pleasure, "and you will see that he was a usurer, and besides that, he stained himself with sins which it is not lawful even to speak about."

But a special detestation was awakened in him toward Epicurus.

"I hold him to be unworthy of an answer. The bestiality with which he plunged into all kinds of passions, and the baseness with which he made himself the slave of sensual pleasures, show well enough that he was not a man, but a beast!"

Quieting down a little, he began to explain some impalpable shade of Arian dogma, falling with peculiar bitterness on the orthodox Catholic Church, which Eutropius counted heretical.

Through the window, from the splendid, deserted garden, came a breath of freshness. Julian pretended to listen attentively to Eutropius. In reality he was thinking of other things,—thinking of his dear teacher Mardonius, and remembering his learned lectures, his readings from Homer and Hesiod. How unlike they were to the monk's lessons!

Mardonius did not read Homer, but chanted him in the manner of the old rhapsodists, and Labda laughed at him, saying that he howled like a dog at the moon. And in fact, for people who were not used to it, it was droll at first. The old eunuch conscientiously scanned every foot of the hexameters, waving his hand in time, and a tri-

umphant grandeur covered his yellow, wrinkled face. But as his thin, womanish voice grew ever louder and louder Julian no longer noticed the the old man's ugliness, but only his living, passionate soul, moved and stirred by the perfection of beauty. A shiver of delight ran down his back. The divine hexameters mingled and flowed like waves. He saw the parting of Hector and Andromache; Odysseus longing for his Ithaca, on Calypso's isle, before the sad, unharvested sea. And a sweet pain stirred Julian's heart; a longing for beloved, ever-living Hellas, the motherland of the gods, the motherland of all who love beauty. Tears trembled in the teacher's voice, tears flowed down his yellow cheeks.

At times Mardonius spoke to the boy of wisdom, of the stern worthies, of the death of heroes for freedom. And how unlike these speeches also were to the lessons of Eutropius; Mardonius told him of the life of Socrates. When he came to the "Apology" before the people of Athens, the teacher sprang to his feet, took up an attitude of stately dignity, and declaimed the philosopher's speech from memory. His face grew peaceful and rather disdainful. It seemed as if he were not judged by the people, but judging the people. Socrates asked not for mercy. All the power, all the laws of the state, were as nothing before the freedom of the human soul. The Athenians might put him to death, but could never take away the freedom and happiness of his immortal spirit. And when this Scythian, this barbarian, who had been bought a slave from the banks of the Borysthenes, loudly repeated "Liberty!" it seemed to Julian that there was such a superhuman beauty in that word that

even the fair imagery of Homer grew pale before it, and gazing with wide-open, almost ecstatic eyes, at his teacher, he trembled and grew white for very joy.

The boy woke up from his dreams, feeling the cold, bony fingers approaching his ears. The lesson in the catechism was at an end. Kneeling down, he pronounced a prayer of gratitude.

Then leaving Eutropius, he ran swiftly to his room, took a book, and went to his favorite nook in the garden, to read in peace. The book was interdicted: "The Symposium of the Blasphemous and Unclean Plato." On the stair, Julian unexpectedly ran into the departing Eutropius.

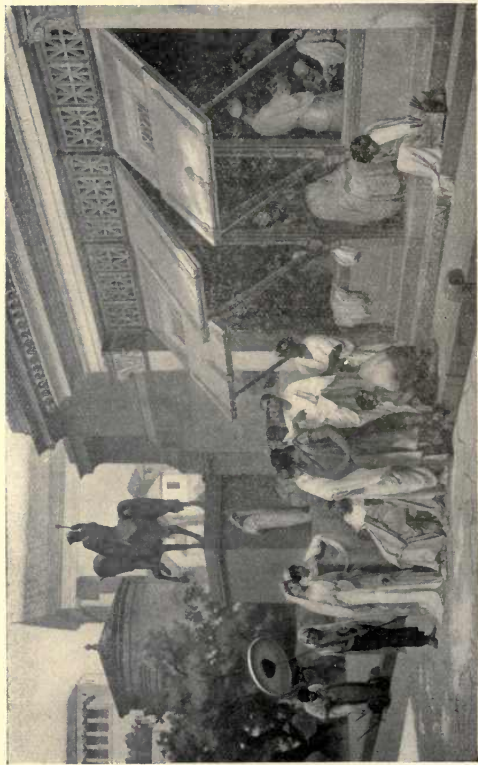
"Wait, wait, my dear! What sort of a book has you Majesty got?"

Julian looked up at him quietly and gave him the book.

On the parchment binding, Eutropius read the title in large letters: "The Epistles of Paul the Apostle." He gave it back, without opening it.

"Oh! that's it, is it? Remember that I am responsible for your soul before God, and before the mighty Emperor. Do not read heretical books, especially the philosophers, whose vain learning I sufficiently confuted to-day."

That was the boy's usual subterfuge. He wrapped the dangerous books in bindings with innocent titles. From his childhood, Julian had learned to dissemble, with more than a child's skill. He took a pleasure in deceiving, especially Eutropius. He sometimes pretended, dissembled, and deceived, without any particular need, from mere habit, misleading everyone except Mardonius, with a feeling of malicious and vengeful pleasure.



Julian 2.

A Street in Scelucia.

In Macellum, amongst numberless idle servants, men and women, there was no end of intrigue, slander, gossip, suspicion, tale-bearing. All this servile throng, in the hope of some personal profit, day and night spied on the royal brothers fallen into disfavor. Since Julian could remember, he had expected death from day to day, and little by little had almost grown accustomed to perpetual fear, knowing that neither in the house nor in the garden could he take a step or make a movement that might escape thousands of curious, unseen eyes. The boy heard much, and understood much, but had to pretend he neither heard nor understood. Once he overheard a few words of a conversation between Eutropius and a spy sent from Constantius, in which the monk called Julian and Gallus the royal whelps. At another time in the gallery, under the windows of the kitchen, the boy involuntarily heard how the drunken old cook, irritated by some impertinence of Gallus, said to the slave-woman, his paramour, who was washing dishes: "God protect my soul, Priscilla,—I cannot understand how it is they have not smothered them yet!"

When Julian, after the catechetical lesson, ran from the house, and saw the greenness of the trees, he breathed more freely.

The eternal snows of the two-peaked summit of the Argian mount gleamed white against the blueness of the sky. A cool breath blew from the neighboring glaciers. Paths led away into the distance, through the impenetrable shadow of southern stone-oaks, with their small, shining, dark-green leaves. Here and there a ray broke through, and fell on the green of the plane-trees. On one

side of the garden there was no wall. It ended there in a declivity. Beneath extended the dead desert to the very horizon, to Antitaurus. A hot breath came up from it; but in the garden, cold water sounded, murmuring and bubbling fountains played, and streamlets gurgled under clumps of oleanders. Macellum a century ago had been the favorite retreat of Ariarathes, the luxurious and half-mad king of Cappadocia.

Julian took his way with his Plato to a lonely grotto, not far from the declivity. There stood goat-legged Pan, playing his flute, and a little altar. From a lion's mouth, a stream of water fell into a marble shell. The entrance was curtained by tea-roses. Through them were seen the hillocks of the desert, misty-blue, undulating like the sea. The scent of the tea-roses filled the cave, and the air would have been heavy but for the crystal spring. The wind brought with it pale yellow leaves, strewing them on the ground, and in the water of the basin; and the humming of bees was heard in the warm, dark air.

Julian, lying on the moss, read the "Banquet." Much of it he did not understand. But the charm of the book lay in its being forbidden.

Laying Plato aside, he wrapped it again in the binding of the Epistles of Paul the Apostle, went softly up to Pan's altar, gazed a while at the jolly god, as at an old companion, and lying on his breast on the yellow leaves, brought forth from the interior of the altar, broken and covered with a thin board, an object which was carefully wrapped up in a piece of cloth. Unwrapping it tenderly, the boy set it before him. It was his own handiwork, a splendid toy ship, a Liburnian

trireme. He came close to the basin, and put the boat into the water. The trireme rocked on the little waves. It was complete,—three masts, rigging, oars, a gilded beak, and a sail, made from a silk rag that Labda had given him. It remained to make the rudder, and the boy set to work. Whittling a piece of wood, he looked away now and then into the distance, at the undulating hills that peeped between the roses. And over his toy ship he soon forgot all insults, all his hatred and perpetual fear of death. In his grotto, he imagined himself lost somewhere amongst the waves; in a desert cave, high above the sea,—subtle-souled Odysseus, building a ship to return to his beloved Ithaca. But there, among the hillocks, where gleamed the roofs of Cesarea, like the foam of the sea, a cross, a little, shining cross, over a basilica, tormented him. That everlasting cross! He tried not to see it, consoling himself with his trireme.

“Julian! Julian! Where is he? It is time for church! Eutropius is calling you to church!”

The boy shuddered, and hurriedly hid his trireme in the hollow of the altar.

Then he set his hair and clothing in order, and when he left the grotto, his face had again taken on its impenetrable and unchildlike expression of deep dissimulation, as if life had flown away from it.

Eutropius, holding Julian's hand in his cold, bony hand, led him to the church.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BASILICA OF SAINT MAURICE.

The Arian basilica of Saint Maurice was almost wholly built of stones from the ruined temple of Apollo.

The sacred court, the atrium, was surrounded on its four sides by colonnades. In the center a fountain bubbled, for the ablutions of the worshippers. In one of the side porticos was an old sarcophagus of carved and blackened oak. In the coffin lay the miracle-working remains of Saint Mamas. Eutropius set Julian and Gallus to build a stone grotto over the relics. The work of Gallus, who considered it a pleasant exercise, got on wonderfully; but Julian's wall kept falling all the time. Eutropius explained this by saying the Saint Mamas refused the offering of the boy, who was possessed of a spirit of demoniac pride.

Near the grotto was a crowd of sick folk, waiting to be healed. One of the Arian monks held a pair of scales. The pilgrims, many of them from distant villages, many parasargs off, carefully weighed pieces of linen, woolen or silk stuff, and laying them on the tomb of Saint Mamas, prayed for a long time, sometimes through the whole night until morning. Then they weighed the same piece of stuff again, to compare it with its former weight. If the stuff was heavier, it meant that the prayer was heard, that the saint had given his blessing like evening dew, falling on the silk, the

linen, or the wool, and now the stuff could heal diseases. But often the prayers remained unheard, the stuff remained light, and the pilgrims passed days, weeks, or months beside the tomb. There was one poor woman there, an old nun, Theodyle by name: some thought she was a saint; others thought her half mad. For years she had not left the tomb of Saint Mamas. The sick daughter, for whom the pilgrim had originally asked the saint's blessing, had died long ago, and Theodyle went on praying as before, over her piece of faded, ragged cloth.

From the atrium, three doors led into the Arian basilica: one of them into the men's division; another into the women's division; the third, to the division for the monks and the clergy.

Along with Gallus and Eutropius, Julian entered by the middle door. He was the anagnost of St. Maurice's; that is, the church reader. A long black robe with wide sleeves covered him. His hair, anointed with olive oil, was held back by a thin band, to keep it out of his eyes, while he was reading. He passed through the crowd, with humbly bent head. His pale face almost involuntarily took on the expression of hypocritical humility, which was indispensable, and to which he had long accustomed it.

He entered the high Arian ambo.

The frescoes on one of the walls represented the martyrdom of St. Euphemia. The executioner had caught hold of the martyr's head, and was holding it bent back, immovable. Another, opening her mouth with a pair of tongs, brought a cup close to her throat, probably with melted lead. Beside it was depicted another scene of torture.

The same St. Euphemia was hanging to a tree by her hands, and the executioner was scarring her blood-stained and almost childish limbs with an instrument of torture.

Under the frescoes was an inscription: "By the blood of the martyrs, oh Lord, thy church is made beautiful, as by purple and fine linen."

On the opposite wall sinners were depicted, flaming in hell. Above was seen paradise, with the just made perfect; one of them was gathering red fruit from the tree of life; another was singing, playing on a harp; and a third was bending down, leaning on a cloud, and watching the tortures of hell, with a serene smile.

Beneath was the inscription: "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The sick from the tomb of St. Mamas entered the church. There were lame, blind, cripples, paralytics, children on crutches, looking like old men, demoniacs, idiots, pale faces with inflamed eyelids, and with an expression of dumb and hopeless submission. When the choir ceased, in the silence was heard the heart-breaking sighing of the church widows, in their black dresses, or the rattling of the old Monk Pamphilus' chains. During many years, Pamphilus had not exchanged a word with any one, perpetually repeating: "Oh Lord! oh Lord! give me tears, give me feeling, give me mortal memory!"

The air was hot, as in a vault,—heavy, charged with incense, the smell of wax, the smoke of lamps, the breath of all those sick people.

That day Julian had to read from the Apocalypse.

The terrible images of the Revelation were enumerated.

There was the pale horse, and his name that sat on him was Death. And the nations of the earth trembled, for the end of all things was at hand. And the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood. And men said to the mountains and rocks: "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?"

And the prophecy was repeated: "And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them."

And a cry arose: "Blessed are the dead!" And there was the bloody slaughter of the nations. And the vine of the earth was cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God, and the winepress was trodden, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

And men blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and of their sores, and repented not of their deeds. And an angel cried with a loud voice, saying: "If any man worship the beast of his image, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; and they

have no rest day nor night who worship the beast and his image."

Julian ceased. Silence reigned in the church. Heavy sighs were heard through the frightened crowd, and people beating their heads against the flagstones of the church, and the rattling of the idiot's chains, as he cried: "Oh Lord! oh Lord! give me tears, give me feeling, give me mortal memory!"

The boy looked up, at the great half-circle of mosaic, between the pillars of the arcade. It was the Arian image of the Christ, a menacing, dark, thin face, with a golden oreole and diadem, already grown like the diadems of the Byzantine emperors; almost an old man, with a long, thin nose, and tightly-pressed lips. With his right hand he was blessing the earth, and with his left hand he held a book, and in the book was written: "Peace be unto you. I am the light of the world." He was seated on a splendid throne, and a Roman emperor (it seemed to Julian that it was Constantius) was kissing his feet.

But at the same time, there, below, in the twilight, where was only the light of a small lamp, was seen a bas-relief on a sarcophagus of the earliest Christian period. There were sculptured graceful little Nereids, panthers, merry Tritons, and beside them Moses, simple-minded Jonah with the whale, Orpheus charming wild beasts with the sound of his lyre, olive boughs, doves, fish, simple symbols of pure, childlike faith. And among them the Good Shepherd, carrying a lamb on his shoulders; the lamb that had been lost and was found, the sinner's soul. He was simple and joyful, the bare-footed youth with his beardless,

humble and modest face, like the faces of the poor country people. He wore a smile of heavenly gladness. It seemed to Julian that no one any longer saw or knew the Good Shepherd, and with that little image of other times was bound up in his mind a kind of far-away, childish dream, which he sometimes wished to recall, and could not. The youth with the lamb on his shoulders looked at him alone, with a mysterious reproach. And Julian whispered the word he had heard from Mardonius: "Galilean!"

At that moment the oblique rays of the sun, falling through the window, made a tremulous pillar in the smoke of the incense; and the pillar, slightly rocking, seemed to rise into a menacing, dark head, the head of the Arian Christ, surrounded with a golden oreole. The choir suddenly burst forth triumphant:

"And let all flesh of man keep silent, and stand in fear and trembling, and let nought upon earth trust in itself. For the King of kings and Lord of lords cometh to judge and to give them for food to the faithful. And let the angels come before him, with every principality and power, the many-eyed cherubim and the six-winged seraphim, covering their faces, and singing: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!"

And the chant swept like a storm over the bent heads of the worshippers.

The image of the bare-footed youth, the Good Shepherd, departed to an immeasurable distance, but still watched Julian reproachfully, and the boy's heart was full, not of reverence, but of intolerable fear before that secret, which he was not destined to penetrate his whole life long.

CHAPTER V.

THE SHRINE OF VENUS.

From the Arian basilica, Julian returned to Macellum, taking with him his model trireme, completed, and carefully wrapped up, and unseen by anyone,—Eutropius had gone away for several days,—slipped out through the gates of the fortress, and ran past the church of St. Maurice, to the neighboring shrine of Aphrodite.

The sacred grove of the goddess bordered on the graveyard of the Christian church. Hostility and quarrels, even lawsuits between the two temples never ceased. The Christians demanded the destruction of the unclean shrine; the priest Olympiodorus made complaints against the church watchmen: by night they secretly broke the immemorial cypresses of the sacramental grove, and dug graves for Christian dead in the sacred soil of Aphrodite.

Julian entered the grove. The warm air encircled him. The heat of midday sucked big drops of resin from the grey, gnarled roots of the black cypresses. Julian felt as though the twilight of the grove was full of the inspiration of Aphrodite.

Statues gleamed white among the trees. Here was Eros, drawing his bow. Probably one of the church watchmen, in wrath against the idol, had broken off the marble bow. Along with the god's two pretty arms, Love's weapon lay in the grass, at the foot of the statue. But the armless boy,

planting one plump leg in front of him, was still aiming with a wanton smile.

Julian entered the house of the priest Olympiodorus. The rooms were tiny, narrow, almost playthings, but cozy. There was no luxury, but rather poverty. There were neither carpets nor plate. Plain stone floors, wooden furniture, cheap amphoras of baked clay. But in every trifle there was distinction. The handle of a simple kitchen lamp was a figure of Poseidon with his trident. It was antique, wonderful work. Sometimes Julian gazed long in ecstasy at the graceful form of a clay vase of cheap olive oil. Everywhere on the walls bright frescoes were seen: here the Nereids, seated on their scaly water-horses; there a young goddess dancing, in a long robe with curved and swelling folds.

Everything in the little house was smiling, flooded with sunlight. The Nereids on the walls were smiling, and the dancing goddesses, and the Tritons, even the scaly sea-horses, and the bronze Poseidon on the handle of the lamp. And the same gayety was on the faces of the dwellers in the house. They were born gay. They did not know how to be unlovely, or angry, or gloomy. They were satisfied with a dozen or two of tasty olives, some white wheaten bread, a bunch or two of grapes, some cups of wine, mixed with water,—this was a regular feast for them. And Diophane, the wife of Olympiodorus, would hang a wreath of laurels in the doorway in sign of the festival.

Julian entered the little garden of the Atrium. Under the open sky was a fountain, and beside it, among narcissus, acanthus, tulips and myrtle, stood a little bronze image of Hermes, winged,

laughing, like everything in the house, ready to spread his wings and fly away. Over the flowerbeds, in the sun, hovered butterflies and bees.

Under the light shadow of the portico in the courtyard, Olympiodorus and his seventeen-year-old daughter Amaryllis were playing the graceful Athenian game of cottabus. On a little column, sunk into the ground, swayed a transverse cross-beam, like the scale-beam of a balance. At each end of it were hung small cups. Under each was placed a vessel of water, with a little bronze statuette in it. The game was to splash wine out of a cup, from a certain distance, so that it should fall in one of the scales, which then tipped down, and struck the bronze statuette.

"Play, play. It is your turn!" cried Amaryllis.

"One, two, three!"

Olympiodorus splashed the wine, but missed. He laughed a childlike laugh; it was strange to see a full-grown man, with grey streaks in his hair, carried away by a game, like a child.

The girl, with a charming gesture of her bare arm, throwing back the purple tunic, splashed the wine, and the kottabos struck the statuette, and rang.

Amaryllis clapped her hands, and laughed.

Suddenly they saw Julian in the doorway.

They all began to kiss him, and embrace him. Amaryllis cried:

"Diophane, where are you? Look at the guest who has come. Quick, quick!"

Diophane ran in from the kitchen.

"Julian, my beloved boy! You look as if you had grown thin. We have not seen you for a long time."

And she cried out, radiant with pleasure:

“Well, make merry, my children. To-day we shall have a real feast. I shall make garlands of fresh roses, and roast three whole perch, and make sweet ginger pastry!”

At that moment, a young slave-girl came up and whispered to Olympiodorus that a rich patrician lady from Cesarea wished to see him, as priest of Aphrodite. He went out.

Julian and Amaryllis were left to play kottabos.

Then noiselessly on the threshold appeared a ten-year-old, slender, pale, fair-haired girl,—Psyche, the younger daughter of Olympiodorus. She had light blue, large, sad eyes. Alone of the whole household she seemed to Olympiodorus not consecrated to Aphrodite, a stranger to the general gladness. She lived a life apart, remained pensive, when the others laughed, and no one knew the cause of her sorrows and her joys. Her father considered her a pitiful creature, incurably ailing, tainted by the evil eye, and the charms of his everlasting foes, the Galileans. They took his child in revenge. Black-curled Amaryllis was Olympiodorus' favorite daughter. But her mother secretly spoiled Psyche, and loved her sickly child with a jealous passion, not understanding her inner life.

Psyche, unknown to her father, went to the basilica of Saint Maurice.

Neither the caresses of her mother, nor her prayers, or threats were of any avail.

The priest in despair shunned Psyche. When she was mentioned, his face clouded over, and his expression became unkind. He asserted that, through his daughter's impiety, the vineyard for-

merly blessed by Aphrodite, began to bear less fruit, that the little cross of gold, which the girl wore on her breast, was enough to pollute the temple of Aphrodite.

"Why do you go to the church?" Julian asked her once.

"I do not know. It is pleasant there. Have you seen the Good Shepherd?"

"Yes, I have seen him. The Galilean! Where did you learn about him?"

"The old woman Theodyle told me. Since then, I have gone to the church. And why is it, tell me, Julian, why do they all hate the Good Shepherd so?"

Olympiodorus returned triumphant, and told of his talk with the patrician lady. She was a young, distinguished girl. Her betrothed had ceased to love her. She thought that he was bewitched by the charms of a rival. She had gone many times to the Christian church, fervently praying at the tomb of Saint Mamas. Neither fasts, nor vigils, nor prayers availed. "As if the Christians can help you!" exclaimed Olympiodorus, contemptuously, and glanced under his knit brows at Psyche, who was listening attentively. "And so the Christian came to me. Aphrodite will heal her."

He triumphantly showed two white doves tied together. The Christian lady had asked him to offer them as a sacrifice to the goddess of love.

Amaryllyis, taking the doves in her hands, kissed their soft red toes, and cried that it was a pity to kill them.

"Father, let us offer them, but without killing them."

“How? Can there be an offering without blood?”

“Let us do this. Let us set them free! They will fly straight up to heaven, to the throne of Aphrodite. Is it not true the goddess is there, in the sky? She will take them to her. Allow me, please, dearest!”

Amaryllis kissed him so tenderly that he had not the courage to refuse.

Then the girl loosed the doves, and set them free. They fluttered their white wings with a joyful rustle, and flew up into the sky, to the throne of Aphrodite. Shading his eyes with his hands, the priest watched the Christian's offering disappear in the blue. And Amaryllis jumped with joy, and clapped her hands:

“Aphrodite! Aphrodite! Accept this bloodless sacrifice!”

Olympiodorus went out. Julian triumphantly and shyly approached Amaryllis. His voice trembled, when he uttered the girl's name in a low voice, and his cheeks grew red.

“Amaryllis, I have brought you —”

“Yes, I wanted to ask long ago what you had with you?”

“It is a trireme.”

“A trireme? What kind? What for? What do you say?”

“A real Liburnian one!”

He began rapidly to unwrap his present, and suddenly felt an indefinable shame and shyness.

Amaryllis watched him, bewildered.

He grew completely confused, and looked at her silently, entreatingly, launching the toy ship in the basin of the fountain.

"Do not think, Amaryllis. It is a trireme, a real one, with sails. You see, it floats, and there is a rudder."

But Amaryllis laughed aloud at his present.

"How odd you are! What am I to do with a trireme? You cannot go far in her! That is a ship for mice or cicadas! Better give it to Psyche, she will be glad. You see how hungrily she is watching!"

Julian was deeply hurt. He tried to assume an indifferent expression, but felt that tears were near, that his throat was contracted, that his lips trembled and pouted. He made a desperate effort, restrained his tears, and said:

"I see, you do not understand anything."

He thought a moment, and added:

"You do not understand anything about art."

But Amaryllis only laughed the louder.

To add to the insult, she was called away to meet her betrothed. He was a rich merchant of Samos. He scented himself too much, dressed without taste, and made grammatical blunders in conversation. Julian detested him. The whole house was overcast for him, and its gayety fled when he learned that the Samian had come.

From the next room came the joyful twittering of Amaryllis, and the voice of her betrothed.

Julian seized his beloved Liburnian trireme, which had cost him such infinite pains, broke the mast, tore up the sail, tangled the rigging, broke and disfigured the hull, without saying a word, with silent detestation, to the no small astonishment of Psyche.

Amaryllis returned. On her face were the traces of another's happiness, the excess of life,

the immeasurable joy of love, which makes young girls feel the need of kissing and embracing some one.

"Julian, forgive me. I have offended you. Well, forgive me, dear. You see how I love you, I love you."

And before he could come to himself, Amaryllis, throwing back her tunic, flung her bare, fresh arms around his neck. And his heart ceased beating from the sweetness of passion: he saw, nearer him than he had ever seen them, those big, soft, dark eyes. A perfume breathed from her, strong as from flowers, when you press your face into a bouquet. The boy's head was turned. She pressed his body to her supple young breast. He closed his eyes, and felt on his lips a lingering, tormenting kiss.

"Amaryllis! Amaryllis! Where are you?"

It was the voice of the Samian. Julian pushed the girl away from him with all his strength. His heart was sore with pain and hate.

He cried out: "Let me alone, leave me!" tore himself away, and fled.

"Julian! Julian!"

Unheeding, he ran from the house, through the vineyard, through the cypress grove, and only stopped at the temple of Aphrodite.

He heard them calling him, he heard Diophane's gay voice, announcing that the ginger pastry was ready, and did not answer. They began to look for him. He hid in the laurel bushes at the pedestal of Eros, and waited. They thought he had run back to Macellum. The household had grown used to his sombre strangeness.

When all had grown quiet, he left his hiding-

place, and looked at the temple of the goddess of love.

The temple stood on a considerable hillock, open on all sides.

The white marble of the Ionic columns, flooded with sunlight, bathed voluptuously in the azure, and the dark, warm blue rejoiced, embracing the marble, cold and white as snow. At either corner, the pediment was crowned with two acroteres, in the form of griffons. With uplifted claws, with open eagle beaks, with round, woman's breasts, they stood out, firm outlines against the blue heavens.

Julian ascended the steps to the portico, softly opened the unfastened door of bronze, and entered the interior of the shrine, the sacred naos.

Coolness and stillness breathed around him.

The declining sun still lighted the upper row of capitols, with their fine carving, like ringlets. Below was twilight. From a tripod came the scent of the burned ashes of myrrh.

Julian shyly raised his eyes, pressing close to the wall, and holding his breath. He was struck dumb.

It was she. Under the open sky stood white Aphrodite Anadyomene, in the midst of the temple, goddess new-born from the foam, in all her unshamed beauty of nakedness. The goddess looked on heaven and earth with a smile, wondering at the loveliness of the world, not knowing yet that it was her own loveliness, reflected in heaven and earth, as in everlasting mirrors. The touch of human garments had not defiled her. Thus stood she there, perfect and

naked, like that cloudless sky of almost menacing blue above her head.

Julian gazed insatiate. Time stood still. Suddenly he felt a throb of reverence run through his body. The boy, in his dark, monk's gown, fell on his knees before Aphrodite, with face uplifted, pressing his hands to his heart.

Afterward, still as distantly, and as shyly, he sat on the pedestal of a column, his eyes fixed on her, and his cheek pressed to the cold marble. The stillness entered his soul. He sank into sleep. But even in dream, he felt her presence. She drew nearer and nearer to him. Her soft, white arms encircled his neck. The boy gave himself up with a passionless smile to her passionless embrace. The coldness of the marble entered into the deeps of his heart. This holy embrace was not like the hot, painfully passionate embrace of Amaryllis. His soul was set free from earthly love. This was the last rest, like the ambrosial nights of Homer, like the sweet repose of death.

* * * * *

When he awoke, it was dark. Stars were shining in the square of open sky. The sickle of the moon cast a gleam on Aphrodite's head.

Julian arose. Olympiodorus must have come, but had not noticed the boy; or had not wished to disturb him, guessing his grief. On the bronze tripod, fresh coals were glowing red, and a thread of scented smoke rose before the image of the goddess.

Julian approached with a glad smile, and from the vase of chrysolite, between the feet of the tripod, took a few grains of scented resin, and

threw them on the coals of the altar. The smoke rose thicker.

And a rosy gleam of fire flamed up, like a light flush of life on the goddess's face, mingling with the gleam of the new-born moon.

Pure Aphrodite; as it were Urania, descended from the stars to the earth.

Julian bowed down and kissed the feet of the image.

He prayed to her:

"Aphrodite! Aphrodite! I will be thine for ever!"

And hot tears fell on the cold marble feet of the statue.

CHAPTER VI.

GALLUS AND THE DANCING GIRL.

In one of the poor and dirty quarters of Syrian Seleucia, on the shore of the Mediterranean sea, the trade haven of Antioch, the great, narrow, crooked streets issued on a square by the wharves. The sea was invisible from the forest of masts and rigging.

The houses consisted of disordered frames heaped together, and smeared with clay. On the street side, they were sometimes covered with a tattered carpet, looking like dirty rags, or matting. In all these corners, frames, by-streets with their heavy smell of washing, laundries, and workmen's baths, a variegated, beggarly, and hungry mob perpetually swarmed.

The sun was setting after burning the earth dry. The twilight descended on swift wings. The heat, dust, and glow still hung heavy over the city. From the market came a suffocating smell of meat and vegetables, that had lain all day in the heat. Half-naked slaves were carrying bales from the ships along the gangway-planks. One side of their heads was shaven. Red weals from blows were seen through their rags. On the faces of many were great scars, branded with hot irons. Some times there were the two letters, C and F, meaning "Cave furem," "Beware of the thief."

Fires were being lit. In spite of the approach of night, the stir and talk in the narrow by-streets did not diminish. From a neighboring smithy were heard the ear-splitting blows of a hammer on sheet-iron; the glow of the furnace flamed, the black smoke rolled upward. Alongside bakers, covered from head to foot with the white dust of flour, with red eyelids, inflamed by the heat, were setting bread in the ovens. A shoemaker, with an open shop-front, from which came a smell of cobbler's wax and leather, was stitching shoes by the light of a little lamp, sitting on his haunches, and with full throat singing a song in a barbarian tongue. From one room to another, across a by-street, two old women, regular witches, with disheveled grey hair, were crying out and abusing each other, stretching out their hands to scratch each other, and all on account of a cord on which they hung rags to dry. And below, a merchant, hurrying from afar, on a bony, broken-down nag, to a market which was to take place on the morrow, was carrying a whole mountain of stale fish in his wicker panniers. The passers-by turned and

cursed at the intolerable stench. A fat-cheeked little Jew, with ruddy curls, was hammering a huge bronze dish, delighted with the deafening noise. Other children, small, innumerable, born and dying every day in hundreds in that nest of paupers, rolled in the dust, squeaking like sucking pigs, round a pool where were pieces of orange-peel and egg-shell. In even darker and more suspicious by-streets, where lived the petty thieves, where a smell of dampness and sour wine rose from the taverns, sailors from the ends of the earth went arm in arm, shouting out drunken songs. Over the doors of a lupanarium was hung a lamp with a carven image, dedicated to the god Priapus; and when the curtain in the doorway was raised, a crowded row of little rooms, like stalls, were seen within. Above each was a sign with a price. In the breathless darkness the naked bodies of women gleamed white.

And above all this noise and talk, over all this human filth and poverty, was heard the distant sigh of the breakers, the murmur of the invisible, everlasting sea.

At the very windows of an underground kitchen, kept by a Phœnician merchant, beggars were playing at knuckle-bones, and chattering. The fumes of stewing fat spread from the kitchen, in thick clouds with a smell of pastry and cooked game. The hungry knaves inhaled it, closing their eyes in delight.

A Christian, a dyer of purple, dismissed from a rich Tyrian factory for theft, who was hungrily sucking a leaf of mallow, thrown out by the cook, spoke:

“And good people, what is doing in Antioch—

it is best not to speak about it, especially at night-fall! The other day, the starving people pulled the prefect Theophilus to pieces. And what for, God only knows! When they had done with him, they remembered that the poor fellow was a good sort, and an honest man. They say Cæsar set the mob on him."

Then a broken-down old man, a very skilful pickpocket, began:

"I saw Cæsar once. I don't know. I liked him. Young he was, with hair as white as flax. A fat face, but good-natured. But how many murders, oh Lord, how many murders! Revolution! People go through the streets in fear."

"All that is not Cæsar but his wife, Constantina: she is a witch!"

Some strangers came up to the speakers, as if they wished to take part in the conversation. If the light from the kitchen had been stronger, it might have been seen that their faces were painted, that their clothing was tattered and torn artificially, like that of beggars on the stage. In spite of his rags, the hands of the dirtiest were white and fine, with pink, trim nails. One of them said to his companions, speaking low, close to his ear:

"Listen, listen, Agamemnon: they are talking about Cæsar here, too."

The stranger whom they called Agamemnon seemed to be drunk. He staggered. His beard, unnaturally thick and long, made him look like a fantastic brigand. But his eyes were good-natured, bright-blue, and even childish. His companions stopped him with a frightened whisper:

"Take care."

The pickpocket continued in a whining voice, as if he was singing:

"No, but tell me, men and brothers, is it right? Bread gets dearer every day. People die like flies. And suddenly—No, only think of it, is that right? A day or two ago, a big, three-masted ship came from Egypt. Everybody was delighted. We thought it was bread. Cæsar, they said, wrote for it, to feed the people. And what was it, what was it, good people? Dust from Alexandria, a special kind of red, Libyan dust, to rub the athletes with. Dust, instead of bread. Well, is that right?" he concluded, making a gesture of dissatisfaction with his deft, thievish fingers.

Agamemnon nudged his companion.

"Quick! ask his name! ask his name!"

"Gently, not now; later."

A wool-carder remarked:

"We have everything quiet enough in Seleucia. But in Antioch, treachery, accusations, spying!"

The dyer, who had sucked the mallow-leaf for the last time, and thrown it away, convinced that it had lost the last vestige of taste, muttered gloomily under his breath:

"Well, please God, human flesh and blood will soon be cheaper than bread and wine."

The wool-carder, a terrible drunkard and philosopher, sighed heavily:

"Oh-ho-ho! We wretched mortals! The blessed Olympians play with us as if we were balls. Now to the right, now to the left, now up, now down: men weep, but the gods laugh!"

Agamemnon's companion managed to mix in the conversation, and deftly, as if he hardly cared,

asked their names. He even managed to overhear what the wandering shoemaker said in a whisper to the wool-carder, about a plot against Cæsar's life, among the Pretorian soldiers.

Then going a few steps backward, he wrote the names of the speakers with an elegant stylus on wax tablets, where many names were already recorded.

At this moment there came from the market-square the hoarse, rumbling sounds of a hydraulic organ, like the cry of some subterranean monster, something between laughter and crying. A blind Christian slave was paid four oboli a day to pump water to produce these strange and weird sounds.

Agamemnon dragged his companions to the booth, beside which stood the organ; it was covered, like a tent, with blue cloth, on which were silver stars. A lamp illuminated a blackboard serving as a notice-board with a program of the representation, written in chalk, in Syrian and Greek.

Inside, it was breathless. It smelt of garlic and smoking oil-lamps. To supplement the organ, two piercing flutes were shrilling, and a black Ethiopian was hammering a tambourine, and turning up the white of his eyes.

A dancer leaped and twisted on a rope, clapping his hands in time to the music. He sang a fashionable song.

The lean, snub-nosed buffon, the cinædus, was old, hideous, and grey. Drops of sweat streamed from his shaven forehead, mixed with rouge. His wrinkles, plastered with powder, were like crevices in a wall, where the lime is melted by the rain.

When he disappeared, the organ and the flutes

stopped. A fifteen-year-old girl came out on the stage to perform the famous "cordax," a dance that all the people were mad about. The fathers of the church fulminated against it, the Roman laws forbade it, but all in vain. The cordax was danced everywhere, by poor and rich, the wives of senators and street-dancing girls alike.

Agamemnon cried out in ecstasy:

"What a girl!"

Thanks to the fists of his companions, he struggled through to the front row.

The lean, dusky body of the Nubian girl was encircled round the middle only by a gauze-like, rose-colored fabric. Her hair lay thickly on her head, in glossy black curls, after the manner of the women of Ethiopia. The girl's face was of the purest Egyptian type, recalling the face of the sphinx.

The crotalistris began to dance languidly and carelessly as though she were weary. Above her head, the bronze cymbals, the crotalia, tinkled almost inaudibly in her finely-shaped hands.

Then her movements grew quicker, and suddenly from beneath her long lashes, her yellowish eyes flashed, transparent and fierce like the eyes of a wild beast. She straightened herself, and the bronze crotalia rang with a penetrating note, so keen and clear that the whole crowd started, breathless.

Then the girl began to turn, swift, slender, supple as a snake. Her nostrils distended. A strange cry broke from her lips. At every swift movement, her small, dark breasts, girt with a green silk net, trembled like two ripe fruit in the

wind, and the rouge with which they were tipped shone red through the net.

The crowd cried out with delight. Agamemnon was beside himself. His companions held him by the arms.

Suddenly the girl stopped, as if her strength had failed her. A light shiver ran along her dusky body from head to foot. Silence followed. The Nubian's head was thrown back, and the cymbals above it vibrated with an almost intangible, dying sound, like the wings of a captive butterfly. Her yellow eyes grew dim. But in their very depths gleamed two sparks. Her face was set and menacing. And on her thick, red lips, the lips of the sphinx, a faint smile trembled. And the bronze cymbals died into stillness.

The crowd cried out and applauded so loudly that the blue stuff with silver stars fluttered like a sail in a storm, and the master of the booth thought it would fall.

His companions could no longer restrain Agamemnon. He threw himself on the stage, raising the curtain, and reached the platform.

His companions whispered to him:

"Wait! It could be done to-morrow. Now they might —"

Agamemnon interrupted.

"Not to-morrow,—now!"

He went to the master of the booth, the sly Greek Myrmex, and hastily, almost without explanation, poured a heap of gold coins into the lap of his tunic.

"The crotalistris is your slave?"

"Yes; what desires my master?"

Myrmex looked first at the torn dress which

Agamemnon wore, and then, with astonishment, at the gold.

“What is your name, girl?”

“Phyllis.”

To her also he gave money, without counting it. The Greek whispered something in Phyllis' ear. She threw the ringing coins into the air, and caught them again in her palm, and laughing, turned her gleaming golden-glinting, wild eyes on Agamemnon. He spoke:

“Come with me!”

Phyllis cast a dark cloak over her bare, dusky shoulders, and glided out beside him into the street.

She asked submissively:

“Where?”

“I do not know.”

“To your house?”

“Impossible. I live in Antioch.”

“And I only came in the ship to-day, and I know nothing of this city.”

“What are we to do?”

“Wait. Just a little while ago, I saw an unclosed temple of Priapus in the next by-street. Let us go there.”

Phyllis drew him along, laughing. His companions wished to follow. He said:

“Do not come. Stay here.”

“Take care! At least take a weapon. In this quarter it is dangerous.”

And drawing a short sword, like a dagger, from under his cloak, one of his companions gave it to him, respectfully. The handle was splendidly inlaid.

Stumbling through the darkness, Agamemnon

and Phyllis entered a dark side-street, not far from the market.

“Here! here! do not fear; go in.”

They entered the porch of the small, deserted temple. A hanging lamp faintly illumined the coarse old columns.

“Close the door!”

Just then, from the interior of the temple, came a piercing, cackling, and a weird flutter of white wings, raising such a wind that the lamp almost went out.

Agamemnon let Phyllis go, and stammered:

“What is that?”

White forms glimmered in the darkness, like ghosts. Agamemnon, completely frightened, crossed himself involuntarily.

“What is it? The power of the cross be over us!”

At that moment something pinched his foot sharply. He cried out with fright and pain. Then he caught his unknown enemy by the throat. He pierced another with his sword. A deafening noise of cries and hissing, and cackling, and fluttering, arose. The lamp flickered up for the last time, before going out; and Phyllis called out, laughing:

“They are geese, the sacred geese of Priapus! What have you done?”

The victor stood, white and trembling, holding in one hand his bloody sword, and in the other a slaughtered goose.

Loud voices were heard from without, and a whole crowd with torches pressed into the temple. In front was Scabra, the old priestess of Priapus. As was her wont, she had been peaceably drinking

her wine in the neighboring tavern, when she heard the cries of the sacred geese, and hastened to their assistance, with a whole crowd of night-wanderers. Her hooked red nose, grey, unkempt hair, and eyes like two steel blades, made the priestess of Priapus the image of a Fury. She cried out:

“Help! help! The temple is polluted! The sacred geese of Priapus are slain! See, these are godless Christians! Seize them!”

Phyllis escaped, covered from head to foot by her cloak. In an instant the crowd dragged Agamemnon out to the market-place; he was so bewildered that he still held the dead goose in his hand. Scabra called the Agoranomes, the market watchmen.

Every moment the crowd grew denser.

Agamemnon's companions ran to his rescue. But it was too late. From their haunts, from the taverns, from the shops, from blind alleys, people streamed forth, attracted by the noise. On their faces was that expression of delighted and ecstatic curiosity which always appears at a street commotion. A blacksmith ran up, with a hammer in his hand; the old women, his neighbors, the baker, smeared with paste, the shoemaker, hurried up, limping. And behind all the rest, the little red-headed Jewish boy flew along whisting and shouting, hammering his bronze basin with a deafening din, as though he was sounding the tocsin.

Scabra cried out, sticking her nails into Agamemnon's garment:

“Wait! I'll get at your vile beard! I won't leave a lock of it! You carrion, raven's food! You

night marauder, you are not worth the cord you will hang by!"

Finally, the awakened Agoranomes appeared, very questionable in their outward looks, much more like night robbers than guardians of the peace.

In the crowd, the noise was so deafening, mingled cries, laughter, abuse, that no one could understand anything. Some one cried out: "Murderers!" Others: "They were stealing!" Yet others: "Fire!"

But at that moment, dominating everything, resounded the thundering voice of a half-naked, red-headed giant, with a freckled face, by profession, a bath-attendant; by calling, a street orator:

"Citizens. Hear me and hearken. I have been following that knave for a long time, and his companions, too. They were writing down names. They are spies, spies of Cæsar!"

Scabra, carrying out her long-formed intention, clutched Agamemnon's hair with one hand, and his beard with the other. He tried to push her aside, but she pulled with all her might, and to the astonishment of all, the long black beard and thick hair remained in her hands. The old woman fell on her back. Before the people, instead of Agamemnon, stood a handsome young man, with flowing, soft hair, light as flax, and a little beard.

The crowd was dumb with astonishment. Then the voice of the bath-man thundered forth again:

"You see, citizens, they are informers, disguised!"

Some one cried:

"Beat them! Beat them!"

The crowd wavered. Stones began to fly. His companions gathered round the transformed Agamemnon, and bared their swords. The wool-carder was struck down by the first blow. He fell, soaked in blood. The little Jew with the bronze basin was knocked over. Faces became like wild beasts.

At that moment, ten immense Paphlagonian slaves, with a purple litter on their shoulders, knocked the crowd this way and that.

"Saved!" cried the light-haired youth, and threw himself, with one of his companions, into the litter.

The Paphlagonians lifted it on their shoulders and ran.

The maddened crowd would have stopped them, and torn them to pieces on the spot, if some one had not cried out:

"Do you not see, citizens? It is the Cæsar, Gallus Cæsar himself!"

The people stood still, petrified with terror.

The purple litter, rocking on the backs of the slaves, like a boat on the waves, disappeared in the depths of an unlighted street.

Six years had passed since the time when Julian and Gallus were confined in the fortress of Macellum. The Emperor Constantius had restored them to his favor. Nineteen-year-old Julian had been summoned to Constantinople, and had afterward been permitted to travel through the cities of Asia Minor. The emperor had made Gallus his coadjutor, the Cæsar, and had given him the government of the East. But this unexpected favor boded no good. Constantius loved to overwhelm

his enemies, disarming their suspicions with excessive favors.

"Well, Glycon, no matter how much Constantina tries to assure me, I will go no more into the streets with false hair. This is the end of it!"

"We warned your Majesty that it was dangerous."

But the Cæsar, reclining on the soft cushions of the litter, forgot his recent fear. He was laughing already:

"Glycon! Glycon! Did you see how that cursed old woman tumbled head over heels, with my beard in her hands? When I looked, she was down already!"

When they reached the palace, the Cæsar ordered:

"Quick, a perfumed bath, and then supper. I am hungry."

A court attendant approached with a letter.

"What is it, Norbanus? No, no, business to-morrow morning."

"Gracious Cæsar, the letter is important; it comes straight from the camp of the Emperor Constantius."

"From Constantius! What is it? Give it to me."

He broke the seal, read it, and grew pale. His knees trembled under him. If the courtiers had not held him up, Gallus would have fallen on the floor.

Constantius, in the most elaborate, and even flattering terms, invited his dearly-beloved cousin, Gallus, to Mediolanum. At the same time the emperor commanded that he should immediately send him the two legions which were stationed

in Antioch, Gallus' only protection. Constantius wished to disarm and ensnare his enemy.

When the Cæsar came to himself, he said in a weak voice:

"Call my wife."

"Our gracious master, it was your consort's pleasure to leave a short time ago for Antioch."

"What? And she knows nothing?"

"She knows nothing."

"Lord, Lord! What does it mean? Without her! Tell the emperor's messenger—no, tell him nothing. I do not know. Can I, without her? Send a swift rider! Tell her that Cæsar begs her to return. Lord, what am I to do?"

He walked about, bewildered, seizing his head with both hands, twisting his fair beard with trembling fingers, and repeating, helplessly:

"No, no, I will not go for anything. Better death! Oh, I know Constantius!"

Another messenger came with a paper.

"From Cæsar's consort. On setting out, she begged him to sign it without delay.

"What? Another death-warrant already! Clematius of Alexandria! This is too much; it cannot be. Three every day!"

"But such is your consort's good pleasure."

"Well, it is all the same! Give me the ink! It is all the same now. But why did she go away? What can I do now, alone?"

And he signed the death-warrant, and looked up with his childish, light-blue, good-natured eyes.

"The bath and supper are ready."

"Supper? No—but what is there?"

"Truffles from Africa."

"Fresh?"

"They have just come."

"Well, it is better to get some strength, eh? What do you think, my friends? I felt so weak. Truffles. I thought this morning—"

A shallow smile lit up his bewildered face.

Before entering the cool water, dull opal from the perfumes, the Cæsar exclaimed, with a wave of his hand:

"Well, no matter, no matter! There is no use thinking about it. Oh Lord, have mercy upon us sinful men! Perhaps Constantina will arrange it somehow!"

And the over-fed pink face grew quite cheerful again. When he plunged into the bath, with his wonted delight, the Cæsar cried out joyfully:

"Tell the cook, without fail, to serve a sour red sauce with the truffles!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE GODLIKE IAMBLICHUS.

In the cities of Asia Minor, Nicomedia, Pergamos, Smyrna, whither nineteen-year-old Julian had wandered in search of Grecian wisdom, he had heard of the famous theurgist and sophist, Iamblichus of Chalcidica, the pupil of the Neoplatonist Porphyry, the godlike Iamblichus, as all men called him.

Julian went to him, in Ephesus.

Iamblichus was an old man, small, lean, wrinkled.

He loved to complain of his illnesses, his gout,

his rheumatism, his headaches. He abused the doctors, but carefully followed their treatment. He took great delight in talking about poultices, infusions, medicines and plasters. He went about in a soft lined tunic, even in summer, and could never keep warm. He was as fond of the sun as a lizard.

From his early youth, Iamblichus had abstained from eating flesh, and spoke of it with sincere disgust. He could not understand how people could eat anything that had had life. His maid-servant prepared him a special kind of barley porridge, a little warm wine, and honey. Even bread the old man could not masticate with his toothless gums.

Around him were gathered a great crowd of pupils, full of respect and adoration for him, from Rome, Antioch, Carthage, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Persia. All believed that Iamblichus worked miracles. He treated them like a father, who was weary of having so many little, helpless children. When they began to dispute or quarrel, the teacher waved his hand with a grimace of physical pain. He spoke in a gentle, pleasant voice, and the higher rose the voices of the disputants, the more gently spoke Iamblichus. He could not endure noise, and hated loud voices and creaking sandals.

Julian, greatly disappointed, looked with perplexity at the capricious, shivering, sick, old man, unable to see what power could attract people to him.

He remembered that it was said that his pupils had seen him once, at night, at the hour of prayer, raised by a miraculous force ten cubits above the ground, and surrounded with an aureole of golden radiance. And there was another story of how the

teacher, in the Syrian town of Gadara, had evoked from the two springs of Eros and Anteros, a joyful genius of love, with fair curls, and a dark, sorrowful spirit. Both nestled up to Iamblichus, like children, and vanished again at a wave of his hand.

Julian listened to the words of the teacher, but could find no power in them. The metaphysics of the school of Porphyry seemed to him dry, dead, and terribly complicated. Iamblichus seemed to be playing at overcoming dialectic difficulties on contested points. In his teaching of God, of the world, of Ideas, of the Triad of Plotinus, there was deep book-knowledge,—and not a spark of life. Julian had expected something different.

Nevertheless, he waited, and did not go away.

Iamblichus had strange, green eyes, which showed even more distinctly against his dusky, wrinkled skin. Sometimes the evening sky has this greenish color, when seen between dark clouds, before a storm. It seemed to Julian that in those eyes, which were not human, and still less divine, there gleamed that occult, higher, serpentlike wisdom, of which Iamblichus uttered not a word to his disciples. But suddenly, in a tired, low voice, the godlike teacher asked why his barley porridge or poultices were not ready, or complained of his gout, and Julian's reverence vanished.

Once he was walking with Julian outside the city, on the sea-shore. It was a soft, sad evening. Far off, over the harbor of Panormos, gleamed the white terraces of the famous temple of Diana of the Ephesians, crowned with statues. On the sandy shore of Cayster,—it was here, according to tradition, that Latona gave birth to Apollo and

Diana,—the thin, dark reeds were motionless. The smoke of innumerable altars from the sacred grove of Ortygia rose in straight columns to the sky. To the south, the mountains of Samos shone white. The beating of the breakers was soft as the breath of a sleeping child. Transparent waves broke over the smooth, black sand. There was a smell of the salt water warmed by the sun, and of seaweed. The setting sun was hidden behind the clouds, gilding their piled-up masses.

Iamblichus sat down on a stone, and Julian reclined at his feet. The teacher stroked Julian's stiff, black hair:

“You are sad?”

“Yes!”

“I know, I know. You are seeking, but not finding. You have not the strength to say: ‘He is;’ and you have not the courage to say ‘He is not.’”

“How did you guess, teacher?”

“Poor boy! I have been suffering from the same malady for fifty years. And I shall suffer, to the day of my death. Do you think I know Him more than you do? These are perpetual birth-pains. In comparison with them, all other pains are as nothing. People think that they suffer from hunger or thirst or pain or poverty. In reality they suffer only from the thought that perhaps He is not. This is the only suffering in the world. Who dares to say ‘He is not?’ and who knows what superhuman power is needed to say ‘He is?’”

“And you, even you have never drawn near to Him?”

“Thrice in my life I experienced the ecstasy, the full absorption into Him. Plotinus experi-

enced it four times. Porphyry, five. There were three moments in my life, for the sake of which it was worth while to live."

"I asked your pupils about this. They knew nothing."

"Do they dare to know? The husks of wisdom are enough for them. For almost all men, the kernel is deadly."

"Let me die, teacher! But give it to me!"

"You dare?"

"I dare! Tell me! tell me!"

"What can I tell you? I know not how. And is it right to speak of it? Listen to the stillness of the evening. It will tell you the secret better than any words."

And he stroked Julian's head as before, as though he had been a child. The pupil thought: "This is it! this is what I was waiting for!" He clasped Iamblichus' knees, looked up entreatingly into his eyes, and said:

"Teacher, have pity! Reveal all. Do not desert me."

Iamblichus spoke low, as if to himself, as if he neither heard nor saw his pupil. His strangely unmoving, green eyes were fixed on the clouds, inwardly gilded by the sun.

"Yes, yes, we have all forgotten the Father's voice. Like children separated from the Father from our cradles, we hear it, and do not recognize it. There must be perfect silence in the soul, a ceasing of all earthly and heavenly voices. Then may we hear His voice. While the reason shines, and like a noonday sun illumines the soul, we remain in ourselves, and behold not God. But when the reason draws near to its setting, an

ecstasy comes over the soul, like the dew of evening. The wicked cannot feel that ecstasy. Only the wise man becomes a lyre, which trembles and resounds under the hand of God. Whence comes the light that illumines the soul? I know not. It comes stealthily, when you do not expect it. It cannot be sought out. God is not far from us. We must prepare ourselves. We must be full of quietness, and wait, as the eyes wait, for the rising of the sun, that uplifts his light in the words of the poet, from the dark ocean. God neither comes nor goes. He only manifests himself. And then He is the opposite of the world, the opposite of all that is. He is nothing. He is All."

Iamblichus rose from the stone, and slowly spread his lean, weak hands.

"Be still, be still,—I say unto you,—be still! Hearken unto Him. He is here. Let the earth and the sea be silent, and the air, and even the heavens! Hearken! It is He who fills the universe, piercing the atoms with His breath, and illumining matter,—Chaos, 'that makes the gods to fear,'—as the evening sun gilds that dark cloud."

Julian listened, and it seemed to him that the teacher's voice, weak and low, filled the world, reaching even to the very heavens, to the utmost limits of the deep. But Julian's sadness was so great that it escaped from his breast in an involuntary sigh:

"My father, forgive me, but if it be so, to what end is life? why this eternal alternation of life and death? why are there sufferings? why is there evil? why is there a body? why are there doubts? why is there a longing after the impossible?"

Iamblichus shuddered slightly, laid his hand on Julian's hair once more, and answered:

“That is where the mystery lies, my son. There is neither evil, nor the body, nor the world, if He is. Either He, or the world. It seems to us that there is evil, that there is the body, that there is the world. This is but an illusion,—a cheat of life. Remember,—all have one soul, all men, and even inarticulate things. There was a time when we all rested together in the bosom of the Father, in the everlasting light. But once we looked from above, into the darkness, the material world, and each saw in it his own image, as in a mirror. And the soul said to itself: ‘I can and will be free! I am as He is. Can I not dare to separate myself from him, and become the All?’ The soul, like Narcissus in the stream, was taken captive by the beauty of its own image, mirrored in the body. And then it fell; it wished to fall to the end, to separate itself from God forever,—and could not. The feet of a mortal touch the earth; his brow is higher than the summit of heaven. And so by the everlasting ladder of birth and death, souls, all beings, rise to Him, and descend from Him. They try to depart from the Father, and cannot. Every soul wishes to be God, but in vain: it longs for the bosom of the Father, and finds no rest on earth, thirsting to return to the One. We must return to Him, and then all will be God, and God will be all. Are you the only one who longs for Him? See what a heavenly sadness there is in the stillness of nature. Listen! Can you not feel that all things are longing for Him?”

The sun set. The golden, incandescent clouds grew cold. The sea became pale and ethereal as

the sky. The sky, as blue and clear as the sea. Along the road a wagon rumbled. In it sat a youth and a woman,—two lovers, perhaps. The woman's voice sang a sad, familiar love-song. Afterward all once more became silent, and still sadder. The swift, southern night descended from the heavens. Julian murmured:

“How often I have wondered why nature is so sad. The more beautiful, the sadder it is.”

Iamblichus replied with a smile:

“Yes, yes; nature would fain say what she is grieving for, but cannot. She is dumb. She sleeps, and tries to remember God in her slumber, through the veil of her dream, but cannot, because of the burden of matter. She conceives God dimly and dreamily. All worlds, all stars, and the sea, and the earth, and living things, and trees, and people,—all are nature's dreams of God. What she conceives is born and dies. She creates by conceiving only, as happens in dreams; creates easily, knowing neither effort nor obstacle. That is why the waves of her creation are so beautiful, so purposeless, so divine. Nature plays at seeing visions,—it is like the sport of the clouds. Without beginning, it is without end. Beyond conceiving, there is nothing in the universe. The deeper it is, the quieter. Will, struggle, action, are only weak, incomplete, or clouded dreams of God. Nature, in her mighty inactivity, creates forms, like Geometry. What she sees, exists. She pours forth form after form, from her maternal bosom. But her dim and silent conception is only the image of another, and a bright one. Nature seeks the word, and finds it not. Nature is the sleeping mother Cybele, with eyes perpetually

closed. Man alone has discovered the word which nature sought, and found not. The soul of man is nature, opening her sleeping lids, awakening, and ready to behold God,—no longer in a dream, but openly,—face to face.”

The first stars shone out on the darkening and deepening sky. Now and again they faded, only to flash up again once more. They seemed to rotate, like great diamonds, strung to the firmament. New stars kept lighting up, and ever new ones. Iamblichus pointed to them:

“To what shall I liken the world—all these suns and stars? I shall liken them to a net, cast by the fishermen into the sea. The net moves, but cannot stop the water, and the universe tries to lay hold on God, but cannot. The net moves, but God is still, as the limitless ocean, in which the net is cast. If the universe did not move, God would have created nothing, would not have moved from his repose; for why and what should He strive after? There, in the kingdom of the eternal Mothers, in the bosom of the Universal Spirit, lie the seeds, the Idea-forms, of all that has been, and shall be,—the Logos lies hidden, the germ of the cricket, of a blade of grass, and side by side with them, in the germ of the Olympian God.”

Then Julian cried aloud, and his voice sounded on the evening stillness like a cry of mortal pain:

“But who is He? Who is He? Why does He not answer when we cry to Him? What is His name? I would know Him, see and hear Him. Why does He evade my thought? Where is He?”

“Poor child,—what means thought before Him? He has no name. He is of such nature that we can only say what He cannot be, and never what

He is. But you cannot suffer without praising Him; you cannot love without praising Him; you cannot curse without praising Him. Creating all, He himself is nought of what He has created. When you say 'He is not,' you offer Him not less praise than when you say 'He is.' Nought can be affirmed of Him; neither existence, nor being, nor life; because He is above all existence, higher than all being, beyond all life. That is why I said He is the negation of the world, the negation of your thought. Turn away from the existent, from all that is; and there, in the abyss of the abyss, the depths of unspeakable darkness, like to the light, thou shalt find Him. Give up for Him friends and kin and land, heaven and earth, and thyself and thy reason. Then thou shalt no longer see the light, for thou shalt be the light. Thou wilt no longer say: 'He and I;' thou wilt feel that He and thou are one; and thy soul will mock at thine own body, as at a mirage. Then,—the silence, and no more words at all. And if the world, at that very moment, should fall into ruins, thou wilt rejoice, for what is the world to thee who art one with Him? Thy soul will desire no more, for He has no desire; it will no more live, for He is above life; it will not think, because He is higher than thought. Thought is a searching for the light; but He seeks not the light, because He is the Light. He penetrates thy soul utterly, and re-creates it into Himself. And then above passion and alone, it rests above reason; higher than the righteous, higher than the realm of Ideas, higher than beauty, in the abyss, in the bosom of the Father of Lights. The soul becomes God, or to speak more truly, it understands at last

that throughout the eternities, it was, and is, and shall be God. . . . Such, my son, is the life of the Olympians, such is the life of godlike men and sages. A renunciation of all that is in the world, a contempt for the passions of earth, the flight of the soul to him whom it beholds face to face."

He was silent, and Julian fell at his feet, not daring to touch him, and only kissed the earth which the feet of the holy man had touched. Then the pupil raised his face, and gazed into those strange green eyes, in which shone the unveiled secret of the Serpent's wisdom. They seemed quiet, and deeper than the sky; within them seemed to flow a magical power. Julian whispered:

"Teacher, you can do all things, I believe! Command the mountains, and the mountains will move! Be like Him! Work a miracle! Accomplish the impossible; pity me; I believe!"

"My poor child, what do you ask of me? Is not the miracle which may be accomplished in your soul greater than any miracle that I can work. My child, is not that miracle more terrible and divine, that power in whose name you dare to say: 'He is,' and if He is not, all the same 'He shall be.' And you say: 'So shall He be; I will it so!'"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE.

When teacher and pupil, returning from their walk, were passing Panormus, the populous port of Ephesus, they noticed an unwonted tumult.

Many were running through the streets, waving flaming pine torches, and crying:

“The Christians are destroying the temple! Woe unto us!”

Others cried:

“Death to the Olympian gods! Astarte is conquered by Christ!”

Iamblichus thought to escape by deserted by-streets, but the hurrying crowd carried them along the quay of Cayster, past the shrine of Diana of the Ephesians. The splendid temple, the creation of Dinocrates, stood like a fortress, stern, dark, and immovable, clear-cut against the starry sky. The gleam of the torches shone on the tall columns, with their lovely and delicate groups,—little caryatides instead of pedestals. Up till now, not only all the Roman empire, but all the world, had held it sacred. Some one in the crowd cried out hesitatingly:

“Great is Diana of the Ephesians!”

And hundreds of voices answered him:

“Death to the Olympian gods, and to Diana!”

Above the black walls of the city arsenal rose a blood-red glow.

Julian looked at his godlike teacher, and did not

recognize him. Iamblichus had once more become the timid, sick old man. He complained of headache and expressed a fear that his rheumatism would begin again at night, and that the servant had forgotten the poultices. Julian gave the teacher his upper cloak. Yet he was still cold. With a morbid grimace, he stopped his ears, not to hear the cries and laughter of the crowd.

Iamblichus feared a crowd above all else in the world, and said that no demon was stupider or more repulsive than the genius of the mob. He directed his pupil's attention to the faces of the people who were hurrying past him:

“Look! what ugliness, what baseness! How confident they are that they are right! Is it not shameful to be a man of the same flesh, the same clay as they?”

An old Christian woman whimpered:

“And my sick grandson says to me: ‘Grandma, cook me some meat-soup.’ All right, dear, I said, I’m off to the market to get the meat. And I think to myself: meat is cheaper than wheaten bread now. I bought five oboli’s worth. I made the soup for him. And my neighbor in the courtyard calls out to me: ‘What are you cooking? Do you not know that meat is defiled?’ How defiled? What is the matter? It was this way: to injure good Christian souls, the priests of the goddess Demeter went at night, and sprinkled the whole market and all the meat-shops with water that had been consecrated to the goddess. No one in the city will eat the defiled meat. That is why they are stoning the priests of Demeter, and pulling down Demeter’s diabolical shrine. And so I threw out the meat-soup to the dogs. Is that a

joke-five oboli? It would take you a whole day to earn it! But I did not defile my grandson."

Others told how, the year before, a niggardly Christian had eaten the defiled meat, and all his intestines had rotted. And there was such a stench in the house that all his kindred fled.

They reached the square. Here was a charming little shrine of Demeter-Isis-Astarte, the three-faced Hecate, the mysterious goddess of the earth's fertility, the mighty and prolific Cybele, the mother of the gods. Monks were crowding round the shrine on all sides, like flies round a honeycomb. The monks swarmed along the white cornices, crowding up the stairs singing psalms, and smashed the statues and bas-reliefs. The columns trembled. Splinters of soft marble flew about. It seemed to suffer, like a living body. They tried to set fire to the building, but it was all of marble, and they could not.

Suddenly within the temple there arose a deafening, and at the same time strangely melodious metallic sound. The triumphant howls of the people rose to the skies.

"A rope! a rope! Bind her shameless hands and feet!"

With chanted prayers and joyful laughter, the crowd dragged forth from the door of the temple the rope-bound goddess, a pale, fair body of ringing silver; it was the mother of the gods, the work of Scopas.

"To the fire! to the fire!"

And they dragged her along the dirty square.

A lawyer monk read aloud a part of the recent and famous law of the Emperor Constans, the brother of Constantius:

"Let superstition cease, and the madness of sacrifices be abolished!"

"Fear nothing! Destroy and plunder everything in the devil's shrine!"

Another was reading by torchlight from a parchment roll the following lines of the book of Firmicus Maternus: *De errore profanarum religionum*:

"Holy emperors! come to the rescue of the unhappy heathen! Better save them by force than give them over to perish. Tear the ornaments from their temples; let their treasures enrich your treasuries. And let him who brings offerings to idols, be uprooted from the earth. Give him up to death, stone him, though he be thy son, thy brother, thy wife, sleeping on thy bosom."

And a triumphant cry rose above the crowd: "Death, death to the Olympian gods!"

A huge Arian monk, with disheveled black hair, clotted against his sweaty face, raised a bronze axe above the goddess, and chose a place to strike.

Some one advised him:

"Her breast, her foul breast!"

The silver body bent, disfigured; the blows rang mercilessly, leaving gashes on the breast of Demeter, the all-nourishing, the Mother of gods and men.

An old heathen covered his face with his gown, not to see the sacrilege. He wept, and thought that all was over now, that the world was lost. The fertile earth, Demeter, would no longer be willing to bring forth a single blade of corn for men.

A hermit, come from the desert of Mesopotamia, in a sheepskin, with a staff and a hollow gourd,

instead of a bottle, in coarse sandals, with iron hob-nails, ran to the goddess.

"For forty years I have not washed myself, in order not to look upon my own nakedness, so that I may not be allured. But as soon as you come into the city, brothers, the Lord forgive us, you see nothing but the naked bodies of these cursed gods everywhere. Are we to suffer this devilish enticement much longer? Pagan idols everywhere: in the houses, in the streets, on the roofs, in the baths, under our feet, above our heads! All the time you have, spit at them right and left!"

And full of detestation for the naked body, full of the terror of sin, the old man struck the benign breasts of Cybele with his sandals. He kicked her bare bosom; she seemed to him so lifelike that he wished to crush her under the sharp nails of his heavy sandals. He hissed, choking with anger:

"Take that, shameless, naked harlot. Take that!"

Under his feet, the lips of the goddess preserved their quiet smile. The crowd began to lift her up, to throw her into the bonfire. A drunken craftsman, his breath smelling of garlic, spat in her face.

The bonfire was huge. They threw all the wooden stalls from the market-place, which had been defiled by the consecrated water, into it. High above the crowd, the quiet stars hardly twinkled through the smoke.

They threw the goddess into the fire to melt her silver body. And once more, with a soft ringing sound, she struck against the flaming firebrands.

"Five talents of molten metal. Thirty thousand pieces of silver. We shall send half to the emperor, to pay the soldiers, and give the other half to the poor. Cybele at least will do some one

some good. Out of a goddess thirty thousand pieces of silver for the soldiers and the poor!"

"Firewood! More firewood!"

The flame blazed up brighter, and all grew gayer around it.

"Let us see whether the devil will fly out of her. They say there is a devil in every idol, and in a goddess, two or three!"

"As soon as she begins to melt, the evil one will feel hot. And then he will jump out of her heathen mouth, like a blood-red or a fiery snake."

"No, we ought to have made the sign of the cross on her first; for the devil will bury itself in the ground like an adder. The year before last, they burned the shrine of Aphrodite. Somebody sprinkled her with holy water. And what do you think? From under her robe came a lot of little devils. I saw them myself. They were fetid, black, with white stripes, and hairy. And they squealed like mice. And when they smashed Aphrodite's head off, the biggest of them jumped out of her throat, and he had horns as big as that! and a peeled tail, naked, without any hair on it, like a mangy dog's!"

But the skeptic remarked:

"I do not deny it. Perhaps, you really did see the devils. Only, when they were breaking up the image of Zeus in Gaza the other day, there were no devils in him, but all sorts of rubbish, that it is a shame to speak of. Outwardly, he was terrible and mighty; ivory, gold, with lightning in his hands. And inside, spiders' webs, rats, dust, rotting beams, iron bars, nails, stinking tar, and the devil knows what rubbish more. Those are the gods for you!"

At the same moment, Iamblichus, terrified, with

eyes starting forth, took Julian by the arm, and led him to one side.

"Look, do you see those two? They are spies from Constantius. You know they have already taken your brother Gallus away under a guard to Constantinople. Take care! They will send their report to-day."

"What am I to do, teacher? I am used to it. I know they have been following me for a long time."

"For a long time? Why did you not tell me?"

And his hand trembled on Julian's arm.

"What are they whispering about? Are they not heathens?"

"Ho, old man! bestir yourself! Bring wood!" cried a ragged beggar, feeling that he was their master.

Iamblichus whispered to Julian:

"Let us despise them, and submit. Is it not all one? The foolishness of men cannot injure the majesty of the gods!"

And the godlike one took a log of wood from a Christian's hands, and threw it into the fire. At first Julian could not believe his eyes. But the spies were watching him now, smiling, steadily and curiously.

Then weakness, the habit of hypocrisy, contempt for himself, and for mankind, and an unintelligible passion overcame Julian's soul. Feeling the eyes of the spies on his back, he went up to a bundle of wood, chose a large log, and after Iamblichus, threw it into the fire on which the goddess' incandescent body was melting. He saw clearly how the red-hot silver flowed over her face, like drops of immortal sweat, and on her lips, as before, was an unconquerable and quiet smile.

CHAPTER IX.

SEEKING A SIGN.

“Looking at those men in black robes, Julian? They are the shades of night,—the shadows of death. Soon there will not be a single antique white robe, a single piece of marble, illumined by the sun. It is finished.”

Thus spoke the young sophist Antoninus, the son of the Egyptian prophetess Sosipatra, and the Neoplatonist Edesias. He was standing with Julian on the great Terrace of the Altar of Pergamos, flooded with sunlight, and enfolded by the blue sky. On the pedestal of the balustrade was sculptured the Gigantomachia, the war of the Titans and the gods. The gods were triumphing, the hoofs of their winged horses crushed the serpentine feet of the ancient giants. Antoninus pointed to the haut-relief:

“The Olympians conquered the Titans, and now the gods of the barbarians are conquering the Olympians. The temples are becoming their tombs,” he said to Julian.

Antoninus was a well-built youth. Some traits of his body and face called to mind the old statues.

But for many years he had suffered from an incurable sickness. And it was strange to see this once handsome face of pure Hellenic type, yellow, lean with an expression of pain, a new sickness, foreign to the faces of the men of old.

"I pray the gods for one thing," continued Antoninus; "that I may not see that night; that I may die before it. Rhetoricians, sophists, men of science, poets, artists, lovers of Grecian wisdom, all of us are out of place. We are belated. It is finished and done with."

"And if it is not yet finished," murmured Julian, as if speaking to himself.

"No, it is finished! We are sickly. We have no force."

The face of nineteen-year-old Julian seemed almost as pale and thin as that of Antoninus. His protruding lower lip gave him an expression of gloomy pride. His thick brows were knit with obstinate and stern intensity. Early wrinkles showed close to his ugly, large nose. His eyes, as strange as ever, glowed with a dry, unpleasant, and feverish fire. He wore the robe of a lay-brother. By day, as before, he visited churches and the tombs of the martyrs, and read the Holy Scriptures from the ambo, preparing for the monastic tonsure. Sometimes this hypocrisy seemed useless to him. He knew what fate had overtaken Gallus, and he knew that his brother could not escape death. And he himself lived, day after day, and month after month, in expectation of death.

Julian passed his nights in the library of Pergamos, where he studied the famous work of the orator Libanius, the greatest opponent of Christianity. He attended the lessons of the Greek sophists, Edesias of Pergamos, Chrysantheus of Sardis, Priscus of Thesprotia, Eusebius of Mindus, Proeresias, and Nymphidian.

They spoke to him of what he had already heard

from Iamblichus: the Triad, of the Neoplatonists, and the sacred ecstasy. He thought: "All this is not what I am in search of. They are hiding the heart of the matter from me."

Priscus, imitating Pythagoras, had passed five years in silence, ate nothing that had life, and wore neither woolen cloth, nor leather sandals. His garments were made of vegetable substances only, like his food. He wore a Pythagorean cloak, of pure white linen, and sandals of palm-leaf. "In our century," he said, "the chief thing is to be able to keep silence, and to learn how to die with dignity." And Priscus, despising all, with dignity awaited what he considered to be destruction: the final victory of the Christians over the Hellenes.

The cunning and cautious Chrysantheus, when the gods were spoken of, raised his eyes to heaven, asserting that he did not venture to say anything about them, as he knew nothing, and what he had formerly known he had long forgotten, and advised others to forget. Of magic, wonders, visions, he would not hear a word, asserting that all this was but unlawful jugglery, forbidden by the emperor's decrees.

Julian ate poorly, slept little, and his blood boiled with passionate impatience. Every morning, on awaking, he asked himself: "May it not be to-day?"

He wearied the poor frightened theurgists and philosophers with his questions of the mysteries and miracles. Many of them laughed at him, especially Chrysantheus. He had a cunning, fox-like smile, and the habit of agreeing with opinions which he held to be the greatest folly.

Once Edesias, a wise old man, timid and gentle, taking pity on Julian, said:

“My child! I want to die in peace. You are still young. Leave me alone. Go to my pupils. They will reveal everything to you. Yes, there are many things which we dare not speak of. When you are initiated in the mysteries, perhaps you will be ashamed that you were born ‘only a human being,’ and that you so remained.”

Eusebius of Mindus, a disciple of Edesias, was a man of jealous and bilious character.

“There are no more miracles,” he announced to Julian, “and so do not look for any. The gods are tired of mankind. Magic is nonsense! Only fools believe in it. But if you are tired of wisdom, and are determined to be deceived, go to Maximus. He despises our dialectics, and — — —, but I will not speak ill of a friend. Better listen to what took place not long ago, in an underground shrine of Hecate, whither Maximus brought us, to show us his art. When we had entered, and had prayed to the goddess, he said: ‘Be seated, and you will see a miracle.’ We sat down. He threw a grain of incense on the altar, and muttered something,— probably a hymn. And we saw clearly how the image of Hecate smiled. Maximus said: ‘Do not fear, you will see in a moment how both lamps in the hands of the goddess will light of themselves. Look,’ and he had not had time to finish speaking when the lamps flashed up.”

“It was a miracle!” cried Julian.

“Yes, yes. We were so full of bewilderment that we fell on our faces. But as I was going out of the temple, I thought to myself: Well, is what Maximus is doing worthy of the philosophy? Read

the books, read Pythagoras, Plato, Porphyry; there you will find wisdom. Is not the cleansing of the heart by divine dialectics more lovely than any miracle?"

Julian was no longer listening. With glowing eyes he was watching Eusebius' sallow, bilious face, and leaving his school, he said:

"Keep your books and dialectics! I want life and faith! And can there be faith without miracles? I thank you, Eusebius. You have shown me the man I have long been seeking."

The sophist looked at him with a bitter smile, and said, as Julian turned to go:

"Well, nephew of Constantine, you have not gone far from your ancestors. Socrates did not need wonders in order to believe."

CHAPTER X.

MAXIMUS THE EPHESIAN.

Exactly at midnight, in the ante-room of the great hall of the mysteries, Julian laid aside the garment of a lay-brother, and the mystagogues, the priests consecrated in the mysteries, robed him in the garment of the hierophants, made of the fibers of white Egyptian papyrus. They put a palm-branch in his hand. His feet remained bare.

He entered a long, low hall.

A double row of thick columns of bronze, of a peculiar greenish color, held up the roof. Each column represented two intertwined snakes. A metallic smell came from the bronze columns.

Beside the columns stood censors, on thin, tall legs. On them flickered tongues of flame, and wreathes of white smoke filled the hall.

At the far end faintly glimmered two golden-winged Assyrian bulls. They supported a splendid throne. On it was seated the chief hierophant, Maximus of Ephesus, like a god, in a long, black robe, embroidered with gold, and heavy with emeralds and carbuncles.

The slow voice of the hierodyle announced the beginning of the mysteries:

"If there are in this assembly any godless, or Christians, or Epicureans, let them depart!"

Julian had been told the initiate's answer. He replied:

"Christians, let them depart!"

The choir of hierodyles, hidden in the darkness, chanted in a melancholy voice:

"Christians, let them depart! Let the godless depart."

Then twenty boys appeared from the darkness. They were naked. In the hands of each gleamed a silver, semi-circular sistrum, like the sickle of the new moon. Only the ends of the sickle were united in a complete circumference, and to them fine points were fastened, which trembled at the slightest movement. The boys all at once raised these musical instruments above their heads, and struck them with a uniform, graceful movement of their fingers, and the sistrums resounded with a melancholy and languorous sound.

Maximus made a sign.

Someone approached Julian from behind, and tightly bandaging his eyes, said:

“Go! Fear neither water, nor fire, nor spirit, nor body, nor life, nor death.”

He was led forward. Apparently, an iron door was opened. He was allowed to pass through it. Close air blew in his face; under his feet were slippery, abrupt steps.

He began to descend an apparently endless staircase. There was a silence as of death. The air smelt of mildew. It seemed to him that he must be deep under the ground.

The staircase ended. Now he passed along a narrow corridor. He could feel the walls with his hands.

Suddenly his bare feet felt a dampness. There was a sound of murmuring streams. The water covered his feet. He continued to advance. With every step, the level of the water rose, reaching his ankles, then his knees, and at last his waist. His teeth chattered with cold. He continued to go forward. The water reached his breast. He thought: “Perhaps this is a trick; does Maximus want to kill me to please Constantius?” But he still went forward.

The water began to decrease.

Suddenly heat, as from a forge, blew in his face. The ground began to burn his feet. He seemed to be approaching a huge, red-hot furnace. The blood beat in his temples. Sometimes it became so hot that he thought a torch was held close to his face, or a red-hot iron. He continued to advance.

The heat diminished. But his breathing was checked by a heavy stench. He struck against something round, then another and another. By

the smell, he guessed that they were skulls and bones.

It seemed to him that someone was walking beside him, gliding silently, like a shade. A cold hand grasped his hand. He uttered a cry. Then two hands began to clutch at him, and catch hold of his robe. He felt the dry skin of them like a husk, and the bare bones underneath. In the way these hands caught at his robe, there was a repulsive caress like the caresses of lascivious women. Julian felt someone's breath on his cheek. In it, there was an odor of decay, a dampness of the tomb. And suddenly at his very ear, a quick whisper, like the rustling of autumn leaves at midnight, murmured:

"It is I, it is I! Do you not recognize me? It is I!"

"Who are you?" he asked, and remembered that he was breaking his vow of silence.

"It is I. If you wish it, I will take the bandage from your eyes, and you will know all. You will see me?"

The bony hands moved over his face, to take away the bandage with the same horrid, joyous rapidity.

The chill of death pierced to his heart, and involuntarily, by force of habit, he crossed himself three times, as he had done in childhood, when he dreamed a horrible dream.

There was a sound of thunder; the earth swayed beneath his feet; he felt that he was falling, and lost consciousness.

When Julian came to himself, the bandages were no longer on his eyes, and he was lying on soft cushions, in a huge, dimly-lighted grotto.

They gave him a kerchief to smell, impregnated with strong perfumes.

Opposite Julian's couch stood a lean and naked man, with a dusky skin. He was an Indian Gymnosophist, the assistant of Maximus. He held a shining circle of metal motionless above his head. Someone said to Julian:

"Look!"

And he fixed his eyes on a metal disk, which shone with a painful brightness. He looked long, and the outlines of surrounding objects began to melt away in a mist. He felt a pleasant, soothing weakness steal through his limbs. It seemed to him that the bright disk shone not outside him, but in him. His eyelids sank down, and on his lips played a tired and submissive smile. He gave himself up to adoration of the light.

Someone passed a hand several times over his face, and asked him:

"Are you asleep?"

"Yes."

"Look into my eyes."

Julian lifted his lids with an effort, and saw that Maximus was bending over him.

He was an old man of seventy. A beard, white as snow, fell almost to his belt. His hair, falling on his shoulders, had a faint gleam of gold through its whiteness. On his cheeks, and on his forehead were dark, clearly-marked wrinkles, showing not suffering, but strength of will, and wisdom. But Maximus' eyes fascinated Julian more than all. Beneath grey, overhanging brows, small, glittering and bright, they had a piercing look of mockery and tenderness combined. The hierophant asked:

“Dost thou wish to behold the mighty Titan?”

“I do,” replied Julian.

“Behold!”

And the magician directed his gaze to the depths of the grotto, where stood a tripod of golden bronze: above it rose a whole cloud of white smoke in great curling wreaths. A voice sounded, like the voice of a storm, till all the grotto rang:

“Hercules! Hercules! set me free!”

The blue sky gleamed between the opening clouds of smoke. Julian lay with pale, motionless face, with half-closed lids, and was conscious of swift, fleeting images, moving before him, and it seemed to him that he did not see them of himself, but that someone commanded him to see them.

As in a dream, he saw clouds and snowy mountains. Somewhere down below, in an abyss, the sea was moaning. He saw a huge form. His hands and feet were fastened to the rock with chains. A vulture was tearing at his vitals. Drops of dark blood dripped from his side. The chains rang, as he writhed in anguish:

“Free me, Hercules!”

And the Titan raised his shaggy head: his eyes met the eyes of the sleeper.

“Who art thou? Whom dost thou call for?” asked Julian, with a strong effort, like one speaking in sleep.

“Thee.”

“I am a weak mortal.”

“Thou art my brother! Set me free!”

“Who forged thy chains anew?”

“Humble, timid slaves, who forgive their enemies—from fear! Set me free!”

“How can I?”

"Become as I am!"

The clouds grew dark and heavy, the thunder muttered in the distance. Lightning flashed. The vulture uttered a cry. Drops of blood dripped from his beak. But louder than the thunder rose the voice of the Titan:

"Hercules, set me free!"

Then the clouds of smoke hid everything again, as they rose from the tripod.

Julian came to himself in a moment. The hierophant asked:

"Dost thou wish to behold the Adversary?"

"I do."

"Look."

Julian again half-closed his eyes, and gave himself up to the light enchantment of sleep.

In the white smoke appeared a faint outline of a head and two huge wings. The feathers hung drooping, like the branches of a weeping yew, and a bluish light gleamed fitfully on them. Someone called him in a far-away, faint voice, like a dying friend:

"Julian, Julian, in my name renounce the Galilean!"

Julian was silent.

Maximus whispered to him: "If thou wouldst see the mighty Angel, renounce!" Then Julian answered:

"I renounce!"

Above the head of the apparition, through the mist, shone the morning star, the star of Aurora. And the Angel repeated:

"Julian, in my name, renounce the Galilean!"

"I renounce!"

And for the third time the Angel spoke, in a

voice that was now loud, near, and triumphant: "Renounce!" And for the third time Julian repeated:

"I renounce!"

And the Angel said:

"Come to me!"

"Who art thou?"

"I am the Bringer of Light! I am the East, I am the Morning Star!"

"How beautiful thou art!"

"Be like unto me!"

"What sadness is in thine eyes!"

"I suffer for all that live. Neither birth nor death are needful. Come to me! I am the shadow, I am rest, I am freedom."

"How do men name thee?"

"Evil."

"Thou art evil?"

"I revolted."

"Against whom?"

"Against Him, whose equal I am. He wished to be alone, but we are twain."

"Grant me to be like thee!"

"Revolt, as I did. I will give thee strength!"

"Teach me how!"

"Break the law. Love thyself. Curse Him, and be as I am."

The Angel disappeared. A gust of cold air blew; the flame of the tripod quivered. First it sank to the ground, lapping along it, then the tripod was overturned by the wind, and the flame was extinguished. In the darkness was heard a stamping, a sound of cries and footsteps, as if an invisible army, fleeing before the foe, was rushing through the air. Julian, overcome with terror,

fell with his face to the ground, and the hierophant's long, black robe struck against him in the wind. "Flee, flee!" cried innumerable voices. "The gates of Hell are thrown open. It is He; it is He, it is He, the Conqueror!"

The wind whistled in Julian's ears. And legion after legion crowded past him. Then suddenly, after a sound of thunder beneath the earth, silence descended over all, and a heavenly freshness spread through it, as in the middle of a quiet summer night. Then a voice resounded:

"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"

It seemed to Julian that he had already heard that voice somewhere in dim, unremembered childhood.

Then again, but lower, as if from afar:

"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"

And the voice faded away to such a distance that it spoke with a hardly audible sigh:

"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"

When Julian awoke, and raised his face from the ground, he saw that one of the hierodyles was lighting the lamp. He felt dizzy. But he clearly remembered everything that had happened, as one remembers a vivid dream.

They bandaged his eyes again, and gave him a draught of spiced wine. He felt strength and lightness course through his limbs.

They led him up the stair. His hand was now in Maximus' strong hand. To Julian, it seemed that an invisible force was lifting him up the steps, as if on wings. The hierophant said:

"Ask!"

"Did you call Him?" questioned Julian.

"No, but when one string on the lyre trembles,

the other answers to it. Opposite answers to opposite."

"Why is there such power in His words, if they are a lie?"

"They are truth."

"What?—you mean that the Titan and the Angel are lies?"

"They also are truth."

"Two truths?"

"Two. All things are dual."

"You are deluding me."

"Not I, but the full truth is misleading and strange. If you are afraid, be silent."

"I am not afraid. Tell me all. Are the Galileans right?"

"Yes."

"Why then did I renounce Him?"

"There is yet another right."

"A higher?"

"No, equal to that which you renounced."

"But what am I to believe in? Where is the God whom I seek?"

"Both here and there. Serve Ahriman, serve Ormuzd,—whichever you please; but remember that the kingdom of Lucifer is equal to the kingdom of God."

"Whither must I go?"

"Choose one of the two ways, and do not hesitate."

"Which?"

"If you believe in Him, take up your cross, and follow Him, as He commanded. Be humble, be chaste, be the lamb, dumb before the slaughterers. Flee into the desert, give up flesh and blood and reason for Him; endure; believe. That is one of

the two ways: the great ascetic Galileans attain the same liberty as Prometheus and Lucifer."

"That way I cannot choose."

"Then choose the other. Be mighty, be like the stern men of old. Be strong, be proud, be implacable, be splendid. Pity not, love not, pardon not. Revolt, and conquer all. Let your body be as the bodies of the marble demigods. Take, and give not. Taste the forbidden fruit, and repent not. Believe not, and acknowledge it. And the world will be yours, and you will be like the Titan, and the Angel, who revolted against Him."

"But I cannot believe that in the words of the Galilean there is also truth. And I cannot endure two truths."

"If you cannot, you will be as all are. Better perish. But you can. Dare! You will be Roman emperor!"

"I—emperor?"

"You will have a power in your hands that Alexander of Macedon did not possess."

Julian felt that they were leaving the underground vault, and coming forth to the fresh air. A free morning breeze from the sea breathed around them. He did not see, but divined the endlessness of the sea and sky around him.

The hierophant took the bandage from his eyes. They were standing on a lofty marble tower. It was the astronomical observatory of the great theurgist, like the towers of the ancient Chaldeans, built on a huge overhanging promontory, above the sea. Below it were the luxurious villa and gardens of Maximus, palaces and propylæ, recalling the colonnades of Persepolis. Further

away, in the mist, were Artemisium, and many-pillared Ephesus. Further still, to the east, the mountains. To the west, the south, the north, spread the quiet sea, limitless, misty, deep blue, all tremulous and smiling for the coming of the sun. They stood at such a height that Julian's head swam. He had to lean on Maximus' arm for support. The rising sun shone forth from behind the mountains; Julian half closed his eyes with a smile, and the sun touched his white, consecrated robe with its first pale rose, and then crimson ray.

The hierophant stretched forth his hand to the horizon, and pointed to the land and sea.

"Look, it is all yours!"

"Have I the power, teacher? I expect death daily. I am weak and sickly."

"The sun, the god Mithra, crowns you with his purple! It is the purple of the Roman emperor. All is yours. Dare!"

"What good is all to me, if there is not one truth?—the one God, whom I seek?"

"Find Him, if you can; unite the truth of the Titan with the truth of the Galilean, and you will be greater than any man upon earth, of woman born."

CHAPTER XI.

GALLUS A PRISONER.

Julian visited his unhappy brother Gallus, when the latter stopped at Constantinople, on his journey to Milan.

He found him surrounded by a treacherous guard of Constantius' minions. The questor Leontius was there, a crafty and cultivated court fop, who was famed for the not insignificant art of listening at doors and extorting information from slaves; the tribune Bainobaudes, chief of the shield-bearing scutarii, a silent, impenetrable barbarian who looked like a disguised executioner; Lucillianus, the powerful master of ceremonies of the emperor, the "comes domesticorum;" and, finally, Scudilo, who had once been military tribune in Cesarea of Cappadocia, and now, thanks to the protection of certain old ladies, had received a coveted position at court.

Gallus, as usual, was healthy, gay, light-minded, and treated Julian to a splendid supper. He was especially proud of a fat pheasant from Colchis, garnished with fresh figs from the Thebaid. He laughed like a child, and talked of Macellum. Suddenly, in the midst of their conversation, Julian asked about Gallus' wife, Constantina.

Gallus' face changed. He let his fingers, which were lifting a white, juicy piece of pheasant to his mouth, fall again. His eyes filled with tears.

"Do you not know, Julian?" he answered,

“Constantina died suddenly of a malignant fever, on her way to the emperor, at Gallician Caene, a little town in Bithynia. I wept two whole nights when I heard of her death.”

He looked at the door hesitatingly, then approached Julian, and whispered in his ear:

“Since that, I have thrown everything overboard. She alone could have saved me. Brother, she was a wonderful woman! Without her I am ruined. I can do nothing, and understand nothing. I simply let my hands fall. They do what they will with me.”

He drank a great cup of undiluted wine at a single draught.

Julian remembered Constantina, a widow no longer young, Constantius' sister, who had been his brother's evil genius; he thought of the innumerable base and foolish crimes which she had led him to commit, sometimes simply for an expensive trifle, some long-promised necklace; and he asked, trying to guess what power could have subjected him to that woman:

“Was she beautiful?”

“Did you never see her? No, she was not beautiful, even very ugly. She was dusky, pock-marked, short; she had bad teeth,—a thing I cannot endure in women. But then, knowing her weak points, she avoided laughing. They say that she used to deceive me. But what had that to do with me? Did I not deceive her? She did not prevent my enjoying life, and I did not prevent her. They say my dead wife was cruel. Yes, Julian, she knew how to rule! She had no love for the makers of epigrams and street verses, in which the rascals sometimes blamed her for bad

manners, and compared her to a kitchen slave, dressed up as Cæsar's wife. She loved revenge! What a mind, Julian, what a mind she had. Beside her I was as safe as if I had been behind a stone wall. And what a time we had of merry-making! To our hearts' content!"

He smiled at his pleasant memories, and silently licked his red lips with the tip of his tongue, which were still wet with Chian wine.

"Yes, there is no denying it, we had our festival!" he concluded, not without pride.

When Julian had come to this meeting, he had hoped to arouse a feeling of repentance in his brother, and had prepared a speech against tyrants, in the style of Libanius. He expected to find a victim, pursued by the scourge of Nemesis; but he saw before him the peaceful, sleek face of an overfed Greek athlete. The words died on Julian's lips. He looked without the slightest antipathy or anger on the "good-natured animal" (as he mentally called his brother), and thought that it would be as out of place to read him a lecture as if he had been a handsome young stallion. Julian only asked in a whisper, glancing toward the door in his turn:

"Why are you going to Mediolanum? Can you not guess?"

"Do not say it. I know. But I cannot turn back. It is too late."

He pointed to his white neck.

"Death's noose is here,—do you understand? And he gently pulls at it. He would dig me up from beneath the earth, Julian! There is no use talking. It is finished. We have had our merry-making, and now it is over."

“You had two legions left in Antioch.”

“Not even one. He took away all my best soldiers, little by little, slowly, and all for my own glory! How he cared for me, how he concerned himself about me, how he thirsted for my counsels! Julian, he is a terrible man. You do not know, and God grant that you may not know, what a man he is. He sees everything, he can see ten cubits into the earth. He knows my most secret thoughts which my own pillow does not even know. And he sees through you, too. I dread him, brother!”

“Can you not run away?”

“Softly, hush! What are you saying?”

A school-boy's fear of punishment was expressed in Gallus' indolent, soft features.

“No, of course not! I am like a fish on the hook. He is pulling in gently, so as not to break the line. And Cæsar, whoever he may be, is a pretty heavy fish. But I know that I cannot break away. Sooner or later he will land me. I see,—how could I not see, that it is a trap? But I go into it, of my own accord, through fear. These six years, and earlier, too, ever since I remember myself, I have lived in fear of him. Enough! The boy has had what was his, he has played his game, and now it is over. Brother, he will cut my throat, as the cook cuts the throat of a fat chicken. But first he will torment me by craft and caresses. The sooner the better.”

Suddenly a flash came into his eyes.

“But if she was here with me, now, what do you think, brother? She would have saved me,—she would certainly have saved me! That is why

I say she was a wonderful and extraordinary woman!"

The tribune, Scudilo, entering the triclinium with a servile bow, announced that on the morrow, in honor of the Cæsar's presence, races had been arranged in the hippodrome of Constantinople, in which the famous rider, Corax, would take part. Gallus was delighted. He ordered a laurel wreath to be prepared, to crown his favorite Corax, with his own hand, if he should be victorious. The talk turned to horses, races, and the skill of famous drivers.

Gallus drank much, and there was not a trace of his recent fear; he laughed his open and light-hearted laughter like a healthy man with an easy conscience.

Only at the moment of leave-taking, as he warmly embraced Julian, his eyes filled with tears:

"God spare you, God spare you," he murmured, falling into excessive sensibility, perhaps from the wine, "I know you alone loved me, you and Constantina."

Then he whispered in Julian's ear:

"I hope you will save yourself, brother. You know how to dissemble. I always envied you. Well, God spare you."

Julian felt sorry for him. He understood that his brother could not get off Constantius' hook.

On the following day, Gallus left Constantinople with the same convoy. Not far from the city gates, Taurus, the recently-appointed questor of Armenia met him. Taurus, a court upstart, looked insolently and mockingly at the Cæsar, and did not salute him.

Meanwhile, letter after letter came from the emperor.

After Adrianople, only ten chariots of the imperial post were left with Gallus. All his baggage and suite, with the exception of two or three attendants of the bed-chamber and table, *ministri tori et mensae*, were left behind.

Late autumn had come on. The roads were abominable. The rain fell for days. The Cæsar was hurried along; no time was given him to rest, or even to get enough sleep. He had not taken a bath for two weeks.

One of his greatest torments was the incessant and unaccustomed feeling of dirt. All his life he had carefully tended his healthy, pampered, and handsome body. The Cæsar looked at his uncleaned and untrimmed nails with sincere grief, and also the royal purple of his cloak, stained with the dust and dirt of the high roads.

Scudilo did not leave him for a moment. Gallus had reason to fear this attentive fellow-traveler.

The tribune who had just come with a commission from the emperor to the court of Antioch, had offended the Cæsar's wife by a careless word or hint; one of those fits of blind, almost mad, rage, which she was subject to, came upon her.

Rumor said that Constantina had ordered the tribune of the shield-bearers, newly sent thither by the emperor, to be punished with blows of the lash, like a slave, and then to be cast into a dungeon.

But others refused to believe that even the madly passionate wife of the Cæsar was capable of such an unheard-of insult to the imperial majesty, in the person of the Roman tribune.

In any case, Constantina soon thought better of it, and had Scudilo liberated from the dungeon. He appeared again at the Cæsar's court as if nothing had happened, taking advantage of the fact that no one knew anything for certain. He did not even send a report to Mediolanum, and silently swallowed the insult, according to the expression of those who envied him. Perhaps the tribune thought that the rumors of his shameful punishment would damage his future career at court.

But during the whole journey from Antioch to Mediolanum, Scudilo had traveled in the chariot with the Cæsar, not leaving him for a moment, had waited on him slavishly, had played with him, not leaving him in peace for a moment, and treating him as an obstinate, sick child, whom he (Scudilo) was so devoted to that he had not the heart to leave him.

During dangerous river-crossings, or on the quaking causeways over the Illyrian marshes, Scudilo firmly upheld Cæsar's body with his arm, with a gentle concern. If Gallus tried to free himself, the tribune held him more firmly, more tenderly, asserting that he would sooner consent to die than to permit such a precious life to run the slightest danger.

The tribune's face bore a singular, thoughtful expression when he looked silently and sweetly at Gallus' neck, soft and white as a young girl's. The Cæsar felt that lingering look, and grew so uncomfortable that he turned away. At that moment, he wished to box the caressing tribune's ears. But the poor prisoner soon came to himself, and only asked, in a pitiful voice, that at any rate they

should stop to eat something. His appetite, in spite of everything, was wonderful.

In the Noric country, in the city of Petobion, they were met by two messengers from the emperor, Barbation and Apodemus, with a cohort of the emperor's bodyguard.

Then the mask was thrown away. An armed guard was posted round Gallus' palace at night, as though it were a prison.

In the evening, Barbation, coming to the Cæsar, without the slightest etiquette, ordered him to take off the Cæsarean cloak, and dress himself in a simple tunic and paludamentum. Scudilo at this made an exhibition of his zeal. He began to take the cloak off Gallus so hastily that he tore the purple.

Next morning they put the prisoner in a two-wheeled post-cart, a *carpenta*, in which the inferior officers of the government traveled when on duty. There was no covering to the *carpenta*. There was a piercing wind, and wet snow was falling. Scudilo, as was his habit, threw one arm around Gallus, and began to finger his new garment.

"It is a good cloak, downy and warm,—far better than the purple, in my opinion. The purple does not keep you warm. But this cloak has a soft, warm lining of wool."

And as if to feel the lining, he slipped his hand under the Cæsar's cloak, and inside the tunic, and then with a soft, caressing laugh, he drew forth a keen-edged dagger, which Gallus had managed to conceal in a fold of his tunic.

"That is not right, not right at all," said Scudilo, with a gleeful smile. "You might cut yourself somehow, by accident. What a toy!"

He threw the dagger on the road.

A boundless weariness and weakness took possession of Gallus' body. He shut his eyes, and felt that Scudilo was still embracing him with great tenderness. It seemed to the Cæsar that he was dreaming a horrible dream.

They stopped not far from the fortress of Pola in Istria, on the shores of the Adriatic. In that same city a sanguinary atrocity a few years before had been accomplished,—the murder of a noble youth,—Crispus, son of Constantine.

The city, inhabited only by soldiers, seemed a melancholy out of the way corner. Endless barracks had been built, in the style of Diocletian. Snow lay on the roofs. The wind whistled in the empty streets and the sea moaned.

Gallus was taken to one of the barracks.

They set him before the window, so that the raw wintry light fell straight into his eyes. The most skilful of the emperor's inquisitors, Eusebius, a small, wrinkled, and suave old man, began to question him in the low, furtive voice of a confessor, all the time rubbing his hands from the cold. Gallus felt a deadly weariness; he said everything that Eusebius wished. But at the words "high treason," Gallus grew pale, and jumped up.

"It was not I, not I," he stuttered, foolishly and impotently, "that was Constantina, only Constantina! I did nothing without her. She demanded the death of Theophilus, Domitian, Clematius, Montius, and others. God sees that it was not I! She said nothing to me. I did not even know."

Eusebius looked at him with a quiet and suave smile:

"Very well," he said, "I shall tell the emperor

that his own sister, the consort of the former Cæsar, is guilty of everything. The examination is ended. "Take him away," he commanded the legionaries.

The sentence of death was soon received from Constantius, who considered the inculpation of his sister in all the murders committed at the court of Antioch, a direct insult, offered to his own house.

When they read the sentence to Gallus he fainted, and fell at the soldiers' feet. The poor wretch had hoped for mercy, until the last moment. And now he still hoped that they would at least give him a few days, a few hours, to prepare for death. But rumors were heard that the soldiers of the Theban legion were mutinying, and intended to set Gallus free. He was led to execution at once.

It was early morning. Snow had fallen in the night, and covered the black, sticky mud. And now, a cold, dead sun glittered on the snow. The dazzling brightness fell on the stuccoed walls of the great barrack hall, whither they brought Gallus.

They did not trust the soldiers, who nearly all loved and pitied him. They chose a butcher for an executioner who had already put to death some Istrian robbers and thieves in the square of Pola. The barbarian did not know how to handle the Roman sword, and so brought a broad axe for the execution; it was more like the double-edged hatchet, with which he killed swine and sheep, in the slaughter-house. The butcher's face was dull, handsome, and sleepy. He was of Slavonic race. They did not tell him that the condemned

man was Cæsar, and the executioner thought that he was to kill a robber.

In the face of death, Gallus had become timid and docile. He allowed them to do whatever they pleased with him, smiling a senseless smile. It seemed to him that he was a little child restored to infancy; he had also cried and struggled when by force he was put in the hot bath and washed, but afterward, resigning himself, he found it was pleasant.

But seeing the butcher draw the broad blade of the axe backward and forward on a whet-stone, he trembled in every limb.

They took him into the next room. There a barber carefully cropped his curly, golden hair, close to the skin,—the beauty and pride of the young Cæsar. Returning from the barber's room, he met the tribune Scudilo for a moment face to face in the corridor. Cæsar unexpectedly fell at the feet of his bitterest foe:

“Save me, Scudilo; I know you can! Last night I received a letter from the soldiers of the Theban legion. Let me speak to them. They will set me free. In the treasury of the Misian cathedral are thirty talents of my own. No one knows of it. I will give it to you. I will give you more. The soldiers are devoted to me. I will make you my friend, my brother, my co-ruler, a Cæsar!”

He clasped the man's knees, maddened by hope, and Scudilo shuddered, feeling Cæsar's lips touch his hand. The tribune made no answer, but slowly drew away his hand, and looked in his face with a smile.

They ordered Gallus to take off his tunic. He did not wish to unfasten his sandals; his feet were

dirty. When he was almost naked the butcher began to tie his hands behind his back with a rope, as he had always done with the robbers. Scudilo sprang forward to help him. But at the contact of his fingers, a madness came upon Gallus. He tore himself from the executioner's hands, seized the tribune by the throat with both hands, and tried to throttle him. Tall, naked, he looked like some strong and terrible young beast, not like a human being. He was caught from behind and dragged away from the tribune; his hands and feet were tied.

At the same time, below, in the barrack-yard, the soldiers of the Theban legion shouted: "Long live Cæsar Gallus."

The murderers hastened with their work. They brought a great wooden log. They set Gallus on his knees. Barbation, Bainobeudes, and Apodemus held him by the arms, the feet, and the shoulders. Scudilo pressed his head down on the wooden block. With a smile of satisfaction on his pale lips, he pressed down, with both his hands, that helpless, yet resisting head; his fingers, cold with exultation, touched the smooth, recently-shaven skin, still damp from the barber's soap; he looked with delight at the plump, soft neck, which was as white as a girl's.

The butcher was an unskilled executioner. Swinging the axe, he grazed the neck, but the blow was uncertain; then he raised the axe a second time, shouting to Scudilo:

"That is not right! Straighter! Hold his head straighter!"

Gallus shivered, and cried out in his terror, with a prolonged, inhuman cry, the cry of a

slaughtered ox, which the first blow had failed to bring down.

The cries of the soldiers sounded nearer and clearer:

“Long live Cæsar Gallus!”

The butcher raised his axe high into the air and struck. The hot blood spurted over Scudilo's hand. The head fell, and struck against the stone floor.

At that moment the legionaries burst in.

Barbation, Apodemus, and the tribune of the shield-bearers ran toward the opposite door.

The executioner stood undecided, but Scudilo had time to whisper to him to take away the head of the slain Cæsar: the legionaries would not know who the headless trunk belonged to, for otherwise they might tear them all to pieces.

“So he was no robber?” stammered the astonished butcher.

There was nothing to catch the smooth-shaven head by. The butcher first tucked it under his arm. But this felt awkward. Then he pushed his fingers into the mouth, and thus hooking it on carried away the head whose one nod had only recently made so many other heads to bow.

Julian, hearing of his brother's death, thought: “Now my turn has come.”

CHAPTER XII.

DIANA THE HUNTRESS.

In Athens, Julian was to take the angelic rank, —the monastic tonsure.

It was an early morning in spring. The sun had not yet risen. Julian had been at the morning service in the church, and immediately afterward had gone several stadia along the bank of the Ilissus, overgrown with plane trees and wild vines.

He was fond of walking alone along the bank of the stream. Through the mist, he could see the ruddy cliffs of the Acropolis, and the outline of the Parthenon, just touched by the light of dawn.

Julian took off his sandals, and with bare feet entered the shallow water of the Ilissus. There was a scent of muscat grapes just about to blossom. In this scent there was already a foretaste of wine; as in the first thoughts of childhood there is a foretaste of love.

Julian sat down at the root of a plane tree, without taking his feet from the water.

He opened the *Phædrus*, and began to read. In the dialogue, Socrates says to *Phædrus*:

“Let us turn hither. Let us follow the course of the Ilissus. We shall choose a lonely place to sit down.

“*Phædrus*: It is well that I came forth to-day without sandals. And thou, Socrates, goest ever unshod. We can go by the bed of the stream itself, washing our feet. Look how the water here seems to laugh. It is so pure and transparent.

"*Socrates*: I swear by Pallas,—what a perfect nook! It must be consecrated to the nymphs, and the river-god, Achelous, to judge by these little statues. Does it not seem to thee Phædrus, that the breeze here is softer and more scented than elsewhere? Here, even in the singing of the cicadas, there is something languorous, that speaks of summer. But what most pleases me, is the long, rich grass: there may we lay our heads to rest."

Julian looked around with a smile. All was as it had been eight centuries ago. The cicadas began their carol in the grass.

"This soil has been touched by the feet of *Socrates*! he thought; and burying his face in the soft, thick grass, he kissed the venerable earth.

"Hail, Julian. You have chosen a charming corner for your reading. May I take a seat beside you?"

"Be seated. I am very glad. Poets do not break the solitude."

Julian looked up at a lean individual, in an immoderately long cloak,—the poet Publius Optatianus Porphyrius, and thought with an involuntary smile: "He is so small, so bloodless, so lank, that one might well believe he will soon turn into a cicada, as it is recounted in Plato's myth of the poets."

Publius, like the cicadas, could live almost without food, but the gods had not given him the power of not feeling hunger and thirst. His face, earthy in color, long, unshaven, and his bloodless lips, preserved the stamp of the pains of hunger.

"Publius, why do you wear such a long cloak?" asked Julian.

"It is not mine," answered the poet, with philo-

sophical equanimity; "that is, it is mine temporarily. You see, I rent a room with a young fellow, Hephestion, who is learning oratory in Athens. He will be a splendid advocate some day. Meanwhile, he is poor, poor as I myself, poor as a lyric poet,—does not that say everything? We have pawned our clothes, our furniture, everything, even the ink-bottle. Nothing is left but this cloak for us both. In the morning I go out, and Hephestion studies Demosthenes; in the evening he dons the garment, and I write verses at home. Unfortunately, Hephestion is tall, while I am of diminutive stature. But there is no help for it. I go long-clad, like the ancient Trojans."

Publius Optatianus burst out laughing, and his earthy face recalled the face of a funeral mourner, who had thought of a jest.

"You see, Julian," continued the poet, "I am counting on the death of a rich Roman publican's widow. The happy heirs will order an epitaph from me, and pay me well for it. Unfortunately, the widow is obstinate and healthy: in spite of the efforts of doctors and heirs she won't die. Otherwise I would long ago have bought myself a cloak. Listen, Julian, come with me at once."

"Whither?"

"Trust to me! You will be grateful."

"What is this secrecy about?"

"Don't be lazy; ask no questions; get up and come. A poet will not do ill to a friend of the poets. You will see a goddess."

"What goddess?"

"Artemis the Huntress."

"A picture? A statue?"

"Better than a picture or a statue. If you are

a lover of beauty, take up your cloak and follow me."

And the verse-maker assumed so humorously mysterious a look that Julian felt curious and, rising, put his cloak on, and followed him.

"A bargain,—say nothing, and express no astonishment. Otherwise the charm will vanish. In the name of Calliope and Erato, trust me! It is only a step or two from here. To keep you from wearying on the way, I will read you the beginning of my publicaness' epitaph."

They went out on the dusty road. In the first rays of the sun, the bronze shield of Athene Promachos flashed lightning over the blushing Acropolis, the point of her slender spear shone bright against the azure, like a candle.

The cicadas along the stone boundary-walls, beyond which murmured rivulets under fig groves, sang their piercing song, as though rivaling the hoarse voice of the poet, who read the epitaph.

Publius Optatianus Porphyrius was a man not devoid of talent. But his life had fallen out oddly. A few years ago he had had a pretty little house, "a regular temple of Hermes," in Constantinople, not far from the Chalcedonian suburb. His father, a trader in olive-oil, left him a moderate competence, that would have permitted him to live fairly well. But his blood boiled within him. This worshipper of ancient Hellas was vexed at what he called "the triumph of Christian slavery." Once he wrote a poem in praise of freedom, which displeased the Emperor Constantius.

Constantius would have considered the poem mere poetic nonsense. But it contained an allusion to the person of the emperor. And that he

could not forgive. Chastisement descended upon the composer. His pretty little house and his property were confiscated, and he himself was exiled to a wild isle of the Archipelago. On the island there was nothing but rocks, goats, and fever. Optatianus did not withstand the trial; he cursed all dreams of freedom, and resolved, at whatever cost, to expiate his sin.

During the sleepless nights when the fever tormented him in his island prison, he composed a poem in praise of the emperor, in centones from Virgil: separate verses of the old poet were so put together as to form a new production. This head-splitting task found favor at court. Optatianus had hit the spirit of the age.

Then he went on to still greater achievements. He wrote a dithyramb to Constantius, in verses of different lengths, so that the verses made complete figures; for example, a many-stemmed shepherd's pipe, a hydraulic organ, a sacrificial altar, in which the smoke was represented by several short, uneven lines above the altar. The triumphs of his ingenuity were square poems consisting of twenty or forty hexameters. Certain letters were repeated in red ink; when united, the red letters represented now the monogram of the Christ, now a flower, now an arabesque,—and then came new lines with new compliments. Finally, the last four lines of the book could be read in eighteen different ways, from the end, from the beginning, sidewise, from above, from below, and so on. And, however read, they were always in the emperor's praise.

The poet almost went mad over this superhuman task. But then his triumph was complete.

Constantius was in ecstasies. It seemed to him that Optatianus had surpassed the poets of antiquity. The emperor wrote him a letter with his own hand, assuring him that he was ever ready to encourage poetry.

"In our century," he wrote, rather pompously, "my notice follows every writer of verse, like the soft blowing of a zephyr." Nevertheless, they did not restore his confiscated property. He only received a small sum of money, and permission to leave the accursed island for Athens.

Here he led a mournful life. The assistant of the junior stable-boy in the circus led a life of luxury in comparison with him. The poet had to wait whole days in the ante-chamber of vain, half-literate dignitaries, in the company of coffin-makers, Jewish merchants and managers of wedding processions, to get orders for epithalamia, epitaphs, or a verse love letter. They paid him miserably. But Porphyrius did not despond, hoping some day to treat the emperor to a trick poem of such unheard of skill that it would procure him his final pardon.

Julian felt that, in spite of Porphyry's degradation, the love of Hellas was not extinct in him. He was a discerning judge of Greek poetry. Julian willingly conversed with him.

They turned aside from the main road, and approached the high stone wall of the palæstra.

All around the place looked deserted. Two black lambs were cropping the grass. At the closed doors, where poppies and dandelions grew in the crevices of the flags, stood a chariot, yoked with two white horses. Their manes were clipped, like the horses in the bas-reliefs.

A slave was watching them, an old man, with a shaky bald head, that looked like an egg, with white down over it.

The old man turned out to be deaf and dumb, but benevolent. He recognized Optatianus, and nodded to him kindly, pointing to the closed doors of the palæstra.

“Lend me your purse for a moment; I will take a denarius or two for the old man to buy wine,” said Optatianus to his companion.

He tossed him a coin, and the mute opened the door for them, with servile grimaces and mutterings.

They entered a long peristyle.

Between the columns were seen the so-called *xisti*, the galleries set apart for the exercises of the athletes. There was no sand in the *xisti*; they were overgrown with grass. The friends entered a wide, inner portico.

Julian's curiosity was awakened by all this mystery. Optatianus led him by the hand, without uttering a word.

On the second portico opened the doors of the *exhedra*, closed marble halls that had once served as the auditoriums of Athenian sages and orators. Field cicadas shrilled where the speeches of famous men had once been heard. Bees murmured over grasses that might have grown on tombs, so rich were they. Silence and sadness reigned there. Suddenly a woman's voice was heard somewhere, then the sound of a bronze disk on the marble, then laughter.

Stealing along like thieves, they hid in the darkness of the columns, in the *eleothesion*, where the

athletes of old used to anoint themselves with oil during the gymnastic contests.

From between the columns they could see a long, four-cornered ephebeon, under the open sky, destined for games of ball, and for casting the disk. It had evidently been recently strewed with fine sand.

Julian looked, and involuntarily stepped backward.

Twenty paces from him stood a young girl, perfectly naked. He saw her beautiful and perfect body, from head to foot. She was holding a bronze disk in her hand.

Julian made a quick movement to go away, but in the innocent eyes of Optatianus, in his pale, lean face, there was so much reverence that Julian understood why the worshipper of Hellas had brought him thither, and felt that not a single sinful thought found room in the poet's soul. His ecstasy was holy. Optatianus whispered in his companion's ear, seizing him by the hand:

"Look, Julian; we are now in ancient Laconia, nine centuries back. You remember the verses of Propertius: *Ludi Laconum*.

"Oh, Sparta, we wonder at many laws of thy gymnastic games, but most of all at the palæstra of the maidens: for thy nude virgins, among contending heroes, take part in not inglorious games."

"Who is she?" asked Julian.

"I know not, nor wish to know."

"Very well. Hush."

Now he looked directly and hungrily at the disk-thrower, no longer ashamed, and feeling that it would not be right or wise to be ashamed.

She stepped backward several paces, bent down,

and setting her left foot forward, raised herself with a powerful motion of her whole body, and threw the bronze disk so high that it glittered in the rising sun, and falling, struck with a ringing sound against the pedestal of a distant column. It seemed to Julian that an antique statue of Phidias was before him.

"That was the best stroke," said a little girl of twelve, dressed in a brilliant tunic, who stood near the column.

"Myra, give me the disk," said the disk-thrower. "I can throw it still higher,—you shall see. Meroe, go aside, or I shall hurt you, as Apollo wounded Hyacinthus."

Meroe, an old slave-woman, an Egyptian, to judge by her motley garments and dusky face, was preparing perfumes for the bath, in an alabaster amphora. Julian understood that the dumb slave and the chariot with the white horses belonged to these two lovers of Spartan games.

When she had finished throwing the disk, the girl took a bent bow from the pale, dark-eyed Myra, and drew a long feathered arrow from a quiver. The girl aimed at a black circle, serving as a target, at the opposite end of the ephebeon. The bow-string twanged. The arrow whistled through the air and struck the mark; then a second, and a third.

"Artemis the Huntress!" murmured Optatianus.

Suddenly a soft, rosy ray of the rising sun, slipping between the columns, fell on the girl's face and almost childish breast.

Throwing down her arrows and bow, she covered her face with her hands, blinded with the light.

The twittering swallows flashed above the palæstra and vanished in the blue sky.

She uncovered her face, throwing her arms above her head. Her hair at the ends was pale gold, like sunlit yellow honey, with a darker, ruddy shade at the roots. Her lips were half-opened with a smile of childish joy. The sunlight spread lower and lower over her naked body. She stood there pure, and wrapped in light and beauty, the most perfect of all garments.

“Myra,” the girl said thoughtfully and slowly, “look what a sky! I would willingly throw myself into it, and be drowned in it, with a cry like the swallows. You remember, we said that we cannot be happy without wings. When you watch the birds, you envy them. You must be light, altogether naked, Myra, as I am now, and gaze deep, deep into the sky, and feel that it lasts forever, that there is not, and cannot be, anything but the sun and sky, around your light, free, naked body.”

Straightening herself, and raising her hand towards the sky, she sighed deeply and sadly, as people sigh for something that is lost forever.

The sunlight fell lower and lower. It had already reached her hips, with a red caress. Then the girl shuddered, as though she had grown ashamed, as though something living and passionate had seen her. She covered her breast with one hand, her loins with the other, in the everlasting movement of shame of the Cnidian Aphrodite.

“Meroe, quick, my garment!” she exclaimed, looking round with large, frightened eyes.

Julian did not remember how he left the palæstra. His heart glowed. The poet’s face was exalted and sad, like the face of one leaving a temple.

“You are not angry?” he asked Julian.

“Oh no, why?”

“Perhaps for a Christian, it is a crime?”

“There was no crime. Do you not understand?”

“Yes, yes—I thought so.”

They went forth again to the dusty and now hot road, and took the direction of Athens.

Optatianus continued to speak, softly, as if to himself:

“How shamefaced we have become, and how ugly. We fear the harsh and pitiful nakedness of our bodies, and hide, because we feel that we are uncouth and unclean. But formerly! For all that was once, Julian! the Spartan virgins came forth to the palæstra naked and proud before all the people. And no one feared temptation. The pure looked on the pure. They were like children, like gods. And to know that this can never be again, that that freedom and purity can never return to the earth, all that life and joy! never!”

Optatianus' head sank on his breast, and he sighed deeply. They entered the street of the tripods. Not far from the acropolis, the friends parted in silence.

Julian entered the shade of the Propylæum. He passed the Stoa Poikile, with the pictures of Parrhasius, representing the battles of Marathon and Salamis; then, past the little temple of Wingless Victory, he drew near to the Parthenon.

He had only to shut his eyes to see the naked, beautiful body of Artemis the Huntress. When he opened them, the marble Parthenon in the sunlight seemed living and golden, like the body of the goddess.

And openly before all men, fearing no death, he

desired to embrace the sun-warmed marble with his arms and to kiss it, as a holy thing.

Not far from him stood two youths in dark garments, with pale, stern faces, Gregory of Nazianzen, and Basil of Cesarea. The Hellenes feared them, as their most powerful foes. The Christians hoped that the two friends would become mighty teachers of the Church. They looked at Julian.

"What is the matter with him to-day?" said Gregory. "Is that a—monk? What movements! How he closes his eyes! What a smile!—Can you really believe in his piety, Basil?"

"I have seen him praying in the church. He was weeping."

"Hypocrisy!"

"Why does he come to us, and seek our friendship? Why does he discuss the Scriptures?"

"He mocks us, or else he wishes to deceive us. Do not trust him. He is a tempter. Remember, my brother, in that youth the Roman Empire is nourishing a mighty evil. He is an enemy."

The friends passed, with downcast eyes. Neither the severe Caryatid-maidens of the Erectheum, nor the white temple of Nike Apteros, smiling in the azure, nor the Propylæ, nor the Parthenon, the most perfect beauty in the world, allured them. They wished one thing only, to destroy it all as a snare of Satan.

The sun cast the shadows of the two monks, Gregory of Nazianzen, and Basil of Cesarea, two long black shadows, against the marble of the Parthenon.

"I want to see her," thought Julian, "I must know who she is!"

CHAPTER XIII.

NIGHTS AND SUPPERS OF THE GODS.

"The gods sent mortals into the world, that they might speak beautifully."

"Wonderful! wonderfully said, Mamertinus! Repeat it, before you forget it: I will write it down, along with your other sayings." Thus was addressed Mamertinus, a fashionable lawyer of Athens by his friend and adoring worshipper Lampridius, teacher of Rhetoric. He drew from his pocket a folding wax tablet and a sharp steel stylus and got ready to write.

"I say," said Mamertinus, looking at his companion with a coquettish smile, as they sat at supper, "I say, that people were sent by the gods—"

"No, no, you did not say it like that, Mamertinus;" Lampridius interrupted him; "you said it much better: the gods sent mortals."

"Oh yes. I said: the gods sent mortals into the world, only that they might speak beautifully."

"You have added the word 'only,' now. It is still better like that. 'Only that they might—'"

And Lampridius adoringly wrote down the advocate's words, as though they were an oracle.

It was a literary supper of friends, given not far from Piræus, by the old and worthy Roman senator Hortensius at the villa of his young and rich ward, Arsinoe.

That same day Mamertinus had pronounced his famous oration in defence of the banker, Barnabas.

No one doubted that the Jew Barnabas was a rascal. But, to say nothing of the invincible eloquence of the orator, he had such a voice that one of the innumerable throng of his fair worshippers said: "I never listened to Mamertinus' words, and I never need know what he is talking about. I am intoxicated by the mere sound of his voice. Especially when it dies away at the end of a phrase—it is something marvelous! It is not the voice of a man, but divine nectar, the strains of an æolian harp!" Though simple coarse people call Barnabas, the usurer, "a drinker of blood, eating up the portions of the widows and the fatherless," the Athenians were of course enthusiastic in exonerating the client of Mamertinus. The lawyer received fifty thousand sesterces from the Jew, and was now in excellent spirits, at the distinguished little festival which Hortensius was giving in his honor. But he had a habit of pretending to be ill, and making perpetual demands for indulgence.

"Oh, my friends, I am so tired to-day," he said, in a plaintive voice, "I am quite ill. Where is Arsinoe?"

"She will come in a moment. Arsinoe has just received a new scientific apparatus from the Alexandrian Museum: she is quite taken with it. But I will have her called," concluded Hortensius.

"No, pray do not!" said the lawyer, carelessly. "Pray do not. But what nonsense. A girl, and—physics! What can there be in common between them? Aristophanes and Euripides laughed at learned women—and they were right! your Arsinoe is capricious, Hortensius! If she was not so charming, really with her sculpture and mathematics, she would be—"

He did not finish his sentence, and looked towards the open window.

"What am I to do?" answered Hertensius, "a spoiled child—an orphan, neither father nor mother—I am only her guardian, and do not wish to limit her in anything."

"Yes—yes—"

The lawyer was no longer listening. He was thinking of himself.

"My friends, I feel—"

"What is it?" asked several voices, with concern.

"I feel—it seems to me there is a draught."

"Shall we have the shutters closed?" asked the host.

"No, it is not necessary. It would be too close. But I tired my voice so, to-day. And the day after to-morrow, I have another case. Give me my chest protector, and a carpet for my feet. I am afraid of getting hoarse, from the damp night air."

Young Hephestion, the same who lived with the poet Optatianus and was a pupil of Lampridius, and Lampridius himself both sprang up in haste to get Mamertinus his wrap.

The chest protector was a handsomely embroidered scarf of feathery, white wool, which the lawyer never parted from, so that at the slightest danger of a chill, he might encircle his precious throat with it.

Mamertinus took all the care of himself a lover takes of a spoiled mistress. All were accustomed to this. He loved himself with such a naive grace, with such touching tenderness, that he compelled other people also to love him.

"The matron Fabiola embroidered that wrap for me," he informed them, with a smile.

“The Roman senator’s wife?” asked Hortensius.

“Yes. I will tell you a story about her. Once I wrote a little note,—elegant enough, it is true,—but of course, a trifle, five lines in Greek,—to another lady, also an admirer of mine, who sent me a basket of magnificent cherries. I wrote a jesting reply, imitating Pliny’s style. But imagine, my friends! Fabiola was in such a hurry to read my letter, and copy it into her collection, that she posted two of her slaves on the road, to waylay my messenger. And so they fell on him by night, in a lonely ravine: he thought they were robbers, but they did him no harm, but gave him money and took the letter away, and so Fabiola was the first to read it, and even learned it by heart!”

“Why certainly, I know, I know—she is a remarkable woman,” said Lampridius, catching at the conversation, “I saw myself that she keeps your letters in a carved cabinet of lemon wood, like treasures. She learns them by heart, and assured me that they are better than any verse. Fabiola reasons justly, in my opinion: ‘if Alexander the great kept Homer’s poems in a cedar-wood box, why should not I keep Mamertinus’ letters in a valuable cabinet?’”

“My friends, this goose-liver with saffron sauce is a miracle of perfection!—I advise you to try it. Who prepared it, Hortensius?”

“The senior cook, Dedalus.”

“Honor to him. Your cook, Dedalus, is a true poet.”

“You are fascinated by the goose-liver, worthy Gargilianus. But can a cook be called a poet?” asked the teacher of rhetoric, with a pedantic

smile, "do you not thereby insult the divine Muses, our protectrices?"

"The Muses should be flattered, Lampridius. I affirm, and shall always affirm, that gastronomy is as high an art as any of the others. It is time to bid farewell to prejudice."

Gargilianus, a Roman official from the prefect's office, was a plump, well-fed person, with a triple chin. He was carefully shaved and perfumed. His grey hair was close-cut and through it gleamed red folds of fat. He had a wise and well-born face. For many years, he had been considered an indispensable guest at every elegant literary assembly in Athens. Gargilianus loved only two things in life: good food, and good style. Gastronomy and literature were blended for him in a single pleasure.

"Let us say that I take an oyster," he declaimed, raising a shell-fish to his mouth, in his fat, well-formed fingers, covered with huge amethysts and rubies.

"I take an oyster, and swallow it—"

He swallowed it, half-closing his eyes, and smacked his upper lip gently. His lip had a peculiar gluttonous and even ravenous expression. Protruding, sharp, curved, it looked something like a little proboscis. In appraising the melodious verse of Anacreon or Moschus, he smacked this gluttonous lip as sensuously as when at supper he regaled himself on a sauce of nightingales' tongues.

"I swallow it, and at once I feel" continued Gargilianus seriously, "I feel that the oyster is from the shores of Britain, and not at all, my friends, from Ostium or Tarentum. If you wish,

I will close my eyes, and tell at once from what sea an oyster or fish comes."

"But what has that to do with poetry?" Mamertinus interrupted him, somewhat impatiently. He never liked to have anyone else listened to, when he was present.

"Imagine, my friends," continued the gastronomist, undisturbed, "that it is long since I have been on the shore of the ocean, and that I love it, and long for it. I can assure you that a good oyster has the fresh, salt smell of the sea, so that to swallow it is enough to imagine one's self on the shores of the ocean. I shut my eyes, and see waves, I see cliffs, and hear the murmuring of the 'misty sea,' as Homer calls it. No, tell me, on your conscience, what verse of the *Odyssey* awakens the poetry of the sea so vividly as the savor of a fresh oyster?—Or, suppose I cut a peach, and taste its perfumed juice. Tell me, why is the scent of violets and roses more poetical than the taste of a peach? The poets describe forms, colors, sounds. Why should not a taste be as beautiful as a color, a sound, or a form? Prejudice, my friends, prejudice! Taste is the greatest, and still uncomprehended gift of the gods. The combination of tastes forms a high and delicate harmony, like the combination of sounds. I repeat that there is a tenth Muse,—the Muse of Gastronomy."

"Well, peaches, oysters, may be—" replied the teacher of oratory,—“But what harmony can there be in a goose-liver with saffron sauce?”

"Is there not beauty for you, Lampridius, not only in the 'Idyls' of Theocritus, but also in the coarsest comic verses of Plautus? in the marketplace jests of his slaves?"

"Well, I suppose there is."

"You see, my friend, and for me there is a special gastronomic poetry in goose-liver. I am really as ready to crown Dedalus with a wreath of bays for it, as Pindar for his Olympic Ode."

Two new guests appeared in the doorway. They were Julian, and Publius, the poet. Hortensius yielded the place of honor to Julian. Publius' hungry eyes lit up, at the sight of the numerous dainty dishes. The poet was in a new cloak, which had come to him just in time. Probably the publican's wife had died, and he had received his honorarium for her epitaph.

The conversation continued.

The teacher of rhetoric, Lampridius was relating that once, from curiosity, he had gone to hear a Christian preacher in Rome, inveighing against "the heathen scholars." "The scholars," affirmed the preacher, "honor men not for their good deeds, but for their good style. They think it is less criminal to kill a man, than to pronounce the word 'homo,' with a wrong accent." Lampridius was vexed at these jests. He asserted that the Christians were so hostile to the good style of the rhetoricians because they knew that their own style was barbarous. They destroyed the antique eloquence, and confused illiteracy with good morals. Everyone who could speak correctly was suspect for them. According to the opinion of Lampridius, the day that eloquence perished, Hellas and Rome would also perish and men would return to inarticulate beasts. And the Christian preachers with their barbarous style did everything in their power to bring about that misfortune.

“Who knows,” remarked Mamertinus, thoughtfully, “perhaps good style is more important than good deeds. Slaves, and barbarians, and ignorant people are also good!”

Hephestion explained to his companion, Junius Mauricius, the precise meaning of Cicero’s words: “*causam mendaciunculis adspergere.*”

“‘*Mendaciunculis*’ means ‘little lies.’ Cicero allows, and even advises, so to speak, that a speech should be sown or sprinkled with inventions, ‘*mendaciunculis.*’ He admits a lie, if it adorns the orator’s style.”

Then began a general heated discussion as to whether an orator should begin a speech with an anapæst or a dactyl.

Julian grew weary.

All turned to him, asking his opinion about the dactyl and the anapæst.

He candidly admitted that he had never thought of it, and that he held that an orator had better concern himself with the wise contents of his speech than with such insignificant details of external style.

Mamertinus, Lampridius, and Hephestion were dissatisfied. In their opinion, the subject of an oration was indifferent. It should be all the same to an orator whether he spoke for or against. Not only had its purport small importance, but even the connection of the words was a matter of secondary importance, while the sounds, the melody of the words, and new combinations of letters were the main matter. A barbarian, who did not know a word of Greek, ought to be able to feel the orator’s charm.

“I shall quote two verses from Propertius,” said

Gargilianus, "and you will see what sound in poetry means, and how subordinate sense is. Listen:

*"Et Veneris dominae volueres, mea turbae, columbae
Tinguunt Gorgoneo punica rostra lacu."*

"And lady Venus' birds, my fluttering doves,
Tinge their pink beaks in the Gorgonean lake."

"What a charm! Every letter sings! What have I to do with the meaning? The whole beauty is in the sounds, in the choice of vowels and consonants! For these sounds, I would give all Juvenal's civic virtue, and Lucretius' philosophy. No! just hear! what sweetness there is in their murmurous sounds:

"Et Veneris dominae, mea turbae, columbae."

And he smacked his upper lip, with sensuous delight.

All repeated the two verses of Propertius, drinking in their charm. They kindled each other to a literary orgy.

"Only listen," murmured Mamertinus, in his soft, die away voice, like an Æolian harp: "tinguunt Gorgoneo"—

"Tinguunt Gorgoneo," repeated the prefect's official, "I swear by Pallas, it is pleasant even to the palate; as if you were swallowing a thick, warm draught of wine, mixed with Attic honey:

'Tinguunt Gorgoneo'—

"Note how often the letter 'g' is repeated,—it is like the cooing of turtle-doves. And further on:

'Punica rostra lacu.'"

"Wonderful! inimitable!"—murmured Lamprius, closing his eyes in rapture.

Julian felt both ashamed and amused, in watching this sensual intoxication on sounds.

"The words must be somewhat devoid of meaning," concluded Lampridius, loftily; "they must flow and murmur and sing, not arresting either hearing or feeling, then only is the full enjoyment of beauty possible."

In the doorway, at which Julian had been looking all the time, as if expecting someone, unheard and unnoticed by anyone, appeared an upright form, white as a ghost.

The shutters were wide open. The clear moonlight fell into the room and mingled with the red glow of the lamps on the mosaic floor, bright as a mirror, and on the walls with their frescoes, representing sleeping Endymion under the caresses of the moon.

The white apparition was motionless. An ancient Athenian peplum, of soft, silvery wool, fell in long straight folds, caught up under her breast by a slender belt. The moonlight lit up the peplum. The face remained in the shadow. The newcomer looked at Julian, and Julian looked at her. They smiled at each other, knowing that that smile was noticed by no one. She laid her finger on her lips, and listened to what was being said at the table.

Suddenly Mamertinus, who was engaged in a lively discussion with Lampridius as to the grammatical differences between the first and second aorist, exclaimed:

"Arsinoe! At last! You have decided to leave your physical apparatus and statues for our sakes."

She entered, and greeted all with a simple smile. It was the disk-thrower, whom Julian had seen in

the deserted palæstra a month ago. The poet Publius Optatianus, who knew everything and everybody in Athens, had become acquainted with Hortensius and Arsinoe, and had brought Julian to their house.

Arsinoe's father, the old Roman senator, Helvidius Priscus, had died in the last year of Constantine the Great's reign. His two daughters by a German captive, Arsinoe and Myra, Helvidius had entrusted, at his death, to the guardianship of his old friend the Senator Quintus Hortensius, whom he respected for his love of ancient Rome, and his hatred of Christianity. A distant relation of Arsinoe's, the owner of a great factory of purple in Sidon, had left her incalculable wealth.

A crowd of admirers surrounded her. From her garments, head-dress, her irreproachable simplicity of behavior, she might have been taken for a pure Greek of the ancient type, few of whom were left. But the new German blood was visible in the irregular lines of her face.

Christian virtues and the patriarchal family morals of ancient Rome seemed to her equally hateful. The images of such free women as Aspasia, Cleopatra, and Sappho had captivated her from childhood. Once, to Hortensius' no small horror, she had affirmed in all simplicity that she would sooner consent to become a hetera, beautiful and free, than a mother of a family; the slave of a husband, "like all the rest." These words "like all the rest," overwhelmed her with weariness and aversion.

At one time, Arsinoe had a passion for the natural sciences, and worked in the Alexandrian museum, under renowned teachers. The atomic

theories of Epicurus, Democritus, and Lucretius captivated her, she liked the teaching which freed her "from fear of the gods." She afterward devoted herself to sculpture, with the same impatient, almost morbid passion.

She had come to Athens to study the best models of Phidias, Scopas, and Praxiteles.

"Oh, you are at grammar again," she said, with a mocking smile, entering the banquet hall. "Do not be shy,—go on! I will not dispute; I am hungry. I have been working all day. Boy, pour me some wine!"

"My friends," continued Arsinoe, "you are unhappy people, with all your quotations from Demosthenes, and rules of Quintilian. Take care! Rhetoric will destroy you. I would fain see a man, at last, who has nothing to do with Homer or Cicero; who speaks without thinking of accents, syntax, and combinations of letters. Julian, come to the sea after supper; to-day I do not wish to hear quarrels about dactyls and anapæsts."

"You have guessed my thought," murmured Gargilianus, for whom the goose-liver with saffron sauce was proving to have been too much. Almost always, at the very end of a supper, along with a heaviness in the pit of his stomach, he felt a revolt against literature.

"*Litterarum intemperantia laboramus,*" as Nero's teacher, the clever Seneca, expressed it. "Yes, yes, that is our trouble! We suffer from literary intemperance. We poison ourselves."

And falling into meditation, he produced a toothpick of mastic-wood. His fat, wise face expressed disgust and weariness.

CHAPTER XIV.

JULIAN AND ARSINOË.

They descended the cypress alley to the sea. The silver pathway of the moon spread out to the horizon. The breakers murmured among the limestone boulders on the beach. A semi-circular bench stood near.

Above it, Artemis the Huntress, in a short tunic, with a crescent moon in her hair, with a bow and quiver, and with two sharp-nosed dogs, seemed alive in the shining moonlight. They sat down.

Arsinoë directed Julian's eyes to the hill of the Acropolis, with the faintly gleaming columns of the Parthenon, and renewed the conversation which they had more than once taken up in previous meetings.

"See how beautiful it is. And you would destroy it, Julian?"

Without answering, he lowered his eyes.

"I have thought much of what we said last time, and what you told me about your humility," continued Arsinoë, in a low voice, as if to herself. "Was Alexander of Macedon humble? And yet was he not great and beautiful?"

Julian remained silent.

"And Brutus, Brutus who slew Cæsar! If Brutus had turned the left cheek, when they struck him on the right, do you think he would have been grander? Or do you Galileans count

him an evil-doer? Why does it seem to me at times that you are dissembling?—that you are weary of that black robe?”

She suddenly turned her lovely face toward him, bright in the moonlight, and gazed straight into his eyes, with a steady glance.

“What do you want, Arsinoe?” he asked, growing pale.

“I want you to be my open foe!” exclaimed the girl, passionately. “You cannot pass by like that, without saying who you are. Do you know, I sometimes think it were better if Athens and Rome were in ruins. Better to burn the corpse, than to leave it unburied. And all those friends of ours, the grammarians, the rhetoricians, the verse-makers, the writers of panegyrics to the emperor,—are the rotting body of Hellas and Rome. They frighten me, like the dead. Yes, you may exult, Galileans! Soon nought will remain on the earth but dead bodies and ruins. And you, Julian. No, No! It cannot be. I do not believe that you are with them,—against me, against Hellas!”

Julian stood before her pale and silent. He wished to go away. She caught him by the arm:

“Say, say that you are my enemy,” she cried with defiance and despair in her voice.

“Arsinoe! why?”

“Tell all! I wish to know. Do you not feel how near we are to each other? Or are you afraid?”

“In two days I leave Athens,” whispered Julian. “Farewell.”

“You leave Athens? Why? Whither?”

“A letter from Constantius. The emperor sum-

mons me to the court, perhaps to death. I think I now see you for the last time."

"Julian, you do not believe in Him?" exclaimed Arsinoe, trying to catch the monk's glance.

"Hush! hush! What are you asking?"

He sprang up from the bench, went back, stepping softly, peering on all sides along the pathway flooded with moonlight, at the black shadows of the bushes, even at the sea, as if the emperor's spies might be lurking everywhere.

Then he returned, sat down again, still ill at ease. Resting his arm on the marble, he bent down to her ear, so that she felt his hot breath, and whispered quickly, like a man delirious:

"Yes, yes, am I likely to believe in Him? Listen, girl, I will tell you now what I have not even dared to tell myself. I hate the Galilean! But I have lied ever since I can remember. The lie has entered into my soul, and has clung there, as this black robe clings to my body: you remember the poisoned shirt of Nessus? Heracles tried to tear it off, with pieces of his flesh and blood, but could not; and so perished. So shall I perish in the Galilean lie!"

He uttered every word with a heavy stress. Arsinoe looked up at him. His face, strained with suffering and hate, seemed strange to her.

"Calm yourself, friend," she murmured, "tell me all; I shall understand you better than any one."

"I wish to tell, but do not know how," he laughed bitterly. "I have kept silent too long. You see, Arsinoe, that once you have fallen into his clutches, it is finished,—the meek and lowly one will disfigure you so, teaching you to lie and

crawl, that you will never become straight, or raise your head again."

All the blood flowed to his face, the veins stood out on his forehead, and gnashing his teeth in impotent rage, he whispered:

"Baseness! baseness! true Galileans, baseness,—to hate my enemy as I now hate Constantius, and to forgive him and crawl like a serpent at his feet according to the humble habit of the Christians, begging for mercy. Just a year more,—one little year of life, for thy wretched slave, the monk Julian, then,—as may be pleasing to thee and thy eunuch counsellors, oh favorite of God!" What cowardice!

"No, Julian," exclaimed Arsinoe, "you will conquer! To dissemble is your strength. You remember, in Æsop's fable, the ass in the lion's skin? Here is the opposite,—the lion in the skin of the ass, the hero in the monkish robe!"

She burst out laughing:

"And how frightened they will be, the fools, when you suddenly show your lion's claws. What a rejoicing and panic there will be! Tell me that you long for power?"

"Power!" He struck his hands together, drinking in the sound of the word, and breathing a deep breath of the cool night air:

"Power! Oh, if for one year, a few months, a few days, I had power,—I would teach these humble, crawling, venomous creatures who call themselves Christians, the meaning of that wise word of the Teacher,—'unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's,'—yes, I swear by the god of the sun, they would render to me, as Cæsar, what is Cæsar's."

He raised his head, his eyes flashing with pride and wrath, his face lit up, as though he had suddenly grown younger. Arsinoe watched him with a smile.

But soon his head sank down again. Glancing round fearfully, he sat down on the bench. Involuntarily, he folded his arms on his breast, after the manner of the monks, and murmured:

“No, no, why should I deceive myself? That will never be. I shall perish. Wrath will kill me. Listen: every night, after a day spent on my knees in the church among the relics, I return home, worn out and weary, and throw myself down on my bed, and, burying my face in the pillow, I cry out, and gnaw it, to smother the sound of my pain and wrath. Oh, you know little of the terror and taint of the Galilean, Arsinoe! I have been dying in it twenty years, and am not dead, because we Christians are as full of life as serpents; cut us in two, we grow together again. Formerly, I sought comfort among the theurgians and the sages. In vain. I am neither a worker of righteousness nor a sage. I am evil, and I wish to be yet more evil, to be strong and terrible, like the devil, my only brother! But why, why can I not forget that there is something more, that there is beauty; why have you appeared to me, merciless one?”

With a sudden movement, opening her beautiful, bare arms, Arsinoe clasped him round the neck, and drew him to her so strongly, so close, that he felt the innocent freshness of her body, and whispered:

“What if I came to you, youth, as an inspiring Sibyl, to foretell your glory? You alone are living amongst the dead. You are glorious! What

is it to me that you have not white swans' wings, but wings terrible and black, curved, cruel claws, like a wild beast? I love all who do not submit, and are recusant; Julian, I love lonely and proud eagles more than white swans. Be more glorious, more evil! Dare to be evil to the end. Lie without shame. Better lie than submit. Do not fear hatred: it is the strong vigor of your wings. Will you make a compact with me?—you shall give me power; I shall give you beauty. Will you, Julian?"

Through the light folds of her antique peplum, once again, as formerly in the palæstra, he saw the clear outlines of Arsinoe's naked body, Artemis the Huntress, as it seemed to him to glow, soft and golden, through the airy drapery.

His head grew confused. In the moonlit twilight that surrounded them, he saw bold, laughing lips draw near his lips.

For the last time, he thought:

"I must go; she does not love me, and will never love me; she desires power only. It is deceit."

But he immediately added, with a helpless smile:

"Well, let it be deceit!"

And the cold of her strange, unsatisfying kiss pierced to the depths of his heart, like the chill of death.

It seemed to him that virgin Artemis herself, through the transparent moonlight, had descended and kissed him with a deceptive kiss, like the cold, soft moonlight.

* * * * *

On the next morning, the two friends, Basil of Cesarea, and Gregory of Nazianzan, met Julian in an Athenian basilica.

He was kneeling before an image, praying. The friends looked at him in wonder. They had never seen in his features such humility, such clearness.

"Brother," whispered Basil in his friend's ear, "we have sinned against him; we have condemned the just in our hearts."

Gregory nodded his head:

"May God forgive me if I was wrong," he replied, slowly, without taking his deep, penetrating eyes from Julian, "but remember, brother Basil, how often the Devil himself, the father of lies, has appeared to me in the form of an angel of light."

CHAPTER XV.

THE COURT OF CONSTANTIUS.

On a lamp pedestal, in the form of a dolphin, was placed a pair of curling-tongues. The flame looked pale, because the morning rays, striking straight on the curtains, filled the dressing-room with a dense, ruddy-violet radiance. The silk of the curtains was dyed with the most costly of all purples, the so-called oxyblatta, hyacinth-colored, from Tyre, dyed thrice.

"Hypostasis? What is the divine Hypostasis of the Trinity? No mortal can apprehend it. I lay awake all night long and thought, for I have a great passion for thinking. But my thoughts attained nothing, except a headache. Boy, give me the towel, and soap."

The speaker had a majestic appearance, and wore a mitre on his head, like a high-priest, or an



Julian 3.

A Crowd of Admirers Surrounded Her. (F. 136.)



Asian prince. He was the senior barber and wig-maker to the sacred person of the emperor. Shaving, in his skilled and almost magical hands, proceeded with inimitable grace and ease. The barber, as it were, performed a mystery, a sacred rite. On either hand, besides the Dignitary of the Most August Bedchamber, Eusebius the most powerful man in the empire, besides innumerable bed-makers,—“cubicularii,”—with different vessels, unguents, towels and basins, stood two boys with fans. During the whole mystery of the shaving, they fanned the emperor with broad, fine fans, in the form of silver six-winged seraphs, like the sacramental fans with which the deacons drive away flies from the holy elements, during the sacrament. The barber had just finished the emperor's right cheek, and was proceeding to the left, lathering it sedulously with soap scented with Arabian essences, called the foam of Aphrodite. He whispered, bending to Constantius' ear, so that no one else could hear:

“Oh, god-loving emperor, thy all-embracing mind alone can decide what are the three Hypostases, of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Do not listen to the bishops. It is not as pleases them, but as pleases you. Athanasius, the Alexandrian patriarch, should be put to death for an obstinate and blasphemous rebel. God the Creator himself will reveal to your Sanctity what and how your slaves should believe. As I apprehend, Arius is right in affirming that there was a time when the Son was not. And so concerning unity of substance.”

But at this point Constantius glanced at the huge mirror of polished silver, and feeling the

freshly-shaven silky surface of his right cheek with his hand, interrupted the barber:

"It does not seem quite smooth. Eh? You may go over it once more. What were you saying about unity of substance?"

The barber, who had received a talent of gold from the Court bishops, Ursacius and Valens, to prepare the emperor for the new Confession of Faith, quickly and stealthily whispered in Constantius' ear, with marvelous softness carrying on the shaving, as though caressing his neck. But at this moment the notary Paulus approached the emperor. He bore the nickname of Catena, the chain, because he wove the unbreaking links of evidence so skilfully round the necks of his destined victims. Paulus' face was effeminate, beardless and handsome. Judging by his outward person, angelic mildness might have been attributed to him. His eyes were dull, black, veiled. He walked inaudibly, with a swaying grace in his soft movements. On his upper cloak, the penula, across the notary's shoulder was thrown a wide dark blue ribbon or scarf of service, a special mark of the emperor's favor. Paulus Catena pushed aside the senior barber with a soft and haughty gesture, and bending over, spoke in Constantius' ear:

"A letter of Julian's. I seized it last night. Does it please you to have it unsealed?"

Constantius hungrily tore the letter from Paulus' hand, opened it, and began to read. But he was soon disillusioned:

"Nonsense," he said, "an exercise in rhetoric. He sends a present of a hundred grapes to some

sophist, and writes praises of grapes, and of the number one hundred."

"Oh, that is craftiness," remarked Catena.

"Is it possible," asked Constantius, "that there is no evidence?"

"None at all."

"He is either artful, or—"

"What did your Eternity wish to say?"

"Or innocent."

"As may please you," whispered Paulus.

"As may please me? I wish to be just, only just; do you not know that? I need proofs."

"Wait. There will be proofs."

Another spy appeared, a young Persian, Mercurius by name, and by vocation, the court cup-bearer, almost a boy, yellow-faced, and black-eyed. He was not less feared than Paulus Catena, and was jestingly called the Dignitary of Dreams and Visions. If a prophetic dream could have a meaning ominous for the person of the emperor, Mercurius, hearing of it, hastened to inform the emperor. Many paid with their property and court career for having been careless enough to dream what they should not have dreamed. The crafty courtiers began to assert that they suffered from incurable insomnia, and they envied the inhabitants of the fabulous Atlantis, who slept, as Plato tells, without beholding dreams.

Two Ethiopian eunuchs were tying the strings on the emperor's shoes, embroidered with golden eagles, and made of bright green leather, a color consecrated to the foot-wear of the emperor alone. The Persian pushed the eunuchs aside and embraced his protector's feet, kissed them, and looked

up in his eyes, as a dog looks up in the eyes of its master fawning and wagging its tail.

"May your Eternity pardon me," murmured the little Mercurius, with a childlike and innocent affection, "I could not endure it, and ran to you as quick as I could. Gaudentius has had a bad dream. You appeared to him, in a torn garment, and in a crown of empty wheat-ears, pointing downward."

"What does that mean?"

"The empty wheat-ears mean hunger, and the torn purple,—I dare not say."

"Sickness?"

"Worse, perhaps. Gaudentius' wife admitted to me that he had consulted the fortune-tellers. God knows what he heard from them."

"Good; we will talk of it later. Come in the evening."

"No; now. Order the torture, the lighter one, without fire. And there is the matter of the table-cloths."

"What table-cloths?"

"Have you forgotten? At a feast in Aquitania, the table was covered with two table-cloths, with such wide purple borders that they almost looked like imperial cloaks."

"More than two fingers wide? I allowed borders two fingers wide by law."

"Oh, far wider. As I say, a regular imperial cloak. Think of it, such a sacred decoration on a table-cloth!"

Mercurius had not time to tell all the tales he had gathered.

"A monster was born in Daphne," he muttered, hastily, and hesitatingly, "four ears, four eyes, two

tusks, and all covered with hair. The soothsayers say it is a bad sign, of the division of the Holy Empire."

"Let us see. Write it all down, in order, and present it."

The emperor finished his morning toilet. He looked once more in the mirror, and with a fine brush took a little rouge from a silver holder, of filagree work, in the shape of a little shrine, with a cross on the top. Constantius was pious. Innumerable crosses and monograms of the Christ were seen in all corners, on all sorts of trifles. A special kind of very precious rouge, called *purpurissima*, was prepared from the rosy foam which they skimmed from the boiling juice of purple shells. Constantius artistically applied a brush dipped in this rouge to his hard, dusky cheeks. From the room called the *Porphyria*, where the imperial robes were kept in a special five-storied wardrobe, the eunuchs brought the emperor's Dalmatian cloak, stiff, almost unpliant, heavy with precious stones and gold, with winged-lions and dragons embroidered on the amethyst-colored purple. That day, in the chief hall of the palace of *Mediolanum*, there was to be held a council of the Arian bishops.

The emperor went thither, along the transverse gallery of marble. The court-guards, the *Palatines*, stood in two rows silent as statues, with upraised spears fourteen cubits long. The standard, brought in by the Dignitary of Most Holy Bounties (*Comes Sacrarum Largitionum*) the golden *Labarum* of Constantine with the monogram of Christ, glittered and gleamed. The speechless guards (*silentarii*), ran in front, and with gestures admonished all to reverent stillness.

In the gallery the emperor met his consort, Eusebia Aurelia. She was a woman no longer young, with a pale and weary face, with refined and noble features. Sometimes malicious mockery flashed in her penetrating eyes. The empress placed her hands on the omoforium, shining with rubies and sapphires, cut in the form of a heart, and bowed her head, giving the customary morning greeting.

"I have come to be favored with the light of your countenance, my consort favored by God. How did your Holiness deign to pass the night?"

Then in obedience to a sign from her, two ladies of the court, Euphrosyne and Theophane, who were supporting her arms, went a little distance away, and she said in a low voice to her husband, with a more sincere and simple accent:

"Julian is to be presented to you to-day. Be gracious to him. Do not believe the spies. He is an unhappy and guiltless boy. God will be gracious to you, if you are gracious to him, sire!"

"You ask favor for him?"

Wife and husband interchanged a swift glance.

"I know," she said, "that you always trust me. Trust me this time also. Julian is a faithful servant. Do not refuse. Be gracious to him."

And she bestowed one of those smiles on him, which still had power over the emperor's heart.

In the portico, separated from the main hall by a tapestry curtain, behind which the emperor liked to listen to what was going on at the sittings of the bishops, a monk with a cruciform tonsure approached him. He wore a tunic with a hood, of coarse, dark stuff. It was Julian.

He bowed the knee before Constantius, and kissed the border of the emperor's Dalmatian robe.

"I greet my benefactor, the victorious and mighty emperor Augustus Constantius. May your Holiness be gracious to me," he said.

"We are glad to see you, our son."

Julian's cousin graciously stretched his hand out almost to his lips. Julian kissed that hand, on which was the blood of his father, of his brother, of all his kindred.

The monk arose, pale, with glowing eyes bent on his enemy. He gripped the handle of a keen dagger, hidden under his robe. The small, leaden-grey eyes of the emperor gleamed with vanity, and only rarely did a crafty cunning break forth in them. He was of small stature, a head shorter than Julian, but broad-shouldered, evidently strong and vigorous. His legs were ugly and bent, like those of old warriors who have long been accustomed to riding on horseback. The dusky skin on his temples and cheekbones was disagreeably glossy. His thin lips were tightly pressed together, as are the lips of people who love exactitude and order more than anything else in the world. Old pedantic teachers have this expression.

To Julian, all this seemed detestable: he felt a blind, bestial madness overcoming him. Unable to pronounce a word, he lowered his eyes, and breathed heavily.

Constantius smiled, thinking that the youth could not endure his kingly presence, and was bewildered at the more than earthly majesty of the Roman emperor. Pompously, but graciously, he said:

"Fear not, youth! Go in peace. Our benevo-

lence accounts no evil to you, and will not henceforth desert your orphaned estate, or fail to guard it."

Julian entered the council hall, and the emperor took his stand beside the tapestry; he laid his ear to it and, with an expression of cunning mockery, began to listen.

He recognized the voice of the chief superintendent of the imperial post, Gaudentius, who had seen the bad dream:

"Assembly after assembly," Gaudentius was complaining to some magnate or other, "now in Sirmiam, now in Sardis, now in Antioch, now in Constantinople. They quarrel and cannot come to an agreement about unity of substance. But they should have some pity on the post-horses. They gallop along at breakneck speed along the royal post-roads. Now forward, now backward, now from the east, now from the west. And with them whole clouds of presbyters, deacons, church servants, clerks. It means ruin! Out of ten horses in the post-stables, you will hardly find one that the bishops have not ridden to death. Five more Councils, and all my steeds will be used up, and the wheels will be off all the imperial carriages. Perfectly true! And observe that in spite of it all the bishops do not come to an agreement about the Hypostases and consubstantiality!"

"Why, most honorable Gaudentius, do you not report this to the emperor?"

"I am afraid. He will not believe me, and will hold me guilty of godlessness, of disrespect for the needs of the Church."

In the enormous round hall, with cupola and columns of greenish-veined Phrygian marble, the

air was close. Slanting rays fell from the window under the arches. The noise of voices recalled the hum of a beehive.

This was the Arian Council.

On a raised dais a throne for the emperor was prepared, a *sella aurea*, with lion's feet of ivory, crossed like the folding *curule* chairs of the old Roman consuls.

Near the throne, the presbyter Paphnytius, with a simple-minded but heated face, was affirming:

"I, Paphnytius, as I heard from my fathers, so have I held in my thoughts. According to the creed of our holy father Athanasius, patriarch of Alexandria, we must give our adherence to the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God. But there are not three Gods, but one God!"

And as if overwhelming an unseen enemy, with all his might he struck the great fist of his right hand on the palm of the left, and turned a triumphant gaze on all:

"As I have received it, so shall I believe."

"Eh? What is it? What does he say?" asked Otius, a centenarian contemporary of the great Nicene Council. "Where is my ear-horn?"

Helpless bewilderment was revealed in his face. He was deaf, almost blind, and wore a long, grey beard. The deacon handed him the ear-horn, and the old man raised it to his ear.

A pale, lean, fasting monk caught Paphnytius by the surplice, with a look of entreaty:

"Oh, father Paphnytius," he tried to shout him down, "what is this? For one word, all for one word, 'of like substance' or 'of one substance!'"

And the monk, grasping Paphnytius' garment,

told him of the terrible things which he had seen in Alexandria and Constantinople.

The Arians opened the mouths of those who were unwilling to receive the Holy Sacrament in heretical churches, with a wooden implement of two pieces of wood like a stake, and forced the holy elements down their throats. They tortured children. They crushed women in vises, or burned their breasts with hot irons. In the church of the holy Apostles there was such a fight between the Arians and the Orthodox, that the blood filled the rain-cistern, and poured out on the square from the porch-steps. In Alexandria, the Governor Sebastian whipped the orthodox virgins with thorny palm-leaves, so that many of them died, and the dishonored, unburied bodies lay before the city gates. And all this, not merely for one word, but for one letter, for an iota, distinguishing the Greek word "homoousios,"—"of one substance," from "homoiousios,"—"of like substance."

"Oh, father Paphnytius," repeated the humble, pale monk, "for a single iota! And most of all, the word 'substance' is not found at all in the Holy Scriptures. Why then do we quarrel, and torment each other? Think, father, how terrible is our sin!"

"What then?" Paphnytius interrupted him; "are we to make peace with cursed blasphemers, dogs, who vomit up from their unclean hearts that there was a time when the Holy Son of God was not?"

"One shepherd, one flock," timidly replied the monk, defending himself. "Let us submit!"

The inexorable Paphnytius would not hear him;

he shouted till the veins of his neck strained, and the sweat stood on his temples.

“Let the enemies of God keep silence! Let not this thing be! I anathematize the foul Arian heresy! As I have received from my fathers so I maintain in my heart!” he concluded in a voice of thunder.

The centenarian Otius helplessly nodded his grey head in assent.

“Why are you silent, abbot Dorotheus? You contend little to-day, or are you weary of it?” Phœbus, a tall, handsome presbyter, with waving hair as black as pitch and uncommonly long, said to a bilious, fiery old man:

“I am hoarse, father Phœbus. I want to speak, but I have no voice. I strained my throat the other day, when they were overthrowing the damned heretics in the Council, and for two days now I am hoarse.”

“You should gargle your throat with a raw egg, father, it does a great deal of good.”

In another group, Ætius the deacon of Antioch, was quarreling. He was the most extreme and daring follower of Arius; they called him a godless atheist, for his rude and scoffing treatment of the Holy Trinity. His face was gay and mocking. The life of Ætius was marked by wonderful variety. He had been in turns a slave, a copper-smith, a day-laborer, a rhetorician, a doctor, a teacher of philosophy in Alexandria, and finally a deacon.

“God the Father is in substance different from His Son,” preached Ætius, with a smile enjoying the terror of his hearers, “the persons of the Trinity differ in glory according to Hypostasis. God

is ineffable for His Son because it is not declared what He is, as to Himself. Even the Son does not know His substance, because it is impossible for that which has a beginning to represent or comprehend the Beginningless."

"Do not blaspheme!" wrathfully exclaimed Theon, bishop of Marmora. "How far, my brothers, will the satanic insolence of the heretics extend?"

"Take care," dictatorially added Sophronius, bishop of Pompeopolis, "do not let the eloquence of your words lead astray the hearts of the simple."

"Show me some philosophic demonstration, and I will agree, but cries and abuse demonstrate only impotence," quietly replied Ætius.

"In the Scripture, it is said—" Sophronius was beginning.

"What have I to do with the Scripture? God gave men reason, to know Him. I believe in dialectics, and not in texts. Reason with me supporting yourselves with syllogisms, after the categories of Aristotle."

And he cynically wrapped himself in his deacon's surplice, like Diogenes in his philosophic gown.

In another group, the bishops were gradually coming to a common understanding, mutually yielding to each other, when suddenly the Arian Narcissus of Neroniades interposed in the discussion. He was a mighty master of all Council rules, creeds, and canons, a man who was not loved, who was even accused of carnal lusts and usury, but who was nevertheless respected for his theological knowledge.

"Heresy," he exclaimed to the bishops, shortly and peremptorily.

"How, heresy? Why heresy?" enquired several voices.

"This was declared heresy at the council of Paphlagonia."

Narcissus had small, crooked eyes, glittering with an evil light, and an equally crooked and evil smile on his venomous lips. His hair, stiff and touched with grey, was like bristles. All his features seemed to be twisted with malice.

"In the council of Paphlagonia!" repeated the bishops, in despair, "we had even forgotten there was such a council. What are we to do, brothers?"

Narcissus triumphed, glancing from one to the other with his crooked eyes.

"May God have mercy on us sinners!" cried the gentle and simple-hearted bishop Eusoios, "I understand nothing of it all! I am altogether bewildered! My head turns round. Homoousios, homoiousios, consubstantial, inconsubstantial, similitude, hypostasis,—my ears are ringing with these hard names. I walk as in a mist, and I myself do not know what I believe, and what I do not believe, what is heresy, what is not. Jesus Christ, King of Heaven, help us. We are perishing in the nets of Satan!"

At that moment, the noise and angry cries ceased, and bishop Ursacius of Singidon, one of the court favorites of the emperor, mounted the pulpit. In his hands he held a long parchment roll. Two shorthand writers were preparing to record the doings of the Council in their books, and were sharpening their calami of slender Egyp-

tian reeds. Ursacius read the ordinance of the emperor, addressed to the bishops:

“Constantius, the Victorious, the Triumphant, the worthy and everliving Augustus,—to all the bishops assembled in Mediolanum.”

The emperor demanded of the bishops the renunciation of Athanasius, the patriarch of Alexandria, in coarse and undignified expressions, calling the holy and universally respected old man “the basest of mortals, a traitor, the fellow of the insurgent and abominable Maxentius.”

The court flatterers, Valens, Eusebius and Axentius, were the first to sign the roll of deposition. But a murmur was heard:

“All that is the accursed machination, the subtle circumvention of the Arian deniers of the Christ. We will not give over the bishop to infamy.”

“The emperor calls himself ‘everlasting.’ None is everlasting but God! Blasphemy!”

Constantius heard the last words clearly, standing behind the curtain. He pulled the tapestry aside, and unexpectedly entered the hall of the Council. The spearsmen surrounded him. The emperor’s face was wrath. Silence reigned.

“What is it? what is it?” repeated the aged Otius, and bewilderment and dismay were on his face.

“Fathers,” began the emperor, restraining his anger,—“permit me, the servant of the Most Holy, under His Providence, to bring my zeal to a conclusion. Athanasius, the rebel, the first disturber of the peace of the world.”

Again was heard a hoarse murmur.

Constantius became silent, and turned his eyes on the bishops with astonishment.

A voice in the crowd spoke:

"We anathematize the abominable Arian heresy!"

"The faith," exclaimed the emperor, "which you attack, is my faith. If it is heretical, why does the Lord, who upholds all, give me the victory over all my enemies,—Constans, Vetranion, Gallus, the insurgent and abominable Maxentius? Why has God placed in our keeping in our sacred right hand, the scepter of the world?"

The Fathers kept silence. Then the court flatterer Valens bowed down with servile humility:

"God opens the truth to thy wisdom, oh ruler, favored of heaven. That which thou believest, cannot be heresy. Not in vain did Cyril of Jerusalem behold a miraculous sign in the heavens, the day of thy victory over Maxentius,—a cross, surrounded by a rainbow."

"I will it so," interrupted Constantius, rising from the throne, "Athanasius shall be deposed by the power given me of God. Pray that at last all contentions and disputes of words may cease, that the ill-famed and murderous heresy of the Sabelians, the followers of the infamous Athanasius, may be annihilated; that the truth may shine abroad in all hearts."

Suddenly the emperor's face grew pale. His words died on his lips.

"What is this? How did they let him in?"

He pointed to a tall old man, with a stern and majestic face. It was the persecuted and deposed bishop Hilary, one of the greatest enemies of the emperor's Arianism. He had come voluntarily to

the assembly of bishops, expecting torture and death. The old man raised his hand toward heaven, as if calling down a curse on the head of the emperor, and his strong voice resounded throughout the stillness of the hall:

“Brothers! Now Christ cometh, for Antichrist has already conquered. Constantius is Antichrist. He strikes us not on the neck, but fawns upon our flesh; he casts us not into prison, but flatters us in kings’ houses. Emperor, hear: I say to thee what I would have said to Nero, to Decius, to Maximian, the fierce persecutors of the Church. Thou art a murderer, not of men, but of the love of God itself. Nero, Decius and Maximian served the true God more than thou dost. In their days we overcame the devil; in their days flowed the blood of the martyrs, purifying the earth; and their dead bones worked wonders. And thou, cruelest of men, slayest us, but givest us not the glory of death. Oh Lord, send us an open persecutor, not a dissembling foe, one like unto Nero and Decius, that the beneficent and terrible weapon of Thy wrath may restore the Church, rotted by the Judas kiss of Constantius!”

The emperor sprang from the throne:

“Seize him! seize him! The rebel, and all rebels!” he cried, breathing hard, and pointing his finger at Hilary. The palatines and shield-bearers threw themselves on the bishop. An inexpressible tumult arose. Swords flashed.

The Roman soldiers bore down Hilary, with coarse insults, tearing the omophorion, stole, and chasuble from him.

Many struggled in terror toward the entrance doors, fell, and crushed and trod on each other.



Julian 4.

They Greeted Each Other With a Holy Kiss. (P. 177.)

One of the young shorthand writers sprang to a window, but a soldier caught him by his long robe, and did not let him escape. The table with the ink-bottles was overturned, and the red ink flowed across the blue jasper floor: at sight of the red pools many cried out:

“Blood! blood! flee!”

Others shrieked: “Death to the foes of the sublime Augustus!”

Paphnytius, dragged along by two court guards, cried out in a voice of thunder:

“I recognize the Nicene Council, I anathematize the Arian heresy!”

Many continued to shout:

“Consubstantiality!”

Others:

“Let it not be! Likeness of substance!”

Yet others:

“Silence, enemies of God! Anathema! Let him be outcast! The Nicene Council! The Sardian Council! The Paphlagonian Council! Anathema!”

Blind Otius sat unmoved, forgotten by all, on his episcopal chair. He murmured, in a hardly audible voice:

“Oh Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us! What have we come to, brothers?”

But he wrung his feeble hands in vain, stretching them forth toward the tumultuous and maddened crowd; in vain he repeated in despair: “Brothers, what are we doing?” No one saw or heard him. And pitiable, helpless tears streamed down his centenarian wrinkles.

Julian watched with a contemptuous smile, and triumphed in silence.

Late in the evening of the same day, in the silence of the desert among the hills to the east of Mediolanum, two monks, anchorites from Mesopotamia, sent to the Council by the distant bishops of Syria, were hastening from the city.

They had barely escaped from the hands of the court guards, and were now hastening on their way to Ravenna, to get on board ship and return to their deserts as quickly as possible. Weariness and indignation were expressed on their faces. One of them, Ephraim, was an old man; the other Pimenius was a youth. Ephraim addressed Pimenius:

“Time for us to go to the desert, my brother. Better to hear the howling of jackals and lions, than what we heard to-days in kings’ houses. Oh my sweet child, blessed are the silent. Blessed are they who surround themselves with a fence of quietness, that the wrangling of the contentious may not come near them. Blessed are they who comprehend the nothingness of words, and who dispute not. Blessed is he who does not enquire into the mysteries of the Highest, but sings before Thy face, oh God, like a harp. Blessed is he who has understood how hard it is to know Thee, oh God, but how sweet to love Thee!”

Ephraim was silent, and Pimenius responded: “Amen!”

The mighty silence of night enwrapped them, and under the stars, they hastened toward the East rejoicing in the quiet of the wilderness

CHAPTER XVI.

JULIAN IN THE PURPLE.

Through all the streets of the city of Mediolanum, in the sunshine of the morning, streamed crowds of people, all going to the great square.

There arose a shout of greeting, as the emperor appeared in a triumphal chariot drawn by a whole herd of swan-white horses.

He stood at such a height that people below looked up at him with bent necks. His garments, powdered with precious stones, gleamed with a blinding brightness. In his right hand he held a scepter, in the left, an image of the world crowned with a cross.

Immovable as a statue, heavily rouged and powdered, he looked straight before him without turning his head, as if it were held in a vise. Throughout the whole length of the way, in spite of the jarring and trembling of the carriage, the emperor did not make a movement, did not stir a finger; he did not even cough, or wink his wide-opened eyes. This petrified immobility Constantius had acquired by many years of effort; he was proud of it, and considered it an indispensable condition of divine majesty, befitting the behavior of an emperor. At such moments, he would sooner have died in torture than show his mortal nature, by wiping the sweat from his face, or sneezing.

Crooked-legged, of small stature, he seemed to himself a giant. When the chariot passed under

the Triumphal arch, not far from the boundary stone of Maximianus Hercules, the emperor bent his head, as if it might have struck the gigantic gateway, through which a Cyclops might have passed with ease.

The palatines stood at either side of the way. They had golden shields and golden breast-plates; the two lines of noble guards shone in the sun like two lightning flashes.

Round the emperor's chariot were raised wide standards in the form of dragons: the purple cloth, fluttering in the wind from the open maws of the dragons, gave forth a piercing sound, like the angry hissing of snakes, and the great red tails of the monsters swayed in the wind.

On the square were assembled all the legions stationed in Mediolanum.

A thunder of shouts met the emperor. Constantius was content. The very sounds of this greeting, neither too low nor too loud, were settled beforehand with the strictest etiquette. Soldiers and citizens were taught the art of expressing their joy in a decorous and reverential manner.

Constantius descended from the chariot, taking care that his every movement, every step was full of pompous and pedantic majesty, and walked up the tribunal, which was erected in the square, and hung from summit to base with the victorious rags of old standards and bronze eagles.

The sound of trumpets broke forth again, the military signal to indicate that the commander wished to speak with the army, and silence spread over the square.

"*Optimi reipublicæ defensores!* Most excellent defenders of the State," began Constantius.

His speech was watery, and full of scholastic flowers of rhetoric.

Julian, in the dress of a courtier, approached the steps of the tribunal, and the fratricide robed the last descendant of Constantius Chlorus in the sacred purple of the Cæsars. The rays of the sun pierced the light silk, when the emperor raised the purple to invest the kneeling Julian, and a blood-colored stain fell on the face of the new Cæsar, overspread with a deathlike paleness. In thought he repeated a verse of the Iliad, which seemed to him prophetic:

“Purple Death overtook him, and potent Fate.”

And meanwhile Constantius was greeting him:

“While yet a youth, thou receivest the splendid flower of thy royal birth, best beloved of all my brothers!”

Then arose a cry of joy through all the legions. Constantius was slightly displeased. This cry surpassed the measure set by etiquette. Evidently Julian pleased the soldiers.

“Long life to Cæsar Julian!” they cried, ever louder and louder, and would not be silenced.

The new Cæsar replied to the plaudits of the soldiers with a kindly smile.

The legionaries struck their bronze shields against their knee, in sign of gladness.

It seemed to Julian that not the emperor's will but the will of the gods themselves exalted him.

* * * * *

Constantius had the habit of consecrating a quarter of an hour every evening to cleaning and polishing his nails. This was the only luxury he allowed himself. He was unimaginative, re-

strained, and coarse, rather than refined, in his other habits.

Rubbing his nails with a fine file, smoothing them with a little brush, he merrily asked his favorite eunuch, Eusebius, the Dignitary of the Most August Bedchamber, on the evening of the same day:

“What do you think? will Julian soon conquer the Gauls?”

“I think,” said Eusebius, “that we shall soon hear the news of the youth’s defeat and death!”

“Is that so? I would greatly regret it. But I have done what I could: he can blame himself alone.”

Constantius smiled, and bending his head on one side, he looked at his polished nails:

“You conquered Maxentius,” whispered the eunuch, “you conquered Vetranion, Constans, and Gallus; you will conquer Julian also. Then there will be one flock and one shepherd. God and thou!”

“Yes, yes, but besides Julian, there is Athanasius. I cannot find peace, until alive or dead, he is in my hands.”

“Julian is more to be feared than Athanasius, and you invested him to-day with the purple of death. Oh wisdom of divine Providence! How by invisible ways it removes all the enemies of thy Eternity! Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, now and forever, world without end.”

“Amen!” concluded the emperor, finishing his nails, and throwing down the last brush.

He approached the ancient standard of Constantine, the Labarum, which always stood in his

bed-chamber, fell on his knees, and looking at the monogram of the Christ shining in the rays of a perpetually burning lamp, began to pray.

With pedantic exactitude, he repeated the set prayers, made the fixed number of obeisances and signs of the cross. He turned to God with unquestioning faith, as people who never doubt their benefactor.

When the three quarter hour set apart for the evening prayer were over, Constantius rose with a light heart.

The eunuchs undressed him. He lay down in his splendid couch supported by the outstretched wings of silver Cherubim.

The emperor went to sleep with a smile on his lips, like an innocent child.

CHAPTER XVII.

ARSINOE AND THE CHRISTIANS.

In one of the many porticoes of Athens, Arsinoe's statue: "*Octavius, the Victor, with the head of Brutus,*" was exhibited to the people. The Athenians greeted the senator's daughter as a restorer of the art of the best periods.

Special civil servants, whose duty it was secretly to watch the political dispositions of people's minds throughout the empire, and who bore the strange name of "the Curious," reported in the proper quarter that the statue might awaken a desire of liberty in the minds of the people.

In the dead head of Brutus, they found a like-

ness to Julian, and saw in this a criminal allusion to the death of Gallus. In Octavius they tried to find a likeness to Constantius.

The matter grew into an investigation for high treason, and came near falling into the hands of Paulus Catena. Happily, the court sent a peremptory order not only to remove the ill-omened statue from the portico, but even to destroy it in the presence of the servants of the emperor.

Arsinoe wished to hide it. Hortensius was in such terror that he threatened to give up his ward to the spies with his own hands.

Arsinoe was overcome with contempt for the human race. She let her works suffer. Stonemasons broke the statue in pieces.

Arsinoe quickly left Athens. Her guardian persuaded her to accompany him to Rome, where his friends had long promised him a lucrative post at the court of the emperor, the post of imperial quæstor.

He settled not far from the Palatine Hill. The days passed in idleness. The artist understood that the great free art of old could exist no longer.

Arsinoe remembered her conversation with Julian in Athens. It was the one thing that bound her to life. To wait in inactivity seemed impossible to her. In moments of despair she wished to end the matter at once, to set forth straightway for Gaul, to the young Cæsar, and with him to gain power or perish.

But at that time she fell grievously ill. During the long quiet days of her convalescence, she was calmed and soothed by Anatolius, the truest and most faithful of her adorers. He was the cen-

turion of the court shield-bearers, and the son of a rich merchant of Rhodes.

He was a Roman centurion, as he himself expressed it, only "through a misunderstanding." He entered military service, in obedience to a vain wish of his father's, who counted it the height of happiness to see his son in the golden accoutrements of a court shield-bearer. Escaping discipline by heavy bribes, Anatolius passed his life in elegant idleness, amongst rare products of art and books, in festivals, in leisurely and luxurious journeys. He had not that deep serenity of soul which belonged to the Epicureans of old. He complained to his friends:

"I am sick of a mortal illness."

"What is it?" they asked him, with a smile of disbelief.

"What you call my wit; but what seems to me at times my sad and strange witlessness."

In his soft effeminate features were expressed weariness and lack of energy.

Sometimes he seemed to waken up: now, during a storm, he took a uselessly dangerous cruise in the open sea with the fishermen; now he went away to the impenetrable forests of Calabria to hunt wild boar and bears, or meditated taking a part in a plot on the emperor's life, or accomplishing prodigies of valor in the field, or sought initiation in the strange rites of Mithra or Adonai. At such moments, he astonished even people who did not know his ordinary life, by his untiring strength and daring.

But his excitement soon passed, and he sank back into idleness even more indolent and dreamy than before, even more melancholy and sarcastic.

"One can do nothing, with you, Anatolius," Arsinoe said to him reproachfully, "you are so soft, as if you had no bones."

But she felt a Hellenic grace in the character of this last of the Epicureans. She loved the melancholy mockery in his sad eyes at everything in life and at himself, when he said:

"The sage can find a drop of sweetness even in his saddest thoughts; so the Hymettan bees suck the sweetest honey from bitter herbs."

His quiet talks soothed and lulled her. She jestingly called him her healer.

Arsinoe grew well again, but did not return to her work-room. The very sight of the marble splinters called forth a feeling of oppression in her.

At this time, Hortensius, in honor of his stay in Rome, was arranging a series of games for the people in the Flavian amphitheater. They were to be of unheard-of magnificence. He was constantly hurrying hither and thither, receiving animals daily from the four corners of the earth,—dogs from Scotland, crocodiles, fearless hunters, skilled drivers, comedians, choice gladiators.

The days of preparation grew to a close, and the lions were not yet brought from Tarentum, where they had been landed. The bears arrived thin, starving, and tame as sheep. Hortensius could not sleep at night for anxiety.

Two days before the festival, the Saxon captives, the gladiators, proud and fearless men, for whom he had paid an immense sum, strangled each other in the prison by night, to the great disgust of the senator; they considered it a disgrace to serve as a gazing-stock for the Roman multi-

tude. Hortensius almost swooned away, when he heard this unexpected news.

Now all his hopes were centered on the crocodiles. These animals aroused the curiosity of the Roman populace.

"Have you tried feeding them with the fresh flesh of a sucking pig?" the senator asked a slave, who was appointed to the care of the precious crocodiles.

"I gave it to them, but they would not eat it."

"And raw veal?"

"They won't eat veal, either."

"And wheaten bread, soaked in cream?"

"They won't even smell at it. They turn their snouts away, and sleep. They must be sick, or very tired. We even opened their mouths with stakes, and pushed the food in. They spat it out again."

"Oh, I swear by Jupiter, these cursed beasts will kill themselves and me. Send them into the arena on the first day, or they will go and die of starvation!" groaned poor Hortensius, falling back into an armchair.

Arsinoe looked at him with a certain envy. He, at any rate, was free from lassitude.

She went to a room, whose windows opened out on the garden. Here, in the quiet moonlight her younger sister Myra, a slender, graceful girl, was touching the strings of a lyre. In the stillness of the moonlight night, the sounds fell like tears. Arsinoe silently embraced Myra, who answered her with a smile, without ceasing to play.

A whistle was heard across the garden wall.

"It is he!" said Myra, rising and listening, "let us go quick."

She clasped Arsinoe's hand tightly with her small, strong hand.

The girls threw dark cloaks over them, and went out. The wind was chasing the clouds; the moon now looked forth, now hid herself behind them.

Arsinoe opened the small wicket in the garden fence.

A youth met them, wrapped in a black monkish robe.

"We are not late, Juventinus?" asked Myra. "I was so afraid you would not come."

They walked long, first by a narrow and dark by-street, afterward through a vineyard, and entered a melancholy unfruitful field, the beginning of the Roman Campania. The dry grass rustled. On the bright moonlit horizon appeared the openings between the arches of an aqueduct of the times of Servius Tullius.

Juventinus looked round and said:

"Someone is following us."

The two girls also looked round; the moonlight fell on their faces, and the man who was following them cried out joyfully:

"Arsinoe, Myra, at last I have found you! where are you hurrying to?"

"To the Christians," answered Arsinoe, "come with us, Anatolius. You will see many strange things."

"To the Christians? What do I hear? I thought you were always such an enemy!" wondered the centurion.

"With years, my friend, you grow kinder and more indifferent to everything," answered the girl, with a sad smile. "This superstition is no worse nor better than any other. And besides what will

you not do, for weariness? I go to them for Myra's sake. It pleases her."

"Where is the church? We seem to be in the open plain," asked Anatolius.

"The churches are defiled or destroyed by their own Arian brothers, who believe in the Christ in a different way from them. At court you must have heard of unity of substance and likeness of substance. Now the opponents of the Arians pray secretly in the catacombs, as in the days of the first persecutions."

Myra and Juventinus fell a little behind, so that Arsinoe and Anatolius could speak as if they were alone.

"Who is that?" asked the centurion, indicating Juventinus.

"A descendant of the old patrician race of the Furii," answered Arsinoe. "His mother wants to make him a consul, and he meditates going away against her will, to pray to God in the desert. He loves his mother, and hides from her, as from an enemy."

"The descendants of the Furii,—monks? a degenerate age," sighed the Epicurean.

By this time they had reached the arenarium, the old quarry of tufa, and descended by narrow steps to the very bottom of the excavation. The moon lighted up the blocks of reddish volcanic earth. Juventinus took a little clay lamp from a dark niche in the wall, struck a flame, and lit it. A long sharp flame flared up in the throat of the lamp, where the wick was floating. They plunged deeper into one of the side entrances of the arenarium. Cut by the ancient Romans, very wide and roomy, it descended into the depths by a steep

incline. They passed other side passages, which had served the workmen for carrying the tufa.

Juventinus led his companions through a regular labyrinth. At last they came to a stop before a well, and he removed its wooden cover. A damp wind came up from it. They descended the steep steps carefully.

At the very bottom was a small door. Juventinus knocked.

The door opened, and a monk doorkeeper admitted them into a narrow and high corridor, cut in the granular tufa, porous enough to make the cutting of galleries easy.

Both walls were covered from the floor to the ceiling with marble tablets, or flat thin tiles, behind which were innumerable "loculi," the tombs of buried Christians.

They met many people with lamps. In their flickering light, Anatolius, stopping for a moment, curiously read the inscription cut on one of the slabs: "Dorotheus, son of Felix, rests in this cool abode, this bright and peaceful abode." On another slab: "Brothers! disturb not my sweet slumbers!"

The tone of these inscriptions was tender and joyful. "Sophronia," said one, "dearest, thou livest for ever in God!" And a little further: "Sophronia, thou livest!"—as if the writer had understood once for all that there is no death.

Nowhere in the inscriptions was it said: "he is buried," but only "he is laid here, for a time" ("depositus"). It seemed that millions of people, generation after generation, lay there, not dead but fallen into a gentle sleep, filled with secret expectation.

Lamps stood in niches, burning with a long steady flame in the unmoving air, and beautiful amphoras with perfumes stood beside them. Only the smell of the rotting bones in the recesses of the graves recalled death.

The corridors ran at several levels, descending deeper and deeper. Here and there were seen the wide openings of the air-shafts, leading to the Campania.

Sometimes a faint ray of moonlight, slipping down one of the air-shafts, lit up a marble tablet with an inscription.

At the end of one corridor they saw a gravedigger at work: with a gay face, and singing, he struck his iron chisel into the granular tufa, which curved up like a vault above his head.

Beside the chief superintendent of the gravediggers, the "fossor," a richly-dressed man, with a shrewd fat face, stood several Christians. The fossor had inherited a whole row of catacombs, and had the right to rent "loculi," that is, places for burial, in the division belonging to him. The division was very profitable, because the relics of Saint Lawrence were buried here. The gravedigger had a very prosperous time of it. He was now bargaining with a rich and niggardly leather-seller, Simon. Arsinoe stopped for a moment, to listen to their conversation:

"And will my coffin be far from the relics?" asked Simon, suspiciously, thinking of the enormous sum which the fossor demanded.

"Not far: six cubits."

"Above them, or below them?" the purchaser could not refrain from asking.

"To the right, to the right, obliquely. I tell you

the place is a fine one. I am not taking too much. No matter how much you sin, it will all slide off you. You will go straight into the kingdom of heaven along with the saints."

And the fossor deftly began to take his measure for the tomb, as a tailor takes it for a garment. The leather-seller entreated him to make the tomb as wide as he could, so as not to crowd him, when he lay in it.

At that moment, a poorly-dressed old woman came up to the grave-digger.

"What do you want, grandmother?"

"I brought the extra money."

"What extra money?"

"For a straight tomb."

"I remember. You don't want to go into a crooked one?"

"No, good sir, my old bones would ache."

In the catacombs, especially near the relics of the saints, every free corner was so sought after that it was necessary to make the tombs slightly crooked, where the direction of the walls did not permit of a different construction. Only poor people consented to buy the crooked tombs.

"God knows, I thought to myself, how long I shall have to lie before the Resurrection," explained the old woman; "and if you get into a crooked one, it won't matter at first, but when you have lain a while and get tired, it would be bad."

Anatolius listened in delight:

"It is far more curious than the mysteries of Mithra," he assured Arsinoe, with a light smile. "I am sorry I did not know of it before. I never saw a gayer cemetery."

They entered a chamber of considerable size, the so-called *cubiculum*. Here numberless lamps were burning; the presbyter was performing the service: the upper slab of a martyr's tomb served him as an altar; it stood under a bow-shaped vault, called the "*arcosolium*."

There were many worshippers in long white dresses. All their faces seemed happy.

Myra knelt down. She looked with tears of childlike love at the image of the Good Shepherd on the wall of the chamber.

Here, in the catacombs, a custom, which began long ago, in the days of the early Christians, was renewed: at the end of the service, the brothers and sisters greeted each other "with a holy kiss." Arsinoe, following the general example, kissed Anatolius with a smile.

Then all four of them went from the lower to the higher levels, whence was an outlet to Juveninus' secret hiding-place,—a deserted heathen burying place, a "*columbarium*" beside the Appian Way.

While waiting for the ship which was to take him away from Egypt, he hid here from his mother, who had laid information with the officials of the prefect. The youth lived with Didymus, a pious old man, from the lower Thebaid. Juveninus obeyed all his commands reverently.

Didymus, seated on his haunches in the *columbarium*, was weaving baskets of osiers. The light of the moon, falling through the narrow air-shaft, illumined his grey, curly locks and long beard.

From roof to ceiling there were rows of holes in the wall of the chamber, like the nests in a dove-

cote." In each of these nests stood an urn with the ashes of one of the departed.

Myra, whom the old man loved dearly, devoutly kissed his wrinkled hand, and asked him to tell them about the hermit-fathers.

She liked nothing better than the fearful and wonderful tales that Didymus told her.

With the gentle smile of age, he softly stroked Myra's hair.

All took places round the old man.

He related legends of the great hermits of the Thebaid, Nitria, and Mesopotamia.

Myra watched him with burning eyes, pressing her thin fingers against her heaving breast. The blind man's smile was mysterious and full of profound kindness, and the soft silky grey locks surrounded his head like a halo.

All kept silent. The unceasing murmur of distant Rome was heard in the stillness.

Suddenly at the inner door of the columbarium leading to the catacombs, a gentle knock was heard.

Juventinus rose, went to the door, and asked before opening: "who is there?"

He received no answer. The knock was repeated even more gently, as if entreatingly.

He opened the door cautiously, shuddered, and stepped back. A tall woman entered the columbarium.

A long white robe wrapped her from head to foot and covered her face. She moved as if she was old or very ill. All gazed silently at the newcomer.

With a single movement of her hand, the woman

threw aside the long folds which hid her face, and Juventinus cried out:

“Mother!”

Didymus rose to his full height. His face was stern.

The woman fell at her son’s feet, and embraced them.

The tresses of her grey hair, breaking loose, fell on her thin, pale face, which still retained the traces of the proud race of ancient Rome.

Juventinus embraced his mother’s head, and kissed her.

“Juventinus!” called the old man.

The youth did not answer.

His mother spoke to him in a quick joyful whisper, as if they were alone:

“I thought I would never see you again, my son! I was going to journey to Alexandria to find you. Oh, I would not have found you there, in the desert. But now all is over, is it not? Tell me that you will not go away. Wait till I die. Afterward, whatever you wish.”

The old man spoke:

“Juventinus, do you hear me?”

“Old man,” said the Roman lady, glancing up at the blind man, “you will not rob a mother of her son? Listen, if need be, I will renounce the faith of my fathers,—I will believe in the Crucified One. I will become a nun.”

Heathen woman, you do not understand the law of Christ! A mother cannot be a nun; a nun cannot be a mother.”

“I bore him in travail: he is mine!”

“You love not his soul, but his body.”

The patrician woman cast a glance full of endless detestation at Didymus:

“Be accursed with your cunning, lying speeches,” she exclaimed, “be accursed, you who take children from their mothers, who delude the innocent, you in black garments who fear the light of Heaven; servants of the Crucified, who hate life and destroy all that is great and joyful in the world!”

Her face was distorted. She pressed her trembling body still closer to her son’s feet, and said, breathing hard:

“My child, I know you will not go away. You cannot.”

The old man Didymus stood with a crosier in his hand, at an inner door of the columbarium, which led into the catacombs. Majestically he pronounced these words:

“Now, for the last time, in the name of the living God, I order you my son to leave her and come with me.”

Then the Roman matron herself let Juventinus go, and whispered almost inaudibly:

“Very well. Leave me if you can.”

The tears ceased to stream from her eyes: her hands fell helplessly on her knees.

She waited. All remained silent.

“Help me, oh Lord,” prayed Juventinus, in mortal agony.

“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple,”—pronounced Didymus, and feeling his way to the door, he turned for the last time to Juventinus:

“Remain in the world. You have renounced the Christ. Be accursed in this world, and in the world to come!”

“No, no, do not cast me away, father! I will follow you. Lord, I follow you!” cried Juveninus, and walked after his teacher.

She made no movement to stop him; not a feature moved.

But when his steps died away, a cry burst forth from her breast. She fell on the ground like one dead.

“Open, in the name of the August Emperor Constantius, open!”

It was the soldiers who were sent by the Roman prefect on the information of Juveninus' mother to seek the “insubordinate Sabellians,” the adherents of consubstantiality, the emperor's foes hiding in the ancient catacombs.

The soldiers bent an iron ram against the door of the columbarium. The fabric shook. The glass and silver urns with the dust of the dead rang pitifully. The soldiers tore down half the door.

Anatolius, Myra, and Arsinoe threw themselves into the inner galleries of the catacombs. The Christians ran through the narrow subterranean corridors like ants in an upset ant-hill, struggling toward the secret outlets and stairs which communicated with the quarries. But Arsinoe and Myra did not know the exact disposition of the galleries. They lost their way in the labyrinth, and reached the lowest level, fifty cubits beneath the earth. It was hard to breath there, and marshy water splashed beneath their feet. The lamp went out for lack of air. Ill odors polluted

the atmosphere. Myra's head grew dizzy, and she lost consciousness.

Anatolius took her in his arms. Every moment they were in danger of meeting the soldiers. The outlets might fall in, and they would be buried alive.

Finally Juventinus called to them:

"This way, this way!"

Bending over, he was carrying old Didymus on his shoulders.

After a few minutes, they gained a secret entrance to the quarries, and thence to the Campania.

Reaching home, Arsinoe hastily undressed Myra and put her to bed, still unconscious. In the first flush of the dawn, the elder sister, kneeling beside her, kissed the girl's thin hands, yellow as wax. A heavy presentiment oppressed her heart.

There was a strange expression on the sleeping girl's face; it had never before breathed such stainless purity. Her whole body seemed childish, transparent and frail, like the transparently thin sides of an alabaster vase, illumined by an inner light. This light was to go out, but only with Myra's life.

CHAPTER XVIII.

JULIAN IN BATTLE.

Late in the evening, in a gloomy, marshy forest not far from the Rhine, between the military fortress "Tres Tabernæ" and the Roman city of Ar-

gentoratum, recently conquered by the Alamans, were wandering two soldiers who had lost their way. One was an awkward giant, with fiery red hair and a face of childlike simplicity, a Sarmatian in the service of Rome. His name was Aragarius. The other was Strombicus, a lean, wrinkled, sun-burnt Syrian.

Amongst the tree-stems, covered with moss and mushroom-growths, the darkness was gathering. A silent rain fell through the warm air. There was a smell of the fresh leaves of the birch, and wet pine-needles. A cuckoo was calling somewhere in the distance. At every rustle or cracking of a dry branch, Strombicus shuddered in terror and seized his companion by the hand.

"Uncle, oh uncle!"

He called Aragarius uncle, not from kinship, but from friendship. They had been taken into the Roman army from opposite corners of the world. The voracious but chaste barbarian of the north despised the cowardly Syrian, with his sensuality and fine taste in food and drink. But while mocking at him, he pitied him like a child.

"Uncle!" sobbed Strombicus, still more plaintively.

"What are you howling about? Stop!"

"Are there bears in this wood? what do you think, uncle?"

"There are," answered Aragarius grimly.

"And what if we come across one? Eh?"

"We'll kill it, take the skin, sell it, and drink the price."

"But what if we don't kill it, but it kills us?"

"What a little coward! you can see at once that he is a Christian."

"Why must a Christian be a coward?" said Strombicus, offended.

"Why you told me yourself that it is said in your books: if any one strikes you on the left cheek, turn the right cheek also."

"That is true."

"There, you see. And if that is so, then I think you ought not to fight either. Your enemy strikes you on one cheek: you turn the other to him. You are all cowards: that is what it is."

"Cæsar Julian is a Christian, and he is no coward," Strombicus defended himself.

"I know, nephew," continued Aragarius, "that you can forgive your enemies, when it is a question of fighting. Eh, you draggled chickens! your whole belly is not bigger than my fist. You eat an onion and you are happy for a whole day. And that is why your blood is like ditch water."

"Oh, uncle, uncle," said Strombicus, reproachfully, "why do you remind me of eating? I feel the cramps coming on again. Dear, give me a head of garlic! I know you have one left in your knapsack."

"If I give you the last, to-morrow we'll both die of starvation in this forest."

"Oh, I feel sick; I feel faint! If you don't give it to me at once, I'll get weak and fall down, and you will have to carry me on your shoulders."

"Take it and gnaw it, you dog!"

"And bread, bread!" begged Strombicus.

Aragarius gave his friend the last piece of bread, with a curse. The evening before, he had eaten enough lard and bean porridge to last him for two days at least.

"Hush!" he said, stopping.. "A trumpet! We

are not far from the camp. We must keep to the north. I am not afraid of bears," continued Aragarius thoughtfully, after a moment's silence, "but of the centurion."

This detested centurion was called by the soldiers "Cede-Alteram," ("Give me another") because every time he had to punish a culprit among the soldiers, and the rod broke, he cried out joyfully: "Cede-Alteram!" The two words became a nickname.

"I am sure," said the barbarian, "that Cede-Alteram will do to my skin what the tanner does to the hides. It's a bad business, nephew, a bad business!"

They had fallen behind the army, because Aragarius according to his habit had drunk himself senseless when they took a village, and Strombicus was worn out. The little Syrian had made an unsuccessful attempt to obtain forcible possession of a fair Frankish girl. The sixteen-year-old beauty, daughter of a slain barbarian, had given him two boxes on the ears so vigorous, that he had fallen head over heels. And then she kicked him with her white, firm feet. "It was not a girl, but a devil," related Strombicus, "I only pinched her, and she nearly broke all my ribs."

The sound of the trumpet grew clearer.

Aragarius, sniffing at the air, like a blood-hound, noticed that it smelt of smoke. The camp fires could not be far off.

It grew so dark that they could hardly make out the road. The path disappeared in the marsh. They jumped from tussock to tussock. Suddenly, from a huge silver-fir whose boughs were hung with moss like the locks of an old man's beard,

something burst forth with cries and noise. Strombicus sat down from fright. It was a black-cock.

They lost themselves completely.

Strombicus climbed up a tree.

"Campfires to the north. Not far off. There is a big river there."

"The Rhine, the Rhine!" exclaimed Aragarius. "Come quick!"

They began to make their way through secular birches and aspens.

"Uncle, I am drowning!" sobbed Strombicus, "somebody is pulling me by the foot. Where are you?"

With great difficulty Aragarius pulled him forth, scolded him, and set him on his shoulder. The Sarmatian's feet knocked against the old rotting remains of a wattle breast-work built by the Romans.

The wattle-work guided them to the main road, not long since cut through the woods by the soldiers of Julian's general, Severus.

The barbarians, in order to cut off the road, had hewn huge trees across it, as was their wont.

The two wanderers had to get over them. These enormous stems fallen in disorder, rotten, covered with moss, and breaking away under their feet; or sound, soaked with the rain, and slippery, hindered them at every step. And along such a road, in constant fear of an attack, the thirty thousand men of Julian's army had to advance, after all the leaders except Severus had treacherously deserted him.

Strombicus began to complain and abuse his companion.

"I'll go no further, you heathen! I'll lie down

in the dry leaves and die, and at least I won't see your cursed face. Ugh, you pagan! It is easy to see that you have no cross. Is it a Christian's business to tumble along roads like this, especially at night? And where, I ask you, are we going? Straight under the rod of that centurion the enemy of God. Fall, if you like; I won't go any further."

Aragarius dragged him along by force, and as soon as the road grew even, put his whimsical companion on his shoulders once more, in spite of his opposition, cries, and pinches.

But after a little while, Strombicus fell into a deep sleep on the "heathen's" back.

At midnight they reached the gates of the Roman camp. All was still. The draw-bridge over the deep moat had long been raised.

The two friends had to pass the night near the rear gate, the so-called decuman gate.

At dawn the trumpet sounded. In the misty forest, that smelt of burning wood, a nightingale was singing. He became suddenly silent, startled by the martial sound. Aragarius, waking, smelt the odor of the hot soldiers' pottage, and wakened Strombicus. They were both so hungry that in spite of the twisted rod with which the detested centurion Cede-Alteram had had time to arm himself, they entered the camp, and sat down beside the common cooking-pot.

Julian was awake in the chief tent, beside the Pretorian gate.

From the day when he was made Cæsar in Mediolanum, thanks to the protection of the Empress Eusebia, Julian had applied himself zealously to the arts of war. Not only did he learn the higher

branches of generalship under the guidance of Severus, but he desired to know also what made up the trade of the simple soldier. At the sound of the bronze trumpet, in the gloomy barracks on the Campus Martius, along with the recruits, he learned to march for whole days, to shoot with the bow, to run under the burden of a complete outfit, to leap over barriers and obstacles, to box. Overcoming the monk's dissembling, the blood of the race of Constantine awakened in the youth, the blood of a whole line of stern, stubborn warriors.

"Alas, divine Iamblichus and Plato; if you saw what had become of your pupil," he exclaimed sometimes, wiping the sweat from his face, and pointing to the heavy bronze accoutrements, he said to his teacher:

"Is it not true, Severus, that armor is as little suited to me, a peaceful pupil of the philosophers, as a war-saddle to a lazy ox?"

Severus smiled cunningly, without answering. He knew that these sighs and complaints were insincere. In reality the Cæsar himself rejoiced at his rapid success in military science.

In a few months he had changed so much, had grown so manly, that many people had difficulty in recognizing the lean "little Greek" as he had once been called in mockery, at Constantius' court. Only his eyes burned with the same strange, over-keen, almost feverish fire which made them memorable for all, even after a moment's acquaintance.

Every day Julian felt himself stronger and stronger, not only in body but in mind. For the first time in his life, he experienced the simple love of simple folk. To begin with, the legionaries

were pleased that the Cæsar himself, the cousin of Augustus, learned the trade of war in the barracks, not ashamed of the soldier's rough life. The stern faces of the veteran warriors lit up with a tender smile, as they watched the Cæsar's growing skill, remembering their own youth, and wondering at his rapid success. He came up and talked to them, listening to their stories of strange campaigns, their advice how to fasten a breast-plate so that it should gall him least, or how to set his foot down so as not to grow tired on a long march. A rumor spread that the Emperor Constantius was sending the inexperienced youth to Gaul "to the slaughter," to meet death at the hands of the barbarians, in order to get rid of a rival; that the generals, under the directions of the court eunuchs, were to betray the Cæsar. This kindled the love of the soldiers to Julian even more strongly.

With the watchful stealth, and skill in winning good opinions which his monastic education had bestowed upon him, he did all that was possible to strengthen their love for himself and their hatred for the emperor. He spoke before the soldiers of his brother Constantius, dropping his eyes with an enigmatic and crafty humility, and taking the airs of a victim.

It was the easier for him to win the love of the soldiers by his daring, as death in battle seemed to him to be enviable in comparison with the inglorious execution which had overtaken his brother, and which Augustus was probably preparing for him.

Julian ordered his life according to the example of the great generals of old. The stoic education

of the Scythian pedagogue, Mardonius, had accustomed him to do without luxury from his youth.

He slept less than the common soldiers, and then not in a bed, but on a rough skin, with long wool, which the common people called in Greek: "suburra." The first part of the night, the Cæsar consecrated to rest; the second, to imperial and military business; the third, to the Muses.

His favorite books did not leave him even on the march. He read at night, and drew inspiration from Marcus Aurelius, or Plutarch, or Suetonius, or Cato the Censor. By day he tried to carry out in action what he had thought, over his books, at night.

On that memorable morning, before the battle of Argentoratum, hearing the trumpet-call, Julian hastily put on his full armor, and ordered his horse to be brought.

While waiting, he retired to the loneliest, most hidden part of his tent. Here was a small, elegant statue of Mercury, with his caduceus, the god of motion, success, and joy, winged as if for flight. Julian bowed down, and threw a grain of incense on a small tripod. By the direction of the smoke, the Cæsar, proud of his knowledge of the augur's art, tried to discern whether the day would be favorable for him. That night, he had heard a raven croak thrice on the right side, and this was an evil omen.

Julian was so convinced that his unexpected successes in war in this Gallic campaign were not the work of human hands, that every day he became more superstitious.

Leaving his pavilion, he stumbled against the wooden slab on the threshold. The Cæsar's face

grew overshadowed. All the omens were unfavorable. He secretly decided to put off the battle till the next day.

The army started. The way through the forest was difficult; heaps of fallen trees barred their passage all the time.

The day promised to be hot. The army had only crossed half the distance, and to the camp of the barbarians pitched on the left bank of the Rhine, on a great level plain near the city of Argentoratum, there still remained twenty-one thousand paces, when midday came.

The soldiers were growing tired.

As they were leaving the forest for the plain, Julian called them round him, and set them in circles, like the spectators in an amphitheatre, so that he himself was in the center of the circles, and the centuries and cohorts spread out from him like expanding rays. This was the wonted order in Roman armies, arranged so that the greatest number of men could hear the general's speech.

He explained to them, in short simple words, that the hour was late; that their weariness might hinder their success; that it would be wiser to pitch their camp on the ground they occupied; to rest, and on the following morning to fall on the barbarians with fresh strength.

A murmur arose through the ranks. The soldiers struck their spears against their shields, in sign of impatience. With cries they demanded that Julian should lead them to battle without delay. The Cæsar looked around, and by the expression of their faces understood that he should not oppose them. He felt that terrible tremor

through the crowd already familiar to him which is indispensable for victory, and which the slightest carelessness may turn into anger.

Julian leaped on his horse, and gave the sign for the soldiers to continue on their march. A cry of joy arose, and the army set forth.

When the afternoon sun began to descend, they had reached the plain of Argentoratum. Amongst low hills shone the Rhine. The forest-clad mountains of Vogesus darkened the south.

Swallows were skimming over the surface of the mighty and lonely German stream. Willows bent their silvery boughs over it.

Suddenly three horsemen appeared on a neighboring hill. They were the barbarians.

The Romans stopped, and began to form in battle array. Julian, surrounded by six hundred horsemen, clad in iron, led the cavalry on the right wing; on the left, the infantry was led by the old and experienced general Severus, whose advice the young Cæsar listened to in everything. Against Julian, the barbarians ranged their cavalry: at their head was Cnodomar, the Alaman king himself; against Severus, Cnodomar's young nephew, Agenaric, with the infantry.

The war-trumpets of bronze, horns, and curved buccinæ thundered. The standards and flags, with the numbers of the cohorts, the purple dragons and bronze Roman eagles at the head of the legionaries, moved forwards. In front, with calm and stern faces, stepping with measured, heavy tread, under which the earth trembled and resounded, marched the axe-bearers and primopilarii, accustomed to victory.

Suddenly the infantry under Severus on the left

flank halted. The barbarians, who had been hidden in a ditch, suddenly leaped forth from their ambuscade and fell on the Romans. Julian saw the confusion from afar, and hastened to their assistance. He tried to calm the soldiers, and turned now to one cohort, now to another, imitating the terse and vigorous style of Julius Cæsar. When he pronounced the words: "exurgamus, viri fortissimi," or "advenit, socii, justum pugnandi tempus," this twenty-six-year-old youth thought with pride: "Now I am like this or another commander." And even in the dust of battle, he was in thought surrounded with books, and was rejoicing that all happened just as Livy, Plutarch, or Sallust had described it. The experienced Severus moderated his fire with wise counsels, and the example of his own calm, and whilst giving Julian a certain freedom, did not let the main guidance of the army out of his own hands.

Arrows whistled, the spears of the barbarians, thrown with long thongs, and huge stones from the military machines, sang through the air.

Finally, the Romans saw the strange and terrible men of the north face to face, the inhabitants of the dreaming forests across the Rhine, of whom so many marvelous tales were told. Here were wonderful weapons also; and some had huge, bare backs, covered with bear-skins, instead of clothes, and instead of helmets on their shaggy heads, were the open mouths of beasts of prey with white tusks. Others wore the horns of stags and buffaloes above their casques. The Alamans despised death so much that they threw themselves into the battle perfectly naked, with only a sword and a spear. Their red hair was tied in a knot on the

tops of their heads, and behind fell in huge plaits like a horse's mane. Their fair mustaches, standing out against their ruddy faces, hung down long on either side. Many of them were so wild that they did not know the use of iron, fighting with spears of fish-bone smeared with a deadly poison, which made them more dangerous than iron: the slightest scratch was enough to bring a slow and painful death. From head to foot, instead of mail, they wore coats of thin plates of horn, made from horses' hoofs, and sewn strongly on linen cloths: in this array the unfamiliar barbarians seemed strange monsters covered with birds' feathers and fishes' scales. The Saxon was there, with his light blue eyes: the sea daunted him not, but he feared the earth on which he stood; and the old Sicambrian was there: he cut his hair off, after the battle, in sign of mourning, and had now let it grow again; and Heruli, with eyes of clouded green, almost the color of the waters of the ocean, on that distant gulf which they inhabited; and the Burgundian and Batavian, and wild Sarmatian, and many more, nameless, half-beasts half-men, whose dread faces the Romans only saw when death was coming upon them.

The primopilarii, uniting their shields, made a smooth wall of bronze, proof against all attack, and advanced at a slow pace. The Alamans threw themselves upon them with cries like the roaring of bears. A hand-to-hand fight began, breast to breast, shield to shield. The dust spread over the plain, concealing the sun.

At that moment on the right wing of the army, the iron-mailed Clibanarian cavalry wavered and

turned in flight. It seemed about to crush the legions in the rear.

Across a cloud of arrows and spears against the dust-veiled sun shone the flaming circlet that bound the kingly brow of Cnodomar.

Julian sprang on his black horse in time. He understood the stratagem. The barbarian infantry, intentionally mingling with the ranks of their own horsemen, slipped under the feet of the Roman horse and gashed their bellies with their short swords. The horses fell, and carried their iron-mailed riders with them, no longer able to rise from the great weight of their armor.

Julian barred the way. He determined either to stop the fleeing horse or be trodden under foot. The horse of the fleeing tribune of the Clibanarians dashed up against the Cæsar's horse. He recognized Julian, and stopped, pale with shame and fear. All the blood flowed to Julian's face, he suddenly forgot his classic authors, bent over, seized the fugitive by the throat, and cried out "Coward!" in a voice that seemed wild and strange even to himself.

And the Cæsar turned his face towards the enemy.

Then all the fugitives halted, recognizing the Cæsar's purple standard, torn in the conflict, and were ashamed. In a single moment, the iron torrent turned roaring backwards, and strained back again against the barbarians.

All was in confusion. A spear struck Julian on the breast. His breast-plate saved him. An arrow whistled past his ear, so close that the feathers brushed his cheek.

At the same moment, Severus sent the terrible

legions of Cornuti and Braccati, half-savage allies of the Romans, to help the wavering cavalry. Their habit was to chant their battle hymn only in last deadly danger and delirium of battle.

The Cornuti and Braccati began their chant in a low and melancholy tone: the first sounds were soft as the nightly murmur of the leaves; then little by little the wild music rose louder, more majestic and terrible, and finally broke out into a furious and deafening roar, like the roar of the storm-lashed waves of the ocean crashing against the cliffs. This chant intoxicated them till they utterly forgot themselves.

Julian no longer saw or understood what was going on round him. He felt only a consuming thirst, and a weariness in his right hand, which held his sword. Time did not exist for him. But Severus did not lose his presence of mind, and wisely directed the combat.

With bewilderment and despair Cæsar noticed the orange circlet of dark Cnodomar in the very middle, among the ranks of his army. The barbarian cavalry had cut into them like a wedge. Julian thought: "It is finished; all is lost." He remembered the evil omens of the morning, and turned with a final prayer to the Olympian gods:

"Help! for if I fall, there is none who will restore your power on earth."

In the heart of the army were the old veterans of the legion of the Petulantes, "the fiery," called so from their daring. Severus counted on them and reckoned not in vain. One of the Petulantes cried out:

"Oh bravest of men! We shall not betray Rome and our Cæsar. Let us die for Julian!"

“Long live Julian Cæsar! For Rome! For Rome!” strong voices answered him.

And the old men, who had grown grey beneath their standards, once more went forth to death, stern and full of peace.

The inspiration of everlasting Rome was breathed out over the soldiers.

Julian, with tears of ecstasy, threw himself among the veterans, ready to die with them. And once more he felt the power of simple love, the love of the people, raising him as on wings and bearing him to victory.

Then terror descended on the hordes of the barbarians. They shuddered, wavered, and fled.

And the bronze eagles of the legions, with their cruel beaks and their wide-spread wings gleamed terribly in the sun amid the dust, soaring once again, and foretelling to the fleeing tribes the victory of the Eternal City.

The Alamans and Franks were falling, fighting to their latest breath.

Kneeling on one knee in a pool of blood, a barbarian still raised his blunted sword, or broken spear, with trembling hand. In his eyes already veiled by death, there was no fear, but only the thirst of revenge, and contempt for the victor.

Even those whom they took for dead, raised themselves from the ground, half hacked to pieces, and caught the enemies' feet in their teeth, and bit into them so fiercely that the Romans dragged them along the ground.

Six thousand northern men fell on the field of battle, or were drowned in the Rhine.

That evening, when Julian Cæsar stood on a hillock, surrounded by the rays of the setting sun,

as by an oreole, they brought King Cnodomar, who had been captured on the right bank of the river. He breathed heavily, sombre, sweat-covered and pale. His hands were bound behind his back. He knelt before his conqueror, and the twenty-six-year-old youth laid his small hand on the disheveled mane of the barbarian king.

CHAPTER XX.

THE PASSING OF MYRA.

It was the time of the gathering of the grapes. All day long, songs resounded along the gay shores of the bay of Naples.

In Baii, the favorite resort of the Romans beyond the city,—Baii, famous for its healing sulphur baths, of which the poets of the Augustan age used to say: "Nullus in orbe locus Baiis preluget amoenis"—idlers were delighting in nature, more delicate and sensuous even than themselves.

Here was an inviolable nook of that refined and comfortable world which filled the imaginations of Horace, Propertius, and Tibullus.

Not even a single shadow of the monastic age yet lay on the sunny shore between Vesuvius and the cape of Misenum. Here, men did not oppose Christianity, but kept away from it, with light-minded jests. Here the harlots had not yet repented, but rather honest women were ashamed of their goodness, as a worn-out fashion. When rumors came, of the Sybilline prophecies threatening the worn-out world with destruction, of the

evil deeds and dark bigotry of the Emperor Constantius, of the Persians advancing from the east, of the clouds of barbarians gathering in the north, of the hermits who had lost all semblance of humanity in the deserts of the Thebaid, the happy inhabitants of those regions closed their eyes, inhaling the delicious savor of Falernian clusters, just crushed in the wine-presses, and consoled themselves with an epigram. To forget the sorrows of Rome, or the forebodings of the end of the world, a few witty verses, which they sent to each other as presents, sufficed:

*Calet unda, friget aethra
Simul innatat choreis
Amathusium renidens,
Salis arbitra et vaporis
Flos siderum Dione!*

There was something senile and at the same time childish on the faces of the last of the Epicureans. Neither the fresh sea water of the salt baths, nor the sulphur vapor of the Baiian springs could bring perfect health to the decrepit and over-sensitive bodies of the young men, bald at twenty, grown old not even from their own immorality but from the immorality of their ancestors, sated with letters and learning and women, witty and impotent, in whose veins was the thin, cold blood of belated generations.

In one of the most comfortable and flowery corners, between Baid and Puteoli, among the flat black summits of the Italian pines, gleamed the white walls of a villa.

At a wide-open window, looking straight out to sea, so that nothing was visible from the windows but sky and sea, Myra lay on a couch.

The doctors did not understand her illness. Arsinoe saw her sister waste and lose strength from day to day. She carried her away from Rome to the sea-side.

Myra, in spite of her sickness, imitated the nuns and hermits, doing her room herself, bringing water herself, and even trying to wash the linen, and cook the food. For a long time, as long as it was at all possible, she would not consent to remain on her couch, and spent her nights in prayer and reading. Once, to her horror, Arsinoe found a hair-shirt on her sister's tender body. Myra ordered all articles of luxury to be taken from her little bedroom,—all tapestries and furniture, leaving only one couch, with a simple wooden cross at its head. The room, with its bare walls, grew to look like a monastic cell. Myra observed a strict fast. Arsinoe had great difficulty in contending with her obstinate and quiet will.

Weariness had left Arsinoe's life, without leaving a trace. She was constantly passing from the hope that Myra would grow well, to despair, and although she did not love her more than before, she only now understood her love, in the fear of everlasting separation.

Sometimes Arsinoe gazed with motherly tenderness at the thin, delicate face, breathing an unearthly charm, at the little body, burning with a too vehement inner fire. When the invalid obstinately refused wine and food prescribed by the doctor, Arsinoe said sorrowfully:

“Myra, do you think I do not understand? You are seeking death. What are you doing with yourself?”

“Is it not all the same whether we live or die?”

answered the girl with such serenity that Arsinoe knew not what to reply.

“You do not love me.”

But Myra drew near to her caressingly, and assured her:

“Dearest, you know how I love you. Oh, if you could only—”

The sick girl never completed the sentence, or asked her sister whether she believed. But sometimes she looked at Arsinoe with great, sad eyes, as if she wished to say something to her, and dared not. Arsinoe felt a dumb reproach in that long gaze. Yet she did not talk to her of her faith, and had not the heart to communicate her doubts to her, and perhaps to take away from her an unreasoning hope for the miracle of immortality.

Myra grew weaker with every day, wasting away like the wax of a burning candle, but the weaker she grew, the more joyful and full of peace she became.

Juventinus came to them in the evenings; he was in Naples fleeing from Rome, fearing his mother's persecutions, and was awaiting the departure of the ship for Alexandria, with Didymus the elder.

He read the Gospel and related legends of the hermit fathers.

He told Myra of the three women who had not seen a human face for many decades, and had lived, naked as in paradise, at the bottom of an abyss, under the impenetrable shadow of green trees beside an icy spring. Ever joyful, day and night they praised the blessed Trinity, living on fruit brought by the birds of the air, and fearing neither the winter's cold, nor the summer's heat,

for God sheltered them, and warmed them with His blessing.

With childish joy, she listened to the story of the incomparable Gerasimus, who made friends with a lion, and lived in the same cave with him. The lion led his ass to the watering place, and watched the saint kindly with his bright kingly eyes, when Gerasimus stroked his formidable mane. After the saint's death, the lion wandered long through the desert, uttering mournful roars. And when brought to the saint's tomb, the lion began to sniff at it, and refusing food, remained there until he died of starvation.

She was touched by the tale of another hermit, who cured a hyena's whelps of blindness, when their mother brought them in her mouth to the saint's feet.

How Myra longed to go there, to the dark, silent caverns, to those great and mysterious people! The wilderness appeared to her neither mournful nor fruitless, but green and full of flowers, an earthly paradise, full of wonders, and lit up by a noonday radiance such as is nowhere on earth. She felt the air close and oppressive, under a roofed house.

Sometimes, in fever, in periods of suffering, overcome by her thirst for the desert, she gazed at the ships' white sails, vanishing over the sea, and stretched her thin white arms after them. Oh, if she could only fly after them, and breathe the sweet air of the desert, full of silence, free from passion! Sometimes she tried to rise, assuring them that she was better, that now she would soon be well, and secretly hoping that they would

let her go with Didymus and Juventinus when the Alexandrian ship arrived.

At that time the centurion Anatolius, the unchanging friend and worshipper of Arsinoe, was living in Baii.

The young Epicurean arranged charming excursions on gilded barques from the Avernian lake to the bay, with gay companions and beautiful women. He delighted in the appearance of the purple sharp-pointed sails, on the surface of the sleeping sea, the soft mingling of sunset colors on the cliffs of Capri and vapor-clad Ischia, that looked like great, transparent amethysts. He rejoiced at his friends' mocking at all belief in the gods, at the odor of the wine, and at the heartless, yet intoxicating kisses of the harlots.

But every time he entered Myra's silent monastic cell, he felt that another side of life was open to him. The perfect charm of her pale face touched him. He wished to believe in all that she believed, in the gentle Galilean, and in the miracle of immortality. He listened to Juventinus' stories, about the great hermits, and their life seemed grand to him.

Anatolius noted with wonder that for him there was truth in the one and in the other; in enjoyment of life, and in renunciation of life; in the flesh triumphant and in the spirit triumphant; in perfection, and in passion.

His thought remained clear. He felt no gnawings of conscience.

Doubt even pleased him, like a new game: those soft deep waves of life, the passages from Christianity to heathenism, did not torment him, but rather soothed and caressed him.

One evening Myra went to sleep before the open window. When she awoke, she said to Juveninus, with a glad smile:

"I had a strange dream."

"What was it?"

"I do not remember. Only I feel happy. What do you think,—will all be saved?"

"All the just; and the wicked will be punished."

"The just! the wicked! I think differently," answered Myra, still with the same glad and thoughtful smile, as if trying to remember her dream. "Juveninus, do you know I think that all, all will be saved,—that God will not leave one to perish!"

"So thought the great teacher, Origen; he said: 'My Saviour cannot rejoice, while I remain in iniquity,' But that is heresy."

Myra did not listen, but continued:

"Yes, yes, it must be so! I understand now: all will be saved, to the last one: God will not permit any of his creatures to perish."

"I also wished to believe that, at times," said Juveninus; "but I was afraid."

"You ought not to be afraid. If love is, there is no fear. I am afraid of nothing."

"And how of him?" asked Juveninus, timidly.

"Of whom?"

"He whom we should not name,—the Adversary."

"He also, he also," exclaimed Myra, with fearless faith, "while there remains even a single soul which has not attained salvation, no being can enjoy perfect blessedness. If there are no limits to love, how could it be otherwise? All things will be in God, and God will be all things. Dearest, what a joy is life; only understand what a joy it is!

We have not yet learned to estimate it aright. But we must bless all things,—do you feel, my brother, what it means to bless all things?"

"Evil also?"

"There is no evil, if there is no death."

The joyful Bacchanalian songs of Anatolius' companions floated in through the window, from the festal barque, bright with purple, its sharp-pointed sails marked clear against the dark blue of the sunset sea.

Myra pointed to them:

"That also is beautiful, and we must bless that too," she murmured softly, as if to herself."

"The sinful songs?" asked Juventinus, fearfully.

Myra shook her head:

"No, no! all is good; all is clean. Beauty is God's light. What do you fear, dearest? Oh what liberty we need, to love. Love Him, and fear not. You do not know yet what a joy life is."

"And sighing deeply, as if in expectation of a great rest, she added:

"And what a happiness is—death."

That was her last talk. She lay for several days, silent and motionless, without opening her eyes. Perhaps she suffered greatly, for her finely marked brows sometimes contracted tremulously, but immediately the same weak, gentle smile returned, and not a groan, not a complaint, passed her lips.

Once, in the middle of the night, she called Arsinoe in an almost inaudible voice. Arsinoe was sitting beside her. The sick girl could hardly speak. She asked, without raising her eyelids:

"Is it day?"

"No, it is still night," answered Arsinoe, "but it will soon be morning."

"I do not hear. Who are you?" said Myra, still lower.

"It is I,—Arsinoe."

The sick girl suddenly opened her great bright eyes, and looked steadily at her sister.

"It seemed to me," murmured Myra with a great effort, "that you were not there; that I was alone."

Then very slowly, with great pains, and hardly moving, she laid her thin, transparently pale hands palm to palm, with a look of gentle entreaty. Her lips trembled, and her brows were raised.

"Do not leave me! When I die, do not think that I am no more!"

Her sister bent down. The sick girl was too weak to throw her arms around her neck; she tried to, and could not. Then Arsinoe laid her cheek near Myra's eyes, and the girl softly caressed her face with her long, downy lashes, lowering and raising them, as if she was stroking her. This was a habitual caress with them, invented by Myra in her childhood. It felt as a butterfly's fine, soft wings were fluttering against her cheek.

And that last childish caress reminded Arsinoe of all their life together, and all their love. She knelt down, for the first time in many years bursting into uncontrollable tears. It seemed to her that her heart melted and flowed in those tears.

"No, no, Myra," she said, "I will not leave you. I will be with you, always."

Myra's eyes glistened joyfully. She whispered:

"It means that—you?"

"Yes, I want to believe, and I shall!" exclaimed

Arsinoe, and was immediately astonished at these unexpected words; they seemed to her a miracle, but not a cheat, and she did not wish to take them back.

"I shall go to the desert, Myra, instead of you," she continued with an almost delirious burst of love, "and if God is, He must make death cease to exist, so that we may be together always!"

Myra closed her eyes, listening to her sister with a smile of endless peace, and added:

"Now I shall go to sleep. I need nothing more. I am well."

After that she did not open her eyes, nor speak. Her face seemed as peaceful and quiet as the faces of the dead, but she breathed for several days more.

When they brought a cup of wine to her parted lips, she drank several drops.

If her breathing became uneven and heavy, Juventinus, bending down, sang some prayer or church hymn in a low voice, and then Myra began to breathe softly and evenly again, as if she had been lulled by a lullaby.

One bright evening, when the sun was turning Ischia and Capri into great transparent amethysts, when the quiet sea was mingled with the sky, and the first star had not yet shone out, but was only divined in the immeasurable dome, Juventinus softly sang the sweet evening hymn over the dying girl:

Oh God, that didst all things create.
Oh heavenly king that too hast clothed
The day in light most beautiful,
The night in sleep most bountiful—

Sleep to restore the weary ones,
And after labor to give rest,
The fainting spirit to refresh,
To drive away all pain and fear.

Perhaps while the words of this triumphant hymn were still resounding, Myra breathed her last sigh. None noted when her breathing ceased. Death and life were one for her, because her life was mingled with the eternal, as the warmth of a clear evening mingles with the freshness of the night.

Arsinoe buried her sister in the ancient catacombs, and with her own hands traced on the marble slab the words "Myra, vivis,—Myra, thou livest!"

She hardly wept at all. In her soul was a great quietness, a contempt for the world, and a decision akin to despair, if she did not believe in God, at least to do all she could to believe in Him.

She wished to distribute her wealth among the poor, and go to the desert.

The same day that Arsinoe, to her guardian's boundless astonishment and chagrin, had informed Hortensius of her decision, she received a brief and enigmatic letter from Julian, from Gaul:

"Julian to the most noble Arsinoe, greeting!

"Do you remember what we said, in Athens, before the statue of Artemis? Do you remember our alliance? Great is my hatred; still greater my love. It may be that the lion will soon cast aside the ass's skin, and meanwhile, let us be harmless as doves, and wise as serpents, according to the words of Jesus of Nazareth."



Julian 5.

Arsinoe Buried Her Sister in the Ancient Catacombs. (P. 208.)

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ARMY DECLARES FOR JULIAN.

More than a year had passed since the battle of Argentoratum. Julian had freed Gaul from the barbarians. Early in the spring, in his winter-quarters in Lutetia, the Cæsar received an important letter from the emperor, brought by Decentius the tribune of the notarii.

Every victory in Gaul had offended Constantius, as a new blow to his vanity. That boy, that "chattering jay," that "monkey in the purple," "the ridiculous victorling," to the disgust of the court jesters, had turned into a real menacing victor.

Constantius burned with envy. At this same time he himself was suffering defeat after defeat from the Persians in the Asiatic provinces.

He grew thin, and lost his sleep; his appetite dwindled, and twice he had suffusions of bile. The court physicians were in dismay.

Sometimes, during sleepless nights the emperor lay with wide-open eyes on his splendid couch, under Constantine the Great's sacred ensign, the Labarum, and thought:

"Eusebia deceived me. But for her, I would have carried out the wise counsels of Paul and Mercurius and smothered the boy somewhere in a dark corner, and rid myself of this young serpent of the Flavian nest. Fool! I let him slip through my fingers. And who knows? perhaps she was his mistress.

Belated jealousy made his envy even more fierce. He could not punish the Empress Eusebia, she had long been in the tomb. His second consort, Faustina, was a pretty, foolish girl, whom he despised.

Constantius clutched his thin hair, in the darkness of the night,—his hair that was so carefully curled every morning by the hair-dresser, and wept cold, bitter tears.

Was it not he who had protected the Church? who had striven to put down every heresy? Was it not he who had founded and adorned cathedrals? Who every morning and evening performed the ordained number of prostrations? And now what reward had he? For the first time in his life, the ruler of the earth felt wrath against the Heavenly Father. Bitter prayers died away on his lips.

To allay his envy even a little, he had recourse to an extraordinary expedient: through all the great cities were distributed so-called triumphal letters, wreathed with laurels, proclaiming the victories which God's grace had vouchsafed to Constantius. These letters were read in the squares. In them it was declared that it was not Julian who had four times crossed the Rhine, but Constantius, who in reality had been losing armies at the other end of the world at that very time; that it was not Julian who had been surrounded with clouds of arrows, at Argentoratum, but Constantius; that not Julian, but Constantius was wounded; that it was not Julian who had passed through morasses and gloomy forests, cutting roads, besieging fortresses, enduring hunger, thirst and heat, toiling more and sleeping less than the simple soldiers,

but again Constantius. Julian's name was not even mentioned in the bay-wreathed letters, as if the Cæsar had not existed at all. The people hailed Constantius as the conqueror of Gaul, and in all the churches, the presbyters, bishops and patriarchs offered up solemn prayers, asking long life for the emperor, and thanking God for the victories over the barbarians vouchsafed to Constantius.

When Julian heard of this, he answered his enemy with a quiet smile.

But the envy which gnawed the emperor's heart was not assuaged. He planned to take away from Julian the flower of his best legions, imperceptibly and gradually, to weaken him as he had formerly weakened Gallus; to draw him gently within his nets, and then to strike a final blow at him, when he was unarmed.

With this end in view, a skilful official, Decentius, the tribune of the notaries, was sent to Lute-tia, with a letter: he was to lose no time in drafting all the best and most efficient troops out of Julian's army,—the Heruli, the Batavians, the Petulantes, and the Celts, and sending them to Asia to the emperor. Besides this, the official was commissioned to choose up to three hundred of the bravest men in each legion, and Sintula, the Cæsarean tribune of the horse, received orders to unite soldiers, selected from the shield-bearers and gentiles, to stand at their head, and lead them to the East to the emperor.

Julian warned Decentius, pointing out the immediate danger of revolt among the barbarian legions, who would sooner consent to die than to leave their native land. The stubborn official paid

no attention to the warning, retaining an imperturbable departmental haughtiness on his shaven and cunning face.

Near one of the old bridges, uniting the island of Lutetia with the bank, was extended the long row of barracks.

Since morning, the soldiers had been in a state of disquiet. Only the strict and wise discipline introduced by Julian restrained them.

The first cohorts of *Petulantés* and *Heruli* set out at nightfall. Their brothers, the *Celts* and *Batavians*, were getting ready to march. *Sintula* gave his orders in a confident voice. Murmurs were heard. One insubordinate soldier had already been whipped with rods till he was half dead. *Decentius* bustled about everywhere.

In the courtyard, and on the road, under the dusky evening sky, stood canvas-covered wagons with huge wheels, for the soldiers' wives and children. The women added their voices, bidding farewell to their native land; others stretched forth their hands to the dreamy forests and wild ravines on the horizon; others fell on the earth and kissed it with sad cries, calling it their mother, and lamenting that their bones would rot in foreign lands. Some of them tied a handful of earth in a cloth, as a memento, in silent grief. A lean dog, with ribs that stuck out from thinness, was licking the axle of the wagon, smeared with tallow; suddenly going to a little distance, and burying its muzzle in the dust, it began to howl. All turned and shuddered. A legionary kicked it angrily. With its tail between its legs, the dog ran away yelping into the plain, and then stopped, and howled louder and more lugubriously than

before. And that prolonged wail was terrible, in the close stillness of the dusky evening.

The Sarmatian Aragarius belonged to the number of those who were to leave the north. He was bidding farewell to his faithful comrade Strombicus.

"Uncle, dear, what are you leaving me for?" sobbed Strombicus, eating his military broth: Aragarius had given it up to him, for he could not swallow a single mouthful from grief. Strombicus' tears fell into the soup, but still he ate with pleasure.

"Well, well, shut up, you fool!" said Aragarius, consolingly scolding him as was his wont, contemptuously, and at the same time kindly. "There is enough woman's howling, without you. Better tell me plainly,—you come from those parts,—what sort of forest is there in those parts, is there more oak or birch?"

"What are you talking about, uncle? Lord help you! There is no forest there, only sand and stones."

"And what do people shelter from the sun under?" objected Aragarius, distrustfully.

"In one word, it is a desert, as hot, you may say, as if you were on the kitchen hearth. And there is no water."

"How, no water? but there is beer?"

"How should there be beer? they never heard of beer."

"You are a liar!"

"May my eyes burst, uncle, if throughout the whole of Asia, Mesopotamia, and Syria, you could find a single keg of beer or mead."

"Well, brother, that's bad enough. Hot as an

oven, and no water, no beer, and no mead. They are driving us off to the ends of the earth, like oxen to the slaughter."

"To the devil's horn, uncle; right to the devil's horn."

And Strombicus sobbed still more pitiably.

At this moment was heard the distant hum and murmur of voices. The two friends ran out of the barracks. A crowd of soldiers came running across the wooden bridge, to the island of Lutetia. The cries came nearer. The disorder spread to the barracks. The soldiers came out to the causeway, gathered in knots, and shouted, in spite of the orders, threats, and even blows of the centurions.

"What has happened?" asked a veteran who was bringing a bundle of brushwood to the barrack kitchen.

"They say they have flogged twenty more men."

"Twenty?—you mean a hundred."

"They will all be flogged in turn. That is the order."

Suddenly a soldier in a torn garment, with a wild distraught face, ran in amongst the crowd, shouting:

"Brothers, run, run to the palace! They have murdered Julian."

These words fell like a spark on dry straw. The long-smoldering flame burst out uncontrollably. Faces became savage, like wild beasts. No one listened to anything; no one heard anything. All shouted at once:

"Where are the villains?"

"Beat the rascals!"

"Who is to be beaten?"

"The emperor's messengers."

"Down with the emperor!"

"Oh you calves! what a leader they have given us!"

They knocked down the two first centurions they came upon, and who were wholly innocent, kicking them, and ready to tear them in pieces. Blood flowed, and at the sight of it the soldiers grew still more furious.

The crowd, thronging across the bridge, approached the barrack building, and suddenly a deafening cry rose clear above everything.

"Long live the Emperor Julian. Long live Julian Augustus!"

"They have slain him!"

"Silence, you fool! I have just seen him."

"The Cæsar is alive?"

"He is not the Cæsar, he is emperor!"

"Who said they had killed him?"

"Where is the knave?"

"They tried to kill him!"

"Who tried?"

"Constantius!"

"Down with Constantius! Down with the damned cunuchs!"

Someone on horseback hurried through the gloom so speedily that they hardly had time to recognize him.

"Decentius! Decentius! Stop the villain!"

Decentius disappeared, accompanied by jeering and shouts. The crowd increased. In the darkness of evening, the mutinous army swayed and seethed menacingly. Anger alternated with childish delight, when they saw that the legions of Heruli and Petulantes, who had been sent off in the morn-

ing, were coming back, having also mutined. Many embraced their fellow-countrymen, their wives and children, as if after a long separation. Others wept for joy. Others shouted, and struck their swords against their shields. The camp-fires were lit. Orators appeared. Strombicus, who had been a circus clown in his youth in Antioch, felt a stream of inspiration. His comrades lifted him on their shoulders, and with a theatrical gesture, he began: "Nos quidem ad orbis terrarum extrema ut noxii pellimur aut damnati,—They are sending us to the ends of the earth, like men condemned, and evil-doers. Our families whom we have redeemed from slavery at the cost of our blood, will fall anew under the Alamans!"

He had not time to finish, when a piercing sound, like the cry of a slaughtered pig, was heard issuing from the barracks, and, at the same time, the familiar sound of the rod on a naked body. The soldiers were flogging the detested centurion, "Cede-Alteram." A soldier, beating his superior, threw away a blood-stained rod, and amidst the general laughter, cried out "Cede-Alteram,"—Give me another!—mimicking the centurion's voice.

"To the palace! to the palace!" cried the crowd, "let us proclaim Julian Augustus, let us crown him with the diadem!"

They all rushed forth, throwing the half-dead centurion into the courtyard, where he lay in a pool of blood.

The gates, doors and shutters of the palace were closely fastened. The building seemed uninhabited.

Foreseeing a mutiny, Julian had not gone out,

and had abstained from appearing to the soldiers. He had been casting lots, and seeking omens. For two days and nights, he had been waiting for a sign. In the long white robe of the Pythagoreans, he was ascending the narrow stairs to the highest tower of the palace, with a lamp in his hands. A Persian magician was standing there already, an assistant of Maximus of Ephesus,—the same Nogodares who once foretold Scudilo the tribune's fortune, in the tavern of Syrophenix, at the foot of the Argian hills.

"Well?" asked Julian, hesitatingly, gazing at the dark vault of heaven.

"I can see nothing," answered Nogodares, "the clouds prevent me."

Julian made a gesture of impatience.

"Not a single sign! As if the heavens and earth were in league together."

A bat fluttered past.

"Watch, watch, perhaps you can tell something from its flight."

It almost touched Julian's face, with its cold, mysterious wings, and disappeared.

"The soul of someone near to you," murmured Nogodares. "Remember, to-night a mighty event is to take place."

They heard the indistinct cries of the soldiers. The wind carried them away.

"If you learn anything, come to me," said Julian, and descended to the library. He began to walk up and down through the huge room, from corner to corner, with quick, uneven steps. Sometimes he stopped to listen. He imagined that someone was following him, and a strange, supernatural cold blew down his neck, in the dark-

ness. He turned quickly,—there was no one. Only the heavily-throbbing blood pulsed in his temples. He began to walk up and down again, and again it seemed to him that someone was whispering words which he had not time to catch, in his ear.

A servant came to announce that an old man who had come from Athens on very important business wished to see him. Julian, crying out with joy, hastened to meet him, hoping that it was Maximus. It was the grand hierophant of the Eleusinian mysteries, whom also he was expecting with the utmost impatience.

“Father,” he cried, “save me! I must know the will of the gods. Come quick!”

At that moment, the deafening cries of the mutinous army rang through the palace. The old brick walls trembled.

A tribune of the household shield-bearers ran in, pale with terror:

“Mutiny! The soldiers are breaking the doors!”

Julian gave a sign of command with his hand.

“Do not fear! Later, later—let no one come to me.”

And seizing the Eleusinian hierophant by the hand, he dragged him into a dark vault, and shut the heavy, iron door after him.

Everything was ready in the vault. The flames of the torches were reflected on a silver image of Helios-Mithra, the sun-god. The censers and sacred vessels of water were standing beside it, and also vessels of wine and honey, for the oblation, with flour and salt, to sprinkle on the victims. In cages were different birds, for the auguries, ducks,

doves, fowls, geese, even an eagle, and a little white lamb, tied, and bleating pitifully.

“Quicker, quicker! I must know the will of the gods,” Julian hurried the hierophant, giving him a sharp-edged knife.

The old man, breathing heavily, rapidly pronounced the necessary prayers, and performed the libations.

He transfixed the lamb, and laid a part of the flesh and fat on the embers of the altar, with mystic incantations, and began to examine the entrails. He drew forth the bleeding liver, heart and lungs with skilful hands, and examined them on all sides.

“There will be a mighty downfall, and a terrible death,” said the hierophant, pointing to the lamb’s still warm heart.

“Who? who is it? I or he?” asked Julian.

“I know not.”

“You do not know?”

“Cæsar,” said the old man, “do not hurry! Do not decide on anything to-night. Wait till morning. The forecasts are doubtful—even—”

He did not finish, and took other victims, first the goose, and then the eagle. The noise of the crowd resounded overhead, like the roar of an inundation. Blows of a lever rang on the iron gates. Julian heard nothing. He watched the bleeding entrails with hungry curiosity. They decided to test the secrets of the gods, with the gizzard of the chicken. The old priest killed it; then shook his head and said:

“Decide on nothing to-night. The gods are silent.”

"What does that mean?" cried Julian, angrily; "they have chosen a fit time to keep silent!"

Nogodares entered, with a look of triumph:

"Julian, rejoice! This night will decide your fate! Hasten, otherwise it will be too late!"

The magian looked at the hierophant; the hierophant, at the magian.

"Wait!" pronounced the Eleusinian priest, knitting his brows.

"Dare!" said Nogodares.

Julian stood between them in uncertainty, looking first at the one, then at the other. The faces of both augurs were impenetrable. They were evidently jealous of each other.

"What am I to do?" whispered Julian. Suddenly he remembered something, and his face cleared. "Wait, I have an ancient Sibylline book in the library, "On Contradictions in the Auguries." We shall come to a decision."

He ran up to the library and began to search among the dusty rolls. Suddenly it seemed to him that someone's voice whispered clearly in his ear: "Dare! dare! dare!"

"Maximus! is that you?" cried Julian, and turned.

There was no one in the dark room. His heart beat so rapidly that he pressed his hand against it. A cold sweat stood on his brow.

"That is what I was waiting for," murmured Julian, "that was *His* voice. All is finished now. I go!"

The iron gates fell down with a deafening noise. The soldiers broke into the atrium of the building. The walls of the palace trembled under their cries. The red light of the torches flickered

through the boards of the shutters, like the redness of dawn. It was impossible to wait, even for a moment. Julian cast aside his Pythagorean gown, and put on his armor, the Cæsar's paludamentum, and his helmet, and buckling on his sword, he hurried down the great staircase to the entrance doors. He flung them open, and appeared before the army with a majestic and quiet face. All his doubts had vanished. His will did not hesitate in action. He had never in his life felt such an inner force, such lucidity of spirit and self-mastery. The crowd felt that instantly. His pale face looked kinglike and terrible. He made a sign with his hand. All became silent.

Julian spoke: he persuaded the soldiers to become quiet, assuring them that he would not desert them, nor allow them to be carried away to foreign lands. He would beg his worthy cousin Constantius—

“Down with Constantius!” the soldiers interrupted him in friendly shouts, “down with the fratricide! You are emperor, glory to Julian Augustus, the Unconquerable!”

He artfully played the rôle of a man who is astonished, even frightened. He cast his eyes down, turned his face aside, and held forth his hands, with outstretched palms, as if pushing away the culpable gift, and defending himself from it. The cries redoubled.

“What are you doing?” cried Julian, with feigned terror, “do not ruin yourselves and me. Can you think that I would betray the noble emperor?”

“The murderer of your father! the murderer of Gallus!” cried the soldiers.

“Be silent! Be silent!” He waved his hand toward them, and descended the steps of the stair, among the crowd. “Do you not know? We swore before the face of God himself.”

Julian’s every movement was crafty and profound acting. The soldiers surrounded him. He drew his sword from its sheath, raised it, and pointed it against his own breast:

“Valiant men! Better that the Cæsar should die than betray.”

They caught him by the arm, and took the sword away by force. Many fell at his feet, embracing them with tears, and pressed their sharp sword-points against their own breasts.

“We will die!” they cried, “we will die for you!”

Others stretched out their hands to him, with pitiful cries:

“Have mercy on us! Father, have mercy on us!”

Grey veterans fell on their knees, seizing the leader’s hands as if to kiss them, and placed his fingers in their mouths, making him feel their toothless gums. They spoke of the untold toils, the intolerable hardships they had endured during their long military service. Many stripped off their garments, and showed him their naked old bodies, their backs with terrible weals from the rods of the centurions, and their wounds.

“Have pity on us! Be our emperor!”

Julian’s heart was moved. He loved those rude faces, the familiar air of the barracks, the general riotous ecstasy, in which he felt his own force. He noted that the mutiny was dangerous, by the following sign: the soldiers did not interrupt each other, but cried all at once, as if they had agreed

beforehand, and then they grew silent, with the same friendly unanimity. Now a deafening cry arose, now perfect stillness followed it.

Finally Julian, as if unwillingly, as if overcome by force, spoke in a low voice:

“Children! Beloved companions! You see that I am yours in life and death. I can refuse you nothing.”

“Crown him. Crown him with a diadem!” they cried triumphantly.

“Let Augustus order a pearl necklace to be brought!”

Julian objected that a woman’s adornment was unbecoming, and would be a bad augury for the beginning of his rule.

The soldiers would not yield. They were determined to see the bright sign of royalty on the brow of their elect, to feel sure that he was emperor.

A coarse legionary tore the breast-piece of bronze off a war horse, the “falera,” as it was called, and proffered it to Julian.

This was displeasing to the soldiers. It smelt of horse’s sweat, from the leather of the breast-piece.

All began impatiently to seek for another decoration. Then the standard-bearer of the legion of the Petulantes, the Sarmatian Aragarius, took a bronze chain from his neck,—the sign of his rank. Julian twisted it twice around his head. That chain made him Roman emperor.

“On the shield! On the shield!” cried the soldiers.

Aragarius handed him a round shield, and hundreds of hands raised the emperor in the air. He

saw a sea of heads in bronze helmets, and heard triumphant thundering shouts:

“Long live Julian, the godlike Augustus!”

It seemed to him that the will of destiny was being accomplished.

The torches flickered. Streaks of white appeared on the horizon. The clumsy brick towers of the palace stood out black and grim.

With the dawn, the worn-out soldiers dispersed, and Julian withdrew into the palace.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE DEATH OF CONSTANTIUS.

The Emperor Constantius had passed sad days in Antioch. All were expecting evil.

By night, he dreamed terrible dreams; in his bedchamber, six lamps burned until dawn, yet he still feared the darkness. Long hours he sat alone, in motionless meditation, turning and trembling at the slightest noise.

Once he dreamed of his father, Constantine the Great, who held a child in his hands, strong and menacing. Constantius, taking the child from him, set it at his right hand, trying to hold up a great ball of crystal with his left. The evil child struck the sphere, so that it fell and broke, and the needle-like fragments of the glass pierced Constantius, with intolerable pain, — his body, his brain, his eyes, his heart; flashing, ringing, piercing and burning.

The emperor woke in terror, bathed in cold sweat.



Julian 6.

He began to take counsel with soothsayers, famous wizards, and interpreters of dreams.

In Antioch, an army was assembled, and preparations were being made for an expedition against Julian. Sometimes the emperor was overcome by a thirst for action after a long period of immobility. Many courtiers held his haste to be irrational. In whispers, they confided to each other rumors of the emperor's doubtful mental condition.

It was late autumn when he left Antioch.

At midday on the road at three thousand paces from the city, close to a village called Hippocephalus, the emperor saw the shapeless corpse of an unknown man. The body, turned towards the west, lay on the right hand of Constantius, who was on horseback; the head was separated from the trunk. He turned pale, and looked away. None of those who were near him said anything, but all knew that it was an evil omen.

In the city of Cilician Tarsus, he felt a slight chill and weakness, but paid no attention to it, and did not even take counsel of his physicians, hoping that riding along the rough mountain road, in the heat of the sun, would make him perspire and do him good.

He directed his course to a small town, Mopsycrene, at the foot of the Taurus mountains, the last stage before leaving Cilicia.

While on the road, he had several times had severe fits of dizziness: finally he had to dismount and get into a litter. Later on, the eunuch Eusebius related that while lying in the litter the emperor drew forth from under his cloak a precious

stone, with the profile of the Empress Eusebius Aurelia, and kissed it tenderly.

At one of the cross-roads he asked whither the other road went, and they answered him that it was the road to Macellum, the deserted palace of the Cappadocian kings.

At this name Constantius' face grew gloomy.

They arrived at Mopsyrene in the evening. He was worn out and silent.

He had just entered the room prepared for him, when one of the courtiers uncautiously, and in spite of the prohibition of Eusebius, informed him that two couriers from the western provinces awaited the emperor.

Constantius ordered to have them brought in.

Eusebius begged him to put the matter off till the morning. But the emperor said that he felt much better, that the chill had left him, and that he felt only a light pain in his elbow.

They admitted the first messenger. He was trembling and pale.

"Speak at once!" exclaimed Constantius, frightened by the expression of his face.

The courier told of the insolence of Julian; the Cæsar had torn the emperor's letter in pieces before the army. Gaul, Pannonia, Aquitania, had gone over to Julian. Traitors turned against Constantius in all the legions, stationed in these countries.

The emperor, his face livid with anger, sprang on the courier, and seized him by the throat:

"You lie, knave, you lie! There is a God in heaven, the protector of the kings of the earth. The Lord of Heaven will not allow, hear all ye fools, will not allow."

Suddenly he grew faint, and covered his eyes with his hands. The courier, half dead with fright, managed to slip out of the room.

"To-morrow," muttered Constantius, indistinctly and disconnectedly, "to-morrow, on the march, straight across the mountains, by forced marches, to Constantinople!"

Eusebius approached him, bowing servilely:

"Oh blessed Augustus, the Lord God ever gave you the power to set your enemies at naught; you conquered the rebellious and foolish Maxentius, Constans, Vetranion, Gallus. You will conquer also the enemy of God."

But Constantius was not listening; he muttered, shaking his head with a meaningless smile:

"It means that He does not exist. If all this is true, it means that he is not; I am alone. Let any one dare to say He is, when such things are done upon earth. I have thought that for a long time, now."

He turned towards them all, with inquiring eyes, and said:

"Call the other."

The physician, a court dandy, with a shaven and impudent rosy face and cold lynx-eyes, a Jew, pretending to be a Roman aristocrat, approached him: he observed to the emperor, in servile tones, that excessive emotion might be dangerous to him, that rest was indispensable. Constantius only waved him aside, like a troublesome fly.

They brought in the other messenger. He was Sintula, a tribune of the Cæsar's stables, who had fled from Lutetia. He brought still more fearful news: the gates of the city of Sirmium had been opened before Julian, and its inhabitants had joy-

fully welcomed him, as the savior of the fatherland. In two days, they were to set out on the great Roman road for Constantinople.

The emperor seemed not to hear the courier's last words. But his face became strangely set. He made a sign that all should go away. Eusebius, with whom he wished to discuss matters, remained.

After a short time, feeling weary, he ordered them to carry him to the bed-chamber, and took several steps towards it. Suddenly a low groan broke from his lips. He raised both hands to his neck, as if he felt a strong momentary pain, and staggered. The court attendants had just time to catch him.

The emperor had evidently not lost consciousness. From his face, from all his movements, from the veins which stood out on his forehead, it was clear that he was making enormous efforts to speak. Finally, he slowly uttered these words, every one of which seemed to choke him, in a half-audible whisper:

“I wish to speak—but—I—cannot.”

These were his last words. His speech failed him. A paralytic stroke had deadened all the right side of his body. His right arm and leg hung motionless.

They laid him on the bed.

In his eyes was anxiety, and an obstinate, recurring thought. He made efforts to say something, to give some important order, perhaps, but only indistinct sounds came from his lips, like a weak, unbroken mewling. No one could understand what he wished, and the sick man turned his eyes beseechingly on all in turn. The eunuchs, courtiers, generals and slaves crowded round the dying man,

wishing to serve him for the last time, but not knowing how.

At times anger flashed into his intelligent, steady eyes: then the mewling seemed angry.

Finally Eusebius guessed, and brought him his writing tablet. Joy shone in the emperor's face; he seized the bronze stylus firmly, but awkwardly in his left hand, like a little child. After long efforts he succeeded in making certain scribbles on the soft surface of the yellow wax. The courtiers with difficulty read the word: "Baptise."

He bent a beseeching glance on Eusebius. All were astonished that they had not understood sooner. The emperor wished to be christened before his death, as, following the example of his father, Constantine, he had put off the great mystery to the last moment, believing that it would miraculously cleanse his soul from all sin, and "wash it whiter than snow."

They ran to bring a bishop. It turned out that there was no bishop in Mopsycrene. They sent for the Aryan presbyter of the poor city basilica. He was a very shy, insignificant person, with a bird-like face, a sharp red nose, like a beak, and a goat's beard, with provincial manners. When they came for him, Father Nymphidianus was beginning his tenth cup of cheap red wine, and seemed over merry. They could not explain to him at all what the matter was; he grew angry, thinking that they were laughing at him. But when they convinced him that he was to baptize the emperor, he almost lost his reason.

The presbyter entered the sick man's room. The emperor looked up at the pale, bewildered and trembling Father Nymphidianus with a glad hum-

ble glance, such as he had never turned on a human being in all his life. They understood that he was afraid of dying, and wished to hasten the rite.

Throughout the city, they sought a gold font, or at least a silver one, but could not find one. It is true that there was a splendid vase, with precious stones, but it was believed to have served in the Bacchic mysteries of the god Dionysus. They preferred an old, bronze font, which was undoubtedly Christian, with coarse, bent edges.

They brought the font close to the bed. They poured warm water into it, and the Hebrew physician wished to try it with his hand. The emperor made an angry movement, and mewed: he feared that the Jew's touch would pollute the water.

They stripped the dying man of his lower tunic. Vigorous young shield-bearers lifted him light as a child in their arms, and plunged him in the water.

Now the dying man showed not the slightest emotion, and looked with a drowsy lifeless face, his wide-open eyes unmoving at the brightly gleaming cross on the Labarum, the golden standard of Constantine. It was a fixed and meaningless stare, like the gaze of infants whose eyes are fascinated by some bright object, so that they cannot turn them away.

Evidently the rite had not brought peace to the sick man. He seemed to have forgotten about it. For the last time his will flashed forth in his eyes, when Eusebius again gave him the tablet and stylus. But Constantius could not write—he simply traced the first letters of the name "Julian." What did it mean? Did he wish to forgive his enemy, or to command revenge against him?

He was in torture for three days. The courtiers whispered to each other that he wanted to die, but could not; that it was a special affliction from God. Still, from old habit, they spoke of the dying man as the "blessed Augustus," "His Holiness," "His Eternity."

He must have suffered. The mewling was prolonged into a moaning that ceased neither day nor night. The sounds were so even, so uninterrupted that it seemed they could not come from a human throat.

The courtiers came and departed as quickly as possible, awaiting the end.

Only the eunuch Eusebius did not leave the dying man, night or day.

The Dignitary of the Most August Bedchamber, in person and character resembled a querulous, crafty, evil-natured old woman. On his conscience were many sins. All the tangled threads of secret information, spyings and church quarrels, went through his hands.

But perhaps he alone of all the court loved his protector like a faithful slave.

By night, when all slept, or had departed, worn out by the sight of so much protracted suffering, Eusebius did not quit the bed. He straightened the pillow, and refreshed the sick man's dry lips with iced drinks. At times he knelt beside the emperor's feet, and probably prayed. When no one was looking, Eusebius gently turned back the end of the purple coverlet, and, with tears, kissed the poor, white, numb feet of the dying man.

Once it even seemed to him that Constantius felt his caress, and responded to it with a look.

Something brotherly and gentle passed between these two wicked, unhappy and lonely people.

Eusebius closed the emperor's eyes, and saw the real majesty of death spread on his face, which had so long expressed the mock majesty of power.

Above him too were to sound the words which, according to custom, the Church pronounced before the remains of the Roman emperors were laid into the tomb:

“Arise, oh king of the earth! Answer the summons of the King of kings, who shall judge thee.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

JULIAN AND THE CROSS.

Not far from the mountain fastnesses of Syccos, on the frontier between Illyria and Thrace, two men walked by night in a beech-wood, beside the narrow road. They were Julian and the magician Maximus.

The full moon shone in a clear sky, and lit up the autumn gold and the purple of the leaves. From time to time, a yellow leaf fell with a soft rustle. There was a peculiar dampness, a smell of late autumn, inexpressibly sweet, fresh, and at the same time mournful, recalling death. The soft, dry leaves rustled under the feet of the wayfarers. All around, in the still forest reigned a sumptuous funereal splendor.

“Teacher?” said Julian, “why have I not the divine lightness of life,—that gladness, which makes so lovely the muses of Hellas?”

"You are not a Hellenist."

Julian sighed.

"Alas! our ancestors were wild barbarians, Medians. In my veins flows heavy, bad blood. I am not a son of Hellas."

"My friend, Hellas never existed," pronounced Maximus, with his ever fascinating smile.

"What does that mean?" asked Julian.

"There never was the Hellas that you love."

"Is my faith in vain?"

"You can have faith," answered Maximus, "only in what is not, but is to be. Your Hellas will exist, there will be a kingdom of demigods, audacious, fearing nothing."

"Fearing nothing? Teacher, you are master of mighty charms! Free my soul from fear."

"Of what?"

"I know not. I cannot tell. But I have feared ever since childhood,—life, death, myself, mysteries that are everywhere, darkness. I had an old nurse Labda, who was like one of the Fates. She related to me the terrible traditions of the house of the Flavii. Silly old women's tales still echo in my ears, by night, when I am alone. I long to be full of joy, like the old heroes of Hellas, and cannot. Sometimes I think that I am a coward. Teacher! Teacher! save me. Free me from this everlasting shadow of fear!"

"Come, I know what you need," pronounced Maximus, majestically. "I will cleanse you from the Galilean stain, and the shadow of Golgotha, in the radiance of Mithra; I will warm you from the chill waters of baptism in the hot blood of the sun-god! Oh my son, rejoice,—I will give you

mighty liberty and joy such as no man has ever yet had on earth!"

They left the wood and entered a narrow stony pathway, cut in the cliff above a precipice. Below murmured a rivulet. Sometimes a stone rolled from beneath their feet, and awakening an angry sleepy echo, fell into the abyss. Snow gleamed white on the summit of Rhodope.

Julian and Maximus entered a cave. It was a temple of Mithra, the sun-god, where were accomplished the mysteries, forbidden by the Roman laws. There was no luxury here. On the bare walls were only drawn the symbolic signs of the Zoroastrian wisdom, triangles, constellations, winged creatures, interlaced circles. Torches burned dully, and hierophants in long strange robes moved like shadows.

Julian also was robed in an "Olympian garment," a robe embroidered with Indian dragons, stars, suns, and hyperborean gryphons. A torch was put in his right hand. Maximus had already prepared his mind, and taught him the sentences of the initiatory rite, the sacramental answers to the questions of the hierophant. Julian had prepared himself for the mysteries, learning the answers by heart, though their meaning would only be revealed to him in the mysteries themselves.

He advanced with Maximus up some earthen steps, through a long cavern. In it, the air was damp and close. Above, the cavern was covered with a strong framework of wood, with many openings, like a network.

There was a sound of hoofs on the wood. The priests were placing on the platform three black calves, three white, and one fiery red, with gilded

hoofs and horns. The hierophants sang a hymn. It was accompanied by the sad lowing of the beasts, struck by a two-edged axe. They fell on their knees, struggled, and the platform trembled under their weight. The passages of the cave echoed to the lowing of the fire-colored ox, whom the priests called the God Mithra.

The blood dripping through the spaces of the wooden network fell on Julian in a red warm stream.

This was the greatest of the heathen mysteries, the so-called "Taurobolia," the immolation of oxen, consecrated to the sun.

Julian cast aside his upper robe, exposed his white undertunic, his head, arms, face and breast and all his limbs to the flowing blood, to the drops of the terrible red life rain.

Then Maximus the high priest, brandishing his torch, pronounced these words:

"Thy soul is washed in the expiating blood of the Sun-god, the cleansing blood of the ever rejoicing Sun-god, the evening and morning shining of the Sun-god. Fearest thou yet aught, oh mortal?"

"I fear!" answered Julian.

"Thy soul is set free," continued Maximus, "from every shadow, from every fear, from every slavery, in the wine of divine joy, the purple wine of the exultant joy of Mithra-Dionysus. Fearest thou yet aught, oh mortal?"

"I fear," repeated the newly-consecrated one.

"Thy soul becomes a part of the Sun-god," cried the hierophant, "Mithra, the invisible and incomprehensible, takes thee for his son,—blood of

blood, flesh of flesh, spirit of spirit, light of light. Fearest thou yet aught, oh mortal?"

"I fear naught more on earth," answered Julian, blood-stained from head to foot, "I am as He is."

"Receive the crown of joy!" and Maximus, with a sharp sword, cast over his head an acanthus crown.

"The Sun alone is my crown," answered Julian, taking the wreath from his head.

He cast it on the ground, and repeated:

"The Sun alone is my crown."

Then he stamped it under foot, and a third time, raising his hands to heaven, he exclaimed:

"Now and until death, the Sun alone is my crown."

The mystery was accomplished. Maximus embraced the initiate, and on the old man's lips flashed the same enigmatical smile.

When they were returning along the pathway through the forest, the emperor turned to the magician:

"Maximus, it seems to me that as to the greatest matter, you keep silent."

He turned to the old man his white face, from which, according to custom, he had not wiped the sacrificial blood.

"What would you know, Julian?"

"What will befall me?"

"You will conquer."

"And Constantius?"

"Constantius is no more."

"What?"

"Wait, the sun will rise on your glory."

Julian did not dare to ask more. They returned silently to the camp.

In Julian's tent a courier from Asia Minor was waiting. It was the tribune Sintula.

He knelt and kissed the hem of the imperial robe.

"Glory to Augustus Julian, the blessed!"

"Are you from Constantius, Sintula?"

"Constantius is no more."

"What?"

Julian shuddered, and looked toward Maximus, who retained an immovable calm.

"By the permission of divine Providence," continued Sintula, "your enemy passed away in the town of Mopsycrene, not far from Macellum."

That evening the army was assembled on the plain. They already knew of the death of Constantius.

Augustus Claudius Flavius Julianus ascended a small steep cliff, so that all the army might see him. He was without crown, without sword or armor, from head to foot clothed in purple. To hide the traces of the blood, which he must not wash off, the purple was drawn over his head also, falling on his forehead. In this garment he resembled a priest of the Eastern mysteries, rather than an emperor.

Behind him gleamed the red autumn woods, on the slopes of Hema, beginning from the cliff, where Julian stood. Over the very head of the emperor, a yellowish maple rustled and gleamed against the blue sky, like a golden standard.

The Thracian plain stretched to the horizon. The old Roman road crossed it, laid with broad

slabs of white marble. A triumph of evenness, it extended to the very waves of the Propontis.

Julian looked at the army. When the legions moved forward, the red lightning of the setting sun flashed on the bronze helmets, the breast-plates and the eagles. The ends of the spears glowed over the cohorts, like torches.

Beside Julian stood Maximus. Bending to Julian's ear, he whispered to him:

"Behold, what glory! Thy hour has come. Delay not!"

The magician pointed to the Christian standard, the Labarum, the sacred standard with the monogram of Christ, made for the Roman army according to the likeness of that miraculous fiery standard with the inscription, "In hoc signo vinces!" which Constantine the Great saw in the heavens.

The trumpets were silent. Julian spoke in a loud, majestic voice:

"My children, our labors are ended. We enter Constantinople. Thanks to the Olympians, who have given us the victory!"

These words were heard only by the first ranks of the soldiers, where were many Christians. Bewilderment spread among them.

"God have mercy! what is that?" said one soldier.

"Do you see the old fellow with the grey beard?" said his companion.

"I see him."

"That is the Devil himself, in the shape of Maximus the Wizard: he is deluding the emperor."

But the isolated voices of the Christian soldiers were only a murmur. From the distant cohorts,

standing behind, who did not hear Julian's words, a cry of triumph arose:

"Glory to the Blessed Augustus! Glory! Glory!"

And ever louder and louder from the four corners of the plain covered by the legions, rose the cry:

"Glory! Glory!"

The hills, the earth, the air, the forest, shook with the voices of the host.

"Look, look! they are pulling down the Labarum!" said the Christians, in horror.

"What is this? what is this?"

And in truth they were lowering the ancient war standard, made sacred by Constantine.

From the forest came an armorer, with a portable forge, pinchers, and a pot of lead, for soldering metal. All this had been prepared beforehand, with a definite object.

The Emperor, pale in spite of the sheen of the purple and the sun, tore the golden cross and the monogram of precious stones from the pole of the Labarum. The army was thunderstruck. Pearls, emeralds and rubies were strewn on the ground, and the fine filigree cross struck into the soft ground, was crushed under the sandal of the Cæsar.

Maximus drew forth a small silver image of the god of the sun, Mithra-Helios, wrapped in blue silk brocade, from a splendid case.

The armorer approached, and in a few moments skilfully straightened the hooks in the pole of the Labarum, and soldered the image of Mithra to them.

Before the army could come to itself, for a ten-

ishment, the Sacred Standard of Constantine was rustling and waving over the head of the Emperor, crowned with an idol of Apollo.

An old soldier, a pious Christian, turned away, and, not to look on this iniquity, covered his eyes with his hand.

"Blasphemy," he murmured, turning pale.

"Woe, woe!" whispered another, in his companion's ear, "the devil has deluded the Emperor."

Julian knelt before the Standard, and raising his hands toward the silver statue, exclaimed:

"Glory to the invincible Sun, ruler of all the gods! Augustus henceforth bows before the eternal Helios, the god of light, the god of reason, the god of beauty and of joy."

The last rays of the sun were reflected on the pitiless, haughtily beautiful face of the Delphic deity. His head was surrounded with silver rays. The "Far-Darter" smiled triumphantly.

The legions were dumb. A silence came over them, so deep that the rustling of the dead leaves was heard, as they fell in the forest.

In the blood-red radiance of the sunset, in the scarlet of the last high priest, and in the purple of the dying forest, there was a gloomy funereal splendor,—the majesty of death.

One of the soldiers in the front ranks, pronounced one word so clearly that Julian heard it and shuddered:

"Antichrist!"

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE HIPPODROME.

Beside the stables, in the hippodrome of Constantinople, were chambers and dressing-rooms for the grooms, the riders, the mimes, and the charioteers. Here even in daytime hanging lamps fastened to the vaults, sent up their smoky flames. The close air, heavy with the smell of manure, was full of the heat of the stables.

When the curtain in the doorway was drawn aside, the blinding light of the morning burst in. In the sunny distance were seen the empty seats for the spectators, the magnificent stairway, which communicated between the emperor's box and the inner rooms of the palace, the stone columns of Egyptian obelisks, and in the midst of the smooth, yellow sand, a giant altar of three intertwined bronze serpents: their flattened heads supported a Delphic tripod of splendid workmanship.

Sometimes the cracking of whips and the cries of the riders floated in from the arena, with the snorting of horses, and the rushing wheels on the soft sand, like the rustling of wings.

This was not a chariot race, but only the preparations for the real games, which were to be held in the hippodrome, in a few days.

In one corner of the stable, a naked athlete anointed with olive oil, and covered with the dust used by the gymnasts, a leather belt around his loins, was exercising with iron weights. Throwing back his close-cropped head, he strained his back till the bones creaked in his joints, his face grew blue, and the veins stood out on his thick neck like the veins of an ox.

A young Byzantine lady, accompanied by her slaves, came to see him; she wore an elegant morning stole, drawn over her head, and falling in folds on her fine aristocratic face, which had lost its first freshness. She was a zealous Christian, beloved by all the priests and monks for her munificent gifts to the monasteries and her lavish charities; she was the widow of a Roman senator, and had come from Alexandria. At first she concealed her visits, but soon saw that to unite love for the Church with love for the circus was accepted as the very latest fashion. Every one knew that Stratonica detested the Constantinople fops, curled and rouged, as nervous and capricious as she herself. Such was her nature: she mingled the costliest odors of Araby with the close smell of the stables and the circus. After hot tears of repentance, after the painful absolutions of artful priests, this little woman, as fragile and delicate as a plaything carved out of ivory, came back again to the coarse embraces of the famous circus-rider.

Stratonica watched the athlete's exercises with the eye of a connoisseur. With dull pride on his ox-like face, the gymnast affected not to notice her existence. She whispered something in her slave's ear, and with simple admiration gazed at his mighty back, and watched the Herculean muscles

moving under the stiff, red-brown skin on his huge shoulders, when he bent, and slowly filling his lungs with air, like a blacksmith's bellows, raised the iron weights above his animal-like, stupid, handsome head.

The curtains were drawn aside, the crowd of spectators divided, and two young Cappadocian mares, one white, the other black, cantered into the stable with a young equestrienne, who sprang deftly from the back of one horse to the other, with a strange guttural cry. She turned in the air for the last time, and leaped to the ground. Her whole person was as strong, healthy, and gay as her young mares. Little drops of sweat stood on her naked body. A young sub-deacon of the Church of the Holy Apostles, daintily dressed, sprang up to her, smiling. He was Zephyrinus, a great lover of the circus, a connoisseur of horses and an enthusiastic sportsman, laying enormous sums on the "blues" against the "greens." He wore creaking shoes of Morocco leather, with red heels. With colyrium-marked eyes, powdered face, and carefully curled hair, Zephyrinus looked more like a girl than a Church functionary. Behind him stood a slave, loaded with all kinds of stuffs, bundles, boxes, and purchases from the fashion-shops.

"Crocala, here is the perfume you asked me for the day before yesterday."

With a graceful bow, the sub-deacon handed the equestrienne a little box, sealed with pale blue wax.

"I have been hunting through the shops all the morning. I could only find it in one. It is pure spikenard! It came from Apamea only yesterday."

"And what else have you bought?" asked Crocala, curiously.

"Some silk with fashionable drawings,—and— all sorts of ladies' trifles."

"All for your—?"

"Yes, yes, all for my honorable sister, all for the devout matron Blesilla. We must help our neighbors. She depends on my taste, in buying stuffs. Since sunrise, I have been running errands for her. I am off my feet altogether. But I do not complain, no, no, I do not complain. Blesilla is really so good, so—a saintly woman, one may call her."

"Yes, yes, but unfortunately old," laughed Crocala. "Ho! Boy! Quick! Rub down the sweat off the black mare with fresh fig-leaves."

"Old age also has its indubitable advantages!" replied the sub-deacon, self-satisfiedly rubbing his white, pampered hands, with their costly rings. Then he whispered in Crocala's ear:

"This evening?"

"I do not know, really. Perhaps. Are you going to bring me something?"

"Fear not, Crocala. I shall not come with empty hands. There is a piece of stuff. What a pattern it is, if you only knew!"

He raised two fingers to his lips, half-closed his eyes, and murmured:

"A perfect treasure."

"Where did you get it?"

"In Sirmicus' shop, at the baths of Constantine, of course. What do you take me for? You can make a long tarantinidion of it. Just imagine what is embroidered on the skirt! What do you think it is?"

"I do not know—flowers? animals?"

"Neither flowers nor animals, but the whole story of the cynic Diogenes, the beggar-sage, who lived in a tub, done in gold, and many-colored silks!"

"It must be beautiful!" cried the equestrienne. "Come, come, without fail. I shall expect you."

Zephyrinus glanced at the water-clock, the clepsydra, standing in a recess of the wall, and began to hurry away.

"I am late, I am quite late. I have to go to the usurer on some other business for the good matron, then to the jeweler, then to the Patriarch, and after that to church, for service. Good-by, Crocala."

"See that you do not fail," she cried after him, and held up a threatening finger, "you gay rogue!"

The sub-deacon disappeared, his Morocco shoes creaking and his slave carrying the bundles after him.

A crowd of grooms, horsemen, dancers, gymnasts, boxers and wild-beast-tamers, ran in. Mirmillon the gladiator, in a wire mask, was heating a thick iron bar in a furnace. He was taming a recently arrived African lion. The beast's roaring was heard, through the wall.

Then another voice:

"You will bring me to the grave, granddaughter, and yourself to eternal perdition. Oh—ho—ho. My sides ache. I am at the end of my strength!"

"Oh, it is you, Grandfather Gniphon; what are you wailing about?" cried Crocala, annoyed.

Gniphon was an old man, with crafty, rheumy eyes, twinkling under grey brows, that kept moving like two white mice, and a nose deep purple

from drink. He wore a pair of patched Lydian drawers, and on his head wobbled a Phrygian felt hat, like a night-cap, with its sharp top bent forwards, and two flaps for the ears.

"You have come for money," cried Crocala angrily, "you are drunk again!"

"It is a sin for you to say it, granddaughter. You answer for my soul before God. Think what you have brought me to. I live now in the Fig-tree quarter, and hire a cheap little room on the ground floor, from a certain sculptor, that is to say, a maker of idols. Every day I see how he carves accursed images—God forgive me—out of marble. Do you think that is nice, for a good Christian? What? You haven't opened your eyes in the morning, when you hear tap, tap, tap,—the master is busy at the stones with his hammer, and foul white devils come out, one after another, damned gods, that seem to laugh at me, and wrinkle up their shameless faces. How can I keep from sin, and not creep down to the tavern out of shame, and take a dram? Oh—ho—ho, the Lord have mercy upon sinful men! I wallow in heathen wickedness like a sow in the mire. And I know that all will be required of us, even to the uttermost farthing. And who, you may ask, is to blame? You are! The chickens could not pick up all your money, granddaughter, and for an old man."

"You are a liar, Gniphon," answered the girl, "you are not poor at all, you skinflint! You have a jug under your bed."

Gniphon held up his hands in terror:

"Hush, hush!"

To change the conversation, he added:

"Do you know where I am going?"

"Probably back to the tavern."

"Not to the tavern, but to something rather like it. I am going to the shrine of Dionysus himself! Since the times of the blessed Constantine, the shrine has been buried in rubbish. But to-morrow, by the august order of Cæsar Julian, it is to be opened again. And I have hired myself to clean it. I know that I am losing my soul, and that I shall burn in Gehenna for it. But still I yielded to temptation. Because I am naked, and poor and hungered, I receive no support from my own granddaughter. That is what I have come to!"

"Get away, Gniphon, I am tired of you. Here, take this and go! Don't dare to come to me drunk again!"

She threw a few small silver coins to him, and then jumped on a brown, half-wild Illyrian stallion, and standing on its back and cracking her long whip, flew through the hippodrome.

Gniphon clucked his tongue with pleasure and cried out proudly:

"I reared her with my own hands!"

And the old man pointed after her triumphantly. Her firm naked body flashed in the morning sun, and her loose red hair was of the same color as the coat of the Illyrian stallion.

"Ho, Zoticus!" cried Gniphon, to an old slave, who was sweeping manure into a wicker basket, "come with me and clean the shrine of Dionysus. You are a master at that sort of thing. I'll give you three oboli."

"I'll come, and thank you," answered Zoticus, "only wait till I fix the lamp before the goddess."

The goddess was Hippona, patroness of charioteers, stables, and manure. Roughly hewn out of wood, smoke-begrimed, looking like a log, Hippona stood in a damp, dark niche of the wall, but the slave Zoticus, who had grown up among horses, held her sacred, prayed to her with tears of humility, decorated her coarse black feet with fresh violets, and believed that she would heal all his sorrows, and guard him in life and death.

Gniphon and Zoticus went out to the market-place, the so-called Forum of Constantine, a circle, with double colonnades and triumphal arches. A gigantic pillar of porphyry stood in the middle of the square, on a marble pedestal. At its summit, at a height of more than a hundred and twenty cubits, shone a bronze statue of Apollo, the work of Phidias, stolen from a city of Phrygia. The head of the old Sun God had been broken off, and with barbarous lack of taste, to the trunk of the Hellenic image had been added the head of the Christian emperor Constantine, the equal of the Apostles. His brow was girt with a crown of golden rays; in his right hand, Apollo-Constantine held a scepter; in his left a globe. A little Christian chapel, like the Palladium, nestled under the pedestal of the colossus. Divine service had been held here up till quite recently, even in Constantius' time. The Christians justified themselves by saying that in the bronze trunk of Apollo in the breast-plate of the Sun God, was enclosed a talisman, a piece of the Holy Cross, brought by Helena from Jerusalem. The emperor Julian closed the chapel.

Gniphon and Zoticus entered a long, narrow street, which led straight to the Chalcedonian

Stairs, not far from the port. Many buildings were still being erected, others were being restored, because they had been raised with such ill-considered haste, to gratify Constantine, that they were tumbling to pieces. Below, people were passing up and down, and purchasers in the shops, porters, and slaves were gathered in crowds, and wagons were rumbling past. And above, on the wooden scaffoldings, hammers sounded, pulleys creaked, sharp saws grated through the hard, white stone, and workmen were raising huge beams, or four-cornered blocks of Proconnesian marble, gleaming against the blue. There was a smell of the dampness of new houses, of still wet mortar. A fine white dust fell on the heads of the passers-by. In places, between the dazzlingly white walls, just newly stuccoed and flooded with bright sunshine, the fairy-blue waves of the Propontis laughing in the sunlight, sparkled far off, dotted with sails like sea-gulls' wings.

Gniphon passing by heard a fragment of a conversation between two workmen spattered from head to foot with alabaster paste, which they were mixing in a big basin.

"Why did you accept the faith of the Galileans?" asked one.

"Judge yourself," answered his companion, "the Christians have not twice, but five times as many holidays as the Hellenes. No one is his own enemy. I advise you to join them too. With the Christians, there is far more leisure."

At a crossing, the crowd crushed Gniphon and Zoticus up against the wall. Wagons were blocked together in the midst of the street, so that neither carriages nor pedestrians could pass; and the air

was full of cries, the cracking of whips, and the shouts of drivers. Twenty pairs of strong oxen, bending their heads under the yoke, were dragging a column of jasper on a huge wagon with heavy stone wheels like mill-stones. The ground trembled under the weight of the wheels.

"Where are you taking it to?" asked Gniphon.

"From the basilica of St. Paul to the temple of the goddess Hera. The Christians took this column away for their church. Now it is being taken back to its old place."

Gniphon glanced at the dirty wall beside which he was standing. The heathen street boys had decorated it with the usual sacrilegious caricature against the Christians, in charcoal.

Gniphon spat in disgust. Near a thronged market, he noticed a picture of Julian, with all the attributes of imperial power. The winged god Hermes, with his caduceus, was descending on Julian, from the clouds. The picture was new. The colors had hardly had time to dry.

According to the Roman law, every one who passed the sacred image of Augustus, had to salute it with bowed head.

The market watchman, the agoranome, had stopped an old woman with a basket of beets and cabbages.

"I cannot worship the gods," cried the old woman, "my father and mother were Christians before me."

"You are to bow before the Roman Emperor, not before the gods," answered the watchman.

"But the emperor and the god are together. How can I bow before him?"

“What do I care about that? I tell you to bow! Don't argue!”

Gniphon dragged Zoticus away as quickly as possible.

“Devilish cunning!” growled the old man. “Either bow to the accursed Hermes, or be guilty of high treason. Neither the one thing, nor the other. Oh—ho—ho, the time of Antichrist is come! The devil is arousing a storm of fierce persecution. Wherever you look, you are sure to sin. When I look at you, Zoticus, I am full of envy. You live with your manure god, Hippona, and all goes well with you.”

They reached the shrine of Dionysus. Beside the temple, there was a community of Christian monks. The doors and windows were fastened with iron bars and locks, as if an invasion of some enemy were expected. The heathen accused the pious monks of having stolen many treasures from the temple.

When Gniphon and Zoticus entered, they saw locksmiths, carpenters, and stone-masons, busy cleaning and repairing the damaged parts of the temple.

They broke away the half-rotten planks which covered a hole in the roof. The rays of the sun lit up the darkness.

“Cobwebs, look, what a lot of cobwebs!”

Among the capitols of the columns hung whole nets of light, dusty grey webs. They fastened brooms to long sticks, and began to brush the spiders' webs away. A disturbed bat fluttered out of a dark corner, and not knowing where to hide from the light, flew hither and thither, rustling its soft featherless wings.

Zoticus gathered up fragments of rubbish from the floor and carried them away in his plaited basket.

"See what a lot of filth they have accumulated, the beasts!" muttered the old man to himself.

They brought a bunch of heavy rusty keys, and opened the treasure-chest. The monks had plundered everything of value. The precious stones had been torn from the votive cups, and the gold and purple embroideries were ripped off the hangings. When they drew forth a splendid priestly chasuble, a cloud of straw-colored moths fluttered out of the folds. At the bottom of an iron censor, Gniphon found a heap of ashes, the remnant of the myrrh burned before the last priest gave way before the tide of Christianity. From all these sacred utensils, from these poor rags and broken vessels, came an odor of death, of mildew, and a soft sad perfume, the incense of the dishonored gods. A sweet melancholy penetrated Gniphon's heart. He remembered something, and smiled. Perhaps he was thinking of his childhood, of the tasty barley cakes with honey and thyme, of the white field-daisies, and yellow dandelions which he and his mother had brought to the modest altar of the village goddess; and he remembered lisping childish prayers, not to the far-off God of heaven, but to the little earthly Penates, glossy from the touch of human hands, carved out of simple beechwood. And he felt full of pity for the dead gods, and sighed deeply. But immediately he came to himself, and whispered: "Promptings of the devil."

The workmen brought a heavy marble slab, an old bas-relief stolen many years ago, and found in the neighboring hovel of a Jewish shoemaker. The

bas-relief, lying among the bricks, held the shoemaker's tumble-down stove together. Old Philumena, the wife of a neighboring clothier and a devout Christian, detested the shoemaker's wife. The accursed Jewess kept letting her ass loose in the clothier's wife's cabbage-garden. War had been waged between the neighbors for many years. Finally the Christian conquered. On her information, the workmen entered the shoemaker's house, and took away the slab of bas-relief. But in doing so they had to pull his stove to pieces. This was a terrible blow to the shoemaker's wife. The poor thrifty housewife, brandishing an oven-fork, called down the curse of Jehovah on the unclean, tore her hair and wailed pitifully over her upset saucepans and dilapidated stove. The little Jews squealed like young birds in a ruined nest. But the bas-relief was taken to its former place, in spite of everything.

Philumena was getting ready to wash it. The bas-relief was blackened by the ill-smelling smoke. Greasy streaks of Jewish soup stained the marble. The clothier's wife industriously rubbed the soft stone with a wet cloth, and little by little the severe, godlike lines of the ancient sculpture appeared from under the fetid kitchen soot. Dionysus, young, naked and beautiful, reclined, with one hand withdrawn from his goblet, as if overcome with Bacchanalian frenzy. A panther was lapping the remains of the wine. And the god, who gave joy to all that lives, with a wise and gracious smile watched how the strength of the wine added a new and sacred beauty to the strength of the wild beast.

The stone-masons began to lift the bas-relief on ropes, to fasten it once more in its old place.

Before the image of Dionysus, on a wooden folding ladder stood a goldsmith, setting two magnificent sapphires of the deepest transparent blue in the dark empty cavities in the face of the god. They were the eyes of Dionysus.

“What are those?” asked Gniphon, with timid curiosity.

“Can you not see?—eyes.”

“That is so, that is so. And where did the stones come from?”

“From the monastery.”

“How did the monks allow it?”

“How could they help it? The blessed Augustus Julian himself ordered it. The god’s bright eyes adorned the garment of the Crucified. That is what it is. They talk about mercy and justice, and they themselves are always the first to plunder. See how well the stones fit into their old place!”

The god, restored to sight, gazed at Gniphon with his sapphire eyes. The old man stepped back and crossed himself, seized with superstitious fear. “Lord have mercy! what a horror!” he cried. Repentance tormented him. While wiping away the dust, he talked to himself, according to an old habit:

“Gniphon, Gniphon, you are a poor creature, you may say straight out,—a worthless dog! What have you done with yourself in your old age, what have you lost your soul for? The Adversary has ensnared you with cursed pay. And you will go to the everlasting fire, and there will be no salvation for you. You have polluted your soul, Gni-

phon, with idolatrous filth. Better for you, if you had never been born!"

"What are you grumbling about, grandfather?" asked the clothier's wife, Philumena.

"My heart grieves, oh my heart grieves!"

"Are you a Christian?"

"What sort of a Christian am I? Worse than any Jew; I am not a Christian, but a betrayer of the Christ!"

Still he continued zealously brushing away the dust.

"Well, would you like me to take your sin away, and not have any of the idolatrous evil stick to you? I am a Christian myself. And I am not afraid. Do you think I would go into bad work like this, if I did not know how to cleanse myself?"

Gniphon looked at her suspiciously.

The clothier's wife looked round to see that no one was watching them. She whispered, with a look of mystery:

"There is a way. Yes. I must tell you that a holy elder gave me a piece of an Egyptian tree, called Persis. This tree grows in Hermopolis of the Thebaid. When the infant Jesus and the Blessed Virgin entered the gates of the city on the ass, the Persis bent to the ground before them, and from that time forth it has worked miracles, and healed the sick. And I have a chip of that very tree, and I will split a splinter off it for you. There is such virtue in it, such virtue, that if you put the smallest piece of it in a large vessel of water over night, the whole of the water will be consecrated by morning. And there will be an unspeakable power in it! If you wash yourself

from head to foot with that water, the idolatrous pollution will go away altogether. You will feel a lightness and cleanness in all your members. And in the Scriptures it is written: Wash in this water, and thou shalt be whiter than snow."

"Oh my benefactress!" cried Gniphon," save me, who am accursed! Give me a piece of your blessed wood!"

"Only—you—know—it is dear. Well, whatever may come of it, I'll let you have it for a drachma."

"What are you saying, mother dear? the Lord have mercy! I have not owned a drachma from the day of my birth. Will you give it to me for five oboli?"

"Oh you miser!" cried the clothier's wife, in disgust,—“you begrudge a drachma! Is your whole soul not worth a drachma?"

"That is all very well,—but would it cleanse me?" Gniphon began to doubt. "Perhaps the pollution has stuck so fast that it won't wash off."

"It will cleanse you," said the clothier's wife, with unshakable confidence. "Now you are like a mangy dog. But if you sprinkle yourself with holy water you will feel the scurf falling off your soul, and it will shine with the whiteness of a dove."

CHAPTER II.

ANTICHRIST.

Julian instituted a Bacchic procession in Constantinople. He sat in a chariot drawn by white

mules. He held a golden thyrsus in his right hand, crowned with a cedar-cone, the symbol of fertility, and in the other a cup, entwined with ivy. The sun's rays falling on its crystal sides were reflected with blinding whiteness, and it seemed that the cup was full of sunlight up to the brim. Tame panthers, sent to him from the island of Serendib, walked beside the chariot. Bacchantes sang, clanging their cymbals, and waving lighted torches, and through the smoke could be seen youths with fauns' horns fastened to their foreheads, pouring wine into cups from a flagon. They jostled each other, laughing, and often the purple stream fell past the cup on the naked, round shoulder of a Bacchante, and was scattered in spray. A fat-paunched old man riding an ass,—the court treasurer, a great rogue and bribe-taker,—represented Silenus splendidly.

The Bacchanals sang, pointing to the young emperor:

Bacchus, thou sittest surrounded
With clouds eternally shining!

A thousand voices caught up the song from the Antigone of Sophocles:

Come to us, oh child of Zeus!
Come to us, oh god that leadest
Forth the choral dances flaming,
Of the stars at midnight shining!
With glad noise and songs and cries,
And the maddened throng of women,
Full of thy ecstatic gladness,
Joining in the dance of Bacchus,
Come to us, oh god of joy.

Suddenly Julian heard laughter, a woman's shriek, and an old man's cracked voice:

“Oh my little duck!”

It was the priest, a roguish old man, who had pinched the naked white elbow of one of the Bacchanals. Julian frowned and called the old buffon to him. The old man ran up to him, dancing, and limping.

“My friend,” whispered Julian in his ear, “preserve a becoming dignity, befitting your age and rank.”

But the priest looked at him with eyes so devoid of expression, that Julian involuntarily became silent.

“I am a simple and unlearned man,—I venture to say to your majesty,—I understand very little about philosophy. But I honor the gods. Ask whomever you please. In the days of frightful Christian persecutions, I remained true to the gods. But all the same, ha-ha-ha! whenever I see a pretty girl, I cannot help it, all my blood begins to jump. I am only an old—”

Seeing the displeasure in the emperor’s face, he suddenly stopped, took on an air of great dignity, and looked only foolisher than before.

“Who is that girl?” asked Julian.

“The one with the basket of consecrated vessels on her head?”

“Yes.”

“A hetera, from the Chalcedonian suburb.”

“What? is it possible that you allowed a prostitute to touch the sacred utensils of the gods with her unclean hands?”

“But you yourself, most gracious Augustus, ordered the procession to be arranged. Whom were we to take? All the respectable ladies are

Galileans. And then none of them would consent to go half naked in a game like this."

"You mean that they are all?"

"No, no, how would that be possible? There are pretty dancing girls here, and actresses, and riders from the hippodrome. Look how gay they are,—and not a bit ashamed. The people like that. You can trust an old man like me! That is just what they want. And that one is a respectable lady."

He pointed to one of the Bacchanals. She was a Christian, an old maid in search of a husband. She had a helmet-like wig made of the then fashionable German hair sprinkled with gold dust. She was all hung with precious stones like an Oriental idol, and had a tiger-skin drawn over her withered breast, which was thickly powdered. She smiled continually.

Julian began to examine the faces of the people with disgust.

Tight-rope dancers, drunken legionaries, public women, grooms from the circus, acrobats, boxers, and mimes surged round him.

The procession entered a side-street. On the way, one of the Bacchanals ran into a low eating-house, whence came a heavy smell of fish fried in rancid butter. The Bacchanal brought three oboli worth of greasy cakes from the shop, and began to eat them ravenously, licking her lips. Afterward, when she had finished, she wiped her hands on her purple silk dress, which had been given out from the imperial treasury for the festival.

The chorus of Sophocles soon lost interest. Hoarse voices began to break forth in street songs.

The whole thing seemed to Julian a bad and silly dream.

A drunken Celt tripped and fell. His companions stopped to pick him up. In the crowd they caught two pickpockets, who were admirably playing the parts of antique fauns. The thieves defended themselves. A fight began. The panthers behaved best, and were most beautiful. Finally the procession approached the temple.

Julian descended from his chariot. "Can I," he thought, "stand before the altar of Dionysus with all this rabble?"

A cold shudder of disgust ran over his body. He looked at the animal faces, savage, worn out with debauchery, looking dead through their rouge and powder; at the pitiful nakedness of the human bodies, shapeless through anemia, fasts, fear of the Christian Hell, and scrofula. The air of the stews and taverns surrounded him. The breath of the mob reached him, through the scent of aromatics, mixed with a smell of stale mackerel, and sour wine. The papyrus rolls of petitioners were stretched out to him from all sides.

"I was promised a place as groom; I renounced Christ; and did not get it."

"Do not forsake us, gracious Cæsar, protect us, have mercy on us! We gave up the faith of our fathers to please you. If you give us up, what is to become of us?"

"We have fallen into the clutches of the Devil!" cried some one, in despair."

"Be quiet, you fool! whose throat are you clutching?"

Single voices were drowned in the chorus:

With glad noise and songs and cries,
And the maddened throng of women,
Full of thy ecstatic gladness,
Joining in the dance of Bacchus,
Come to us, oh god of joy!

Julian entered the temple, and looked up at the marble statue of Dionysus. His eyes were refreshed after the sight of human ugliness, by the proud, pure lines of the godlike body.

He no longer noticed the crowd. It seemed to him that he was alone, a man fallen amongst a herd of animals.

The emperor proceeded to offer the sacrifice. The people watched, wondering at seeing the Roman Cæsar, as Pontifex Maximus, doing zealously what should have been done by servants and slaves,—cutting wood, carrying a bundle of fuel on his shoulder, bringing water from the fountain, cleansing the altar, removing the ashes, blowing the fire.

A tight-rope dancer remarked in a whisper to his neighbor:

“Watch how busy he is! He seems to love his gods!”

“He does indeed!” remarked a boxer. “Many a one is not so fond of his father and mother as he is of the gods.”

“See how he puffs his cheeks out!” softly laughed another. “Blow away, dear, nothing will come of it. It is too late, your uncle Constantine put the fire out!”

The flame flared up and illumined the emperor's face. Dipping a consecrated sprinkler of horse-hair in a flat silver bowl, he sprinkled the crowd with holy water. Many of them winked, others shivered as they felt the cold drops on their faces.

When all the preparations were ended, he remembered that he had prepared a philosophical sermon for the people.

"People," he began, "the god Dionysus is the great principle of freedom in your hearts. Dionysus casts away all the bonds of the earth, laughs at the strong, sets the slaves free."

But the high priest saw such bewilderment on all their faces, and such a look of weariness, that the words died on his lips. A deadly sickness and disgust at the people arose in his heart.

He gave a sign for the shield-bearers to draw round him. The crowd gave way, dissatisfied and disappointed.

"I'll go straight to church and confess! Perhaps I'll get absolution," said one of the fauns, wrathfully tearing off his false beard and horns.

"It was not worth damning my soul for!" muttered a prostitute, discontentedly.

"Who wants your soul? They would not give three oboli for it!"

They have deceived us," cried a drunkard, "they have made our mouths water in vain. The accursed devils!"

Entering the treasure-room of the temple, the emperor washed his face and hands, took off the splendid robe of Dionysus, and put on a simple Pythagorean tunic, fresh and white as snow.

The sun set. He waited for darkness to come on, to return to the palace unobserved.

Julian passed through the back doors of the temple, to the consecrated grove of Dionysus. Here silence reigned. Bees were humming, and he could hear the murmuring of a thin stream of clear spring water.

He heard someone walking. Julian turned. It was his friend, the young Alexandrian physician Oribasius, one of the favorite disciples of Maximus.

They walked together along the grass-grown path. The sunbeams darted between the broad, golden leaves of a vine.

"Look," said Julian, with a smile, "great Pan is still alive here."

Then he added in a lower voice, with drooping head:

"Oribasius, did you see?"

"Yes," answered the physician, "but perhaps you were to blame yourself, Julian. What did you want to do?"

The emperor did not reply.

They came to a ruin overgrown with ivy. It was probably a little shrine of Silenus. Fragments of stone lay among the weeds. Only one column stood straight and unbroken, with its delicate capital, like a white lily. A ray of the setting sun gleamed upon it.

They sat down on a slab of marble. There was a sweet smell of mint, southernwood and thyme. Julian pushed the grass aside, and pointed to a broken antique bas-relief:

"Oribasius, that is what I wanted to do!"

An ancient Hellenic "theoria" was represented on the bas-relief, the sacred festal procession of the Athenians.

"That is what I wanted,—this beauty! Why do men become uglier from day to day? Where are they—where are those godlike old men, stern heroes, proud youths, pure women, in white flowing garments? Where is all this strength? Where

is all this joy? Galileans! Galileans what have you done?"

His eyes full of endless sadness and love, he gazed at the bas-relief, pushing the long grass aside.

"Julian," asked Oribasius in a low voice, "do you believe in Maximus?"

"I do believe in him."

"Altogether?"

"What do you mean?"

Julian looked up at him in astonishment.

"I have always thought, Julian, that you are suffering from the same sickness as your Galilean enemies."

"What sickness?"

"Faith in miracles."

Julian shook his head:

"If there are no miracles and no gods, all my life is madness. No, let us not speak of that. But do not judge me too severely for my love of the ceremonies and auguries of antiquity. I know not how to explain it to you. The foolish old songs touch me to tears. I love evening better than noon, autumn better than spring. I love all that is passing away! I love all dying colors. What can I do, my friend? The gods created me so! I need this sweet sadness, this magical, golden twilight. There, in distant antiquity, there is something unspeakably beautiful and lovely, something which I can find nowhere else. There is the radiance of the evening sun, on marble yellow, with age. Do not rob me of my mad love for something that is not. It is more beautiful than anything that is! Memory has a greater power over my soul than hope."

He grew silent and thoughtful, and gazed into the distance with a gentle smile, leaning his head against the unbroken column with its delicate capital, that looked like a sad white lily. The brightness of the setting sun had already died away from it.

"You speak like a poet," replied Oribasius, "but a poet's dreams are dangerous when the power of the whole world is in his hands. Must not he who rules over men be something more than a poet?"

"What can be greater?"

"A creator of new life."

"The new, the new," exclaimed Julian. "In truth, I sometimes fear your new. It seems to me cold and cruel as death. I tell you my heart is with the old! The Galileans are also ever in search of something new, treading the old sanctities under foot. Believe me, the new is only in the old, that grows not old; in the dead that is immortal, in the despised, in the beautiful!"

And he rose to his full height, with pale and proud face and glowing eyes:

"They think that Hellas is dead! From every corner of the earth black monks, like crows, alight on the white marble body of Hellas and hungrily peck at it like offal, and croak in their gladness: 'Hellas is dead!' but Hellas is not dead, and will never die! Hellas is here, in our hearts! Hellas is man's godlike beauty on earth. Hellas will awake, and then,—woe to the Galilean crows!"

"Julian," replied Oribasius, "I am afraid for you. You wish to accomplish the impossible. Crows do not peck at a living body, and the dead do not rise again. Cæsar, what if the miracle is not accomplished?"

"I fear nothing. My destruction will be my triumph," exclaimed the emperor, with such radiant gladness on his young face that Oribasius started involuntarily, as if a miracle were about to take place: "Honor to the Rejected, honor to the Vanquished!"

"But before perishing," he added, with a haughty smile, "we shall struggle! I would that my enemies were worthy of my hate, not merely of my contempt. In truth, I love my enemies, because I can conquer them, and feel my strength through them. The joy of Dionysus is in my heart! Now the Titan of old arises and bursts his chains, and once more the fire of Prometheus is lit upon the earth. The Titan against the Galilean! I come to give men liberty and joy such as they have never dared to think of. Galilean, thy kingdom vanishes like a shadow! Rejoice, peoples and nations of the earth; I am the messenger of life, I am the liberator, I am Antichrist!"

CHAPTER III.

IN THE MONASTERY.

In the neighboring monastery with its closely shut windows and doors, the monks were offering solemn prayers. From afar was wafted among them the noise of Bacchanalian revelry. To drown it, the monks united their voices in a melancholy wail:

"O God, why hast thou cast us off forever? Why

doth thine anger flame against the sheep of thy pasture.

"We are become a reproach to our neighbors, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us."

The ancient words of the prophet Daniel: "Oh Lord thou has given us up to the king of the heathen; more crafty than all the earth," took on a new and unexpected meaning.

Late at night, when all was silent in the streets, the monks dispersed to their cells.

Brother Parthenius could not sleep. He had a pale, mild face. In his large eyes, pure as a maiden's, there was an expression of sorrowful bewilderment whenever he spoke to any one. And he spoke very little and indistinctly, as if with a great effort, and always said something so childlike and unexpected that no one could listen to him without smiling. Sometimes he burst out laughing, without any apparent reason. The stern monks asked: "What are you showing your teeth about? Are you making sport for the devil?" Then he modestly explained that he was laughing "at his own thoughts." This convinced the monks still more that Parthenius was demented.

But he was master of a valuable art: he could illuminate the title pages and capital letters of the manuscripts with cunning patterns. The art of Brother Parthenius brought not only money but also consideration and honor to the monastery, even from distant lands. To be sure, he did not suspect this, and if he could have understood what human fame was, he would have been frightened rather than gratified.

His artistic work which sometimes cost him im-

moderate pains, as he brought the smallest details to the utmost limit of perfection, he considered to be play, rather than work; he did not say: "I am going to work," but always asked the chief elder Pamphilus, who loved him tenderly: "Father, give me your blessing,—I am going to play."

When he had finished some detail, some subtle and delicate tracery, he clapped his hands and praised himself.

Brother Parthenius was so fond of solitude and the stillness of night, that he learned to work even by lamp-light. The colors came out unexpectedly, but that did not do any harm to his fanciful designs.

In a little cell with overhanging walls, Parthenius lit his lamp, and set it on a board beside his little jars, his fine brushes, his boxes with colors, cinnabar, and liquid silver and gold. He crossed himself, wet a brush carefully, and began to draw the tails of two peacocks, at the bottom of a title page. Golden peacocks on a green ground were drinking at a sapphire spring. They were raising their beaks and stretching their necks, as birds do, when they drink.

Other parchment-rolls lay around him, with half-finished patterns.

It was a whole world, supernatural and fascinating. Airy creations of fabulous architecture were woven round the text: trees, clusters, and fantastic animals. Parthenius thought of nothing while he was doing them, but a bright and joyful light suffused his pale face. Hellas, Assyria, Persia, India, the refinements of later Byzantium and the dim inspirations of the coming world,—all peoples and centuries were mingled in all simplicity, in this

monastic paradise glowing with the changing colors of precious stones, round the capital letters of the Holy Scriptures.

Here was a representation of the Baptism. John the Baptist was pouring water on the head of Jesus Christ. And beside them the heathen river-god Jordan, with an inclined amphora from which water streamed, was graciously holding a towel, like an Eastern host, ready to offer it to the Saviour after the Baptism.

Brother Parthenius had no fear of the antique gods. They pleased him, and in the simplicity of his soul he held that they had long ago been converted to Christianity. On the summits of mountains, he invariably placed a mountain-god, in the form of a naked youth.

When the artist drew the passage of the Children of Israel across the Red Sea, a woman with an oar in her hand represented the Sea, while a nude male figure, with the inscription "Bythos," was to indicate the Abyss, which swallowed up Pharaoh; on the bank sat Desert, in the form of a sad woman, in a tunic of sand color.

Here and there, on a horse's bent neck, in the fold of a long robe, or in the pose of an Oread, reclining on her elbow, or the god Jordan, offering Jesus the towel, the true Hellenic grace, the beauty of the naked body, suddenly shone through.

That night his "play" did not hold the artist.

His ever unwearying fingers trembled. The wonted quiet smile was absent from his lips. He listened a moment, then opened a box on his cypress bench, drew forth a sharp awl for book-binding, crossed himself, and shading the flame of his

lamp with his transparent, pink hand, softly left the cell.

It was quiet and close in the corridor. The humming of flies caught in spiders' webs was the only sound.

Parthenius entered the chapel. A single lamp was flickering before an antique diptych, a two-leaved image of ivory. Two great oblong sapphires in the aureole of the Infant Jesus whom the Blessed Virgin held in her arms, had been wrenched out by the heathens and restored to their former place in the temple of Dionysus.

The ugly black hollows in the ivory, which age had lightly touched with yellow, seemed to the artist Parthenius like wounds in the living body. "No, I cannot!" he whispered, and approached his lips to the Infant Jesus' little hand, "I cannot; better that I should die!" The sacrilegious wounds in the ivory tortured him terribly, and aroused him more than any assault on a living body.

In a corner of the church, he found a rope ladder. The monks used it to light the lamps in the dome of their church.

With this ladder, he went to the dark narrow passage which ended at the outer door.

The red-cheeked brother Choricus who kept the keys was snoring in the straw.

Parthenius slipped past him like a shadow. The lock on the door opened with a metallic click. Choricus half-raised himself, blinked, and then sank back again on the straw.

Parthenius climbed over the low fence. The street in that out-of-the-way quarter was deserted. A full moon was shining in the sky. The sea murmured.

He went round to that side of the temple of Dionysus which lay in the shadow, and threw his rope ladder so that one end of it caught in the bronze acrotere at the corner of the roof. The ladder hung from the upraised paw of a Sphinx. The monk climbed up on the roof.

Somewhere in the distance the cocks were beginning to crow. A dog barked.

Then again silence; only the murmur of the sea.

He drew up the ladder, and descended to the interior of the temple.

A majestic stillness reigned there. The eyes of the god, two great oblong sapphires, shone with a strange life in the moonlight, gazing straight at the monk.

Parthenius shuddered and crossed himself.

He climbed on the altar. It was not long since the high priest Julian had blown its embers into flame. Parthenius felt the warmth of the ashes under his feet. The monk drew the awl from his bosom. The god's eyes gleamed close to his face. The artist saw the careless smile of Dionysus, and his marble body flooded with moonlight, and he thrilled with delight at the beauty of the antique god.

Then he set to work, trying to take out the sapphires with the point of his awl. Often his hand strove almost against his desire to spare the enchanting marble.

Finally the work was finished. The blinded Dionysus looked threateningly at the monk out of the black hollows of his eyes.

Then terror overcame Parthenius. It seemed to him that some one was watching him. He leaped down from the altar, ran to his rope-ladder,

climbed hastily up, and lowered it on the other side, not even fastening it properly, so that when he was near the bottom it slipped and fell. Pale, disheveled, with stained garments, but still clasping the sapphires firmly in his hand, he stole across the street into the monastery like a thief.

The doorkeeper did not awake. Parthenius, opening the door, slipped through and entered the chapel. Looking at the image, he felt calmer. He tried to fit the sapphire eyes of Dionysus into the dark hollows. They slipped back into their old places in the most perfect way, and once more glowed with a warm light in the aureole of the Infant Jesus.

Parthenius returned to his cell, put his lamp out, and threw himself down on his couch. Suddenly, in the darkness, shrinking together, and covering his face with his hands, he laughed a noiseless laugh, like a child who has played some prank, and is glad to have played it, but is also afraid that he will be found out. He went to sleep with that laugh in his heart.

The morning waves of the Propontis were sparkling beyond the trellis of his little window when Parthenius awoke.

The doves were cooing on his window-sill and rustling their soft blue-grey wings.

The laughter still remained in his heart. He ran to his work-table, and looked with delight at the unfinished arabesques.

It was a picture of paradise. Adam and Eve were sitting in a meadow.

A ray of the rising sun fell through the window, straight on his arabesques, and they shone with a heavenly brightness, all gold and purple and azure.

Parthenius, as he worked, never noticed that he was giving the naked body of Adam all the antique Olympian beauty of glad Bacchus—Dionysus.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONVERSION OF HECEBOLUS.

The famous sophist Hecebolus, the court teacher of rhetoric, had begun to ascend the ladder of imperial preferment at the lowest round. First he was a servant in the temple of Astarte at Hieropolis. At sixteen, he stole some of the treasures of the temple and ran away to Constantinople. He passed through all the knaveries and filth of the metropolis, walked in the highway with devout pilgrims and with the lawless herd of Dindymene's worshippers, — the many-breasted goddess whom the rabble delighted in, when she was carried through the villages on an ass.

Finally he stumbled into the school of the rhetorician Proeresias, and soon became a teacher of oratory himself.

In the last years of Constantine the Great, when the Christian religion became the fashion at court, Hecebolus was converted to Christianity. People of a spiritual calling felt a special leaning towards him. He paid them in the same way.

Hecebolus had often changed his creed, according as the wind blew, but always exactly at the right time. From Arianism, he became Orthodox, and returned again from Orthodoxy to Arianism, and each change was a step on the ladder of pre-

ferment. Persons of a spiritual vocation helped him up quietly, and he in turn aided them to climb.

His hair was beginning to be touched with grey, his obesity was becoming more and more a comforting presence, his wise words grew even more insinuating and suave, and his cheeks were bright with the freshness of vigorous old-age. His eyes were caressing, and somewhat lachrymose, but now and then there flashed up in them a piercing and evil mockery, a cold and daring soul. Then he swiftly lowered his lids and the spark died out again.

The whole exterior of the famous sophist wore a cloak of ecclesiastical unction.

He fasted scrupulously, but at the same time was a fine gastronomist. The delicate fast dishes on his table were more carefully planned than the dishes of a festal banquet, just as Hecebolus' monastic jests were sometimes keener and more pointed than the mockery of open heathenism. At his table was served a famous cooling drink made of beetroot juice and spices: many people said that it was better than wine. For fast days, instead of ordinary wheaten bread, he ate a kind of cake made from a grain of the desert, on which, tradition alleged, Saint Pachomius had lived in Egypt.

Evil tongues whispered that Hecebolus was a lover of women. In Constantinople they told the following anecdote. A young wife acknowledged to her confessor that she was unfaithful to her husband. "That is a great sin—but who—my daughter?" "Hecebolus, Father!" The priest's face cleared: "Hecebolus. Ah! Well, he is a holy

man, and devoted to the Church. Repent, my daughter! God will forgive you!"

Of course these stories were mere gossip. Nevertheless, in the clean-shaven dignified face of the official, his thick red lips looked somewhat out of place, even though he pressed them together with an expression of monastic modesty.

Women were devoted to him.

Sometimes Hecebolus disappeared suddenly for several days. No one, or almost no one knew anything of that side of his life. He knew how to hide his trail. Neither his servants nor his slaves accompanied him in those enigmatic journeys. The secret was preserved inviolably.

After a few days, he returned as if nothing had happened, refreshed and calm. Only his wise speeches became even more insinuating, his grey hair more venerable, his monastic unction more majestic.

Under the emperor Constantius, he received the position of court orator, with a splendid salary, a senatorial lateclave, and a blue sash of honor, the distinctive mark of superior rank.

He aimed yet higher.

But at the very moment when Hecebolus was preparing to take the final step, an unexpected blow overtook him. Constantius died, and Julian, the enemy of the Church, ascended the throne. Hecebolus did not lose his presence of mind. He did what all the rest did, but more cleverly than the rest, and neither too soon nor too late.

Once, in the first days of his power, Julian arranged a theological discussion at the palace. Cæsius of Cappadocia, a young philosopher and physician, who was esteemed by all for his probity

and nobility, and brother of Basil, the famous Father of the Church, was to defend the Christian faith against the emperor. Julian allowed the utmost liberty in these controversies, and even preferred to be answered with heat and passion, in defiance of court etiquette.

The discussion grew very heated, and hosts of sophists, sages, rhetoricians, priests, and Church teachers were present.

Generally the contest had to give way and yield, if not before the logic of the Greek philosopher, at least before the majesty of the Roman Emperor.

This time things went otherwise. Cæsarius would not yield. He was a youth with a girlish grace in his movements, with silky locks, and with a steady lucidity in his eyes. He called the philosophy of Plato "the subtle wisdom of the serpent," and opposed to him the celestial wisdom of the Gospel. Julian knitted his brows, moved in his seat, bit his lips, and could hardly restrain himself.

Like all sincere discussions, the discussion led to no result.

The Emperor left the assembly, mastering his feelings with a philosophic jest, assumed a gentle look, with a faint shade of all-forgiving sadness, but in reality with resentment in his heart.

And just at that moment, the court orator Hecebolus, came up to him. Julian considered him an enemy. He asked:

"What do you want?"

Hecebolus fell on his knees and began a confession of repentance. He had long been wavering, but the logic of the emperor had finally convinced him. He abjured the dark Galilean superstition,

and his heart returned to the memories of childhood, to the bright Olympian gods.

The emperor lifted the old man to his feet, and in his emotion could not speak, but only clasped him to his breast with all his strength, and kissed his plump, smooth-shaven cheeks and thick red lips.

His eyes sought Cæsarius, to enjoy his discomfiture.

For several days, Julian kept Hecebolus close to him, and told of his marvelous conversion in season and out of season. He rejoiced over him, like a priest over a well-fed victim, like a child over a new toy, like a youth over his first love.

The emperor wished to give the new convert a considerable post at court. Hecebolus flatly refused, esteeming himself unworthy of that honor. He preferred to prepare his soul for Hellenic piety by long trials and penances, to wash himself clean of the pollution of the Galileans by service in some of the ancient Olympian temples. Then Julian appointed him high priest of Bithynia and Paphlagonia. Those who filled this office were called by the heathen "archpriest."

The Archpriest Hecebolus governed two populous Asiatic provinces, and setting out on his new path, he walked along it with his habitual success. He took part in the conversion of many Galileans to Hellenism.

Hecebolus became the chief priest in the temple of the Phœnician goddess Astarte-Atagartis whom he had served in his childhood. The temple was half way between Chalcedon and Nicomedia, on an eminence which overlooked the waves of the Propontis. The village was called Gargaria. Pilgrims

came hither from the ends of the earth, suppliants to Aphrodite-Astarte the goddess of love and death.

CHAPTER V.

THE VESSEL OF CLAY.

In one of the wide halls of the palace of Constantinople, Julian was occupied with the affairs of the empire.

Between the porphyry columns on the terrace which looked out over the Bosphorus, shone the pale blue sea. The young emperor was seated before a round marble table heaped with papyrus and parchment rolls. Shorthand writers, bending their heads, wrote rapidly with their creaking Egyptian calami. Some of the officials looked sleepy. They were not used to such early rising. At a little distance among the columns, Hecebolus and the official Junius Mauricus were exchanging remarks; the lean official had a wise but bilious face, with disagreeable folds round his thin lips.

In the midst of universal superstition, this sceptic and court dandy was one of the last followers of the great Lucian, the satirist of Samos, the author of biting dialogues in which he makes such pitiless sport of all the holy things of Olympus and Golgotha, of all the traditions of Rome and Hellas.

In an even voice Julian was dictating an epistle to Arsacius, high priest of Galatia:

“Do not permit the priests to visit the theaters,

to drink in taverns, to engage in degrading trades. Honor the obedient; chastise the disobedient. Establish houses of refuge in every city, where travelers may profit by our benevolence,—not only people of the Hellenic faith, but all who have need of help. We assign for yearly distribution in Galatia thirty thousand measures of wheat, and sixteen thousand cesti of wine. Distribute the fifth part of these supplies among the poor who live near the temples, and the rest among pilgrims and beggars. It is shameful that the Hellenes should want, when there is not a single beggar amongst the Jews, and when the godless Galileans feed their own people and ours as well. They begin like people who entice children with sweetmeats; they begin with hospitality and acts of mercy, with invitations to their love-feasts, which they call 'Agapæ,' and little by little inveigling those who trust them into their godless communities, they end with fasts, castigations, mortification of the flesh, the pains of hell, madness, and a terrible death in torments. This is the habitual path of those haters of humanity who call themselves Christians and lovers of their neighbors. Conquer them by acts of mercy, in the name of the eternal Olympian gods. Announce throughout all cities and villages that this is my heartfelt concern. If I learn that you have so acted, I shall continue to reward you. Make it clear to all our citizens that I am ready to help them in all things, at any hour. But if they wish to gain my especial favor, let them bow to Dindymene, the Mother of the Gods, and let all nations and people do honor to her, for ever and ever."

The last words, he wrote with his own hand.

At this point they brought breakfast, barley bread, fresh olives and light white wine. He ate and drank without leaving his work. But suddenly he turned, and pointing to a golden vessel containing olives, he asked a favorite old slave, whom he had brought from Gaul, and who always served the emperor at table:

"Why this gold? Where is the old earthen one?"

"Forgive me, master, it is broken."

"In pieces?"

"No; only the edge of the rim."

"Bring it, then."

The slave ran to bring the clay vessel, with the broken rim.

"That is nothing!" said Julian, "it will serve a long time yet!"

He smiled:

"My friends, I have observed that things that have been broken serve longer and better than new ones. I admit that it is a weakness of mine, that I get wonderfully accustomed to old things. They have a special charm for me, like old friends. I am afraid of novelty, and I detest changes. I am always sorry for the old, even if it is bad. The old is comfortable and pleasant."

Julian laughed gaily at his own words:

"See what philosophic thoughts are sometimes inspired by a broken plate!"

Junius Mauricus twitched the hem of Hecebolus' garment:

"Did you hear? His whole nature is expressed in that. He cares as much for his broken plates as for his half-dead gods. That is to decide the fate of the world."

Julian grew enthusiastic. From edicts and laws, he passed on to thoughts of the future.

In all the cities of the empire he proposed to found schools and professorships for the promulgation and explanation of the Hellenic dogmas, to establish forms of prayers, epithemes, philosophical discourses, resorts for lovers of the perfect, and for those who gave themselves up to meditation.

“What next?” whispered Junius Mauricus to Hecebolus, “monasteries in honor of Aphrodite and Apollo. From hour to hour, it is getting worse!”

“And all this, my friends, we shall accomplish—with the help of the gods,” concluded the Emperor. “The Galileans wish to assure the world that mercy is their peculiar heritage. But mercy belongs to all philosophers, whatever gods they may worship. I have come to preach a new love to the world, not slavish and superstitious, but free and joyful as the heaven of the Olympians!”

Julian embraced all who were present in one inquiring glance. He did not find what he sought, on the faces of the officials.

A deputation of Christian teachers of rhetoric and philosophy entered the hall.

Not long before, an edict forbidding Galilean teachers to lecture on ancient Greek oratory had been promulgated. The Christian orators had either to renounce their faith or close their schools.

One of their representatives approached Augustus with a scroll in his hand. He was a lean, absent-minded man, the image of a bald old parrot; he was accompanied by two awkward rosy-cheeked pupils.

"Have mercy on us, beloved of the gods!"

"What is your name?" asked the Emperor.

"Papirianus, a Roman citizen."

"Well, understand me, good Papirianus. I wish you no ill. On the contrary, remain Galileans."

The old man fell at the Emperor's feet, and embraced them.

"I have been teaching grammar for forty years. I know Homer and Hesiod as well as anybody."

"What is your petition?" asked Julian, frowning.

"I have six children, your majesty, small, smaller, smallest. Do not take away the last piece of bread from them! My pupils love me. Ask them! Have I done anything wrong?"

Papirianus could not proceed from emotion, but pointed to his two pupils, who were trying hard to hide their hands. They stood staring, their faces growing redder and redder.

"No, my friends," the Emperor interrupted, in a low, firm voice. "The law is just. I find it absurd that the Christian teachers of rhetoric, in explaining Homer, should deny the very gods whom Homer honored. If you think that our sages did no more than weave clever tales, then you had better go to your churches and explain Matthew and Luke! Observe, Galileans, that I do this for your own well-being."

Someone in the crowd of rhetoricians, muttered half audibly:

"For our own good,—you starve us to death!"

"You fear to defile yourselves by touching meat or water that has been offered in sacrifice, Christian teachers," continued the Emperor unmoved, "why do you not fear to defile yourselves with what

is far more dangerous than meat or water?—the false wisdom of the heathen? You say: ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit!’ Then be poor in spirit! Or do you think that I do not know your teachings? I know them better than any of you! I see in the Galilean commandments depths that you never dreamed of. But to everyone his own. Leave us our vain wisdom, our poor science of words. What have you to do with these tainted springs? You have a higher wisdom. Our kingdom is of earth. You have a heavenly kingdom. Think: a heavenly kingdom! That is not a little for such humble and disinterested people as you are! Dialectics can only awaken a taste for free-thinking and heresy. Better be simple as children. Is not the blessed ignorance of the fishermen of Capernaum higher than all the Platonic dialogues? All the wisdom of the Galileans consists in the one thing: ‘Believe.’ If you were true Christians, you would bless our law, rhetoricians. And it is the flesh, not the spirit, which now rises up in you, the flesh for which sin is sweet. That is all that I have to say to you, and I hope that you will justify me, and admit that the Roman emperor takes more care for the salvation of your souls than you do yourselves!”

Julian passed through the crowd of unhappy rhetoricians, calm and satisfied with his speech.

Papirianus falling on his knees as before, tore his thin grey locks.

“Wherefore? Oh Queen of heaven, wherefore such a punishment?”

The two pupils, seeing their teacher’s sorrow, rubbed their bulging eyes with their red, awkward hands.

CHAPTER VI.

MARANATHA.

Julian remembered the endless disputes of the Arians and the Orthodox, under Constantius. He bethought himself to take advantage of their enmity, and decided to summon a Church Council, after the manner of Constantine and Constantius, his predecessors.

Once, in conversation, he announced to his astonished friends that instead of employing force and persecution, he wished to give the Galileans full religious liberty, and to recall the Donatists, the Semiarians, the Marcionites, the Montanists, the Cecilians, and other heretical sects, exiled by order of the Councils under Constantine and Constantius. He was convinced that there was no better method of destroying the Christians.

“You will see, my friends,” said the Emperor, “that when they all return to their former places, such hatreds will spring up among the followers of brotherly love that they will tear each other like wild beasts let loose from their cages into the arena, and that they will bring the name of their Teacher into dishonor sooner than I could, even by the most savage persecutions and punishments.”

Julian sent edicts and letters to every corner of the Roman Empire, inviting the exiled sectarians to return without fear. The completest freedom of faith was announced. At the same time, the

wisest teachers from among the Galileans were invited to the Emperor's court at Constantinople to deliberate on ecclesiastical matters. The greater part of those who were invited knew nothing of the purpose, constitution and powers of the assembly, since all this was set forth in the Emperor's letters with skilful ambiguity. Many of them, suspecting some wile of the Apostate, failed on the plea of sickness or distance to appear in answer to the invitation.

The azure of the morning seemed dark and sombre in comparison with the blinding brightness of the double colonnade of white marble, which surrounded the great court, the so-called Atrium of Constantine. White doves disappeared in the blue like flakes of snow, with a glad fluttering of their silky wings. Aphrodite Calipyge stood in the center of the court, in the bright spray of a fountain. The wet marble shone in the sun, like a living body. The monks, passing by her, turned away and tried not to look, but she was in their midst, crafty and tender.

Julian had not chosen this strange meeting-place for the Galileans without a hidden purpose.

The dark robes of the monks seemed even darker here, the bitter faces of the heretics, drawn with suffering, seemed even more gloomy. They glided among the sunlit marble pillars, casting formless shades of blackness as they went.

They all felt constrained. And each of them tried to assume an air of equanimity, even confidence, pretending not to recognize in his neighbor an enemy, who had ruined his life, or whose life he had ruined; but at the same time they cast curious malignant glances at each other.

"Holy Mother of God! What is that? Where are we?" cried the plump old Sebastian bishop Eustathius in dismay; "Let me depart, soldiers!"

"Gently, gently, my friend," said the chief of the shield-bearers persuasively, politely barring him from the door.

"I cannot breathe in this sink of heresy! Let me go! let me go!"

"According to Cæsar's command, all who have entered the Council must remain," continued the barbarian Dagalaiphus, the chief of the shield-bearers, restraining him with gentle insistence.

"This is no Council!" cried Eustathius, in anger, "it is a den of thieves!"

A few wits were to be found among the Galileans, who made sport of the provincial exterior, asthmatic speech, and strong Armenian accent of Eustathius. He lost his head completely, lapsed into silence and shrunk away into a corner, repeating in despair:

"Oh Lord, why am I here? Oh Lord, why am I here?"

Evander of Nicomedia also repented that he had come and brought Juventinus the disciple of Didymus, who had just arrived in Constantinople.

Evander was one of the greatest dogmatists of his time, a man of penetrating and profound intellect. He had ruined his health and grown old before his time over his books; his sight had grown weak, and in his kind, short-sighted eyes, there dwelt an expression of perpetual weariness. Endless heresies occupied his mind, and gave him no rest. They tormented him in his waking hours, and haunted him in his dreams, but at the same time they fascinated him by their subtilty and re-

finements. Evander had collected them for many years, in a huge manuscript, entitled: "Against Heresies," with as much zeal as some amateurs collect marvels of art. He traced them out with hungry delight, even inventing non-existent ones, and the more he attacked them, the deeper he became involved in them. He often prayed desperately to God to give him simple faith, but God had given him no simplicity.

In his everyday life, he was modest, confiding and helpless as a child. It cost the unscrupulous no trouble to deceive Evander. Mockers recounted innumerable anecdotes of his absent-mindedness. Plunged in his theological dreams, the bishop was perpetually finding himself in impossible situations.

And it was through absent-mindedness that he had wandered into this awkward assembly, without due thought as to whither and why he was going, in part allured by the hope of finding some new heresy.

And now he kept frowning in dismay, and shading his weak eyes with his weak hand against the intense brightness of the sun on the marble. He felt ill at ease, and his one desire was to get away as quickly as possible to his half-darkened room, to his books and manuscripts.

Evander kept Juventinus close to him, and guarded him against delusion by attacks on the various heresies.

Through the midst of the hall passed a short powerful man, with high cheek-bones and an aureole of downy grey hair round his head.

He was the septuagenarian bishop Purpurius,

an African Donatist whom Julian had recalled from exile.

Neither Constantine nor Constantius had been able to crush the Donatist heresy. Rivers of blood had been shed because some fifty years before Donatus had been irregularly consecrated instead of Cecilianus, or Cecilianus instead of Donatus,—no one was quite certain which. But the Donatists and Cecilians massacred each other, and no one could foresee any end to this fratricidal quarrel which had arisen not even from a difference of opinion but only from a difference of names.

Juventinus noticed that in passing Purpurius, a Cecilian bishop brushed the Donatist's garment with the hem of his chasuble. The latter started aside with an exclamation, and lifting his robe with two fingers, with an expression of disgust, shook it several times in such a way as to attract general attention, to rid himself of the polluting touch of the Cecilian bishop.

Evander told Juventinus that when a Cecilian inadvertently entered a Donatist church, they drove him out again, and afterwards carefully washed the flagstones on which he had stood with salt water.

An African of huge stature followed in Purpurius' footsteps, with a dog's fidelity. He was the bishop's body-guard, dusky and repellent, with squat nose, and thick lips, and a club in his muscular hands. This African deacon, Leo, belonged to the sect of the Self-torturers, who inhabited the villages of Gætulia. They were called the Circumcelliones. Roaming about armed, they offered money to the people they met on the high roads, with the threat: "Kill us, or we will kill you!" The

Circumcelliones wounded and burned themselves, and threw themselves into the sea, in the name of Christ. But they never hanged themselves, because Judas Iscariot was hanged. Sometimes whole crowds of them cast themselves over a precipice, singing psalms the while. They affirmed that suicide for the glory of God cleansed the soul from all sins. The common people honored them as martyrs. Before dying, they gave themselves up to debauchery, eating, drinking and the lusts of the flesh. Many of them would not use swords because Christ forbade the use of the sword, but then they used great clubs, according to the Scripture, against heretics and the heathen, with a quiet conscience. When they shed blood, they cried out: "Glory to God!" The peaceable inhabitants of the African cities and villages feared this pious cry more than the war-trumpets of their enemies or the roaring of lions.

The Donatists considered the Circumcelliones as their soldiers and guards. And as the Gætulian peasants did not understand much of their theological quarrels, the Donatists carefully pointed out to them whom they should slay "according to the Scripture."

Evander called Juventinus' attention to a handsome youth with a tender and innocent face, like a girl's. He was a Cainite.

"Blessed are our proud and unsubdued brothers, Cain, Ham and the dwellers in Sodom and Gomorra!" thus preached the Cainites, "they were of the family of the higher Sophia, the Hidden Wisdom. Come unto us, all ye who are persecuted, all ye who revolt, all ye who have been overcome. Blessed is Judas! He alone of the Apostles was in-

initiated into the Higher Knowledge, the Gnosis. He sold Christ, that Christ might die and rise again, because Judas knew that the death of Christ would save the world. Those who are initiated in our wisdom should break through all limits, should dare all, despise property, and trample all desire for it under foot, and giving themselves up to all sins and all the lusts of the flesh, they should attain a blessed loathing of the flesh and the highest spiritual purity!"

"Look, Juventinus, there is a man who considers himself incomparably higher than the archangels and seraphim," said Evander, pointing to a well-formed young Egyptian, who stood apart from all the rest, with a smile of high intelligence and irony on his thin lips, which were rouged like a prostitute's. He was dressed in the very latest Byzantine fashion. On his white, delicate hands were costly rings. He was Cassiodorus, the Valentinian.

"The Orthodox, the Psychics," affirmed the haughty Valentinian, "have a soul (psyche) like the rest of mankind, but they have no spirit (pneuma), as we have. We alone the initiates in the Gnosis and the Godlike Pleroma, are worthy to call ourselves men. All the rest are swine, or dogs."

Cassiodorus instructed his pupils with a fascinating smile:

"You must know all, but none must know you. Deny the Gnosis in the presence of the profane. Keep silent and despise all proofs. Despise confessions of faith and martyrdom. Love silence and secrecy. Be intangible and incomprehensible for your enemies, like the disembodied powers. The

common Christians, the Psychics, need good works for their salvation. He who has the higher wisdom, the Gnosis, has no need of good works. We are the children of light. They are the children of darkness. We fear no sin, for we know that to the body belong the things of the body, and to the spirit the things of the spirit. We are at such a height that we cannot fall, whatever sins we may commit. Our hearts remain sinless in the midst of sensual indulgence, as pure gold loses not its lustre, even in the dirt!"

Here also Juventinus saw a suspicious-looking, squint-eyed old man, with the face of a sensual faun. He was Prodicus the Adamite, who affirmed that his teaching restored the primitive innocence of Adam. The naked Adamites celebrated their mysteries in heated churches, which they called Edens. Like our first parents before the fall, they were not ashamed of their nakedness, affirming that all men and women among them possessed the highest spiritual perfection. But the purity of these paradisiacal assemblies was doubted.

Close to the Adamite Prodicus, a pale, grey-haired woman sat on the ground; she wore a bishop's gown, and had a stern handsome face; her eyelids were half-closed from weariness. She was the prophetess of the Montatists. Yellow-faced, lean eunuchs guarded her. They watched her with devoted eyes, and called her the Heavenly Dove. Amongst the hot ruins of Phrygia, near the deserted city of Pepusa, they sat in crowds with their eyes fixed on a point of the horizon where the Saviour should appear. On misty evenings, they saw the glory of God and the New Jeru-

saalem descending to the earth, in the red and gold of sunset among the clouds above the grey plain.

And so year after year passed, and they died in the hope that the Kingdom of Heaven would at last descend on the burned ruins of Pepusa.

Sometimes raising her weary lids, and straining her dim gaze into the distance, the prophetess muttered in Syrian:

“Maranatha, Maranatha!—the Lord cometh, the Lord cometh!”

And the pale eunuchs bowed over her, listening.

Juventinus listened to Evander’s explanations, and thought that it was all like some strange, painful dream. His heart was wrung by bitter impotent pity.

All became silent. Their eyes turned in one direction. At the other end of the Atrium, the emperor Julian stood on a marble platform.

His face was full of self-confidence. He wished to give it an impassive expression, but at times a flash of malicious triumph blazed up in his eyes. He wore the simple white robe of an ancient philosopher.

“Elders and teachers!” he began, turning towards the assembly; “We have thought good to extend all possible tolerance and mercy to our subjects who confess the faith of the Crucified Galilean. We must feel pity for those who have gone astray, and bring the wayward to the truth not by blows and bodily punishments but by persuasions. And so desiring to establish peace throughout all lands which have been disturbed by the quarrels of the Church, we have called you together, wise men of the Galileans. We hope that under our patronage and protection you will show an example of those

high virtues which are befitting to your spiritual rank and wisdom."

His speech had been prepared beforehand, and he spoke with graceful, flowing gestures, like a practised orator before a popular assembly. But through his words, full of benignant expressions, hidden suggestions of malice now and then appeared. Amongst other things, he showed that he had not yet forgotten the foolish and degrading quarrels of the Galileans, in the famous Council of Milan, under Constantius. And it was with bitter mockery that he further spoke of certain lawless people who, regretting that they no longer had the power to persecute, torture and slay their brothers, now stirred up and inflamed the rabble, pouring oil on the flames and filling the world with fratricidal hate. They were the enemies of the human race, the authors of the worst disorder and anarchy. And he concluded his oration with these unexpected words, whose irony was felt by all:

"We have recalled your exiled brothers who were banished under Constantine and Constantius, wishing to assure liberty to all the citizens of the Roman Empire. Live in peace, Galileans, according to the commandment of your Teacher. And for the perfect restoration of amity, we charge you, wise teachers, forgetting all enmities, and uniting in brotherly love, to come to an ecclesiastical unity, and to establish one general confession of faith for all the Galileans. And to this end we have summoned you hither, to our residence, according to the example of our predecessors Constantine and Constantius. Judge and decide, in virtue of the power vested in you by the Church.

We shall withdraw, to leave you fuller liberty, and shall await your wise decision."

Before the members of the assembly had time to come to themselves, or to dispute this strange oration, Julian, accompanied by his friends the philosophers, left the Atrium and disappeared.

All kept silent. Some one sighed heavily. In the stillness was heard only the joyful fluttering of the doves' silky wings in the sky, and the splashing of the fountain on the marble.

Suddenly on the platform from which the emperor had spoken appeared the good-natured old man with the provincial exterior and Armenian accent, at whom everybody had been laughing. The emperor's speech had offended the old Sebastian bishop. His face was red and there was a wild light in his eyes. Eustathius stood up before the assembly full of spiritual zeal and forgetting his former timidity:

"Fathers and brothers!" he exclaimed, and in his voice there was so much decision that no one now thought of laughing;

"Let us separate in peace! He who has summoned us hither to insult and delude us, knows neither the canons of the Church nor the ordinances of the Councils. He detests the name of Christ! Let us not make sport for our enemies; let us refrain from angry words. I adjure you in the name of the Most High God, let us depart in silence!"

He pronounced these words in a loud, clear voice, raising his eyes to an upper gallery, shaded from the sun by purple curtains. There, in the background between the columns, appeared the emperor and his suite. A murmur of astonish-

ment and fear passed through the crowd. Julian looked straight in Eustathius' face. The old man met his gaze, and did not give way. The emperor grew pale.

At the same moment, the Donatist Purpurius roughly pushed the bishop aside, and took his place on the dais.

"Do not listen to him," cried Purpurius, "do not depart, and do not traverse Cæsar's will! The Cecilians are wroth that he, our deliverer—"

"No, no, brothers!" interrupted Eustathius, in a voice of entreaty.

"We are not your brothers! Depart, accursed! We are the clean wheat of God, you are the chaff, ordained by God for the burning."

And pointing to the Emperor, the Apostate, Purpurius continued in a triumphant, resonant voice, as if offering him the praises of the Church:

"Behold, there is our Savior! Look upon him! Glory, glory to the blessed and all-wise Augustus! He has set his foot on the asp and the basilisk, and trodden under foot the lion and the serpent, and the angels are commanded to keep him in all his ways. Glory to Julian!"

Then the assembly began to seethe with commotion. Some maintained that they should follow the counsel of Eustathius, and disperse, while others wished to speak, eager to take advantage of the one chance of their lives to address a Church assembly. Their faces began to glow, and their voices were raised angrily.

"Let one of the Cecilian bishops look into our church now," continued Purpurius, triumphantly, "and we will lay our hand on his head, not to consecrate a pastor, but to break his skull!"

Many quite forgot the purpose of the assembly, and entered into abstruse theological discussions. They gathered audiences around them, and tried to draw them away from others and win over the unexperienced. Triphon, a follower of Basilides, who had come from Egypt, was surrounded by a crowd of curious auditors, to whom he was showing an amulet of transparent chrysolite, with the inscription: "Abraxes."

"He who understands the word 'Abraxes,'" said Triphon: "will receive the highest liberty; he will become immortal and will remain unstained by sin, even though indulging in all sins. Abraxes expresses in letters the numbers of the celestial spheres, 365. Above the three hundred and sixty-fifth sphere, above the hierarchies of Eons, angels and archangels, there is a certain Nameless Darkness, more lovely than all lights, motionless, unborn."

"There is a nameless and motionless darkness in your ignorant head!" cried an angry Arian bishop, coming near Triphon.

The Gnostic, according to his habit, immediately became silent, compressing his lips with a contemptuous smile, half-closing his eyes and raising a warning finger:

"Wisdom, wisdom," he murmured half-audibly, and disappeared as if he had slipped through the Arian's fingers.

The prophetess of Pepusa with her adoring eunuchs supporting her arms, raised herself to her full height, terrible, pale, disheveled, with dazed, half-mad eyes, and cried out in an inspired voice, seeing and hearing nothing:

“Maranatha! Maranatha! The Lord cometh!
The Lord cometh!”

The pupils of the youth Epiphanius, who was half heathen demigod, half Christian martyr, deified in the prayer meetings of Cephalonia, cried out:

“Koinonia, kai isotes! Brotherhood and equality! There are no other laws. Destroy, destroy everything! Let property and women be held in common for all, like the grass, the water, the air, and the sun!”

The serpent-worshipping Ophites raised up their bronze cross, entwined with a tame little snake of the Nile.

“The wisdom of the serpent,” they said, “gives men the knowledge of good and evil. This is the Savior, Ophiomorphos, in the form of the Serpent. Fear not but hear Him, and taste of the forbidden fruit, and ye shall be as gods in very deed!”

A Marcosian, a scented dandy and seducer, raising with the skill of a juggler, a transparent glass cup filled with water, invited the curious:

“Look, look! A miracle! The water will boil, and become blood!”

The Colarbasians were quickly counting on their fingers, and proving that all the Pythagorean numbers, all the secrets of heaven and earth, were included in the letters of the Greek alphabet:

“Alpha, Omega, the beginning and the end. And between them the Trinity, beta, gama, delta, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. See how simple it is!”

The Fabionites, the Carpocratian gluttons, the debauched Barbelonites, preached such disgusting doctrines that devout folk spat, and stopped their

ears. Many acted on their hearers through that unintelligible force of attraction which is exercised on the imagination by anything miraculous and insane.

Every one of them was convinced that he was right. And each was against all the rest.

Even the insignificant sect of the Rogatians, who were lost in an out-of-the-way corner of Africa, asserted that when Christ returned to the earth, He would find the true Gospel among them alone;—in a few villages of Cæsarean Mauritania, and nowhere else, throughout all the world.

Evander of Nicomedia, forgetting all about Juveninus, had hardly time to note the new and hitherto unrecorded shades of heresy which he discovered, on his wax tablets, with all the passion of a collector of curios.

At the same time, his eyes full of deep and satisfied malice, the young emperor, surrounded by sages in the white robes of old, looked down from the marble gallery at the maddened throng. Here were his friends: Proclus the Pythagorean, Nymphidianus, Eugenius Priscus, Edesias, his old teacher Iamblichus, the godlike and the worthy Hecebolus, archpriest of Dindymene. They neither laughed nor jested. Their faces were impassive. They behaved like worthy men of wisdom. Only from time to time smiles of pity appeared on their closely compressed lips. It was the triumph of Hellenic wisdom. They looked down, as the gods look down on struggling mortals, and as the lovers of the circus look down at the arena, where wild beasts fight and slay each other.

They were cool and comfortable in the shadow of the purple curtains.

But below, the Galileans, covered with sweat, anathematized and preached.

In the midst of the uproar, the effeminate young Cainite, with his handsome, soft face, and sad, childishly bright eyes, managed to mount the platform, and to exclaim with a voice so full of unction, that all turned, grew silent, and listened to his blasphemy:

“Blessed are those who bow not down before God! Blessed are Cain, Ham, Judas, and the dwellers in Sodom and Gomorra! Blessed be their Father, the angel of Darkness and the Abyss!”

The furious African, Purpurius, who had been trying to make himself heard for an hour, and to utter what was in his heart, rushed at the Cainite, and raised a hairy, muscular hand, “to close his impious mouth.”

They held him back, and tried to bring him to reason:

“Father, this is unworthy of you!”

“Loose me! Loose me!” cried Purpurius, breaking away from them, “I will not endure his filth! Take that, brood of Cain!”

And the Donatist spat in the Cainite’s face.

All became confusion. A fight would have begun, if the Roman shield-bearers had not hastened to them. Separating the Galileans, the soldiers reproved them:

“Here in the palace, is no place for this! Or have you not churches enough to fight in?”

They lifted Purpurius, and would have removed him.

He cried out:

“Leo, deacon Leo!”

His body-guard pushed the soldiers aside,

knocked two of them down, set Purpurius free, whirling the terrible Circumcellian club in the air, above the heads of the heresiarchs.

“Glory to God!” howled the African, marking a victim for his wrath. Suddenly the club fell helplessly from his hands. All were turned to stone. In the silence resounded the piercing cry of a crazy eunuch of the Pepusan prophetess. He fell on his knees, and with a face drawn with terror, pointed to the platform:

“The devil! the devil! look, the devil himself!”

On the raised marble platform, above the crowd of the Galileans, with his arms crossed on his breast, calm and majestic in the white robe of an ancient philosopher, stood the Emperor Julian. His eyes shone with an unconcealed and terrible joy. At that moment, the Apostate appeared to many as terrible, crafty and strong, as the Adversary.

“It is thus, Galileans, that you fulfill the law of love!” he spoke, addressing the assembly, cowed with terror. “I see, I see now, what means your loving kindness and tender mercy! In very truth, wild beasts are more pitiful than you, oh teachers of—brotherly love. To speak in the words of your own Teacher: ‘Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge; ye entered not in yourselves and them that were entering in ye hindered. Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees!’”

CHAPTER VII.

CHRIST AND THE OLYMPIANS.

When Julian left the Atrium of Constantine and descended the steps of the broad staircase, he turned to offer sacrifice into a little temple of Fortune near the palace; Maris, the grey-haired bishop of Chalcedon, bent with old age, approached him. Maris' old eyes trickled with rheum. A boy led the blind man by the hand. The stair led to the square of the Augusteum. A crowd gathered below. The bishop stopped the Emperor, with a majestic gesture, and addressed him in a firm, clear voice:

“Give ear, all ye peoples, tribes, tongues, men of all ages, all, as many as are and shall be upon the earth! Give ear, ye higher Powers, ye angels, by whom will soon be accomplished the overthrow of the torturer! Not the king of the Amorites shall be laid low, nor Og, the king of Bashan, but the Serpent, the Apostate, the great Mind, the rebellious Assyrian, the common enemy and foe, accomplishing many lies and threats upon the earth, and setting himself up on high. Hear, oh ye heavens, and inspire the earth! And do thou Cæsar, give ear to my prophecy, for God Himself speaketh by my lips. His word enkindles my heart, and I cannot keep silent. Thy days are numbered. Not many days, and thou shalt perish and pass away. Like dust, scattered by the wind, like dew, like the hissing of an arrow, like the noise of thunder, like

the lightning flash, thou shalt vanish. The Castalian spring shall be dried up for ever, and men shall come and make a mock of it. Apollo shall become once more a voiceless idol, Daphne a tree, lamented in a fable, and the grass of the tomb shall grow over the ruins of the temples. Oh pollution of Sennacherib! Thus we make it known, we, Galileans, men despised, worshipping One Crucified, disciples of the fishermen of Capernaum, and ourselves fools. Worn out by long fasting, half-dead, we keep watch in vain, and speak empty words at the times of our sacred vigils, and yet we overcome you: 'Where are your books? where are your catechisms?' I borrow this song of victory from one of our men of little wisdom. Give hither thy royal and sophistic speech, thy irrefutable syllogisms and forms of logic! Let us see how our unlearned fishermen speak! And let David sing once more with courage, he who laid low the mighty Goliath with his sacred stones, and overcame many by his meekness, and by the sweetness of his harping healed Saul, tormented by the evil spirit. We thank Thee, oh Lord, for now Thy Church is purified by persecution. The Bridegroom cometh! The wise virgins shall light their lamps. Don the priest's mighty and unpoluted robe, the Christ, our righteousness!"

The blind man pronounced the last words in a chanting voice, like the words of a solemn service. The crowd answered him with a murmur of approbation. Some cried out:

"Amen!"

"Have you finished?" asked Julian, quietly.

The Emperor heard the long harangue to the end with imperturbable coolness, as if the matter

did not concern him at all. Only at the corners of his mouth a fine smile sometimes flickered.

"Here are my hands, persecutor! Bind me! lead me away to death! Lord, I accept the crown!"

The bishop raised his dim, blind eyes to the sky.

"Do not think, good man, that I am giving you over to death," said Julian; "you are mistaken! I send you away in peace. In my heart there is no anger against you."

"What is it? what is it? what does he say?" they asked, in the crowd.

"Delude me not. I will not renounce the Christ! Depart, enemy of mankind! Executioners, lead me to death. I am ready!"

"There are no executioners, my friend. Here are people as simple and kind as you are. Calm yourself! Life is more irksome and commonplace than you think. I have listened to you with interest, as an admirer of all eloquence, even Galilean. And there was something of everything in it, the pollution of Sennacherib, and the king of the Amorites, and the stones of David, and Goliath! There is no simplicity in your speeches. Read our Demosthenes and Plato, and most of all Homer. They are really simple as children or gods. And learn from them mighty peace, Galileans. God is not in the whirlwind, but in the stillness. That is all my lesson, that is all my revenge,—since you yourself demanded punishment."

"May the Lord strike you down, Blasphemer!" Maris was beginning again.

"God in His wrath will not make me blind,—or make you see!" answered Augustus.

"I thank my God for my blindness," cried the

old man, "it keeps my eyes from beholding the accursed face of the Apostate."

"What bitterness, what bitterness in such an outworn body! You speak ever of humility and love, Galileans, but what hatred there is in your every word. I have just come forth from a Council, where the brethren were ready to tear each other's limbs, like wild beasts, in the name of God, and here you are also, with your untrammelled speech. Why are you full of such hatred? Am I not your brother? If you could know how calm and benevolent is my heart, even now. I wish you all good, I pray the Olympians to soften your cruel, dark, and suffering soul, blind man! Go in peace, and remember that not Galileans alone can forgive!"

"Do not believe him, brothers! this is the craft of the Adversary, the Serpent. Behold, oh Lord, how this Apostate speaks evil of Thee, God of Israel, and keep not silent!"

Then paying no more attention to the old man's curses, Julian went forth among the people, in his simple white dress, sun-lit, peaceful and wise, like one of the philosophers of old.

CHAPTER VIII.

ARSINOE IN THE CLOISTER.

It was a stormy night. At long intervals the moonbeams broke through the rapidly drifting clouds, and mingled strangely with the flashing of the lightning. A warm wind, full of the salt

smell of rotten reeds, swept the rain in oblique lines.

On the banks of the Bosphorus, a horseman was approaching a lonely ruin. In immemorial days, when the warlike Trojans lived here, this fortress was a watch-tower. Only wind-worn stones were now left of it, and half-dilapidated walls. In the base of the tower was a tiny chamber, a refuge for wandering shepherds and tramps in foul weather.

Tying up his horse under the shelter of a half-fallen shed, and pulling a prickly burdock aside, the horseman knocked at the low door:

“It is I, Meroe, open!”

An Egyptian woman opened the door, and admitted him to the interior of the tower.

The horseman went close to a dimly burning torch. The light fell on his face. It was the Emperor Julian.

They went out. The old woman, who knew the place well, led him by the hand.

Pushing aside the stiff stems of a dead thistle, she sought the low entrance into a cleft between the cliffs. They descended a stairway. The sea was near. The thunder of the breakers shook the ground. But the wall of rock sheltered them from the wind. The Egyptian struck a light.

“Here, my master,—a torch and the key. Turn it twice. The door into the monastery is open. If you meet the door-keeper, do not fear; I have bribed him. Only be careful not to make a mistake on the upper corridor,—the thirteenth cell on the left.”

Julian opened the door, and for a long time continued to descend a steep broad stair of time-worn stone slabs. Soon the covered passage

changed into a defile so narrow that two men meeting each other could not pass. This secret passage once connected the watch-tower with the other side of the Bosphorus,—now it connected the deserted ruin with a new Christian monastery.

Julian came out high above the wave-tossed sea, between sharp cliffs, eaten away by the breakers, and began to ascend a narrow stairway cut in the face of the cliff. Reaching the top, he saw a brick wall. It was uneven; many bricks were missing, or stuck out. Resting his foot in the inequalities, and grasping the rough ends of the bricks, he succeeded in climbing over into the tiny monastery garden.

He entered a neat courtyard. Here all breathed tranquillity. The walls were covered with tea-roses. In the warm stormy air, the scent of the flowers was strong and overpowering.

The shutters on one of the lower windows were not fastened from within. Julian opened them gently, and climbed through the window.

The close air of the nunnery surrounded him. It smelt of damp and incense, mice, medicinal herbs and fresh apples, which the careful nuns kept in the cellars.

The Emperor entered a long corridor. There was a row of doors on either side.

He counted to the thirteenth door on the left, and softly opened it. The cell was dimly lighted by an alabaster night-lamp. There was an atmosphere of dreamy warmth. He held his breath.

On a low couch, with snow-white coverlet, lay a girl in a nun's robe. She must have gone to sleep during the prayer time, without undressing. The shadow of her eye-lashes fell on her pale cheeks.

Her brows were set sternly and majestically, like the brows of the dead.

He recognized Arsinoe.

She was greatly changed. Only her hair remained the same: at the roots, dark golden, at the ends, pale yellow, like honey in the rays of the sun.

Her eyelids trembled. She shuddered.

Before his eyes flashed the proud body of the Amazon bathed in the sunlight and blinding, like the gold-tinged marble of the Parthenon. And, stretching out his hand to the nun, who slept, under the shadow of the black cross, Julian whispered, in tones of uncontrollable love:

"Arsinoe!"

The girl opened her eyes and looked at him quietly, without astonishment or fear, as if she had known that he was coming. But coming to herself, she shuddered, and raised her hand to her face.

He came closer to her:

"Fear not. Say the word, and I go."

"Why have you come?"

"I wanted to know whether it was true."

"Julian, it is all the same. We shall not understand each other."

"Arsinoe, is it true that you believe in Him?"

With downcast eyes, she made no answer.

"Do you remember that night in Athens," continued the Emperor, "do you remember how you tempted me, a Galilean monk, as I now tempt you? The pride and strength of old are in your face, Arsinoe, and not the slavish humility of the Galileans! Why do you lie? The heart cannot change. Tell me the truth!"

"I desire power," she murmured.

"Power? So you remember our compact?" he cried joyously.

She shook her head, with a mournful smile:

"Oh no! not over people, it is not worth while. You know that, yourself. I desire power over myself!"

"And for it, you go into the desert?"

"Yes, and also for—freedom."

"Arsinoe, as of old you love yourself, and yourself alone."

"I would gladly love myself and others, as He commanded. But I cannot. I hate myself and others."

"Better not live at all!" exclaimed Julian.

"I must overcome myself," she said slowly, "I must conquer myself, and conquer in myself not only my detestation of death, but also my detestation of life. And this is far harder, because such a life as mine is more terrible than death. But if you conquer yourself to the end, life and death will be one, and then comes mighty freedom!"

Her narrow brows were drawn with the stubbornness of an unbending will.

Julian looked at her in despair.

"What have they done with you?" he asked gently, "you are all either torturers or tortured. Why do you torment yourselves? Do you not see that there is nothing but hatred and despair in your soul?"

She looked up at him angrily:

"Why have you come hither? I did not invite you. Go! What is it to me what you think? I have enough of my own thoughts and torments. Between us there is a gulf fixed, which the living may not cross over. You say that I do not be-

lieve. But I hate myself for it. I shall reach God by hatred of myself. I do not believe,—but I wish to believe, I will and I shall! I shall force myself to. I shall subdue my flesh; I shall wither it with hunger and thirst. I shall make it more dead to feeling than the lifeless stones. But most of all,—the reason. I must slay it, because it is the Devil. It is more alluring than all desires. I shall cut it away. That will be the last victory, and the mightiest. Then,—liberty. Then we shall see whether anything rebels within me, saying: ‘I do not believe!’ ”

She pressed the palms of her hands together, and raised them to heaven, in a desperate prayer:

“Oh Lord, have mercy upon me. Where art Thou, Lord? Hear me, and have mercy upon me!”

Julian threw himself on his knees before her, and clasped her round the waist; he drew her to his breast, and his eyes gleamed triumphantly:

“Oh, Arsinoe! I see now that you could not desert us; that you wanted to, and could not! Come at once, come away with me! And to-morrow you will be the wife of the Roman emperor, the queen of the world. I came hither like a thief,—I will go like a lion—with my prey. What a victory over the Galileans! Who will hinder us? We shall dare all; we shall be as gods!”

Arsinoe’s face grew mournful and calm. She looked at him compassionately, not thrusting him away:

“Poor soul! You are to be pitied as much as I! You do not know yourself what you seek. And what do your hopes rest on? Your gods are dead. From that infection, from that terrible taint of

rottenness, I am fleeing to the desert. Leave me. I cannot help you. Go."

His eyes flashed with anger and passion.

But she continued calmly, with still greater pity in her tone, so that his heart shuddered and grew cold as from a mortal insult:

"Why do you deceive yourself? Are you not as full of doubt, as much a castaway as I am?—as we all are? Think what your acts of mercy mean, and your refuges for strangers, your sermons to the Hellenic priests. All this is an imitation of the Galileans, all this is new,—unknown to the great men of old, the heroes of Hellas. Julian, Julian, are your gods the Olympians of old,—radiant and pitiless, terrible children of the azure, delighting in the blood of victims and the sufferings of mortals? Blood and the sorrows of men are the nectar and ambrosia of the ancient gods! And yours,—ensnared by the faith of the fishermen of Capernaum,—are weak, sickly, dying for love of men. Because pity for men is death for the gods!"

The storm was sinking into silence. Through the window, between the riven clouds, the bottomless abyss of the sky shone in a green, sad dawn, in which the star of Aphrodite was dying. The emperor felt weary and worn. His face was covered with mortal paleness. He made fearful efforts to appear calm, but every word Arsinoe spoke penetrated into the depths of his heart and hurt him.

"Yes," she continued inexorably, "you are sickly; you are too weak for your wisdom. That is your condemnation, belated Hellenes! You have strength neither for good nor for evil! You

are neither day nor night, neither life nor death. Your heart is here, and also there. You have set forth from one bank, but have not reached the other. You believe, and yet believe not, ever changing, ever hesitating, you will, and you cannot, because you know not how to will. They only are strong who, seeing one truth, are blind to the other. They will conquer you, who are double-minded, wise and weak!"

Julian raised his head with an effort, as if driving away an evil dream, and spoke:

"You are mistaken, Arsinoe! My soul knows no fear, my will is undaunted. The powers of Fate lead me. If I am destined to die before my time, I know that my death will be glorious in the eyes of the gods! Farewell. You see that I depart without anger, mournful and calm, because you are now for me as one dead."

CHAPTER IX.

THE GODS ARE NOT.

Above the gates of the chief building of the hospital of the Far-darting Apollo, for beggars, wanderers and waifs, a verse of Homer was inscribed in Greek letters on the marble pediment:

"Zeus is our father,
"We are all wanderers. Little I give, but with love it is given."

The Emperor entered the inner portico. A graceful Ionic colonnade surrounded the court. The hospital had once been a palæstra.

The evening came on, still and full of quiet joy. The sun was not yet set.

But from the portico of the hospital and from the inner chamber came a heavy and oppressive odor.

Here, in a single heap, lay children and old men, Christians and heathens, sick and healthy cripples, the maimed, the halt, the weak, covered with sores, swollen with dropsy, wasted by decline, with the stamp of all sins and all sorrows on their faces.

A half-naked old woman, with leather-colored skin, like the color of withered leaves, was scratching her back, covered with wounds, against the delicate marble of an Ionic pillar.

In the midst of a court rose a statue of the Pythian Apollo, with a bow in his hands, and a quiver on his back.

At the foot of the image sat a wrinkled monster, a mixture of childhood and old age. Clasp- ing his hands round his knees, and resting his chin on them, he swayed slowly from side to side, and chanted an endless melancholy dirge with an expression of dull listlessness:

“Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon us accursed!”

Finally the chief overseer, Marcus Ausonius, appeared, pale and trembling.

“Most wise and gracious Cæsar, will you not be pleased to enter my house? The air here is bad. And moreover, there are dangerous illnesses. The division of the lepers is not far off.”

“Never mind, I am not afraid. Are you the chief overseer?”

Ausonius bowed low, trying not to breathe, for fear of contagion.

“Are bread and wine distributed daily?”

“Everything that the gracious Augustus commanded.”

“What filth!”

“The Galileans are the cause of it. They count it a sin to wash. You cannot get them into a bath even by force.”

“Order the account-books to be brought,” interrupted Julian.

The overseer fell on his knees, and for a long time could not utter a word; finally, gulping and stammering, he said:

“Master, everything is as it should be; but we had an accident—the books were burned.”

The Emperor frowned.

At that moment, cries arose among the crowd of sick folk:

“A miracle! A miracle is accomplished! Look, a man smitten with the palsy is standing up!”

Julian turned, and saw how a man of great stature, his face demented with joy, and his hands stretched out towards him, was rising from his straw pallet with a light of childish faith in his eyes.

“I believe! I believe!” cried the paralytic, “that you are not a man but a god, descended upon the earth! Your face is like the face of a god! Approach me and heal me, Cæsar!”

“A miracle, a mighty miracle!” cried the sick in triumph. “Glory to the Emperor, glory to Apollo the Healer!”

“Come to me! Come to me!” cried others, “say only a word! And I shall be healed.”

The setting sun flashed through the open doorway, and lit up the face of the Far-darting Apollo

with a soft radiance. Julian looked up at the god, and, for the first time, everything in the hospital seemed a sacrilege to him. The eyes of the bright Olympian ought not to look on such ugliness. Julian wished to cleanse the ancient palaestra where mighty athletes had once exercised, of all this Galilean and heathen rabble, all this foul-smelling human ordure. Oh, if the antique god were to awaken, how his eyes would glitter, how his arrows would twang, driving away the halt and maimed, and clearing the air that they had polluted.

Julian hurriedly and silently left the hospital of Apollo, forgetting Ausonius and his account-books. The Emperor saw that the information he had received was true; that the chief overseer was a pilferer, but such weariness and disgust filled his heart that he had not the courage to look deeper into this knavery and verify it.

When he returned to the palace, it was late. He ordered no one to be admitted, and went to the terrace that looked over the Bosphorus. He had passed the whole day in wearisome petty affairs, in official details, in the verification of accounts. Many robberies had been discovered. The emperor saw that his best friends deceived him. All these philosophers, rhetoricians, poets and panegyrists, to whom he had entrusted the government of the world, cheated the treasury not less than the Christian eunuchs and bishops of Constantius' time. The houses of refuge, the retreats for philosophers modeled on the monasteries, the hospitals of Apollo and Aphrodite, were the excuse for clever pilfering, the more so that both Galileans and heathens thought them a ridiculous and sacrilegious caprice.

Julian felt that his body was being consumed by a great and fruitless fatigue. Extinguishing his lamp, he retired to his sleeping chamber.

"Let me think it over in silence and quiet," he said to himself, looking out at the evening sky.

But he did not feel inclined to think.

A bright star was shining in the darkening abyss of blue ether. Julian closed his eyelids, and a starbeam shone through them, penetrating to his heart like a cold caress.

He started up and shuddered, feeling that some one had entered the room. The moonlight fell between the columns. A tall old man, with hair as white as the moonlight, with deep, dark wrinkles, in which not suffering was expressed, but the pressure of unbending will and thought, stood at his couch. Julian rose, and whispered:

"Teacher,—is it you?"

"Yes, Julian; I have come to talk to you in private."

"I listen."

"My child, you will perish, because you are not true to yourself."

"Are you also against me, Maximus?"

"Remember, Julian, the golden apples of the Hesperides, eternally young. Mercy is the softness and sweetness of overripe, rotting fruit! You fast, you seek perfection, you are full of gloom, you are compassionate, you call yourself the enemy of the Galileans, but you yourself are a Galilean! Tell me, with what weapons do you hope to conquer the Crucified?"

"The beauty and gladness of the gods," answered Julian.

"Have you strength?"

"I have."

"To bear the whole truth?"

"Yes."

"Then know that they are not!"

Julian looked in terror at the teacher's calm, wise eyes.

"Of whom do you say that they are not?" he asked, trembling.

"I say that the Olympians are not. You are alone."

The Emperor made no answer. His head fell helplessly on his breast.

Then a great tenderness glowed in Maximus' eyes. He placed his hand on Julian's shoulder:

"Be comforted. Or have you not understood? I wished to try you. The gods are. See how weak you are. You cannot be alone. The gods are, and they love you. Only remember, you cannot unite the truth of the Titan with the truth of the Galilean, the Crucified. If you wish, I shall declare to you what He will be like, who is to come, the Unknown, the Reconciler of the two worlds?"

Julian was silent, still terror-struck and pale.

"He shall appear," continued Maximus, "like lightning from the clouds, bringing death and lighting all things. He shall be terrible, and yet without terror, higher than duty and law, higher than good and evil. In Him shall blend good and evil, humility and pride, as light and darkness are mingled in the morning twilight. And men shall bless Him, not only for His mercy, but also for His sternness. In it will dwell a superhuman strength and beauty!"

"Teacher!" exclaimed the Emperor, "I see it all

in your eyes. Tell me that you are the Unknown, and I will fall at your feet, and bless you."

"No, my son, it is not I. I am light of His light, spirit of His spirit. But I am not yet He. I am hope; I am the foreteller."

"Maximus, why do you hide yourself from the people? Appear to them, so that they may know you, as I do."

"My time has not yet come," answered the hierophant. "Many times have I appeared to the world, and shall appear yet many times. Men fear me, and call me now a great sage, now a deluder, now a wizard: Orpheus, Pythagoras, Maximus of Ephesus. But I am nameless. I pass through the crowd with sealed lips, and covered face. For what can I say to the crowd? They will not understand my first word. The secrets of my wisdom are more terrible for them than death. They are so far from me that they crucify me not, nor stone me, as they stone their prophets, they see me not. I live in caverns of the earth and talk with the dead, I go forth to the deserted mountain-peaks and talk with the stars, I listen to the growing of the grass, the moaning of the waves of the sea, the beating of the heart of the earth, to see whether my time be yet come. But my time is not yet, and again I depart like a shadow, with sealed lips and covered face."

"Do not depart, Teacher! do not leave me!"

"Fear not, Julian: my spirit will not leave you till the end. I love you, because you must perish for me, my beloved son, and there is no salvation for you! And before I enter the world, and reveal myself to the people, many mighty ones will perish, rejected, revolting against God, their great

hearts rent in twain, allured by my wisdom, apostates like you. Men shall curse you, but they will never forget you, because my seal is upon you, and you are mine, the child of my wisdom! Men of coming ages will recognize me in you, and my hope in your destruction, my might through your life, like the sun through a cloud!"

"If you delude me, Teacher, if your words are false, let me die even for that falsehood; for it is more beautiful than truth."

"Once I blessed you, for life and rule, Emperor Julian; now I bless you for death and immortality. Go, perish for the Unknown, for Him that is to come, for the Reconciler of the two truths!"

The old man laid his hands on the head of the Rejected, with a majestic smile, like a patriarch of old, like a father blessing his child, he kissed his brow and said:

"Once more I disappear in the caverns of the earth, and none shall know me. Let my spirit be upon thee!"

CHAPTER X.

IN THE BATHS.

In Antioch the Great, the capital of Syria, in a side way not far from the main street of Singon, were the Thermæ, the magnificent warm baths.

The baths were fashionable and dear, and many came thither to hear the latest news of the city.

Between the disrobing room and the cold room was a luxurious hall, paved with many-colored marbles and mosaics, called the sweating-chamber.

From the neighboring halls was heard the incessant falling of water into the echoing baths and huge basins, and the splashing and laughter of the bathers. Dusky slaves, naked bathing-men, ran hither and thither, bustling about and opening jars of perfumes. In Antioch people looked on the baths not as an amusement or a necessity, but as the chief pleasure of life, as a great and complicated art. It was not for nothing that the capital of Syria was famed throughout all the empire for the abundance and purity of its water. A bath or a pail full of it seemed empty, so transparent was the water of the Antiochian aqueduct.

Through a hot milk-white cloud of steam which rose from the spiracles in the sweating-chamber, were seen the red naked bodies of the chief citizens of Antioch. Some were reclining, others were sitting, and others were being rubbed with oil by the bath-attendants; they all talked with an air of great dignity, and sweated, giving themselves up with high seriousness to this fashionable and scientific art. The beauty of the ancient statues, the Antinoes and Adonises set in niches, accentuated only the more the ugliness of the living bodies.

A fat old man, of haughty and fantastic exterior came out of the hot bath. He was the merchant Busiris who held the trade of the Antiochian grain-market in his hands. A well-built young man politely supported him by the arm. Although both were naked, it was easy to see at a glance which was the master, and which the client.

"Turn on the heat!" said Busiris, in a hoarse voice of command. By the roughness of his tone alone it was easy to guess that the corn-merchant was a master of millions.

Two bronze taps were opened. The hot steam hissed out of the spiracle, and surrounded the old man with a thick cloud. Like a monstrous god in his apotheosis, he stood in a damp white cloud, snorting and grunting with satisfaction, and clapping his fat palms on his red, fleshy paunch, that resounded like a drum.

Close to him Marcus Ausonius the questorian official, and former overseer of the houses of refuge and hospitals of Apollo, was sitting on his haunches. Diminutive and lean, he looked like a pinched and frost-bitten chicken beside the fat mountainous merchant.

The sarcastic Junius Mauricus could not get the sweat to break out on his sinewy body, do what he could. He was as dry as a stick, bony, and bilious.

Gargilianus was lying, stretched out on the marble floor, fat, sinewless, soft as jelly, and huge as a boar's carcass. A Paphlagonian slave, panting from his exertions, was rubbing his puffy back with a wet cloth.

The poet Publius Porphyrius Optatianus, who had recently grown rich, looked sadly at his feet, deformed by gout.

"Do you know, my friends," asked the poet, "do you know the message of the white oxen to the Roman emperor?"

"No; tell it to us!"

"There is only one line: 'If you conquer the Persians, we are lost.'"

"What? is that all?"

"What more do you want?"

The white carcass of Gargilianus quivered with laughter:

"I swear by Pallas, it is short but true! If the

Emperor returns victorious from Persia, he will offer such a multitude of white oxen to the Olympian gods that those animals will become a greater rarity than the Egyptian Apis. Slave, my loins, my loins. Rub harder!"

And the carcass, turning slowly over, rolled to its other side with the sound of a heap of wet linen falling on the marble floor.

"Ha-ha-ha!" laughed Junius, with his thin, crackling, and bilious laugh. "They say that from India and from the island of Taprobane an innumerable quantity of rare white birds are being brought. And from somewhere in frozen Scythia are coming huge wild swans. And all for the gods. The Roman emperor is feeding up the Olympians. What can we do? The poor things have had time to get hungry since Constantine's time!"

"The gods are over-eating themselves," cried Gargilianus, "while we starve. For three whole days there has not been one Colchidian pheasant in the market, nor a single decent fish."

"The young puppy!" remarked the corn-merchant, abruptly.

Every one turned and became politely silent.

"The young puppy!" repeated Busiris, yet more majestically and insistently. "I say that if somebody squeezed your Roman emperor's lips or nose, the milk would flow out of it, as it does from the lips of a calf a fortnight old. He wanted to lower the price of corn, and forbade it to be sold at the price they settled themselves. He sent for 400,000 measures of Egyptian corn."

"Well? did he lower it?"

"Wait a moment, and you will hear. I spoke to

the merchants. They shut up the granaries. We thought it would be better to let the wheat rot, rather than give in. They ate up the Egyptian corn. We won't sell ours. He cooked the broth himself; let him eat it!"

Busiris slapped his belly majestically.

"That's enough steam—pour!" and a handsome young slave with long curls, who looked like Antinous, opened a fine vase of Arabian perfumes, and poured it over him. The cassia flowed in thick streams over his hot, red body, and Busiris wiped the big drops off with much satisfaction. Then he wiped his fat fingers on the slave's golden curls, as the latter bent down before him.

"Your grace," began his complaisant parasite and client, "your grace was good enough to remark that the Emperor Julian was nothing but a young calf. Not long ago, he published a pasquinade on the citizens of Antioch, with the title: 'The Beard-hater,' (Misopogon), in which he answers the abuse of the rabble even more abusively, declaring openly that: 'you laugh at my rudeness, at my beard,—laugh, as much as you please. I also will laugh at myself. I have no need of judges, spies, prisons, or executioners.' Well, I ask you, is that worthy of the Roman Emperor?"

"Cæsar Constantius of blessed memory," remarked Busiris in a tone of authority, "was not like Julian. You could see that he was an emperor by his dress, by his carriage. But this fellow, God forgive me, is a god-forsaken, short-legged ape, a bow-legged bear who wanders about the streets, unshaven, unbrushed, unwashed, with black marks on his fingers. Books, learning, philosophy,—wait a little, and we will settle with you

for all this freethinking. You cannot jest like that. The people must be held in; that is how it is! Once you let them go, you cannot get hold of them again."

Then Marcus Ausonius, who up to that time had kept silent, thoughtfully remarked:

"We could forgive him everything, but why does he take away the last pleasures that are left to us?—the circus and the gladiatorial shows? My friends, the sight of blood affords people the highest enjoyment, and always will. It is a sacred and mystic delight. Without blood there is no pleasure and no greatness upon earth; the smell of blood is the smell of Rome!"

The face of the last descendant of the Ausonii expressed a strange feeling of weakness. He looked at his auditors inquiringly, with naive, half childish, half senile eyes.

The overfed carcass of Gargilianus quivered on the floor; raising his head, he gazed at Ausonius.

"That was very well said: 'the smell of blood is the smell of Rome!' Go on, go on, Marcus, you are in vein to-day."

"I say what I feel, friends. Blood is so sweet to mankind that even the Christians could not do without it. They want to cleanse the world with blood. Julian is making a mistake. In taking away the circus from the people, he takes away the pleasure of blood. The rabble would forgive everything, but it will not forgive that!"

Marcus pronounced these last words in a majestic voice. Suddenly he passed his hand over his body, and his face beamed.

"You are sweating?" asked Gargilianus sympathetically.

"Yes," answered Ausonius, with a soft smile of ecstasy.—"Rub, rub, quick, rub my back, before it gets cold."

He lay down. The bath attendant began to rub his poor bloodless limbs, suffused with a bluish pallor, like a corpse.

From their niches of porphyry, the proud Hellenic sculptures of olden days looked contemptuously through the clouds of steam at all these shapeless bodies.

Meanwhile a crowd was collecting in the side-street, at the entrance of the *Thermæ*. By night Antioch was brilliant with fires, especially the main street of Singon, which cut straight through the city, for thirty-six stadia, with porticos, double colonnades and luxurious shops throughout its whole length.

In front of the bath staircase, illuminating the motley crowd, the street lamps flared, blown about by the wind. The pitchy smoke rolled in clouds from the iron lamp-holders.

Jests at the emperor were heard all through the crowd. Small boys dived hither and thither, shouting satirical anapæsts. An old charwoman caught one of the young satirists and pulling his shirt over his head, spanked his bare pink body with the sole of her sandal, exclaiming:

"Take that! take that! You will sing low songs, you little devil!"

The dusky-faced boy set up a piercing shriek.

Another, climbing on a companion's back, drew a caricature on the white wall with a piece of charcoal,—a long-bearded goat, in an imperial diadem. An older boy, probably a scholar, with a pretty, mischievous and knavish face, added an inscrip-

tion in large letters under the drawing: "This is the godless Julian."

Trying to make his voice loud and frightful, and hopping from one foot to the other like a bear, he half sang, half shouted:

The butcher comes,
The butcher comes,
With a big sharp knife,
And his beard hangs down,
With its black, black wool,
With its long, long wool,
Like a he-goat's beard—

An old man, in black clothes, probably a monk, stopped to listen to the boy. He shook his head, raising his eyes to heaven, and turned to a slave porter:

"It is said that out of the mouths of babes comes the truth. Was it not better for us all under C and Ch?"

"What do you mean by C and Ch?"

"Do you not understand? C is the first letter of Constantius, and Ch is the beginning of Christ. I mean that Constantius and Christ did the people of Antioch no harm, not like certain wandering philosophers."

"That's true, that's true. We got on better with C and Ch."

A drunken beggar had overheard the witticism, and started to spread it through the streets, with a look of pride.

"We got on well, under C and Ch!" he cried, "long live C and Ch."

That jest was destined to spread through all Antioch, and to delight the rabble with its senseless jingle.

Even greater gayety reigned in the taverns opposite the baths, which belonged to the Cappadocian Armenian, Syrophenix. He had long ago transferred his trade from the neighborhood of Cæsarea, near Macellum, to Antioch.

Wine was being carefully decanted from goat-skins and clay amphoras into pewter goblets. Here as everywhere else, people were talking about the emperor. A little Syrian soldier was especially eloquent. It was Strombicus, the same who had taken part in Julian's expedition against the northern barbarians of Gaul. Beside him was his faithful friend and companion, the gigantic Sarmatian Aragarius.

Strombicus felt like a fish in the water. He loved revolts and disturbances better than anything else in the world.

He was preparing to pronounce a speech.

An old woman, by profession a rag-picker, brought a piece of news:

"We are ruined, we are ruined to the last one. God has deserted us! Yesterday a neighbor told me something that I could not believe at first!"

"What was it, old woman? tell us."

"It was in Gaza, dears, it happened in the city of Gaza. The heathens attacked a nunnery. They dragged the nuns out, stripped them, fastened them to pillars in the market-place, cut their bodies up, sprinkled them with barley, and threw the pieces to the pigs."

"I saw," said a young spinner with a pale obstinate face; "I saw myself how a heathen ate the raw liver of a murdered deacon, in Heliopolis of Lebanon."

“What an abomination!” cried a coppersmith, frowning.

Many of them crossed themselves.

With Aragarius' help, Strombicus climbed upon the dirty, sticky table, with pools of wine on it, and striking a fine oratorical attitude, turned to the crowd. Aragarius nodding his head approvingly, pointed at him with pride.

“Citizens!” began Strombicus, “how long shall we delay? let us rise in revolt! Do you know that Julian has sworn that when he returns victorious from Persia, he will gather all the holy men together and throw them to the wild beasts in the arena? He will turn the basilicas into granaries, and the churches into stables!”

At that moment, a hunchbacked old man staggered into the tavern, pale with fear. He was a glass-maker, and the husband of the rag-picker. Stopping in despair he struck himself on the thighs with both hands, attracting the eyes of all, and stammered:

“Have you heard? Listen to what has happened! Two hundred dead bodies in the wells and aqueducts!”

“When? Where? what dead bodies?”

“Hush, hush,” whispered the glass-blower mysteriously: “they say that the Apostate has been casting omens from the entrails of living men,—all about the war with the Persians and his victory over the Christians!”

And suffocating with satisfaction, he went on:

“They found boxes of bones in the vaults under the palace in Antioch. Human bones! And in the city of Carpol, not far from Edessa, the Christians found the body of a pregnant woman, in an

underground temple. Julian had cut her open, to cast omens, all about the accursed war with the Persians."

"Ho, Gluturinus! is it true that they found human bones in the cloacæ? You ought to know," said a shoemaker, a great sceptic.

Gluturinus, a cleaner of sewers, was standing in the doorway, not daring to enter, because of his unsavory odor. When he was questioned, he began to smile timidly, and to blink his swollen lids:

"No, worthy sir!" he answered modestly, "they found a few babies. And they also found the skeletons of asses and camels. But I don't think they found any human bones."

When Strombicus began to speak again, the sewer-cleaner watched the orator with awe, and scratching his bare foot against the door-post, listened with inexpressible delight.

"Men and brothers!" exclaimed the orator with unwonted heat, "let us die like ancient Romans!"

"What are you bursting your throat about?" interrupted the shoemaker angrily, "when it comes to action, you will be the first to run and leave the rest of us to die."

"Cowards, you are cowards!" a rouged and powdered woman broke into the dispute; she wore a many-colored but poor garment, and was a woman of the streets whom her admirers simply called the Witch.

"Do you know," she continued angrily, "what the holy martyrs, Theodulus, Tatianus and Macedonius said to the executioners?"

"We don't know. Tell us, Witch!"

"I heard them myself. In Phrygian Myrrha, three youths, Macedonius, Theodulus and Tatia-

nus, went to a heathen temple at night and destroyed the idol, for the glory of God. The proconsul Amachius seized the holy men, and putting them on an iron frying pan, ordered a fire to be lit. And they said themselves: Amachius, if you wish to taste well-roasted flesh, turn us over on the other side, so that we may not be underdone! And all three of them laughed and spat in the proconsul's face. And many saw how an angel flew down from heaven with three crowns. I do not think you would answer so! You can only tremble for your own skins! It is sad to look at you!"

The Witch turned aside, with contempt.

Cries floated up from the street.

"Can they be breaking down the idols?" asked the glass-maker delightedly.

"Forward! citizens, follow me!" said Strombicus waving his arms, and he tried to leap up from the table, but slipped and would have rolled on the floor if the faithful Aragarius had not caught him in a tender embrace.

All rushed to the doors. From the chief street of Singon a vast crowd was moving forward, and choking the narrow by-street; it halted before the baths.

"The aged Pamba, the aged Pamba!" the people in the crowd cried to each other, joyfully. "He has come from the desert to heal the people; to overthrow the mighty, and save the weak!"

CHAPTER XI.

SAINT AND CAESAR.

The old man had a coarse face with high cheek-bones. He wore his hair long. Instead of a tunic, he wore a patched linen sack, instead of a cloak, a dusty sheep-skin, with a hood for his head. In walking, he leant on a long stick with a sharp iron point. For twenty years, Pamba had not washed because he considered every care for the body a sin and believed that there was a special demon of physical cleanness. In the frightful wilderness of Chalcedonian Berea, to the east of Antioch, where the snakes and scorpions nest at the bottom of dried up wells, he had lived in a long dry reservoir, called in Syrian "kubba;" and feeding on five stalks of a sweet farinaceous reed a day, he had almost died of exhaustion. His disciples began to lower food to him on a string. For seven years he lived each day on a half sextarius of lentils soaked in water. His eye-sight grew weak. His skin was covered with itch and scabs. Then he added a little oil to his food. But he began to accuse himself of sensuality.

Pamba heard from his disciples that the fierce Antichrist Julian was persecuting Christ's flock, and leaving the desert, he came to Antioch to confirm those who were wavering in the faith.

"Listen, listen! The saint is going to speak!"

Pamba ascended the steps in front of the baths, and took his stand on the marble slab at the foot of the lamp.

His eyes gleamed with a fierce fire. He waved his hand, pointing to the palaces, heathen temples, baths, shops, courts and monuments of Antioch.

“Not one stone will be left standing upon another. All shall pass away; all shall be destroyed. Fire shall flash forth, and consume the earth. The heavens shall be rent apart, like a burned scroll. It is the dread judgment of Christ! Whither shall I turn my eyes? In what shall I take delight? Shall it not be to behold the kings of the earth, cast into outer darkness? Shall it not be to see how Aphrodite and her little son Eros tremble in nakedness before the Crucified? To see how Zeus with his bolts put out and all the Olympians flee before the thunders of the Most High? Triumph, ye martyrs! Rejoice, ye who are persecuted! Where are your judges, the Roman governors and consuls? They are caught in a flame hotter than that which burned the Christians. The philosophers, rejoicing in their vain wisdom, blush with shame before their disciples, blazing in hell, and neither the syllogisms of Aristotle nor the demonstrations of Plato avail them. The tragic actors cry out, as they never cried in the tragedies of Sophocles and Æschylus. The rope-dancers leap in the fire of hell, with a zeal not seen before. Then we, the people, coarse and unlearned, shall tremble with joy, and shall say to the proud, the wise, and the mighty: ‘Look, oh scoffer! behold the Crucified, the Son of the Carpenter; behold the King of the Jews, clothed in purple, and crowned with thorns! Samaritans, behold the Sabbath-breaker, the possessed of devils! This is He whom ye bound in the Pretorium, in whose face ye spat, to whom ye gave vinegar and gall to drink! And

we shall hear in answer a weeping and gnashing of teeth, and we shall laugh, and delight our hearts with gladness. Even so, Come Lord Jesus!"

Gluturinus the sewer-cleaner fell on his knees, and blinking his swollen lids, stretched out his hands as if he saw the coming Christ. The copper-smith, clenching his fists, grew rigid like a bull preparing to make an angry charge. The pale, lank weaver, trembling in all his limbs, smiled senselessly and murmured: "Lord, let me suffer!"

On the coarse faces of the vagabonds and toilers was a wild expression of triumph, the triumph of the weak over the strong, the slaves over their masters. The harlot Witch gnashed her teeth, with a noiseless laugh, and an insatiate thirst of revenge gleamed in her drunken and threatening eyes. Suddenly the rattle of weapons, and the regular tramp of horses was heard.

Round the corner appeared the Roman legionaries, the night-watch. In front of them was the prefect of the East, Sallustius Secundus. He had the head of a Roman official, a curved aquiline nose, a broad, bare head, and wise, calm, kind eyes. A simple senatorial lateclave covered him. In his whole bearing there was nothing bombastic, but the self-confident dignity and nobility of a Roman patrician.

From behind the dome of the Pantheon erected by Antiochus Seleucus, the huge, dull red disk of the moon rose slowly, and threatening gleams shimmered on the bronze shields of the Romans, on their breast-plates and helmets.

"Disperse, citizens," Sallustius turned to the crowd; "it is forbidden by the blessed Augustus to

hold assemblies by night in the streets of Antioch."

The mob muttered and wavered. The street boys began to whistle. An impudent, shrill boyish voice sang:

"Sorrow to the poor fowls,
Sorrow to the oxen white,
For the emperor of Rome
Gives them to the gods of night!"

The sharp threatening ring of steel was heard: it was the Roman legionaries, drawing their swords from their scabbards, ready to attack the crowd.

Old Pamba struck the iron point of his staff on the marble slab, and cried:

"Hail, brave host of Satan, hail, wise Roman leader. You have recalled the days of old, when you burnt us, and we prayed God for you. Well, do your will!"

The legionaries raised their swords. The prefect stopped them with a movement of his hand.

He saw that the crowd was in his power.

"What do you threaten us with, fools?" continued Pamba, turning to Sallustius; "what can you do? One hot night, and two or three torches will suffice for our revenge. You fear the Alemans and Persians—we are more terrible than Persian or Aleman! We are everywhere. We are among you, innumerable; impalpable! We have no limits, no fatherland; we recognize one kingdom, the Kingdom of Heaven! We are but of yesterday, yet we fill the world: your cities, fortresses, islands, municipalities, councils, camps, tribes, decuries, palaces, senates, forums,—only your temples we leave to you. Oh, how we could overwhelm you, were it not for our humility, our brotherly love, did we

not desire rather to be slain than to slay. We need neither fire nor sword. We are so many that we need only depart together, and you perish. Your cities will be deserted, you will be stricken with terror at your loneliness,—the silence of a world. All life shall cease, stricken by death. Remember: the Roman Empire endures only through the mercy of the Christians!”

All eyes were turned towards Pamba. No one noticed that a man in the coarse gown of a wandering philosopher, with a yellow, lean face, with disheveled hair and a long black beard, surrounded by several companions, had quickly passed among the Roman legionaries who respectfully made way for him. He bent towards the prefect Sallustius, and whispered to him:

“Why are you delaying?”

“If we wait,” answered Sallustius, “they will disperse of themselves. The Galileans have too many martyrs as it is, for us to make any new ones. They fly to death like bees to honey.”

The man in the philosopher’s gown, stepping forward, cried in a loud, clear voice, like that of a general, used to command:

“Disperse the crowd! Seize the rioters!”

All turned at once. A cry of fear arose:

“It is Augustus, Augustus Julian!”

The soldiers charged with drawn swords. They knocked down the old rag-picker. She struggled under the feet of the legionaries, and shrieked. Several ran. Little Strombicus was the first to disappear. The crowd got locked together. Stones began to fly. The copper-smith, protecting Pamba, threw stones at the legionaries, but hit the Witch.

She cried out shrilly, and fell, covered with blood, thinking that she was dying a martyr.

A soldier seized Gluturinus. But the sewer-cleaner surrendered with such readiness, (the position of a martyr, honored by all, seemed to him paradise, in comparison with his daily life of half-starvation)—and his garments had such a foul odor, that the legionary instantly let his prisoner go again.

In the midst of the crowd, a pedlar had got unintentionally entangled; he was driving an ass, laden with fresh cabbage. He had listened to the saint all the time, open-mouthed. Noticing his danger, he wished to run away, but the ass was obstinate. In vain the driver struck it over the back with his stick, and clicked his tongue. Sticking its front feet firmly against the ground, laying back its ears, and lifting its tail, the beast began to bray with a deafening roar.

And for a long time the voice of the ass echoed above the crowd, victorious and ridiculous, smothering the groans of the dying, the shouting of the soldiers, and the prayers of the Galileans.

The physician Oribazius, who was among Julian's companions, went up to the emperor:

"Julian, what are you doing? Is this worthy of your wisdom?"

Augustus looked at him, frowning. Oribazius grew confused, and did not finish his sentence.

Julian had not only altered, but had grown old, in the last few months: on his haggard face was the pitiful, terrible expression which comes on people who are attacked by a slow, incurable illness, or are possessed by a dominating idea, which is nigh to madness. With his strong hands, he

was tearing to pieces a papyrus scroll, which had accidentally fallen into his hands, without noticing what he was doing.

Finally the Emperor spoke, in a low, restrained whisper, looking straight into the eyes of Oribasius:

“Cease to importune me, you and others like you, with fools’ counsels. I know what I am doing. With rascals who do not believe in the gods, you cannot speak as if they were human beings; you must trample them under foot like wild beasts. And after all, what does it matter if a dozen Galileans are slain by the hand of one Helene?”

Oribasius involuntarily thought: “How like he is now to his cousin Constantius, in a moment of anger.”

Julian cried out to the crowd, in a voice which seemed even to himself strange and unnatural:

“I am still Emperor, by the grace of the gods; hear me then, Galileans! You may laugh at my beard and my dress, but not at the laws of Rome. Understand, I punish you, not for your faith but for rioting. Put the rogue in chains!”

With trembling hand he pointed to Pamba. Two fair-haired, blue-eyed Batavians with good-natured faces seized the old man.

“You lie, blasphemer!” cried the triumphant Pamba, “you are punishing us for our faith! Why do you not spare me, as a while ago you spared Maris, the blind man of Chalcedon? Why do you not hide your efforts, as is your wont, by caresses, and your fish-hook by the bait? Where is your philosophy? Or are the times changed? Have you



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The Sacred Festival. (P. 338.)



gone far? Brothers, let us fear, not the Roman Cæsar, but the living God!"

No one thought any longer of running away. The victims infected each other with their fearlessness. The Batavians and Kelts were terrified at their readiness to die, with laughing, gay, senseless faces. Even children threw themselves before the blows of sword and spear. Julian wished to stop the slaughter, but it was too late. The bees were flying to the honey. He could only exclaim with despair and contempt:

"Wretches, if you are so weary of life, is it so hard to find a rope, or a precipice?"

And Pamba, bound, and lifted up, cried out more triumphantly:

"Slay us, slay us, Romans,—and we shall multiply! Chains are our liberty,—weakness is our strength, our victory is death!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE SHRINE OF APOLLO.

Down the stream of the Orontes, forty stadia from Antioch, was the famous grove of Daphne, consecrated to Apollo.

Once the virgin nymph, so the poets tell, fled from the embraces of Apollo. She stopped at the bank of the Orontes, faint and overtaken by the god. She turned in prayer to her mother Latona, who, to free her from the persecutions of the Sun-god, turned her into a laurel. From that time forth Apollo loved Daphne the laurel more than

all trees, and her proud greenery, that the sun's rays cannot penetrate, but ever caress, he binds upon his lyre, and as a wreath upon his curls. Phœbus visits the spot where Daphne was transformed, the thick laurel grove in the valley of the Orontes, and mourns for her, and breathes the scent of the thick leaves, warmed but not vanquished by the sun, mysterious and full of gloom even at the heat of noonday. Here men built him a temple, and yearly celebrate a sacred festival in honor of the deity of the sun.

Julian left Antioch early in the morning, intentionally leaving his purpose unknown. He wished to learn whether the men of Antioch remembered the sacred festival of Apollo. On the way, he thought continually of the celebration, expecting to see crowds of worshippers, choirs in honor of Apollo, libations, the smoke of incense, youths and maidens ascending the steps of the temple in white garments, the symbol of their stainless youth.

The way was rough. From the stony plain of Chalibonian Berea, a hot wind blew in gusts. The air was full of the acrid vapor of a forest fire, a bluish mist drifting down from the dreamy chasms of the Casian hills. The dust stung his eyes and gritted between his teeth. Through the smoky hot vapor, the sunlight seemed red and sickly.

But as soon as the emperor entered the consecrated grove of Apollo, a sweet-scented freshness surrounded him. It was hard to believe that this paradise was only a few steps from the burning road. The grove was eighty stadia round. Eternal twilight reigned here under the impenetra-

ble shade of gigantic laurels, that had grown there for many centuries.

The emperor was astonished at the silence in the grove: there were neither worshippers, nor incense, nor offerings,—no preparations whatever for the Panegyrian festival. He thought the people must be nearer the temple, and went on.

At every step, the grove seemed more deserted. A strange silence reigned, unbroken by a single sound, as in deserted cemeteries. Even the birds did not sing; they rarely flew thither. The shadow of the laurels was too dense for them. A cicada began to shrill in the grass, but immediately ceased as if frightened at its own voice. Only in a narrow strip of sunlight, the noonday insects hummed faintly and sleepily, not daring to fly beyond the boundary of the light into the surrounding darkness.

Julian entered a wider pathway between two velvety gigantic walls of everlasting cypresses, that cast a shade black as coal, almost as dark as night. From them came a breath of sweet and sombre perfume.

In one part of a crevice of rock overgrown with moss, white water-drops were gathering and falling one after another, but the thick moss deadened their fall. The drops fell silent, like the tears of an unspoken love.

There were whole meadows of wild narcissus, marguerites and lilies; here were many butterflies, not colored, but black. A ray of the midday sun, that struggled through the laurels and cypresses, grew pale as a moon-beam, almost funereal and soft as if it had come through black gauze, or the smoke of a funeral torch.

It seemed that Phœbus had grown pale for ever, from the incurable coldness of Daphne, who had remained gloomy and impenetrable, under the burning kisses of the god, and still held the chilly shadows of night under the boughs of the laurels. And everywhere throughout the grove reigned loneliness and silence, the sweet sadness of the love-sick god.

Already the majestic steps, pedestals and columns of the temple of Daphne, built in the days of the Diadochians, shone blinding in their whiteness among the cypresses, and Julian had not met a single worshipper.

At last he saw a ten-year-old boy, following a path thickly studded with hyacinths. He was a weak, even sickly child. His black eyes stood out strangely, shining brightly on a pale little face of pure Hellenic beauty. His golden locks fell in soft ringlets on his neck, and the veins on his temples were blue, clear as the veins of too transparent leaves that have grown in the darkness.

"Do you know, child, where are the people and the priests?" asked Julian.

The boy answered nothing, as if he had not heard the question.

"Listen, boy, can you lead me to the chief priest of Apollo?"

He gently shook his head, and smiled.

"What is the matter with you? Why do you not answer?"

Then the beautiful child pointed to his lips, and then to both ears, and once more shook his head, this time without smiling.

"Julian thought: 'He must have been dumb from his birth.'"

The boy, laying his fingers on his pale red lips, looked at the emperor under his brows.

"An evil augury!" muttered Julian, and he felt almost terrified, in the silence, loneliness and twilight of Apollo's grove, with the deaf and dumb child who gazed steadily and enigmatically into his eyes, beautiful as a god. At last he pointed to an old man coming from among the trees, in a stained and tattered garment, and whom Julian immediately recognized as the priest. The old fellow, bent, decrepit, tottering slightly like a man who has drunk too much, laughed, and muttered something as he went. He had a red nose, and a round, bald pate, fringed with thin white locks like white sheeps' wool, so light and downy that it did not fall, but surrounded the bald place on his head, almost standing up. In his bleared, moist eyes, the old drunkard had a light of almost childish good-nature. He was carrying a wicker basket.

"The priest of Apollo?" asked Julian.

"That is who I am; my name is Gorgias. And what do you want, here, good man?"

"Can you show me where the high priest of the temple and the worshippers are?"

Gorgias at first made no reply, but set his wicker basket on the ground. Then he began to rub his bare poll in a concerned way with his palm, then set both hands upon his hips, and leaning his head on one side, winked one eye, not without a certain air of roguishness:

"And why should I myself not be the high priest of Apollo?" he said, after an interval, "and what worshippers do you speak of, my son? May the Olympians have mercy on you!"

He smelt strongly of wine. Julian, to whom

the high priest seemed indecent, was preparing to give him a stern rebuke.

“Old man, you must be drunk.”

Gorgias was quite unabashed, and only rubbed his bare crown the harder, and winked still more knowingly.

“Drunk, well,—not exactly drunk. But I did take four or five cups for the Panegyria. And even so, you drink in sorrow, not in joy. So it is, my son,—and may the Olympians bless you. And who may you be yourself? Judging from your dress, you are a wandering philosopher,—or a school-teacher, from Antioch?”

The Emperor smiled and shook his head. He wished to question the priest further.

“You have guessed. I am a teacher.”

“A Christian?”

“No, a Hellene.”

“Oh, that is it, is it? A lot of those godless folk come here.”

“Still you have not answered me, old man; where are the people? Have they brought many offerings from Antioch? Are the choirs ready?”

“Offerings? What next?” laughed the old man; and wagged his head so vigorously that he almost fell,—“why friend, we have not had any this long time,—since Constantine’s days!”

Gorgias waved his hand with a gesture of despair, and cried:

“It is all over! Men have forgotten the gods. As for offerings, we have never even an offering of flour to bake the god a cake, or a grain of incense, or a drop of oil for his lamp. Lie down and die—that is all that is left, my son, and may the Olympians bless you! The monks have taken every-

thing away. And they fight into the bargain. Our little song is sung. The times are evil. And you say: Do not drink! You must drink to drown your sorrow. If I did not drink, I would have hung myself long ago."

"No one has come from Antioch, for so great a festival?" asked Julian.

"No one but yourself, my son. I am the priest; you are the people. We'll offer a sacrifice together."

"You just said that not a single offering had been brought to you."

Gorgias caressed his bald head with satisfaction.

"Other folk brought nothing: I have one of my own. I looked to it myself. Euphorion and I went hungry for three days," he went on, pointing to the deaf and dumb boy, "to save up for an offering. Look!"

He raised the wicker lid of the basket. A goose lifted its head and hissed, trying to get free.

"Ha-ha-ha! Isn't that an offering?" asked the old man, proudly, "though the goose is no longer young nor very fat, still it is a good and holy bird. Apollo ought to be glad of it, as times go. The steam of it will be good. The gods are fond of geese," he added, winking his eye, with a sly and piercing expression.

"Have you lived long in this temple?" asked Julian.

"A long time, now. Forty years,—may be more."

"Is this your son?" said the emperor, pointing to Euphorion, who had been watching all the time with a fixed and thoughtful gaze, as if trying to guess what they were saying.

"No, he is not my son. I have neither friends

nor kindred. Euphorion assists me in the services."

"Who are his parents?"

"His father I do not know, and I doubt if any one knows. But his mother was the great Sibyl, Diotime, who lived many years in this temple. She never spoke with men nor raised her veil before them, and was perfect as a vestal. When her child was born, we wondered and did not know what to think. But a wise centenarian priest, a hierophant, told us."

And with a mysterious face, Gorgias, shading his mouth with his palm, whispered in Julian's ear, as if the boy might overhear:

"The hierophant said that the child was not the son of a mortal, but of a god who had secretly come by night to the Sibyl's embraces, when she was asleep within the temple. You see how beautiful he is?"

"A deaf and dumb boy,—the son of a god?" interrupted the emperor, astonished.

"What then? If in such times as ours," went on the priest, "the son of a god and a prophetess was not deaf and dumb, he would die of shame. Look how thin and pale he is, even as it is!"

"Who knows?" muttered Julian, with a mournful smile. "May be you are right, old man,—it is better for a prophet to be dumb in our days."

Suddenly the boy came up to Julian, quickly seized him by the hand and kissed it, looking into his eyes with a strange, deep gaze.

Julian started.

"My son," said the old fellow, with a triumphant and joyful smile. "May the Olympians bless you! You must be a good man. The boy never

caresses the evil or impure. He runs away from the monks, as from the plague. It seems to me that he sees and hears more than we do, only he cannot tell about it. I have sometimes found him alone in the temple: he would sit whole hours before the image of Apollo and watch it, and smile as if he was talking with the god."

Euphorion's face clouded over, and he went softly away from them.

Gorgias regretfully struck himself on the bald crown, shook himself, and said:

"But why do I stay here gossiping with you? The sun is high. It is time to offer the sacrifice. Come."

"Wait, old man," said the emperor; "I wished to ask you something more: have you heard that the Emperor Julian has resolved to set up the worship of the old gods again?"

"How should I not hear it?" the priest shook his head incredulously, and waved his hand. "What can he do, poor fellow? Nothing will come of it. It is useless. I tell you it is all over!"

"You believe in the gods!" said Julian. "Can the Olympians desert mankind for ever?"

The old man sighed deeply, and bent his head:

"My son, you are young," he said, at last,—"*although the early grey is touching your locks and there are wrinkles on your brow. But in the days when my white hair was black and the girls looked at me, I remember we were once sailing in a ship not far from Thessalonica, and we saw Mount Olympus from the sea. Its base and middle were wrapped in a light blue mist, but the snowy summits soared in the air, and gleamed, a glory in the sky above the sea, and unapproachable in their*

golden light. And I thought to myself: That is where the gods live! And my heart was full of awe. But on the same boat there was an old man, an evil jester who called himself an Epicurean. He pointed to Mount Olympus and said: 'My friends, many years have passed since travelers reached the summit of Olympus. They found that it was an ordinary mountain, just like any other. There was nothing there but snow, ice, and stones.' Thus he spoke, and his words sank deep into my heart, and I have remembered them, all my life."

The emperor smiled.

"Old man, your faith is childish. If there are no gods on Olympus, why should they not be still higher, in the realm of eternal Ideas, in the kingdom of spiritual light?"

Gorgias' head sank still lower, and he scratched his poll despondently.

"That is so. But all the same, it is all over. Olympus is empty!"

Julian looked at him silent and wondering.

"You see," continued Gorgias, "the earth now gives birth to people as weak as they are cruel and hard-hearted. The gods can only mock them or grow wroth at them. It is not worth while to destroy them. They will perish themselves, of sickness and corruption and weariness. The gods have grown tired, and have departed."

"And you think, Gorgias, that the human race must perish?"

The priest shook his head.

"Oh—ho—ho, my son! may the Olympians save you! All is going to wrack and ruin. The earth is growing old. The rivers flow slower. An old boatman told me, not long ago, that when you are

sailing away from Sicily, you cannot see Etna at so great a distance as of old. The air has grown thicker and darker. The sun has grown dim. The end of the world is at hand."

"Tell me, Gorgias,—in your memory, were there ever better times?"

The old man brightened up, and his eyes gleamed with the fire of recollection:

"When I came here, in the first years of Constantine's reign," he answered joyfully, "there were still great Panegyria every year in Apollo's honor. How many lovers, youths and maidens, used to gather in the sacred grove! And how the moon shone, and how the cypresses smelt, and how the nightingales sang! And when their songs died away, the air trembled with the nightly kisses and the sighs of the lovers, like the whisper of unseen wings. Those were the times!"

Then Gorgias ceased, and fell into melancholy thought.

At that same moment, the sad sound of church singing was clearly borne to them from beyond the trees.

"What is that?" asked Julian.

"The monks," answered the priest, "every day they pray over the bones of a dead Galilean."

"What?—a dead Galilean here, in the sacred grove of Apollo?"

"Yes. They call him the martyr Babyllas. Ten years ago, the Emperor Julian's brother, Cæsar Gallus brought the dead bones of Babyllas from Antioch to Daphne's grove, and built a splendid sarcophagus over them. Since then, the prophecies have ceased. The temple is polluted and the god has departed."

"What sacrilege!" cried the emperor, in anger.

"It was that same year," continued the old man, "that the virgin Sibyl Diotime gave birth to a deaf and dumb son, which was an augury of ill. The waters of the Castalian spring, choked by a stone, grew scant, and lost their prophetic power. Only one of the sacred streams has not dried up; it is called 'the Tears of the Sun;' you see it there, where my boy is now sitting. Drop by drop, it oozes forth from the mossy stone. They say that Helios is weeping for the nymph who was turned into a laurel. Euphorion sits whole days there."

Julian looked up. The boy was sitting motionless in front of the mossy stone, and stretching out his palm, was collecting the falling drops. A sunbeam pierced through the laurels, and the slow tears sparkled in it, silent and unassuaged. The shadows were strangely tremulous, and Julian fancied for a moment that he saw two transparent wings flutter behind the back of the child, beautiful as a child of the gods. He was so pale, so fragile, so lovely, that the emperor involuntarily thought: 'It is Eros himself, the little old god of love, sick and dying in our age of Galilean sadness. He is gathering the last tears of love, the tears of the god for Daphne, for vanished beauty.'

The deaf mute sat motionless, and a great black butterfly, velvety and funereal, alighted on his head. He did not notice it, and did not move. Like an ill-omened shade, it hovered over his bent head. And the golden Tears of the Sun, one after the other, fell slowly into Euphorion's pink hand, and round him spread the sounds of the church singing, funereal and hopeless, rising ever louder and louder.

Suddenly the voices of disputants were heard from behind the cypress-trees.

"Augustus is here."

"Why should he come alone to Daphne?"

"Because this is the day of the great Panegyria of Apollo. Look, he is there! Julian we have been seeking you since early morning!"

The speakers were the Greek sophists, learned men, and rhetoricians, the emperor's wonted companions. Here were the ascetic, the neo-Pythagorean Priscus from Epirus, and the bilious sceptic Junius Mauricus, and the wise Sallustius Secundus, and the renowned Antiochian orator Libanius, vainest of men.

Augustus paid no attention to them, and did not even greet them.

"What is the matter with him?" muttered Junius Mauricus, in Priscus' ear.

"He is probably dissatisfied to find that no preparations were made for the festival. We have been careless, indeed! not a single sacrifice."

Julian turned to Hecebolus the former Christian orator, and now high priest of Astarte:

"Go to the chapel over there, and announce to them my command that the Galileans who are celebrating a service over the relics should come here."

Hecebolus went to the chapel hidden among the trees, whence came the sounds of singing.

Gorgias, holding the basket with the goose in his right hand stood motionless with staring eyes. Sometimes, with desperate energy, he took to scratching his pate. He thought he had drunk too much wine, and that he was dreaming it all. A cold sweat gathered on the poor old man's brow,

when he remembered what he had said to that supposed school-teacher, about Julian Augustus, and the gods. His knees knocked together in terror. He knelt before Julian:

“Oh Cæsar, be gracious! Forget my rash words. I did not know.”

One of the officious philosophers wished to drive the old man away:

“Where are you going? get away, old fool!”

Julian stopped him:

“Do not insult the priest. Rise, Gorgias! Here is my hand. Do not fear. While I live, no one shall harm you or your boy. We have both come to the Panegyria; we both love the old gods,—let us be friends, and meet the festival of the Sun with glad hearts.”

The church singing ceased. In the cypress alley appeared the pale frightened monks, deacons, and the priest himself, who had not had time to remove his stole. Hecebolus led them. The presbyter, a fat man with a shining, bronze-red face, puffed, blew, and wiped the sweat from his brow. Stopping before Augustus, he bowed low, bringing his hand to the earth, and spoke in a thick, pleasant bass which the worshippers were particularly fond of:

“May the most humane Augustus have mercy on his unworthy slaves.”

He bowed still lower, and when he rose again, muttering, two young acolytes, who greatly resembled each other, lank, with faces yellow as wax, supported him on either side, holding his hands. One of them had forgotten to leave his censer, and a fine thread of smoke rose from the embers. Eu-

phorion, seeing the monks from afar, immediately ran away. Julian spoke:

“Galileans! Before to-morrow night, I command you to clear the grove of Apollo of this dead man’s bones. We do not wish to employ force against you, but if our will is not executed, we shall take measures ourselves to free Helios from the sacrilegious presence of these Galilean ashes. I shall send my soldiers here, to dig up the bones, and burn them, and cast the ashes to the winds. Such is our will, citizens!”

The presbyter coughed gently, covering his mouth with his palm, and finally murmured in a most humble voice:

“Most gracious Cæsar, this is of course most grievous for us, because for a long time already have these relics rested in a sanctified place, according to the will of the Cæsar Gallus. But the matter is beyond our power; we shall lay it before the bishop.”

A noise was heard in the crowd. A boy, hiding behind a laurel-bush was singing:

The butcher comes,
With a big, sharp knife,
And his beard hangs down,
With its black, black wool,
With its long, long wool,
Like a he-goat’s beard,—
Make a rope of it—

But some one gave the boy such a slap, that he ran away howling.

The presbyter, thinking that for decency’s sake, he ought to make a stand for the relics, again began, humbly coughing in his hand:

“If it pleases thy wisdom to decree this, because of the idol—”

He quickly corrected himself:

“—That is, the Hellenic god, Helios—”

The emperor's eyes flashed with anger.

“The idol!” he interrupted the priest, “the idol, —that was your word. What fools do you take us to be, if you think we deify the substance of the images, the bronze, or stone, or wood? All your preachers try to make themselves and others and even us believe that! But it is a lie! We honor not the dead stone, bronze, or wood, but the soul, the living soul of beauty in our images, symbols of the highest human joy. It is not we who are idolaters, but you, who fight like wild beasts for ‘homo-ousios,’ and ‘homoi-ousios,’ for a single iota, you who kiss the rotten bones of criminals, punished for breaking the Roman laws, you who called the fratricide Constantius ‘his Eternity,’ and ‘his Holiness.’ We deify a splendid sculpture of Phidias which breathes Olympian beauty and wisdom; is not this wiser than to bow down before two wooden beams, fastened cross-wise,—a base instrument of punishment? Ought I to blush for you, or to pity you, or to hate you? It is the crown of folly and dishonor for our land that the descendants of the Hellenes, who have read Homer and Plato, should betake themselves—whither? oh, baseness, to an outcast tribe almost destroyed by Vespasian and Titus, to deify—a dead Jew. And yet you dare to accuse us of idolatry!”

The presbyter, unabashed, stroking his soft silvery-black beard with his five fingers, looked askance at Julian with a bored and weary look, and wiped big drops of sweat from his shining forehead.



Julian 8.

The Crowd Filled the Street. (P. 434.)

Then the emperor said to the philosopher Priscus:

“My friend, you know the old rites of the Hellenes. Accomplish the Delian mystery necessary to purify Apollo’s temple from the sacrilegious presence of these dead bones. The god will return to his dwelling-place, the old oracles will be restored as soon as the stone is removed from the Castalian spring.”

The presbyter closed the meeting with a profound bow, with the humility in which invincible obstinacy is felt.

“Be it according to thy will, most potent Augustus! We are children. Thou art our father. In the Scripture, it is said: ‘Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power, but of God.’”

“Oh hypocrites!” exclaimed the emperor, “I know, I know your humility and obedience. Rise up against me, and fight like men! Your humility is your serpent’s sting, slaves! With it you poison those whom you bow down before. Your own Teacher well said of you: ‘Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones and of all uncleanness!’ In truth ye have filled the world with dead men’s bones, and uncleanness. You fall down before dead bones, and expect to be saved by them. Like sepulchral worms, you feed on decay. Is that what Jesus taught? Did He command you to hate your brothers, whom you call heretics, because they do not believe as you believe? The words of the Galilean are applied to you out of my mouth: ‘Woe unto you Scribes and

Pharisees, hypocrites! oh generation of vipers, how will ye flee from the wrath to come?"

He turned to go away, when suddenly an old man and an old woman came forth from the crowd and threw themselves at the emperor's feet. Both of them in poor, tattered garments, but well-favored and greatly resembling each other, with birdlike faces and kindly wrinkles around their bleared eyes, they recalled Philemon and Baucis.

"Protect us, just Cæsar!" begged the old man; "we have a little house in the suburb of Antioch, at the foot of Staurinus. We have lived in it twenty years. We revered God. Then suddenly, the other day, the decurions—"

At this point, the old man clasped his hands in despair, and the old woman clasped hers: her every movement mimicked his.

"The decurions come and say: 'The house isn't yours!' 'How? not ours? The Lord be with you. We have owned it for twenty years.' 'You have occupied it, but against the law. The land belongs to the temple of the god Æsculapius, and the foundations of the house are laid on stones of the ruined shrine. We are going to take your land away, and restore it to Æsculapius.' What are we to do? be merciful to us, all-powerful Augustus!"

The old couple knelt before him, clean and decent, like children, kissing his feet in tears. Julian noticed an amber cross on the old woman's neck:

"Christians?" he asked, clouding over.

"Yes."

"I would gladly grant your request. But what can I do? The ground belongs to the god. But

I will give orders to pay you the value of the property."

"No, no, we do not want that," said the old couple, "we have grown accustomed to the place. Everything there is ours. We know every blade of grass. We do not want money."

"Everything there is ours," said the old woman, like an echo, "our vineyard, our olives, our chickens, our cow, our little pigs, everything our own. And there is the little bench on which we have sat of an evening, for twenty years, warming our old bones in the sun."

The emperor, not listening, turned to the frightened crowd, standing further off:

"This is the last time the Galileans shall besiege me with requests for the restoration of church lands. Thus the Valentinians from the city of Edessa complain of the Arians, who, they say, took away their land. To cut the quarrel short, I gave one part of the disputed property to my Gallic veterans, and the other to the treasury. And thus I intend to act in the future. You ask by what right? But you yourselves say 'it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.' So, you see, I have decided to help you to fulfill your difficult and wise law. As is known to all the world, you exalt poverty, Galileans. Then why do you rail against me? In taking away property which you have stolen from your brothers the heretics, or from Hellenic shrines, I only set you again on the path of salutary poverty, which leads straight to the kingdom of heaven."

An unkind smile flickered across his lips.

"We suffer evil against the law!" cried the old couple.

"Very good, then; endure it," answered Julian. "You should rejoice in persecutions and insults, as the Nazarene taught you. What signify these temporary sufferings—in comparison with eternal blessedness?"

The old man was least of all prepared for such an argument. He grew bewildered, and could only mutter as a last hope:

"We are your faithful slaves, Augustus! My son is serving as the assistant of the strategos in a distant fortress on the Roman frontier, and his superiors are satisfied with his work."

"Also a Galilean?" interrupted Julian.

"Yes," answered the old man, frightened at his own admission.

"Well, it is well that you warned me. The Galileans are the bitter enemies of the Roman Augustus, and must not therefore fill the higher offices of the empire, especially the military offices. Once more in this as in much else, I am more in harmony with your Teacher than you are yourselves. Is it just that the disciples of Jesus should dispense justice according to the Roman law, when he said: 'Judge not, that ye be not judged?' Or that Christians should accept from us the sword for the preservation of the empire, when your Teacher has warned you that 'He that draweth the sword shall perish with the sword?' And in another place as plainly: 'Resist not evil.' This is why, busy for the salvation of Christian souls, we shall take away Roman justice, and the Roman sword from them; therefore let them enter the kingdom of heaven,

light, undefended, unarmed, estranged from all that is worldly and vain."

With a silent inner laugh, which somewhat relieved his hatred, the emperor turned, and rapidly entered the temple of Apollo.

The old people sobbed, stretching out their hands to him:

"Cæsar, we did not know. Take our little house, our land, everything that we have, only have mercy on our son!"

The philosophers wished to enter the doors of the temple with the emperor. He stopped them with a wave of his hand:

"I alone came to the festival. I alone bring an offering to the god."

"Come," he turned to the priest, "close the doors, so that none of the impure may enter."

In the very faces of his philosophic friends, the doors slammed to.

"The impure! How do you like that?" said Gargilianus, uncertain what to think.

Libanius sniffed, and sulked in silence.

With a mysterious air, Mauricus led his companions to a corner of the portico, and whispered something, pointing to his forehead:

"Do you understand?"

All were astonished.

"Is it possible?"

He began to count on his fingers:

"To begin with, pale face, burning eyes, disheveled hair, uneven steps, disconnected speech. Secondly, extreme irritability and hard-heartedness. Thirdly, these senseless wars with the Persians; I swear by Pallas! It is clear madness!"

The friends drew closer together, and whispered, gossiping delightedly.

Sallustius standing apart, watched this conference with a bitter smile.

Inside the temple, Julian found Euphorion. The boy was gay, and during the celebration of the sacred rites, often looked into the emperor's eyes and smiled enigmatically, as if they had a common secret.

Lit up by the sun, the gigantic statue of Apollo rose in the center of the temple. The body was ivory, the garments gold, as in the Zeus of Phidias at Olympia. The god, slightly bending, was making a libation to Mother Earth, praying that she should restore Daphne to him.

A light cloud passed over; shadows shimmered on the ivory, golden-yellow with age, and it seemed to Julian that the god bent towards him with a benevolent smile, accepting the last offering of his last worshippers, the decrepit priest, the apostate emperor, and the prophetess' deaf and dumb child.

"This is my reward," thought Julian, with childlike pleasure, "and I wish for no other glory. Oh Apollo, I thank thee that I am cursed and rejected by the crowd, as thou art; that I live alone, and shall die alone like thee! Where the mob worships, God is not. Thou art here in the accursed shrine. Oh god, mocked at by men, thou art now more beautiful than in the days when men bowed before thee! In the day appointed for me by the Fates, let me unite myself with thee, oh joyful one; let me die into thee, oh Sun,—as on the altar the last fire dies in thy radiance!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BURNING OF THE SHRINE.

Darkness reigned in Daphne's grove. A hot wind chased the clouds. Not a drop of rain fell to the earth, parched with the heat. The black branches of the laurels trembled, stretched towards the sky. The titanic alleys of cypress rustled, and the sound was like the talking of angry old men.

Two figures stole through the shadows close to Apollo's temple. The shorter, who had green cat's eyes, that saw excellently at night, led the taller by the hand.

"Oh, oh, oh, nephew! we'll break our necks somewhere in a chasm."

"There are no chasms here. What are you afraid of? Since you got baptized, you have turned into a regular old woman."

"An old woman! my heart beat evenly when I fought against bears in the Hyrcanian forest with my spear. But here, it is different. You and I will dangle together on one gallows, nephew!"

"Well, well, keep quiet, you fool!"

The shorter once more dragged on his tall companion, who had a huge bundle of straw on his shoulders, and a spade.

They stealthily reached the rear wall of the temple.

"Here, with the spade first," whispered the shorter, feeling among the bushes along the wall

for a hole left among the bricks by the carelessness of the builders, "then break the wooden boarding inside with the axe."

The blows of the spade were muffled by the wind among the trees. Suddenly there was a cry, like the wail of a sick child.

The taller of the two shivered in all his limbs.

"What was that?"

"The Evil Power!" exclaimed the shorter, his green eyes starting out with terror, and gripping his companion's garment. "Oh, oh, do not desert me, uncle!"

"Why, it was only a screech-owl—what cowards we are!"

The huge night-bird, disturbed by their coming, had started up flapping its wings, and disappeared in the distance with a long cry.

"Let us leave it," said the taller; "all the same, it will not burn."

"How can it not burn? The wood is rotten, dried by the sun and eaten by worms,—touch it, and it falls to pieces. It will kindle from a single spark. Come, come, friend, cut away; don't go to sleep."

And the shorter shook the taller, impatiently.

"Now the straw in the hole. Like that—more, more! Glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost!"

"What are you wriggling like an eel for? Why are your teeth rattling?" snarled the taller.

"Ha—ha—ha! I cannot help laughing! Now the angels are flying through the sky. But remember, uncle, if we are caught, not to renounce the faith! We shall light a brave fire. Here is a spark,—set it going."

"Get away to the devil!" said the taller, trying to push him aside, "do not lead me into evil, you cursed little snake. Light it yourself."

"Oh ho, so you are going back on your word? you are mad, brother!"

The little man, beside himself with fright, convulsively caught at the giant's red beard.

"I'll inform on you first! they will believe me."

"Well, well, you little devil, stop it. Give me the tinder. There is nothing to be done,—we must finish with it."

The sparks began to fall. The little man lay down on his stomach, and looked still more like a snake. The flickering flames ran among the straw soaked in pitch, the smoke rolled up and the tar crackled. The flames flared up, and their red light illumined the frightened face of the huge Aragarius, and the sly monkey-like countenance of the Syrian Strombicus. He looked like an ugly imp, clapped his hands, jumped about and laughed like a drunken man or a madman.

"We shall destroy it all,—to the glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. He-he-he! And the snakes, and the snakes,—how they run! A fine fire, uncle, eh?"

In his passionate laughter, there was the eternal savagery of the crowd,—the delight in destruction.

Aragarius, pointing into the darkness, said:

"Do you hear?"

The grove was deserted as before. But in the wailing of the wind and the murmuring of the cypresses the incendiaries fancied whispering voices. Aragarius started to run at full speed.

Strombicus caught the end of his tunic, and shrieked out:

“Uncle, take me on your shoulder. You have long legs! But if I come to grief, I’ll blame it all on you.”

Aragarius stopped for a moment.

Strombicus sprang up like a squirrel on the Sarmatian’s shoulder, and they fled on. The little Syrian pressed his knees into the other’s sides, and clasped his arms round his neck to keep from falling. Looking at the fire, he laughed uncontrollably, squealing softly to himself in mad delight.

The incendiaries left the grove and ran out into the open fields, where the dusty, lean ears of corn bent towards the arid ground. Between the clouds on the horizon shone bands of moonlight. The wind whistled piercingly. Crouching on the giant’s shoulders, little Strombicus, with his glittering green cat’s eyes, looked like an evil spirit, or a were-wolf hanging to its victim. A superstitious terror overcame Aragarius: it suddenly seemed to him that it was not Strombicus but the devil himself, in the form of a huge cat, sitting on his shoulders, and scratching his face, and hissing, and squealing, and laughing, and driving him into the abyss. The giant began to make desperate leaps, trying to rid himself of his burden. His hair stood on end, and he forgot where he was, in his fright. A great double shadow of black against the pale bands of the horizon, they fled across the dead fields with their dusty corn-ears bending towards the burnt and stony ground.

* * * * *

At that time, in the sleeping-chamber of Julian’s palace in Antioch, the emperor was engaged in a secret conference with Sallustius Secundus, the prefect of the East.

“Most gracious Cæsar, where are we to find corn for such an army?”

“I have sent triremes to Sicily, to Egypt, to Apulia,—wherever there is a harvest,” replied the emperor. “I tell you, there will be corn.”

“And money?” continued Sallustius. “Would it not be wiser to put it off till next year,—to wait?”

Julian all the time walked up and down the room, with great strides; suddenly he stopped before the old man.

“Wait?” he exclaimed angrily, “you seem to have agreed among you all to repeat the same thing. To wait? As if I can wait now and weigh the matter, and continue undecided! Will the Galileans wait? Understand old man, I must accomplish the impossible, I must return from Persia terrible and mighty, or not return at all. There can be no more truce. There is no middle path. What do you say about wisdom? About being reasonable? Or do you think that Alexander of Macedon conquered the world by being—reasonable? Would not that beardless youth who set forth with a handful of Macedonians against the rulers of Asia, have seemed mad to such moderate folk as you? And who gave him the victory?”

“I know not,” answered the prefect, conciliatingly, with a slight mockery, “it seems to me that the hero himself.”

“Not he himself,” exclaimed Julian, “but the gods! You hear, Sallustius? The Olympian gods can give me victory also, a victory greater than Alexander’s, if they wish. I began in Gaul, I shall end in India. I shall pass through the whole earth, from the sunset to the sunrise, like the great

Macedonian, like the god Dionysus. Let us see what the Galileans will do then, how they who now mock at the simple dress of a sage will laugh at the sword of the Roman Emperor, when he returns victorious over Asia!"

His eyes burned with a delirious brilliance. Salustius wished to say something, but stopped. When Julian began once more to pace through the room with great uneven strides, the prefect shook his head and pity shone in the eyes of the old Roman.

"The army must be ready to march," continued Julian,—“I will it so, do you hear? No dissuasions, no delays! We have thirty thousand men. The Armenian king, Arzacious has promised his assistance. We have corn. What more do we need? I must know that I can start against the Persians at any moment. On this depends not only my honor and the safety of the Roman Empire, but also the victory of the everlasting gods over the Galileans.”

The wide window was open. The hot dusty wind, blowing into the window made the long flames flicker in the three-wicked lamp. Cutting through the darkness of the heavens, a falling star flashed forth, and disappeared. Julian shuddered. The omen was evil.

There was a knocking at the door. Voices were heard.

“Who is it? enter!” said the emperor.

It was the group of philosophers. Libanius led them. He seemed more bombastic and inflated than usual.

“What do you want?” said Julian coldly.

Libanius knelt down, preserving his haughty look.

"Let me depart, Augustus. I cannot live longer at court. My endurance is exhausted. Every day I suffer unheard-of insults."

He spoke long of certain presents, of money rewards promised to him, of ingratitude, of his services, of the splendid panegyrics in which he had celebrated the emperor's praises.

But Julian no longer listening to him, looked with repulsion and weariness at the famous orator, and thought: "Can this be the same Libanius whose speeches I esteemed so highly in my youth? What little-mindedness! What vanity!"

Afterwards all the philosophers began to speak at once. They quarreled, shouted, accusing each other of atheism, of extortion, of immorality, and repeating the most foolish gossip. It was a shameful domestic war, not of sages, but of parasites, maddened with their own fatness, ready to tear each other in pieces from vanity, malice and weariness.

Finally, the emperor uttered a single word, in a low voice, which compelled them all to remember themselves:

"Teachers!"

All became silent instantly, like a frightened flock of chattering jackdaws.

"Teachers," he repeated, with a bitter smile, "I have heard you long enough. Allow me to relate a fable to you. An Egyptian king once had some tame monkeys, taught to perform the Pyrrhic war-dance on the stage. They were dressed in helmets and masks, and their tails were hid under the imperial purple, and when they danced, it was hard

to believe that they were not human beings. For a long time the sight gave him great pleasure. But once upon a time one of the spectators threw a handful of nuts upon the stage. And what happened? The actors tore off the purple and the masks, laid bare their tails, went down on all fours, and began to scratch each other for the nuts, squealing the while. Thus certain people majestically perform the Pyrrhic dance of wisdom, till the first present comes. But it is only necessary to throw the handful of nuts, and the wise men turn into monkeys: they lay bare their tails, squeal, and scratch. How does this fable please you, Teachers?"

Suddenly Sallustius softly took the emperor by the arm, and pointed through the open window.

Against the black lining of cloud, a scarlet gleam was slowly spreading, rocked by the strong wind.

"A fire! a fire!" cried all, at once.

"Across the river," suggested some.

"Not across the river, but in the suburb of Harandama," corrected others.

"No, no, in Hezira, among the Jews!"

"Neither in Hezira, nor in Harandama," exclaimed some one, with that irresistible gladness which takes hold of a crowd at sight of a fire, "but in the grove of Daphne!"

"The temple of Apollo," muttered the emperor, and suddenly all the blood rushed to his heart.

"The Galileans!" he cried, in a terrible, wild voice, and ran to the door, and then down the stair.

Slaves! quick! a horse, and fifty legionaries!

After a few moments, all was ready. They led a black stallion into the court-yard, trembling in

every limb, dangerous and angrily turning back his bloodshot eyes.

Julian sped through the streets of Antioch, with fifty legionaries behind him. The crowd scattered in terror before them. They knocked down some and crushed others. Their cries were drowned by the thunder of hoofs and the rattle of armor.

They passed out through the city. Their gallop lasted more than two hours. Three legionaries were left behind. Their horses had given out.

The scarlet grew ever clearer. There was a smell of smoke. The fields with their dusty corn-ears, reflected the blood-red glow. Curious people were hurrying from all sides like moths to a flame. They were inhabitants of the neighboring villages and the outlying parts of Antioch. Julian noticed gladness in their faces and voices, as if they had come to a festival, or to some holiday spectacle.

The tongues of flame flashed at last among the clouds of thick smoke over the black summits of Daphne's grove.

The emperor entered the sacred enclosure. Here a noisy crowd was gathered. Many were cracking jokes at each other, and laughing. The quiet alleys, so long deserted by all, swarmed with people. The mob polluted the grove, broke branches of the ancient laurels, fouled the springs, and crushed the soft dreamy flowers. The narcissus and lilies, dying, vainly struggled with their last freshness against the smothering heat of the fire and the breath of the mob.

"God's miracle! God's miracle!" a delighted hum of voices rose above the crowd.

"I saw myself how lightning fell from heaven, and set the roof on fire."

"It was not lightning. You lie. The earth opened, and shot up a flame inside the shrine, just under the idol."

"And no wonder. What a crime they had committed! — disturbed the relics! They thought they would get off. How could it be otherwise? And there is your temple of Apollo for you, and your Castalian springs! That's how it happens!"

Among the crowd, Julian saw a woman half-dressed, disheveled, who had probably just come from her bed; she was also watching the fire with delight, with a beatific and meaningless smile, and was hugging an infant to her breasts. Tears gleamed on his lashes. He had been crying, but stopped, and hungrily began to suck the dusky fat breast, smacking his lips, pressing one hand against it, and stretching forth the other, plump and dimpled, towards the fire, as if he was trying to reach a bright, pretty plaything.

The emperor stopped his horse. It was impossible to go a step further. The heat blew in his face, like a furnace. The legionaries awaited his orders. He understood that the temple was lost.

It was a splendid sight. The building blazed from head to foot. The inner boarding, the rotten walls, the dried-up beams, piles, joists, trusses, —were all turned into blazing brands. They fell crashing, and fiery wreaths of sparks flew up to the sky, which seemed to lower ominous and blood-red. The flames licked the clouds with their long tongues, flickering and swaying in the wind like the folds of a curtain.

The leaves of the laurels crackled in the flames, and curled up as if in pain. The tops of the cypresses blazed with a bright resinous light, like

gigantic black torches. Their white smoke seemed the smoke of offerings. The drops of resin fell thick, as if the world-old trees, coeval with the temple, were shedding tears of gold for the god.

Julian watched the fire with a fixed, uncomprehending gaze. He wished to give an order to the legionaries, but only drew his sword from its scabbard, reined his horse up on its haunches, and clenching his teeth, muttered with impotent wrath:

“Oh abominable creatures!”

The cry of the crowd was heard further off. He remembered that the treasury was behind the temple, with the vessels for the service of the god, and he was afraid the Galileans would plunder the shrine. He gave the signal, and hurried with his soldiers to the side where the treasury was. A sad procession stopped him on the way.

A number of Roman guards who had just had time to come from the neighboring village of Daphne, were carrying a litter.

“What is it?” asked Julian.

“The Galileans have stoned the priest Gorgias,” answered the Romans.

“And the treasury?”

“It is untouched. Standing on the threshold, the priest slammed the door, and would not let the sanctuary be polluted. He did not desert his post until he fell, struck on the head with a stone. Then they killed the boy. The Galilean mob, trampling them down, would have broken in the door, but we arrived and dispersed the crowd.”

“Is he alive?” asked Julian.

“Just breathing.”

The emperor sprang from his horse. They

gently lowered the litter. He approached, bent down, and carefully lifted the old stained cloak that covered both bodies.

The old man lay on a cushion of fresh laurel boughs. His eyes were closed. His breast rose and fell slowly. Pity filled Julian's heart, when he saw the old drunkard's red nose, which had so recently seemed so indecent to him, and when he remembered the lean goose in the wicker basket, the last sacrifice to Apollo. Drops of blood trickled over the soft woolly hair, white as snow, and the sharp, black laurel-leaves curved round the priest's head in a sacred wreath.

Beside him in the same litter, lay the little body of Euphorion. His face, over which had spread the paleness of death, was even lovelier than before. Red drops gleamed on his tangled golden curls. Resting his hand against his cheek, he seemed to be sleeping a gentle sleep. Julian thought:

"Thus must Eros be, the son of the Goddess of Love, stoned by the Galileans."

And the Roman Emperor knelt down reverently before the martyr of the Olympian gods. In spite of the ruin of the temple, in spite of the senseless mockery of the mob, Julian felt in that death the presence of God. His heart softened, even his hatred vanished, and with tears of tenderness he kissed the old man's hand.

The dying man opened his eyes:

"Where is my boy?" he asked, softly.

"Here, beside you."

"Alive?" asked Gorgias, stroking the child's hair, with a last caress.

He was so weak that he could not turn his head

round to him. Julian had not the heart to reveal the truth to him. The priest turned to the emperor a look full of entreaty:

“Cæsar, I intrust him to you—do not desert him.”

“Rest assured that I shall do all that I can for your boy.”

Thus Julian took upon himself the responsibility for him to whom not even the Roman Cæsar could do either good or ill, upon this earth.

Gorgias did not withdraw his stiffening hand from Euphorion’s curls. Suddenly his face lighted up; he wished to say something, but murmured only disconnected words:

“It is they—it is they—I knew it—rejoice.”

He looked before him, with wide-open eyes, sighed, stopping in the middle of a breath, and his glance faded out.

Julian closed the dead man’s eyes.

Suddenly the triumphant sounds of church singing broke forth. The emperor looked up, and saw that along the chief cypress alley was moving a procession, an endless crowd of priests and elders, in gold-embroidered stoles studded with precious stones, high deacons with swaying censers, black monks with tall tapers, youths and maidens in white garments, with palm-branches in their hands. And high up above the crowd, on a triumphal car, gleamed the shrine of Saint Babylas. The flames of the burning temple flickered along its pale silver. The relics, driven forth by the emperor’s command, from Daphne’s grove were on their way to Antioch. The departure of the relics had been turned into a triumphal procession.

The people were singing a psalm of David, in praise of the God of Israel:

“Clouds and darkness are round about Him;” their voices rose, drowning the wail of the wind, and the flickering of the flames; and the triumphal song of the Galileans soared to the sky, lit up with red,—

“Clouds and darkness are round about Him.

“A fire goeth before Him, and burneth up His enemies round about Him.

“The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.”

And Julian grew pale, on hearing the insolent triumph of the last verse:

“Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship Him all ye gods!”

Then the emperor leaped on his horse, drew his sword and cried:

“Soldiers! follow me!”

He wished to throw himself into the midst of the crowd, to disperse the triumphant mob, to overthrow the shrine with the relics and scatter the accursed bones.

But some one’s hand caught the emperor’s horse by the rein.

“Out of the way!”—he cried, angrily, and had already raised his sword to strike. But at the same moment his hand fell again. Before him was a wise old man, with a sad and quiet face, Sallustius Secundus, who had just come from Antioch.

“Cæsar! do not fall upon unarmed men. Remember yourself.”

Julian replaced his sword in the scabbard.

The bronze helmet galled and burned his brow, as if it had been red-hot. Tearing it off and throwing it on the ground, he wiped the great drops of sweat from his forehead. Then alone, without soldiers and bareheaded, he approached the crowd and stopped the procession with a motion of his hand.

All recognized him. The singing stopped.

"Men of Antioch!" pronounced Julian, almost calmly, restraining himself by a terrible effort of will, "know that the rebels and incendiaries of Apollo's temple will be punished without pity. You laugh at my mercy; let us see whether you will laugh at my wrath. The Roman Augustus might wipe your whole city off the earth, so that men might lose the memory of great Antioch. But I shall only leave you. I start on an expedition against the Persians. If the gods have decreed that I shall return victorious, then woe to you, rebels! Woe to thee, Nazarene, Carpenter's son!"

He shook his sword above the crowd.

Suddenly it seemed to him that a strange, inhuman voice spoke clearly behind him:

"The Nazarene, the Carpenter's son, is preparing a coffin for thee!"

Julian shuddered and turned, but saw no one. He raised his hand to his eyes.

"What is it? or did it only seem so to my fancy?" he said, almost inaudibly and vaguely.

At the same moment, within the blazing temple a deafening noise was heard; part of the wooden roof fell directly upon the gigantic statue of Apollo. The image tumbled from its pedestal. The golden goblet, with which Apollo was making his everlasting libation to the All-mother Earth,

rang piteously. Sparks flew up to the clouds in a golden sheaf. A graceful column in the portico staggered, and the Corinthian capitol, with a soft charm even in its destruction, fell like a white lily from its broken stem, and lay prostrate on the earth. It seemed to Julian that the whole temple, falling in ruins, would overwhelm him.

And the psalm of David in praise of the Lord God of Israel, rose in triumph to the midnight sky, drowning the roar of the flames and noise of the falling idol:

“Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship Him, all ye gods!”

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE.

Julian passed the winter in hastening on the preparations for the Persian campaign. At the beginning of spring, on the fifth of March, he left Antioch with an army of sixty-five thousand men.

The snow was melting on the mountains. In the fruit gardens, the young peach trees naked and leafless, were already covered with pink flowers. The soldiers went forth to war joyfully, as to a festival.

A fleet of twelve hundred vessels had been built at the wharfs of Samosata, of huge cedars, pines and oaks hewn in the ravines of Mount Taurus, and sent down the Euphrates to Callinice.

Julian passed through Hierapolis to Carrhae by

forced marches, then further to the south, along the bank of the Euphrates, to the Persian frontier. Another army of thirty thousand was sent to the north under the leadership of Procopius and Sebastian. They were to unite with the Armenian king Argaces, and lay waste Adiabene and Chilio-cus, and passing through Corduene, to meet the main army on the banks of the Tigris under the walls of Ctesiphon.

The emperor had superintended everything down to the smallest details, and everything had been weighed and meditated on with love. Those who understood his plans were justified in their enthusiasm for its wisdom, largeness, and simplicity.

At the very beginning of April, the army arrived at Circesium, the last Roman possession, strongly fortified by Diocletian, on the frontier of Mesopotamia, where the river Abora flows into the Euphrates. A floating bridge of boats was constructed. Julian gave the order to cross the frontier on the following morning.

Late in the evening, when all was prepared, he returned to his tent weary but elated, lit his lamp, and wished to take up the favorite work, which daily took up a part of his leisure. It was an extensive philosophical dissertation "Against the Christians." He wrote it in fragments, to the sound of war trumpets, camp songs, and the cries of the sentinels. He found joy in the thought that he was fighting against the Galileans, by all possible means,—on the field of battle, and in his book, with the Roman sword, and the wisdom of Hellas. The emperor never parted with the works of the Fathers of the Church, the Canons, and the de-

crees of the Councils. On the leaves of a very ancient and worn roll of the New Testament, which he studied with not less zeal than Plato and Homer, sarcastic remarks were written by his own hand.

Julian stripped off his dusty armor, washed, sat down at his camp table, and dipped a sharp pointed reed in his ink-horn, getting ready to write. But his solitude was disturbed. Two messengers had reached the camp, one from Italy, the other from Jerusalem. Julian heard them both.

The news was not elating. Earthquakes had just destroyed Nicomedia, a splendid city in Asia Minor. Subterranean shocks had caused a panic among the inhabitants of Constantinople. The Sibylline books forbade the crossing of the Roman frontier for a year.

The messenger from Jerusalem brought a letter from Alypius of Antioch, the official to whom Julian had entrusted the rebuilding of Solomon's temple. By a strange contradiction, the worshipper of Olympus with its many gods had determined to restore the temple of the one God of Israel, destroyed by the Romans, in order to confute, before the eyes of all peoples and all ages, the words of the Gospel prophecy: "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." The Jews enthusiastically welcomed Julian's design. Offerings came in from all sides. The plan of construction was grandiose. The work was taken up with alacrity. The general superintendence of the work Julian entrusted to his friend Alypius of Antioch, a noble and cultivated man who had been governor of Britain.

"What has happened?" asked Julian uneasily,

looking under his brows at the messenger's gloomy face, and breaking the seal of the letter.

"A great misfortune, most noble Augustus!"

"Speak. Fear not!"

"While the builders were clearing away the rubbish," began the messenger, "and removing the ruins of the ancient walls, all went well. But as soon as they proceeded to the foundations of the new building, a flame burst forth from the excavations in the form of globes of fire, and scattered the stones and burned up the workmen. On the next day, by order of the most noble Alypius, they returned to the work. The miracle was repeated. And the same thing a third time. And now the Christians are triumphant, the Hellenes are in terror, and not a single workman will consent to enter the excavations. Not one stone of the building is left upon another. All is thrown down."

"Be silent, villain! You must be a Galilean yourself," cried the emperor wrathfully, raising his hand to strike the kneeling messenger, "it is a lie! a lie!! Old wives' tales! Is it possible that Alypius could not have chosen a more intelligent messenger?"

He hastily broke the seal, unfolded the letter, and read it. The messenger had spoken the truth. Alypius confirmed his words. Julian could not believe his own eyes, and re-read it carefully, holding the letter close to the lamp: a red flush of anger and shame covered his face, and finally biting his lips till they bled, he crumpled the papyrus, and threw it to the physician Oribasius, who was standing beside him:

"Read,—you do not believe in miracles. Either Alypius is mad, or—no, no,—that cannot be!"

The young Alexandrian scientist took up the letter and read it, with the calm and impassive slowness with which he did everything. Then he turned his wise, bright eyes to Julian.

"I see no miracle here," said the physician, "men of science have long ago described this phenomenon. In the vaults of old buildings, which have been closed and deprived of the access of air for many centuries, heavy, easily inflammable fumes sometimes collect. It is enough to enter these vaults with a lighted torch, to cause an explosion. The sudden outbursts of fire may kill the careless. And ignorant people take it to be a miracle. But here, as everywhere, the light of science disperses the darkness of superstition, and gives the wise man freedom. Everything is beautiful, because everything is natural and conforms to the will of Nature."

He laid the letter quietly on the table, with a self-confident and pedantic smile on his thin, obstinate lips.

"Yes, yes, certainly," replied Julian, with bitter irony, "we must find some way of consoling ourselves! Everything can be explained; everything is natural: the earthquake in Nicomedia, and the earthquake in Constantinople, and the prophecy of the Sibylline books, and the drought in Antioch, and the fire in Rome, and the flood in Egypt. Everything is natural, only it is strange that everything is against me,—earth and heaven, water and fire, and, it would seem, the very gods themselves!"

Sallustius Secundus entered the tent.

"Great Augustus! The Tuscan soothsayers whom you ordered to inquire concerning the will

of the gods, pray you to delay and not to cross the frontier to-morrow. The prophetic chickens of the Haruspices, in spite of every prayer, refuse food and sit crouching together, and will not pick the grains of barley,—it is an evil augury!”

At first Julian knit his brows in anger, but suddenly his eyes lit up, and he burst into laughter so unexpectedly that all looked at him in astonishment and silence.

“Is it so, Sallustius? They will not eat? Well? What are we to do with these obstinate birds? Had we not better obey them, and return to Antioch, to the joy and derision of the Galileans? Do you know, my dear friend, what must be done? Go at once to the Tuscan fortune-tellers, and declare to them the emperor’s will. Let the priests take all their silly fowls, and throw them into the river. That is the right place for them. Do you hear? The fat, spoilt creatures will not eat; let us see whether they will drink fresh river-water. Go, fulfil my will!”

“You are jesting, gracious Cæsar! Have I understood you aright? Is it possible that you are still determined to cross the frontier to-morrow morning?”

“Yes, yes, I swear by my future victories, I swear by the might of the Roman Empire that no consecrated chickens can terrify me, nor waters, nor fire, nor earth, nor heaven, nor even the gods themselves. It is too late! The die is cast. Friends, is there anything more godlike in all nature than a man’s will? In all the Sibylline books; is there anything stronger than these words: I will it so! More than ever before, I feel the secret of my life. Before, signs entangled me like nets, and

intimidated me. Now I believe in them, and laugh at them. Perhaps this is sacrilege! Be it so! I have nothing more to lose. If the gods desert me, I renounce the gods."

When those about him had departed, Julian went to a little silver image of Mercury, by a portable altar, intending, as was his habit, to perform the evening prayer, and to throw a few grains of incense into the flame, but he suddenly turned, and went away, with a smile, and threw himself down on the lion's skin which served as his couch, and extinguishing his lamp, fell into a deep, careless sleep, such as sometimes overtakes people after great misfortunes.

Dawn had hardly broken when he awoke, still fuller of gladness. The trumpets were sounding.

Julian leaped on his horse and rode down the bank of the Abora.

The early April morning was fresh and almost perfectly still. A dreamy breeze brought the coolness of the night from the great Asian river. All along the wide spring flood of the Euphrates, from the tower of Circesium to the Roman camp, for ten stadia stretched the fleet. Such martial pomp had not been seen since the days of Xerxes.

The first rays of the sun flashed up from behind the pyramidal mausoleum of Gordianus, the conqueror of the Persians, who had been put to death there, by Philip of Arabis. The edge of the red disk gleamed above the quiet horizon of the desert like a hot coal, and in a moment all the tops of the sails and masts grew rosy through the morning gloom.

The emperor gave a sign, and eight huge companies of five thousand men advanced with meas-

ured tread, that made the earth quake and tremble. The Roman army began to cross the bridge, and the frontier of Persia.

Julian rode across to the opposite bank, to a high, sandy hillock in the territory of the enemy.

At the head of one of the Palatine cohorts, marched Anatolius, Arsinoe's admirer, the centurion of the shield-bearers.

Anatolius looked at the emperor. In Julian's outward appearance, a great change had taken place.

The month spent in the open air in camp work, had done him good. In the manly warrior with wind-tanned and sun-burned cheeks, with a light of youth in his eyes that shone exultantly, he could hardly recognize the scholastic philosopher with the lean, yellow and unhealthy face, the pedantic severity in his eyes, the disheveled hair and beard, the absent-minded abruptness of movement, the ink-blots on his fingers, and the Cynic toga,—Julian the rhetorician, whom the street-boys of Antioch jeered at.

"Listen! Listen! Cæsar is going to speak!"

All became silent. The only sounds were the low rattle of weapons, the murmuring of the water around the ships, and the rustling of the silken standards.

"Valorous warriors!" began Julian, in a strong, sonorous voice, "I see such courage and gladness in your faces that I cannot refrain from a joyful greeting. Remember, friends, that universal destinies are in our hands. We go to restore the ancient glory of Rome. Therefore be of good heart, and make ready to face all. For us, there is no more return. I shall be at your head, or among

your ranks, on horse or on foot, taking part in all your difficulties and dangers, not above the last of my soldiers, because from this day forth you are not servants, but my equals, my children! And if traitorous fate has decreed that I shall fall in the struggle, I shall be happy, for I die for everlasting Rome like the great men of old, the Scævolas, the Curtii, and the noblest scions of the Decii. Quit yourselves like men, my companions, and remember that victory is to the valiant!"

He drew his sword, and stretched it forth, and with a smile pointed to the distant horizon of the desert.

The soldiers raised their shields in unison, and struck them with a cry of joy:

"Glory to Cæsar the Victorious!"

The war-galleys cut the waters of the Euphrates and the Roman eagles spread their wings above the cohorts, as his white charger bore the young emperor towards the rising sun.

But a cold, pale blue shadow fell on the smooth white sand, from the pyramid of Gordianus. Soon Julian passed from the morning sunlight into the long ominous shadow of the lonely tomb.

CHAPTER XV.

ON THE EUPHRATES.

The army marched along the left bank of the Euphrates.

The plain, broad and smooth as the sea, was covered with silver-grey brushwood. There were

no trees. The bushes and grass had an aromatic odor. Now and then a herd of wild asses appeared on the horizon, in a cloud of dust. Ostriches ran before the army. The plump, dainty flesh of great bustards smoked over the camp-fires of the soldiers at supper. Jests and songs continued the whole night through. The march was like a holiday-party. Graceful, slender-legged gazelles sped before them, with airy lightness, hardly touching the ground: they had soft winning eyes, like the eyes of fascinating women.

The soldiers, who sought glory, prey and blood in the desert, met only a silent welcome, star-lit nights, quiet sunsets and sunrises, and the sweet-smelling gloom of evening, full of the odor of scented brushwood.

They went on further and further, without finding the enemy.

And as soon as they had passed, the silence again descended on the plain, as water closes behind a passing ship, and the stems of the grass that the feet of the legionaries had trodden down, rose softly upright.

Suddenly the desert took on a threatening face. Clouds covered the sky. Rain began to fall. The lightning killed a soldier who was leading his horse to the water.

The days began to grow hot at the end of April. The soldiers who walked in the shadow of the camels, or of the baggage-wagons with their canvas covers were envied by their companions. The men of the distant north, the Gauls and Scythians died of sunstroke. The plain became bleak, bald, and only here and there dotted with tufts of dry grass. Their feet sank in the sand.

Sudden hurricanes blew so fiercely that they tore away the standards, and even whole tents. Men and horses were struck to the ground. Then again came a strange and sudden silence, that seemed to the frightened soldiers more terrible even than the storm. Jests and songs were no longer heard. But the soldiers went ever further and further, without meeting the enemy.

At the beginning of May, they entered the palm-groves of Assyria.

At Macepracta, where were still visible the ruins of a great wall built by the ancient Assyrian kings, they saw the enemy for the first time. The Persians retreated with unexpected readiness.

Through a storm of poisoned arrows the Romans crossed a deep canal which united the Euphrates with the Tigris. This mighty fortification, made of Babylonian bricks, and cutting through the whole of Mesopotamia with geometrical accuracy, was called Nahar-Malcha, the River of the Kings.

Suddenly the Persians disappeared. The level of the Nahar-Malcha rose. Then overflowing its banks, the water poured over the surrounding plain. The Persians had caused an inundation, opening the sluices and flood-gates of the canals which irrigated the withered earth of the Assyrian plains through a net-work of channels.

The infantry walked up to their knees in water. Their feet stuck in the heavy, clinging mud. Whole companies fell into unseen channels, and unexpected morasses, and even horses with their riders, and loaded camels disappeared. They had to feel their way with stakes.

The plain became a lake, with the palm-groves for islands.

“Where are we going?” murmured the cowardly, “what are we looking for? Why do we not go back to the river at once, and go aboard the ships? We are soldiers,—not frogs, to swim about in muddy pools.”

Julian went on foot beside the soldiers in the ranks, even in the most difficult places. With his own hands he helped to pull out the heavily loaded wagons, when their wheels stuck in the mire, and even jested, showing the soldiers his imperial purple, wet and besmirched with dark green slime.

They made rafts of palm-trees, and built floating bridges on inflated skins.

When night came on, the army managed to reach a dry camping ground.

The worn-out soldiers sank into a troubled sleep.

In the morning, they saw the fortress of Perisabor.

The Persians shot at their enemies, from the summits of inaccessible towers and walls hung with thick cushions of goat-skin, to guard against the blows of siege-machines. The whole day was spent in an exchange of iron missiles and taunts.

In the darkness of a moonless night, the Romans, preserving absolute silence, brought their catapults and battering rams from the ships, and set them close up to the walls of Perisabor.

Cries filled the air.

By means of a “maleola,” or fire-bolt, a huge distaff-shaped missile full of a burning mixture of pitch, sulphur, oil, and tar, the Romans succeeded in setting fire to the carpet of goat’s-hide which hung on the wall. The Persians rushed to extin-

guish the fire. Taking advantage of this moment of confusion, the emperor ordered the siege-machine to be brought forward.

It was a huge pine, hung on chains from a pyramidal tower of beams. The trunk ended in a bronze ram. Hundreds of powerful legionaries, with a strong, sing-song cry of "one, two, three!" set the battering ram swinging. The muscles on their dusky shoulders stood out, as they strained at the thick ropes of tightly twisted ox-gut, and swayed the heavy pine-trunk.

The first blow sounded like a peal of thunder. The earth rang, the walls trembled. Then again and again the tree-stem swung back, the blows fell thick and fast, the ram seemed to grow furious and struck its bronze head against the wall in obstinate anger. Suddenly a crash was heard, and a whole corner of the wall gave way.

The Persians fled with a cry of despair.

Julian, his helmet flashing in a cloud of dust, joyful and terrible as a god of war, pressed forward into the captured city.

The army advanced. For two days, the soldiers rested in fresh shady groves, refreshing themselves with a cooling acid drink like wine, made of palm juice, and with aromatic Babylonian dates, transparent, and golden-yellow like amber.

Then they entered a wild and stony plain. The heat was oppressive. Men and animals fell dead. The air at midday shimmered and curled above the cliffs, in hot wavelike layers. The river Tigris flowed through the grey, ash-colored plain, glittering like scales of silver, like a lazy snake warming its supple folds in the noonday heat.

The Romans saw a huge wall overhanging the

Tigris, red and bare, with uneven, pointed peaks. It was a second fortress guarding Ctesiphon, the southern capital of Persia, even more inaccessible than Perisabor,—a true eagle's nest above the clouds. The sixteen towers and double wall of Maogamalcha were built of the famous Babylonian bricks, dried in the sun, and laid in tar, like all the old Assyrian buildings, which have nothing to fear even from tens of centuries.

The assault began. Once more the huge, unwieldy arms of the balistæ creaked, the wheels, blocks and pulleys of the catapultæ whirred, and the fiery maleolæ hissed through the air.

It was the hour when the lizards sleep in the crevices of the cliffs. The rays of the sun fell on the backs and heads of the soldiers like a crushing weight. Their glitter was terrible. The legionaries tore off their glowing helmets and breastplates in despair, in spite of the commands of their leaders and regardless of danger. They preferred wounds to the scorching heat. Above the dark brown brick towers and embrasures of Maogamalcha, whence fell showers of poisonous arrows, spears, stones, leaden and clay projectiles, flaming Persian phalarici which poisoned the air with a foul stench of sulphur and naphtha, hung the dusty sky, with its hardly perceptible tinge of azure, terrible, blinding, inexorable as death.

The sky overcame the hostility of men. Besiegers and besieged ceased from the fight, worn out and weary.

A silence came over them, strange in that bright noontide, more full of death than the depth of night.

The Romans did not lose courage.

Since the capture of Perisabor, they had believed the emperor invincible, comparing him to Alexander the Great, and looking for miracles.

During several days the soldiers dug a mine on the eastern side of Maogamalcha, where the cliffs descended more obliquely to the plain. Advancing under the wall of the fortress, the mine ended in the center of the town. The width of the subterranean passage was three cubits, and allowed two soldiers to advance together. Thick wooden beams set at some distance from each other, upheld the roof. The sappers worked gaily; after the sun, the coldness and damp of the mine was pleasant enough.

"It is not so long since we were frogs," laughed the soldiers, "now we are moles."

Three cohorts, the *Matiarii*, the *Lacinarii* and the *Victores*, fifteen hundred of the bravest warriors, entered the underground gallery in the most perfect silence, and impatiently awaited the orders of their commanders to break through into the city.

At dawn, the attack was intentionally directed to two different points, so as to divert the attention of the Persians.

Julian led the soldiers up a narrow path over a precipice, under a hail of arrows and stones. "Let us see," he said, exulting in the danger, "whether the gods will preserve me, whether a miracle will happen, whether I shall be saved from death."

With irresistible curiosity and a thirst for the supernatural, he exposed himself to danger, seeking fate with a challenging smile. He feared not death, but only to lose that purposeless, intoxicating game with the Higher Powers.

And the soldiers followed him, charmed and infected by his courage.

The Persians, laughing at the efforts of the besiegers, sang aloud in praise of King Sapor, the Son of the Sun, and cried to the Romans, from the cloud-capped towers of Maogamalcha:

“Julian will sooner reach the Hall of High Ormuzd than the heart of our fortress!”

In the heat of the attack, the emperor whispered the word of command to the generals.

The soldiers hidden in the mine came forth in the center of the city, in the cellar of a house where an old Persian woman was baking cakes. She uttered a piercing shriek, when she saw the Roman legionaries. They killed her.

Stealing up unobserved, they threw themselves on the besieged from behind. The Persians threw down their weapons, and fled through the streets of Maogamalcha. Then the Romans within the fort opened the gates to Julian, and the city was captured from both sides.

Then the soldiers no longer doubted that the emperor, like Alexander of Macedon, would conquer the Persian monarchy as far as India.

The army was approaching Ctesiphon, the southern capital of Persia. The boats remained on the Euphrates.

Julian, with that feverish and almost magical swiftness which gave the enemy no time to think, restored the old Roman connecting canal, dug by Trajan and Septimius Severus, to guard against onslaughts of the Persians.

Through this canal, the fleet was taken to the Tigris a short distance above the walls of Ctesi-

phon. The emperor had penetrated to the very heart of the Central Asian monarchy.

On the evening of the following day, Julian, calling a Council of war, announced that he would that night transfer the army to the other bank, up to the walls of Ctesiphon. Dagalaiphus, Hormisdas, Secundinus, Victor, Sallustius, all men experienced in war, were terror-struck, and for a long time pleaded with the emperor to desist from such a daring undertaking. They pointed to the weariness of the army, the width of the river, the speed of the current, the steepness of the opposite bank, the proximity of Ctesiphon, the vast army of King Sapor, and the fact that the Persians would inevitably make a sally, while the Romans were crossing over. Julian would not hear them.

"However long we may wait," he exclaimed at last, impatiently, "the river will not grow narrower, nor the banks less steep, but the army of the Persians will receive new reinforcements every day. If I had listened to your counsels, we should still be at Antioch!"

The generals left him in dismay.

"He cannot hold out!" said the experienced and wise Dagalaiphus, a barbarian who had entered the Roman service, "he cannot hold out. He is gay, it is true, and he even laughs, but still there is something not all right in his face. I have seen an expression like that in the faces of people who were at the point of despair, and tired to death. It is not a wholesome gayety."

The hot misty twilight descended swiftly on the surface of the mighty river. The signal was given. The dip of the oars was heard for a long time; then all was still. The gloom became impenetrable.

Julian looked steadily from the bank. He hid his excitement with a smile. The generals whispered to each other. Suddenly a fire flashed up in the darkness. All held their breaths, and turned their eyes to the emperor. He understood what that fire meant. The Persians had succeeded in setting fire to the Roman ships with fire-bolts, thrown down skilfully from the steep bank.

He grew pale, but came to himself in a moment, and without giving the soldiers time to think, threw himself into the first vessel that came to hand, moored close to the bank, and cried aloud, with a triumphant smile to the army:

“Victory, victory! See! the fire! They have scaled the bank and taken possession of it. I ordered the cohort that was sent to light fires in sign of victory. Follow me, companions!”

“What are you doing?” the cautious Sallustius whispered to him; “we are lost. That is a conflagration.”

“Cæsar has gone mad,” Hormisdas muttered to Dagalaiphus, in terror.

The cunning barbarian shrugged his shoulders in bewilderment.

The army hastened towards the bank with irresistible speed. With a triumphant cry of: “Victory! victory!” they urged each other on, vying with each other, falling into the water and climbing out again, swearing merrily, and all swarmed aboard the boats. Several small barques were almost upset. There was no more room on the galleys.

Many horsemen swam in, turning the breasts of their horses up the swift current. The Kelts and Bavarians pushed off into the dark river on their

huge leather shields bent like coracles. They swam through the mist utterly fearless, and their shields whirled round in the swift eddies, but not noticing their danger, the soldiers raised the joyful cry: "Victory, victory!"

The force of the current was temporarily broken by the ships which dammed the river. The fire on the first five galleys was easily put out.

It was only then that all understood the emperor's daring strategy. But the soldiers only grew merrier. Now, when they had overcome such a danger, everything seemed possible.

Not long before the dawn, they gained possession of the heights, on the opposite bank. The Romans had hardly had time to refresh themselves with a short sleep, without taking off their armor, when they saw a huge army in the dawning light, stretching from the walls of Ctesiphon to the plain in front of the city.

The battle lasted for twelve hours. The Persians fought with the fury of despair. It was here that Julian's army for the first time encountered huge battle-elephants that could crush a whole cohort, like a field of corn.

The victory was such as the Romans had not gained since the times of the great emperors, Trajan, Vespasian and Titus. At sunrise, Julian offered a solemn sacrifice to Ares the War-god: ten white bullocks of rare beauty, that recalled the images of the consecrated oxen on the ancient Greek bas-reliefs. Every one was in holiday mood. The Tuscan augurs alone maintained an obstinate and malicious silence as before. With every victory that Julian won, they grew more gloomy, secretive and enigmatical. The first bullock was

led up to the lighted altar, wreathed with laurels. The ox walked sluggishly and quietly, then suddenly slipped and fell on its knees, with a strange and piteous lowing like a human voice, at the sound of which a chill crept over every one's body; then it laid its muzzle in the dust, and before the two-edged axe of the victimarius touched its broad forehead, it shivered and died. They brought another. It fell dead in the same way. Then a third, and a fourth. All came up to the altar listless, weak, hardly able to stand, as if they were stricken with a mortal illness, and lowing mournfully, fell dead. A murmur of terror spread through the army. It was a terrible omen.

Many asserted that the Tuscan augurs had intentionally poisoned the oxen, in order to take vengeance on the emperor for his contempt of their sooth-saying.

Nine oxen fell. The tenth broke loose, burst its cords, and charged, bellowing and scattering confusion through the army. It ran out through the gates of the camp, and the soldiers were not able to catch it.

The sacrifice was disorganized. The augurs were malignantly delighted.

When they cut open the dead bullocks, Julian's practised eye saw in their intestines certain and dire auspices. He turned away. His face was covered with pallor. He tried to smile and could not. Suddenly he approached the blazing altar, and kicked it with all his strength. The altar swayed, but did not fall. The crowd sighed heavily like a single man. The prefect Sallustius hurried up to the emperor and whispered to him:

"The soldiers are watching. Better cut the service short."

Julian pushed him aside, and kicked the altar harder. The altar fell, and the ashes were scattered on the ground. The fire went out, but the aromatic smoke rose in still thicker clouds.

"Woe, woe unto us! the altar is polluted!" cried some one's voice, in the crowd.

"I tell you that he is mad," muttered Hormisdas, in terror, seizing Dagalaiphus by the arm. "Look at his face. I wonder the rest do not see it."

The Tuscan augurs stood as before calm, unmoved, with stern, impassive faces.

Julian raised his hands towards the sky. His eyes shone. He cried aloud:

"I swear by the everlasting joy hidden here in my heart that I renounce you, as you have renounced me, I turn away from you as you have turned away from me, blessed, powerless gods! I stand alone against you, shadows of Olympus! I am like unto you; but not your equal, because I am a man, and you are only gods. Long has my heart thirsted for this final liberation, and now I tear our treaty in pieces. I laugh at my superstitious fear, at the childish lisp of your prophecies. I have lived like a slave, and might have died like a slave, but I have awakened, I have understood,—I am stronger than the gods, because, subject to death, I have conquered death. There is no more place for dejection, there is no place for fear, no place for sacrifices, no place for prayers. It is finished. Henceforth, there will not be one shadow in my life, nor any trembling, nothing but eternal Olympian laughter, which I rob you of; and when

I die, nothing but the heavenly fire, which I wrest from you, immortals! My life shall be like the motionless azure, in which ye once dwelt and now die, giving place to us, who are like unto the gods!"

A bent nonagenarian augur, with a long white beard and a crooked priestly crozier, came up to the emperor and laid his still firm, strong hand on his shoulder:

"Hush, my child, hush! If you have won the secret, rejoice in silence. Do not lead the crowd away. Those are listening to you, who may not understand."

The murmur of discontent grew stronger.

"He is raving. He is simply raving," Hormisdas whispered to Dagalaiphus, "he should be taken to his tent. Otherwise things may turn out ill."

Oribasius hurried up to Julian, with his wonted air of concern, as a self-forgetting physician. He cautiously took the emperor by the arm, and began to address him insinuatingly, as people talk to a sick man:

"Most gracious Augustus, you need rest. You have not slept for two nights. How hot your hands are! There are dangerous fevers in these lands,—let us go to your tent. The sun is injurious. Your illness may be aggravated."

The emperor looked at him with a vague smile:

"Wait, Oribasius. I have forgotten something. Yes—yes. This is the most important thing. Listen,—do not say: the gods are no more, but, the gods are not yet. They are not, but they shall be,—not in the heavens, but here, upon earth. We shall all be as gods, only we must have mighty dar-

ing, such as no man has yet had on earth, not even the hero, Alexander of Macedon."

The disturbance among the soldiers grew dangerous. The murmurs and exclamations grew into an open expression of dissatisfaction. No one understood anything clearly, but all felt that something evil was happening. Some cried out in superstitious terror:

"Sacrilege! sacrilege! Lift up the altar! Why do the priests look on?"

Others answered:

"The priests have poisoned Cæsar, because he would not listen to their counsels. Beat the priests! They are bringing us to destruction!"

The Galileans, taking advantage of a favorable opportunity, hurried and pushed in every direction, with most humble countenances, smiling and whispering to each other, inventing gossip, and like snakes awakening from their serpent's sleep, just warmed by the sun, began to hiss:

"Can you not see? God is punishing him. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! The devils have gained dominion over him, the devils have confused his reason,—and so he rises up against the very gods for whom he renounced the One God."

The emperor, as if awakening from a deep sleep, enveloped them all in a slow glance, and finally, with an expression of perfect calm, asked Oribasius:

"What is the matter? What are they shouting about? What has happened? Oh, yes, the overturned altar."

He looked at the ashes of incense, smouldering in the dust, with a sad mockery:

“Do you know, my learned friend, that nothing wounds people like the truth? Poor silly children! Well, well, let them cry, let them weep; they will soon be consoled again. Come, Oribasius, let us go into the shade. You are right, the sun must be too strong for me. My eyes are sore. I am tired.”

Julian walked slowly, leaning on the physician's arm. Entering his pavilion, he signed to all to depart, by a listless gesture. They closed the doors, and it grew dark within the tent.

The emperor went to his hard traveling couch, —a lion's skin,—and fell helplessly on it. He lay thus for a long time on the ground, pressing his head between his hands, as he used to in childhood, after sorrow or insult.

“Softly, softly, Cæsar is ill,” the generals tried to calm the excited soldiers.

The soldiers grew quiet, and kept silent.

Silence fell over the Roman camp, as over a sick-room, a silence full of ominous and harassing expectation.

The Galileans alone did not wait nor linger, but hurried hither and thither, gliding unobserved and penetrating everywhere, spreading dark rumors, and hissing as snakes hiss when they wake from their serpents' sleep, warmed by the sun.

“Can you not see? God is punishing him. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!”

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW THE SHIPS WERE BURNED.

Oribasius looked cautiously into the tent several times, and offered the sick man a cooling draught. Julian declined it, and asked to be left in peace. He feared human faces, sounds, and light.

Clasping his head in his hands as before, he tried to think of nothing, to forget where he was, and what had happened to him.

The unnatural strain on his will, which he had maintained for three months, deserted him and left him weak and broken, as if he had had a long illness.

He hardly knew whether he was asleep or awake.

Pictures passed before him, changing and melting into each other with irresistible swiftness and torturing clearness.

First it seemed to him that he was lying in the great cool chamber in Macellum. His decrepit old nurse Labda was crossing him for the night, and the snorting of the war-horses turned into the ridiculous, abrupt snoring of the old pedagogue Mardonius. He was full of joy at feeling himself once more a little boy, quite unknown, far from everybody, amongst the mountains of Cappadocia.

Then he seemed to smell the familiar, fresh and delicate odor of hyacinths, softly warmed by the March sun, in the snug little garden of Olympiodorus the priest, and to hear the dear, silvery laughter of Amaryllis, and the murmuring of the

fountain, the sound of the bronze cups, in the game of cottabus, and Diophane's cry from the kitchen, before dinner: "My children, the ginger cakes are ready."

Then all vanished.

And he heard only how the first flies of January, rejoicing in the heat of noon, sang their springtide songs in a corner sheltered from the wind, on the white wall beside the sea. At his feet, the bright green waves died away without foam. He watched the sails with a smile, as they sank in the infinite softness of the sea and the winter sun, knowing that in that blessed loneliness there was none but he, and like the black flies on the wall, feeling only the innocent gladness of life, the sunlight and the stillness.

Suddenly Julian awoke, and remembered that he was in the depths of Persia, that he was the Roman emperor, that he had sixty thousand soldiers on his hands, that the gods were not, that he had thrown down the altar and committed sacrilege. He shuddered. A cold chill ran through his body. It seemed to him that he had broken loose, and was falling through an abyss, and had nothing to catch hold of.

He could not say whether he had lain in that trance one hour or twenty-four.

But the voice of his faithful old slave sounded clear, not in dream, but in broad wakefulness, as he cautiously put his head into the door:

"Cæsar! I am afraid to disturb you, but I dare not disobey you. You ordered me to tell you without delay. The General Arintheus has just reached the camp."

"Arintheus!" cried Julian, and sprang to his

feet, awakened as if by a thunderclap, "Arintheus! Call him, call him hither!"

Arintheus was one of his bravest generals who had been sent with a small division to the north, to find out whether the auxiliary army of thirty thousand men under Procopus and Sebastian was approaching,—the army which had been ordered to join the forces of Rome's ally, Arsaces King of Armenia, and to unite with the emperor under the walls of Ctesiphon. Julian had long been waiting for these reinforcements. The fate of the main army depended on them.

"Bring him here," exclaimed the emperor, "Bring him here. Quick! Or, no. I will go myself."

But his weakness had not quite passed, in spite of his momentary excitement. His head felt dazed. He closed his eyes and had to lean for support against the canvas wall of the tent.

"Give me some wine—strong—with cold water."

The old servant bustled about, hurriedly filled a drinking-cup, and gave it to the emperor.

Julian drank it in slow draughts, to the last drop, and sighed with relief. Then he left the tent.

It was late in the evening. A storm was passing, far away across the Euphrates. The gusts of wind brought a fresh dampness, a smell of rain.

Through the dark clouds a few big stars were shimmering like lamp-flames flickering in the wind. The cry of the jackals was borne up from the desert. Julian bared his breast, turned his face to the wind, and felt with delight the vigorous caress of the departing storm playing with his hair.

He smiled, remembering his faintness of spirit. His weakness vanished. The pleasant tension of moral forces returned like an intoxication. His nerves were strained like tightened chords. He felt a desire to command, to act, to keep vigil through the whole night, to go into battle, to play with life and death, to vanquish danger. Only from time to time a cold chill ran over his body. Arintheus came up.

His tidings were melancholy. Every hope of help from Procopius and Sebastian had disappeared. The emperor was deserted by his allies, in the unknown depths of Asia.

There were gloomy rumors of treachery, of the crafty Arsaces having betrayed him.

At that moment the emperor was informed that a Persian fugitive from King Sapor's camp wished to speak to him.

He was brought.

The Persian prostrated himself before Julian, and kissed the earth. He was a monster of disfigurement. His shaven head was scarred with Asiatic tortures, his ears were cut off, his nostrils were slit open, so that he looked like a skull. But his eyes were full of intelligence and decision. He wore costly raiment of fire-colored Sogdian silk, and spoke in broken Greek. Two slaves accompanied him.

The Persian, who called himself Artabanes, said that he was a satrap who had been calumniated to Sapor and disfigured by tortures, and that he had fled to the Romans to be revenged on the king.

"Oh universal ruler!" said Artabanes, in an inflated and flattereering voice, "I shall deliver Sapor unto thee, tied hand and foot like a sheep for the

sacrifice. I shall lead thee by night to his camp and thou shalt softly, softly cover the king with thy hand, and take him, as children take nestlings in their palms. Only hearken to Artabanes. Artabanes can do all things. Artabanes knows the secrets of the king."

"What do you want of me?" asked Julian.

"A mighty vengeance! Come with me."

"Whither?"

"To the north, across the desert,—three hundred and twenty-five parasangs,—then across the mountains to the east, straight to Susa and Ecbatana."

The Persian pointed to the horizon.

"Thither, thither," he repeated, not taking his eyes off Julian's.

"Cæsar," Hormisdas whispered in the emperor's ear, "Beware! That man has an evil eye. He is a wizard, a knave, or,—let it not be spoken at night,—something worse. Sometimes dark things stir in these lands at night. Drive him away, do not listen to him."

The emperor paid no heed to Hormisdas' words. He felt a strange enchantment in the Persian's supplicating, steady gaze.

"You know the road to Ecbatana well?"

"Oh yes, yes, yes," muttered the Persian, with an ecstatic laugh, "I know it—how could I fail to know it? Every blade of grass, every well in the wilderness. Artabanes knows what the birds sing, hears how the feather-grass grows, how the springs flow underground. The old wisdom of Zarathustra is in the heart of Artabanes. He will run, he will run before thine army, scenting the trail, pointing out the way. Believe me, and in

twenty days all Persia shall be in thy hands, as far as India, as far as the Ocean!"

The emperor's heart beat rapidly.

"Is it possible," he thought, "that this is the miracle I have waited for? In twenty days Persia shall be in my hands!"

His breathing stopped, for joy.

"Drive me not away," murmured the monster, "I will lie like a dog at thy feet. When I beheld thy face, I loved thee, I loved thee, universal ruler, more than mine own soul, because thou art mighty! I would that thou shouldst step on my body, and crush me under thy feet, and I will lick the dust from thy feet, and sing: 'Glory, glory, glory to the Son of the Sun, to Julian, king of East and West!'"

He kissed his feet. The two slaves fell on their faces to the ground, repeating:

"Glory, glory, glory!"

"What am I to do with the ships?" muttered Julian, deep in thought, as if to himself, "to leave them without a guard, as a prey to the enemy, or to remain with them?"

"Burn them!" whispered Artabanes.

Julian shuddered, and looked inquiringly in his face.

"Burn them?—what do you say?"

Artabanes raised his head, and his eyes pierced the eyes of the emperor:

"Thou fearest, thou? No, no, men are afraid, but not gods! Burn them, and thou shalt be free as the wind, the ships will not fall into the hands of the enemy, and thy army will be strengthened by the soldiers withdrawn from the fleet. Be mighty and fearless to the end! Burn them, and

in ten days thou shalt be at Ecbatana, and in twenty Persia shall be in thy hands! Thou shalt be greater than Phillip's son, who overcame Darius. Only burn the ships, and follow me! Or thou dardest not?"

"And if this is a lie?" If I read in thy heart that all this is a lie?" exclaimed the emperor, siezing the Persian by the throat with one hand, and holding his short sword above him with the other.

Hormisdas heaved a sigh of relief.

For several moments, they silently looked each other in the eyes. Artabanes did not flinch before the emperor's gaze. Julian felt himself once more conquered by the influence of those bold and supplicating eyes.

"Let me die, let me die by thy hand if thou believest not!" repeated the Persian.

Julian loosed him, and returned the sword to its scabbard.

"It is terrible and sweet to look into thine eyes!" continued Artabanes, "for thy face is as the face of a god! None know it yet. I alone know who thou art. Cast not away thy slave, oh Lord!"

"We shall see," said Julian, meditatively, "I myself have long wished to penetrate the desert, and seek battle with the king. But the ships—"

"Oh yes, the ships!" broke in Artabanes, "we must depart this very night, before the dawn, while it is yet dark, so that the enemy in Ctesiphon may not know. Wilt thou burn them?"

Julian made no answer.

"Take him away," commanded the emperor to the soldiers, pointing to the fugitive, "and guard him carefully."

Returning to his tent, Julian stood for a moment in the doorway and raised his eyes.

"Can it be? so easy and so soon? I feel that my will is like the will of the gods! I have not time to think, and it is already accomplished."

The gladness in his soul grew and swelled like a storm. With a smile, he pressed his hand to his heart, so strongly was it beating. The chill still ran over him, and his head ached as if he had spent the whole day in too strong sunlight.

Cæsar, calling the old General Victor who was blindly and boundlessly devoted to him, to his tent, gave him his gold ring with the imperial seal.

"To the commanders of the fleet, Constantianus and Lucillianus," commanded Julian, "to burn the ships before dawn, except the five largest with corn, and twenty boats for temporary bridges. They are to be taken. The rest are to be burned. Whoever resists, answers with his head. Keep it all secret. Go!"

He gave him a fragment of papyrus, after quickly writing a few words on it,—a laconic order to the commanders of the fleet.

Victor, as was his wont, showed no astonishment and made no reply, but silently, with an expression of passive obedience, kissed the hem of the emperor's robe, and went forth to fulfil his command.

Julian summoned a council of war in spite of the late hour.

The generals assembled in his tent, gloomy, secretly irritated, and suspicious.

In a few words, he informed them of his plan to go to the north, to the interior of Persia, in the

direction of Susa and Ecbatana, so as to take the king unawares.

All the generals arose and spoke at once, hardly concealing their opinion that the emperor's plan was madness. On the stern faces of these wise old men who were inured to every danger, there was an expression of weariness, dejection and suspicion. Many expressed themselves sharply.

"Where are we going? What do you want?" said Sallustius Secundus, "bethink yourself, gracious Cæsar. We have conquered half Persia. Sapor offers you such conditions of peace as the kings of Asia have never offered to a Roman conqueror, not even to the great Pompey, nor to Septimius Severus, nor Trajan. Let us make a glorious peace, while it is not too late, and return to our native land."

"The soldiers murmur," remarked Dagalaiphus, "do not bring them to despair. They are weary. Many are wounded. Many are sick. If you lead them further into the unknown desert, we can answer for nothing. Have pity on them! And it is time for you also to rest. Perhaps you are more tired than any of us."

"Let us turn back," they all cried; "to go further is madness!"

At that moment, an indistinct and menacing murmur was heard through the wall of the tent, like the roar of distant surge. Julian stopped to listen, then immediately understood that it was a mutiny.

"You know my will," he said, with cold haughtiness, showing the generals to the entrance of the tent. "It is unchangeable. I need nothing more. In two hours we start. See that all is ready."

"Blessed Augustus," said Sallustius quietly and respectfully, but with a slight tremor in his voice, "I cannot go without saying what I have to say. You have spoken to us, your equals, not in power, but in valor, not as a Roman, nor as a disciple of Socrates and Plato. We can justify your words only by a momentary irritation, which darkens your godlike reason."

"What then?" said Julian, sneering, and paling with hidden wrath, "the worse for you, my friends! It means that you are in the hands of a madman. I have just ordered the admirals to burn the ships,—and my command is being carried out. I foresaw your two great reasonableness, and cut off the last pathway for retreat. Yes, your lives are now in my hands, and I shall make you believe in miracles!"

All were struck dumb. Only Sallustius sprang toward Julian, and caught him by the hand.

"It is impossible, Cæsar. You could not!—or is it true?"

He did not finish, and dropped the emperor's hand. All sprang out to listen.

The cries of the soldiers beyond the canvas wall grew louder, and the mutinous uproar came closer, like a storm passing over a vast forest.

"Let them shout!" said Julian, calmly, "poor, foolish children! Where could they go, away from me? Listen! That is why I burned the ships,—the hope of the cowards, the consolation of the indolent. In twenty days Asia will be in our hands. I have surrounded you with terror and destruction, that you may conquer all and become like me. Rejoice! I shall lead you like Dionysus,

through the whole world, and you will conquer men and gods, and will yourselves be as gods!"

He had hardly pronounced the last words, when a cry of despair arose throughout the whole army:

"The ships are burning! The ships are burning!"

The generals ran out of the pavilion, Julian followed them. They saw the sky all red. Victor had faithfully fulfilled his lord's commands. The fleet was in flames. The emperor watched it with a strange and silent smile.

"Cæsar! May the gods pardon us,—he has escaped!"

With these words one of the centurions threw himself at Julian's feet, pale and trembling.

"Escaped? Who? What do you say?"

"Artabanes, Artabanes! Woe unto us. He has deceived you, Cæsar!"

"Impossible! And his servants?" stammered the emperor, hardly audibly.

"They have just confessed under torture," continued the centurion, "that he is not a satrap, but a tax-collector of Ctesiphon. He invented this ruse to save the city, and deliver you into the hands of the Persians by leading you into the wilderness. He led you to set fire to the ships. And they said further that Sapor was approaching, with a great army.

The emperor hastened to the river-bank, to meet General Victor.

"Quick, quick, extinguish the fires!"

But his words died on his lips, and looking at the burning fleet, Julian understood that his command was folly, and that no human power could

stay the flames, fanned by the strong gusts of wind.

He seized his head in terror, and although there was neither faith nor prayer in his heart, he raised his eyes to heaven, as if seeking something there.

The pale stars hardly shone through the redness of the sky.

The army grew more and more tumultuous.

“The Persians set fire to them!” cried some, stretching forth their hands toward the blazing ships, their last hope.

“It was not the Persians but the generals themselves, to draw us into the wilderness, and desert us,” cried others.

“Beat the priests, beat the priests!” repeated others, “the priests have drugged Cæsar, and taken away his reason.”

“Glory to Augustus Julian, the Conqueror,” cried the faithful Gauls and Kelts, “be silent, traitors! While he lives, we have nothing to fear.”

The cowardly wept:

“Let us go home! We will go no further, we will not go into the wilderness. We will not take a step further; we will fall by the way—better slay us!”

“We shall never see our homes again. We are lost, brothers! We have fallen into the Persian’s snare.”

“Can you not see?” triumphed the Galileans, “that the devils have gained dominion over him! The impious Julian has sold his soul to them, and they are carrying it to destruction. Whither can a madman lead us, who is in the power of the devils?”

And at the same time Cæsar, seeing nothing and hearing nothing as if in delirium, whispered to himself, with a wandering, weak and vacant smile:

“It is all the same; it is all the same! the miracle will happen. If not now, then later. I believe in the miracle.”

CHAPTER XVII.

ARSINOË'S TEMPTATION.

It was the first halt on the retreat, in the beginning of June. The army had refused to go further.

The prayers, promises and threats of the emperor were equally in vain. Kelts, Scythians, Romans, Christians, and heathens, brave and cowardly alike,—all answered him with the cry: “Back, back, to our homes again!”

The generals were full of secret satisfaction. The Tuscan augurs triumphed openly.

All revolted after the burning of the ships.

Not only the Galileans, but the worshippers of the Olympian gods also, were now convinced that over the emperor's head hung a curse, that the Furies were pursuing him.

When he entered the camp, all conversation ceased and all made way for him fearfully.

The books of the Sibyl and the Apocalypse, Tuscan augurs and Christian seers, gods and angels united to condemn the common foe.

Then the emperor declared that he would lead them homewards through the province of Corduene, in the direction of the fertile Chiliocomus.

In retreating by this route, he at least retained some hope of uniting with the soldiers of Procopius and Sebastian.

Julian consoled himself with the thought that he had not yet left the boundaries of Persia, and consequently might meet the chief forces of Sapor, and achieve such a victory as would set everything right.

The Persians did not appear again. Wishing to wear out the Roman army before making a final onslaught, they set fire to the rich fields with their golden barley and oats already ripe, and burnt all the dwelling-houses and granaries in the villages.

Julian's soldiers went through a dead desert, smelling of the recent conflagration. A famine began.

To increase their misfortunes, the Persians broke down the banks of the canals, and flooded the burnt-up fields. The springs and streams helped them, overflowing their banks after a short but rapid melting of the snows on the peaks of Armenia.

The water dried up rapidly, under the hot June sun. In the fields, not yet cooled after the fire, stood pools of warm, thick, black mud. In the evening, there arose from the wet wood a heavy exhalation, a horrible smell of rotteness mixed with burning, which infected everything, the air, the water, even the clothes and food of the soldiers.

From the rotting marshes rose myriads of insects, mosquitoes, poisonous gadflies, flies and gnats.

They settled in swarms upon the baggage animals. They fastened on the dusty, sweaty skin of

the legionaries. Their sleepy droning resounded day and night. Horses went mad; oxen broke forth from beneath their burdens and cast their packs on the ground.

After a wearisome march, the soldiers could not count on sleep. There was no escape from the insects, even in the tents. They made their way through the interstices. The soldiers had to wrap themselves up in their hot blankets, covering their heads also, to get any sleep.

From the bite of a tiny yellow-brown fly, came boils and blains, which first itched, then ached, and finally turned into horrible open sores.

For several days the sun had not shone out. The sky was covered with an even pall of white, hot clouds. But their unmoving light was even more blinding for the eyes than the sun. The sky seemed low, flat and smothering, like the hanging ceiling in a hot bath.

Thus they went on, worn, weak, with weary tread, hanging their heads, between the sky implacably lowering, white as lime, and the charred black ground.

It seemed to them that Antichrist himself, a man apostate from god, had led them deliberately into this cursed place to destroy them.

Some murmured, accusing their leaders, but indistinctly, as in delirium.

Others prayed and wept quietly, like sick children, asking their companions for a piece of bread, a mouthful of wine.

Some fell by the way from weakness.

The emperor gave orders to distribute to the hungry soldiers the last food supplies which were being kept for himself and his suite.

He himself ate thin flour pottage, with a small piece of lard, food such as the not very particular soldiers would have turned away from.

Thanks to the utmost abstinence, he felt a restless excitement, and at the same time a strange lightness in his body, as if he had wings. It supported him and increased his powers tenfold.

He tried not to think of the future. To return to Antioch or Tarsus, beaten, a mockery and laughing-stock for the Galileans,—he knew well that he could not endure it, if he were to accept this thought even for a moment.

That night the soldiers rested. A north wind drove away the insects. The oil, wine and flour, given out from the emperor's last reserves, somewhat stayed the hunger of the soldiers. Hopes of return were awakened anew. The camp sank into a deep sleep.

Julian went into his tent alone.

For some time he had slept as little as possible, sinking into a light doze only when morning was at hand. If he slept longer, he awoke with terror in his heart, with drops of cold sweat over all his body. He needed the power of consciousness to overcome the torments that gnawed at his soul.

Entering his pavilion, he snuffed the small bronze lamp hanging in the middle of the tent. Parchment rolls were strewn around, part of his traveling library, the Gospels amongst others. He got ready to write. It was his favorite occupation at night. He was writing his philosophic work: "Against the Galileans," begun two months and a half ago, when he was setting out on his journey.

Julian read over his manuscript, lying with his

back to the door of the tent, when suddenly he heard a rustle.

He turned, uttered an exclamation, and leaped to his feet. It seemed to him that he saw a vision. In the doorway was standing a youth in a dark brown tunic of camel's hair, with a dusty sheep-skin thrown over his shoulder,—the so-called "melote" of the Egyptian hermits—with bare feet and palm-leaf sandals.

The emperor looked and waited, unable to utter a word. Silence reigned, such deep silence as comes only in the depth of night.

"Do you remember," said a familiar voice, "do you remember, Julian, how you came to me in the monastery? Then I drove you away, but I could not forget, because you alone were ever near to me."

The youth threw the dark monastic covering aside. Julian saw golden curls, and recognized Arsinoe.

"Whence and how did you come hither? Why are you dressed thus?"

He still feared that it might be a vision; that she might disappear unexpectedly, as she had come.

Arsinoe told him in a few words what had befallen her since they had parted.

Leaving her guardian Hortensius, and distributing nearly all her possessions to the poor, she had long lived among the Galilean hermits, to the south of Lake Mareotis, among the barren Libyan hills, in the terrible deserts of Nitria and Setia. The youth Juventinus, the pupil of blind old Didymus, accompanied her. They visited the ascetics.

"And then?—" asked Julian, not without a secret dread, "what then, girl? did you find what you sought?"

She shook her head, and answered sadly:

"No; only glimpses, only hints and signs, as everywhere."

"Tell me; tell me all," the emperor pressed her, and his eyes gleamed with hope and gratitude.

"Shall I be able to tell you?" she began, slowly. "You see, my friend, I was seeking spiritual freedom, but it does not exist there."

"Yes, yes, is it not so?" said Julian triumphantly; "I told you it was so, Arsinoe! Do you remember?"

She sat down on a stool covered with a leopard skin, and went on quietly, with the same sad smile. He caught at her every word with hungry delight.

* * * * *

"Tell me how you came to leave the wretches?" asked Julian.

"I also had my temptation," answered Arsinoe; "once in the desert among the stones, I found a fragment of pure white marble. I took it up and admired it for a long time, watching it sparkle in the sun, and suddenly I remembered Athens, my youth, art, you,—I seemed to awake. Then I immediately determined to return, to live and die what God made me,—an artist. At that time the old man Didymus dreamed a prophetic dream,—that I had reconciled you with the Galilean."

"With the Galilean?" cried the emperor, and his face immediately clouded over, his eyes grew dark, and the triumphant smile died away from his lips.

"Curiosity brought me to you," continued Arsinoe,— "I wished to know if you had attained

truth along your path, and what you had reached. Disguised as a monk, I set out with brother Juveninus, to Alexandria along the Nile, by ship to Seleucian Antioch, with a great Syrian caravan across Apamea, Epiphania, and Edessa to the frontier. Through many dangers and difficulties, we passed through the desert of Mesopotamia, deserted by the Persians. Not far from the village of Abusata, after the victory at Ctesiphon, we came in sight of your camp. And here I am. And you, Julian?"

He sighed. His head fell on his breast, and he answered nothing.

Afterwards, looking at her from under his brows with a quick supplicating and suspicious glance, he asked:

"And now you hate Him, Arsinoe?"

"No: why should I?" she answered softly and simply. "Why should I hate Him? Did not the sages of Greece come close to what the Galilean said? They who mortify their bodies and souls in the wilderness, are far from Mary's gentle Son. He loved children and liberty and the joys of festivals, and sumptuous white lilies. He loved beauty, Julian! Only we have departed from Him and have wandered and darkened our souls. They all call you the Apostate. But they themselves are Apostates."

The emperor knelt before her, raising his eyes full of entreaty. Tears shone in them and trickled slowly down his emaciated cheeks:

"Do not! do not!" he whispered,—“do not say it! What use is it? Leave me with what I have already! Do not become my enemy anew!"

"No! no!" she exclaimed, with irresistible force, "I must tell you all. Listen! I know that you

love Him! Be silent! it is so,—in this is your curse! Whom have you risen against? In what sense are you His enemy? When you fight against His name, you are nearer His spirit than they who with dead lips repeat: "Lord, Lord!" They are your enemies, not He. When your lips curse the Crucified One, your heart is thirsting for Him. Why do you torture yourself more than the Galilean monks?"

The emperor tore himself from her embrace, and sprang up white as death. His face was distorted, his eyes flashed with a strange hatred. He whispered with trembling lips, with a smile of pain, pride and anger:

"Away, away! depart from me! I know this Galilean guile!"

Arsinoe gazed at him in terror and despair, as at a maniac:

"Julian, Julian! What is it? Is it possible that only for a name—?"

But he had already regained command over himself.

His eyes grew calm, his face became indifferent, almost contemptuous. The Roman Emperor spoke to the Galilean woman:

"Away, Arsinoe! Forget all that I have said. It was a moment of weakness. It has passed. I am calm. You see that we are still strangers to each other. The shadow of the Crucified is between us. You have not renounced Him. Who is not His enemy, cannot be my friend."

She fell on her knees before him:

"Why? why? what are you doing? Have pity on yourself, while it is not too late! This is madness! Recover yourself, or else—"

She did not finish speaking. But he concluded for her, with a haughty smile:

“You would say, Arsinoe, that I shall perish? So be it! I shall follow out my path to the end, whithersoever it may lead me. If, as you say, I was wrong and unjust to the wisdom of the Galileans, remember what I endured from them, how innumerable, how contemptible, were my enemies! Listen! Once in my presence the Roman soldiers found a lion in the marshes of Mesopotamia, persecuted by poisonous flies. They flew into his mouth, his ears, his nostrils, and would not let him breathe; they darkened his shining eyes, and the lion’s might was slowly overcome by their stings. Such will be my death! Such the victory of the Galileans over the Roman Cæsar!”

The girl still stretched forth her white hands to him from the gloom, without words, without hope, like a friend to a friend that is dead. But between them was a gulf, such as the living pass not over.

* * * * *

On the twentieth of July, the Roman army, after a long march through the burned-up plains, found in the deep valley of the river Dura, a little grass that had escaped the fire. The legionaries were unspeakably delighted, lying down and breathing the damp smell of the earth, and pressing the lush, cool grass to their inflamed eyelids and dusty faces.

There was a field of ripe wheat at hand. The soldiers gathered the ears. Three days they rested in the sheltering valley of the Dura.

On the morning of the fourth, the Roman sentries noticed a cloud, like smoke or dust on the

neighboring hills. Some thought that it was a herd of wild asses, gathered together to protect themselves from the attacks of lions; others thought that it was the Saracens, attracted by rumors of the siege of Ctesiphon; while others feared that it was the main army of King Sapor himself.

The emperor commanded to sound the trumpet.

The cohorts, in close defensive order, a great regular circle, protected by their shields, closed up and forming an unbroken wall of bronze, took up their position on the bank of the stream.

The curtain of smoke or dust remained on the horizon until evening, and no one could guess what was hidden behind it.

The night was dark and silent. Not a star shone in the sky.

The Romans did not sleep. They stood round their blazing camp-fires, and awaited the morning, in silent uncertainty.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LAST BATTLE.

At sunrise, they saw the Persians. The enemy moved slowly forward. On the estimation of experienced warriors, there were not less than two hundred thousand of them. New and ever new ranks kept appearing from behind the hills.

The flashing of their armor was so bright that even through the thick dust, the soldiers' eyes could hardly endure it.

The Romans silently left their camp in the valley and drew up in battle array.

Their faces were stern but not downcast.

Danger put an end to hostility. All eyes were again turned to the emperor. Galileans and heathens alike tried to guess from the expression of his face what were their hopes of victory.

Cæsar's face shone with gladness. He waited for the attack of the Persians as for a miracle, knowing that victory would set all right, and give him such honor and power that the Galileans could not withstand him.

Danger gave him wings. A strange, joyful fire gleamed in his eyes.

He was beautiful as a hero of old Hellas.

The close dusty morning of the 22d of July foretold a hot day.

The emperor was unwilling to load himself with the heavy bronze armor. He remained in a light silken tunic.

The general Victor came up to him, holding a breastplate in his hand.

"Cæsar, I have dreamed an evil dream. Do not tempt fate, but put on your armor!"

Julian silently pushed it aside with his hand.

The old man knelt down, holding up the light armor:

"Put it on! Have pity on your slave! The battle will be dangerous."

Julian took the round shield, threw the flowing purple over his shoulder, and leaped on his horse:

"Let me alone, old man! I do not need it."

And he set forth, his Bœotian helmet shining in the sunlight, with its tall crest of gold.

Victor looked after him, anxiously shaking his head.

The Persians were approaching. There was no

time to lose. Julian drew up the army in the order, "lunare acie, sinuatis lateribus," in the form of a bent crescent. The huge half moon was to plunge its two horns into the Persian multitude, and lay hold on it on both sides. On the right wing, Dagalaiphus commanded; on the left, Hormisdas, and in the center Julian and Victor.

The trumpets sounded.

The earth swayed and rumbled under the soft, heavy tread of the charging Persian elephants. Ostrich feathers waved on their broad foreheads. Towers were fastened on their backs, with leather thongs. From each of them four arches discharged their phalarici,—missiles of burning pitch and tow.

The Roman cavalry did not withstand their first onslaught. With deafening roars from their trunks, the elephants opened their fleshy, damp mouths, so that the soldiers could feel in their faces the breath of the monsters maddened with a mixture of wine, pepper and valerian,—a special stimulant which the barbarians intoxicated them with before battle. Their tusks reddened with cinnabar and lengthened with steel points, ripped open the bellies of the horses. Their trunks caught the riders, and lifting them into the air, hurled them on the ground.

In the midday heat a piercing and acrid smell of sweat came from these grey, swaying giants, with flapping folds of skin. The horses shivered, snorted and stamped when they caught the smell of the elephants.

One cohort had already taken to flight.

It was the Christians.

Julian hastened to stop the fugitives, and strik-

ing the chief decurion in the face with his hand, he cried out angrily:

“Cowards! you only know how to pray!”

The Thracian light-armed archers and Paphlagonian slingers went forward against the elephants.

Behind them went the skilled Illyrian javelin throwers with weapons filled with lead, the “*martio-barbuli*.”

Julian gave orders to aim their arrows at the legs of the monsters, as also stones and the leaden javelins. One arrow struck a huge Indian elephant in the eye. He bellowed, and reared on his haunches. The thongs burst. The saddle with the leather tower fell over and crashed to the ground, the Persian archers falling out of it like young birds from a nest. Confusion broke out among the ranks of elephants. Wounded in the legs, they fell down, and soon a moving mountain of fallen beasts was heaped up round them. Feet lifted in the air, bloody trunks, broken tusks, up-turned towers, half-crushed horses, wounded and dead, Persians and Romans, all were mingled together.

Finally the elephants took to flight, rushing among the Persians and trampling them under foot.

This danger was foreseen in the tactics of the barbarians. The example of the fight at Nisiba had shown that an army might be thrown into confusion by the broken ranks of its own elephants.

Then the Vogatai, with long sickle-shaped knives tied to their right hands, began to strike at the monsters with all their might between two

joints of the spinal column close to the skull. One blow was enough to strike the strongest and biggest of them dead.

The cohorts of *martiobarbuli* threw themselves forward, slipping between the bodies of the wounded, and following up the fugitives.

At that time the emperor was hurrying to the assistance of the left wing.

The Persian *clibanarii* were advancing at this point,—a famous body of horsemen, fastened together by huge chains of bronze and covered from head to foot with thick chain mail, impenetrable, almost invulnerable in battle, like statues cast in bronze. They could only be wounded through the narrow openings of their visors, left for their eyes and mouths.

Against the *clibanarii*, he directed the cohorts of his old faithful friends, the Batavians and Celts. They died for a smile of the Cæsar, watching him with childlike, passionate eyes.

On the right wing, the Roman cohorts were cut into by the Persian chariots yoked with striped, thin-legged zebras. Sharp-edged scythes fastened to the axles and spokes of the wheels, turning with frightful rapidity, cut off the legs of the horses and the heads of the soldiers at a single blow, and mowed their bodies down as easily as the scythe of the reaper cuts a swathe through the soft stems of grain.

After midday, the *clibanarii* grew faint; their armor stuck to them and burned them.

Julian directed all his forces against them.

They wavered and broke in disorder, and the emperor uttered a cry of triumph.

He threw himself forward, pursuing the fugi-

tives, not noticing that the soldiers had fallen behind him.

A few body-guards accompanied Julian, amongst the number the General Victor. The old man, though wounded in the arm, felt no pain. Not for a moment did he leave the emperor, saving him from mortal danger, covering him with his long shield, sharp-pointed below.

The skilful general knew that to follow close after a fleeing army is as unwise as to approach a falling building.

“What are you doing, Cæsar?” he cried to Julian, “take care! Take my armor!”

Julian flew forward unheeding, with arms uplifted, with bare breast, as though he alone, without his army, and by the terror of his countenance and his uplifted hands, would put to flight the innumerable foe.

A joyful smile played on his lips, his Bœotian helmet shone through the clouds of dust raised by the wind, and the folds of his cloak, floating in the breeze, were like two gigantic purple wings which carried the emperor ever farther and farther onward.

The division of the Saracens was fleeing in front of him. One of their horsemen turned, recognized Julian by his dress, and shouted to his companions, with a wild guttural cry, like the shriek of an eagle:

“Malek! Malek!”—“the king! the king!”

They all turned back. Without stopping their horses, they leaped to the ground, in their long, white cloaks, with spears raised above their heads.

The emperor saw a wild, dusky face. He was almost a boy. He was riding on the hump of a

huge Bactrian camel, with lumps of dry dirt sticking to its belly and hanging from its rough hair.

Victor turned two Saracen spears aside with his shield, guarding the life of the emperor.

Then the boy on the camel aimed, and flashing his wild eyes, and savagely gnashing his teeth, cried out in triumph:

“Malek! Malek!”

“How full of joy he looks,” thought Julian, “and I even more.”

He had not time to finish his thought.

The spear whistled through the air, struck him on the right arm, slightly scratched his skin, slipped between his ribs, and buried itself in his side.

He thought that the wound was not severe, and caught the two-edged spear-head to draw it out, but cut his hand. The blood gushed forth.

Julian cried out aloud, throwing back his head, and with wide open eyes looking into the pale blue sky, fell from his horse into the arms of his body-guard.

Victor supported him reverently and gently. The old man's lips trembled and with eyes dim with sorrow he looked at the veiled eyes of his commander.

The belated cohort overtook them.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DEATH OF JULIAN.:

They carried Cæsar to his tent, and laid him on a camp-bed. He did not return to consciousness, but groaned from time to time.

The physician Oribasius drew the sharp blade from the wound, examined it, and washed and bandaged it.

After the bandaging was complete, Julian sighed deeply and opened his eyes.

"Where am I?" he looked round wondering, as if awaking from deep sleep.

From afar the sound of the battle came. He remembered all, and rose from his couch with a great effort.

"Why did you carry me away? Where is my horse? Quick, Victor!"

Suddenly his face was drawn with pain. All sprang forward, to support Cæsar. He pushed Victor and Oribasius aside.

"Leave me! I must be with them till the end!"

And he rose slowly to his feet. There was a smile on his pale lips, and his eyes shone:

"You see, I still can—Quick, my shield, my sword, my horse!"

His soul fought against death. Victor gave him the shield and sword.

Julian took them, and staggering like a child, who had not learned to walk, made two steps forward.

His wound opened. He dropped his weapons, and fell into the arms of Oribasius and Victor, and opening his eyes with a smile of quiet contempt, he exclaimed:

"It is finished! Thou hast conquered, Galilean!"

And resisting no longer he yielded himself up to those who surrounded him. They laid him on the bed.

"Yes, it is finished, friends!" he repeated in a low voice. "I am dying."

Oribasius bent over him, trying to soothe him, and assuring him that wounds like his could be healed.

"Do not deceive me!" said Julian, briefly, "to what end? I am not afraid."

Then he added triumphantly:

"I shall die the death of the wise."

Toward evening he became unconscious.

Hour after hour passed.

The sun set. The battle ceased. They lit a lamp in the tent. Night came on.

He did not return to consciousness. His breathing grew weaker. They thought that he was dying. At last he slowly opened his eyes. His steady, unmoving gaze was strained toward a corner of the tent. A quick, weak whisper broke from his lips. He was delirious.

"You?—Here?—Why? No matter, it is finished. Can you not see? Go! You hated laughter. That is what we cannot forgive."

Then he came to himself for a little while, and asked Oribasius:

"What hour is it? Shall I see the sun?"

And meditating, he added, with a mournful smile:

“Oribasius, is the reason so weak? I know it is bodily weakness. The blood fills the brain and gives birth to visions. It must be conquered. The reason must—”

His thoughts grew once more confused. His gaze became fixed.

“I will not. Do you hear? Depart, Deluder! I do not believe. Socrates died like a god. The reason must—Victor! Victor! What do you want with me, merciless one? Your love is more terrible than death. Your yoke is a heavy yoke. Why do you watch me like that? How I loved you, Good Shepherd, you alone. No, no! Pierced feet? Blood? The death of Hellas? Darkness. I want the sun, the golden sun, on the marble of the Parthenon! Why did you quench the sunlight?”

The dark, quiet hour after midnight came.

The legions returned to the camp. Their victory gave them no joy. In spite of their weariness, almost no one slept. They were waiting for news from the emperor's tent. Many standing beside the waning camp fires were drowsy from weakness, and leaned heavily upon their long spears.

The heavy breathing of the shackled horses was audible, as they munched their oats.

White stripes began to show on the horizon, between the dark tents. The stars grew distant and cold. The air grew damp. The spears and shields began to be covered with a grey layer of dew, like cobwebs. The cocks of the Tuscan augurs began to crow; the wise birds had not been

drowned, in spite of the emperor's command. A soft sadness was over heaven and earth. All things seemed transparent; the near seemed far; the far, near. Round the doorway of Cæsar's camp gathered his friends, the generals, and his suite. In the twilight, they seemed to each other like pale shadows.

A still more solemn silence reigned inside the pavilion. With a monotonous sound, the physician Oribasius stirred some medicinal herbs in a bronze basin, to prepare a cooling drink.

The sick man grew quiet. His delirium left him.

At the dawn, he returned to consciousness for the last time, and asked impatiently:

"When will the sun come?"

"In an hour," answered Oribasius, glancing at the level of the water in the glass walls of the clepsydra.

"Summon the generals!" commanded Julian, "I must speak."

"Gracious Cæsar," observed the physician, "will it not injure you?"

"It is all one. I shall not die before the sunrise. Victor, raise my head higher. So! Good!"

They told him of the victory over the Persians, of the flight of Meranee, the leader of the enemy's cavalry with the king's two sons, of the destruction of fifty satraps. Julian showed neither surprise nor pleasure. His face became indifferent.

His closest friends entered: Dagalaiphus, Hormisdas, Nevitta, Arintheus, Lucillianus, and Salustius, the prefect of the East. In front of them came Jovian. Many, making suggestions for the future, expressed a wish to see this weak, timid

man on the throne, because he would be dangerous to no one. They hoped to rest under him, after the turmoils of a stormy reign. Jovian had the art of pleasing everybody. He was tall and well-favored, with an insignificant face, easily lost in the crowd. He had a well-meaning and insignificant soul.

Here also among the emperor's suite, was a young centurion of the household shield-bearers, the future historian, Ammianus Marcellinus. Everyone knew that he was keeping a diary of the campaign and collecting materials for an extensive historical work. On entering the pavilion, Ammianus drew forth his wax tablets and bronze stylus. He was preparing to write down the emperor's dying speech. On his manly face there was a deep, impassive curiosity, as in the face of an artist, or man of science.

"Raise the curtain," commanded Julian.

They drew back the hangings in the doorway. All stepped back. The coldness of the morning blew in the dying man's face. The door opened toward the east. Not far off was a declivity. Nothing interrupted the horizon.

On the rim of the sky, Julian saw the white clouds, still cold and transparent as ice. He sighed, and then spoke:

"So! Good! Put the lamp out."

They extinguished the lamp. Twilight filled the tent.

All waited in silence.

"Hear, my friends!" Julian began his last speech. He spoke low, but clearly; his face was calm. It wore an expression of the triumph of reason. Invincible will shone in his eyes.

Ammianus Marcellinus began to write. His hand trembled. He knew that he was writing on the tablets of history, recording the last words of a mighty emperor for future generations:

“Hear, my friends, my hour has come, perhaps too soon, but you see that I rejoice, like an honest debtor repaying my life to Nature, and there is neither sorrow nor fear in my soul, but only the quiet gladness of the wise, the foretaste of everlasting rest. I have fulfilled my duty, and recalling the past, I repent of nothing. In the days when, persecuted by all men, I expected death in the desert of Cappadocia, in the castle of Macellum, and afterward, at the summit of my power, I have kept my soul unspotted, striving after the highest goal. If I have not accomplished all that I desired, remember that earthly things are in the hands of Fate. And now I bless the Everlasting, that He has given me to die, not from a lingering illness, nor at the hand of an executioner, or an assassin, but on the field of battle, in the flower of my youth, in the midst of great achievements.

* * * * *

“And now, beloved, tell my enemies and friends how the Hellenes die, through the power of god-like wisdom.”

He ceased speaking. All knelt.

Many wept.

“Why do you weep?” asked Julian, with a smile. “It is unseemly to weep for one who is going home. Victor, be consoled.”

The old man tried to answer but could not, and covering his face with his hands, he wept aloud.

"Hush, hush!" said Julian, turning his gaze to the distant sky; "the sun!"

The clouds lit up. The twilight in the tent grew yellow and warm. The first ray of the sun flashed up. The dying man turned his face toward it.

Then Sallustius Secundus the Prefect of the East, approaching, kissed Julian's hand:

"Blessed Cæsar, whom will you appoint as your successor?"

"It matters not," answered Julian, "Fate will decide. It is useless to resist. Let the Galileans triumph. We shall conquer in the end. There will be a kingdom of godlike men upon the earth, ever full of laughter like the sun! The sun! Behold the sun!"

A faint shudder ran through his body, and with a last effort he raised his hands as though to go forth to meet the sunrise. The dark blood gushed from his wound. The veins stood out on his neck and temples.

"Give me water," he whispered, dying.

Victor raised a deep drinking cup to his lips, a shining vessel of gold full of fresh spring water to the brim. Julian watched the sun, and slowly and with eager draughts he drank the water, transparent and cold as ice.

Then his head fell backward, and from his half-open lips came a last sigh, a last whisper:

"Rejoice, death is like the sun. O Helios! Take me. I am as thou art."

His eyes grew dim. Victor closed his lids.

The emperor's face in the sunlight was like the face of a sleeping Olympian god.

CHAPTER XX.

INNOXIA AND MICA AUREA.

Three months had passed since the Emperor Jovian concluded his shameful treaty with the Persians.

The Roman army had returned to Antioch at the beginning of October, worn out with hunger and endless marches through burning Mesopotamia.

On the march, Anatolius, tribune of the shield-bearers, had made friends with the young historian Ammianus Marcellinus. The two friends decided to go to Italy, to a quiet villa near Baiæ whither Arsinoe had invited them, to rest from the fatigues of their journey, and to be cured of their wounds by the sulphur baths.

On the way, they stopped a few days at Antioch.

Every one was looking forward to a splendid festival in honor of Jovian's accession to the throne, and the return of the army. The peace concluded with King Sapor was disgraceful to the empire; five rich Roman provinces across the Tigris, including Corduene and Regimene, fifteen forts on the frontier, the cities of Singara, Castra-Maurorum, and the old inaccessible fortress of Niziba, which had withstood three assaults of the Persians, passed into Sapor's hands.

But the Galileans were not concerned at the downfall of Rome.

When the news of the Apostate Emperor's death was brought to Antioch, the frightened citizens at

first refused to believe it, fearing that it was a wile of Satan, a new net to catch the feet of the just, but at last they believed it, and went mad with joy.

Early in the morning, the noise of festivities and the cries of the people began to pierce through the closely fastened shutters into Anatolius' sleeping chamber. He awoke, and decided to pass the day at home. The exultation of the multitude disgusted him.

He tried to go to sleep again, but could not; a strange curiosity got the better of him; he dressed rapidly, and went out to the street, without saying anything to Ammianus.

It was a southern autumn morning, fresh but not cold. Great round clouds in the dark blue sky blended with the white marble of Antioch's endless colonnades and porticos. Fountains murmured at the street-corners, and in the market-places and forums. Along the sunny, dusty vistas of the streets, the city aqueducts were seen sprinkling their nets of crystal drops. Pigeons were cooing and picking up grains of barley. There was a smell of flowers, of incense from the open church-doors, and of wet dust. Dusky girls were laughing, sprinkling baskets of pale October roses at the transparent basins, and then weaving them in garlands around the columns of the Christian basilicas, singing joyful psalms the while.

The crowd filled the street with incessant talk and noise. The chariots and litters, the pride of the city council of decurions, moved along the splendid pavement of Antioch in slow procession.

Triumphant cries were heard:

“Long live Jovian Augustus, blessed and mighty!”

Others added: "the conqueror!" but hesitatingly, because the title of "conqueror" looked too like irony.

The street boy who had once drawn charcoal caricatures of Julian on the walls, now clapped his hands, whistled and jumped about, playing in the dust like a sparrow, and crying out in a piercing voice:

"He is dead, the wild boar is dead who laid waste the garden of the Lord."

He repeated these words after his elders; they seemed the more offensive to him, because he did not understand what they meant.

An old hag in tatters, who lived in a foul quarter, in a damp cellar, also crawled forth into the sunlight, like a wood-louse, to enjoy the festival. She brandished her stick, and cried in a trembling voice:

"Julian is dead! The Beast is dead!"

The joy of the festival was also reflected in the wide-open wondering eyes of an infant in the arms of a dusky work-woman from the factory of purple dye. His mother had given him a honey-cake. Watching the many-colored garments in the sun, he stretched out his hands in delight, and suddenly turned his plump, dirty face, smeared with honey, and laughed cunningly, as if he knew perfectly well what it was all about, but would not tell. And his mother proudly thought to herself that her wise boy was pleased at the festival for the death of the Apostate.

An endless sadness filled Anatolius' heart.

But he went onwards, overcome by a strange curiosity.

He approached the cathedral, on the street of

Singon. There was a dense throng on the sun-lit porch. He saw the well-known face of Marcus Ausonius, the questor, leaving the basilica accompanied by two slaves, who pushed a way for him through the crowd with their elbows.

"What is this?" thought Anatolius in wonder, "what has this detester of the Galileans been doing in the church?"

Ausonius' violet-colored cloak was adorned with crosses embroidered in gold, and there were even crosses on the toes of his crimson leather slippers.

Junius Mauricus, another acquaintance of Anatolius, came up to Marcus Ausonius:

"How is your health, worthy sir?" asked Junius, feigning comic wonder, as he examined the official's new Galilean decorations.

Junius was free, and possessed an independent fortune, so that he had nothing in particular to gain by embracing Christianity. He was not the least surprised when his official friends went over to the church in a body, but he took a special pleasure in mocking them every time he met them, questioning them, and playing the part of a deeply offended friend who hid his sorrow under a mask of forced irony.

The crowd passed hastily through the church door. The porch rapidly emptied. Anatolius stood behind a column, listening to their dialogue:

"Why did you not wait till the end of the service?" asked Mauricus.

"Palpitations. It was so close. What can I do, I am not used to it."

And he added thoughtfully:

"That young preacher's style is something extraordinary, all the same. His exaggerations get

on my nerves. As if a piece of iron was scraping across glass. A strange style."

"Truly, this is touching," cried Junius delightedly, "here is a man who has been unfaithful to everything,—except good style."

"No, no, perhaps I have not yet caught the taste," Ausonius interrupted him hurriedly, "please do not think that I am insincere, Mauricus."

The vast fat body of the questor Gargilianus came slowly forth from a deep, soft litter, with groans and sighs:

"I am afraid I am late,—never mind, I can stand in the porch a while; God is a spirit, inhabiting—"

"A miracle!" laughed Junius, "texts of Holy Writ on the lips of Gargilianus!"

"Christ forgive you, my son," answered Gargilianus, unabashed, "what are you always sneering and mocking about?"

"I am trying to count up—how many conversions—how many perversions. I always thought that your convictions at least—"

"What nonsense, my dear! I have only one conviction, that the Galilean cooks are just as good as the Hellenic. And their fast-day dishes are excellent. Come to supper with me, philosopher. I will soon convert you to my faith. You will lick your fingers. After all, is not all the same, my friends, whether you eat a good dinner in honor of Mercury the god, or Mercury the saint? Mere prejudice! What is the harm in a pretty little thing like this?"

And he pointed to a simple amber cross, hanging among the scented folds of rich amethyst-colored purple which covered his portly paunch.

"Look, look, there is Hecebolus, the archpriest of Astarte Dindymene,—the repentant hierophant in the black robe of a Galilean. Oh why art thou not here, poet of the *Metamorphoses*!" cried Junius Mauricus, pointing to a dignified old man, grey-haired, with a serene tranquillity in his pleasant pink face, who was seated in a half-open litter.

"What is he reading?"

"Not the laws of the goddess Astarte!"

"What humility and sanctity! He is thin from fasting. Look how he casts down his eyes, and sighs!"

"Have you heard how he was converted?" asked the questor, with a gay smile.

He probably went and fell at Jovian's feet, as he did at Julian's."

"Oh no, he has a new fashion for everything. It was quite unexpected. A public repentance! He lay on the ground at the door of one of the basilicas, when Jovian was coming out, amongst a crowd of people, and cried in a loud voice: 'Trample me under foot; trample the salt that has lost its savor!' And he wept, and kissed the feet of the passers-by."

"Yes, that was certainly something new. And was it a success?"

"I should think so! They say he had a private conference with the emperor. Oh, people like that will neither burn nor drown. Everything turns their way. They put off their old skins, and look all the younger. Learn from them, my children."

"But what could he have to say to the emperor?"

"Oh, many things," answered Gargilianus, not without secret envy, "for example, he might have

whispered to him: 'Hold firmly to Christianity, and there will not be a heathen left in the world; the true faith will be the strength of your throne.' The way is straight before us, now; far better than in Julian's times."

"Oh, oh, oh, my benefactors! help me, defend me! Save the humble slave Sicumbricus from the lion's claws!"

"What is the matter?" asked Gargilianus of a bow-legged, consumptive shoemaker, with a good-natured, absent-minded expression, and disheveled grey locks. Roman spearsmen were dragging him away to prison.

"They are taking me to jail!"

"What for?"

"For robbing a church."

"What? did you?"

"No, no, I was only in the crowd, and cried out: 'Strike!' once or twice, perhaps. That was in Augustus Julian's time. People said that the Cæsar would be pleased if we wrecked the Galilean churches. And so we wrecked them. And now some evil-minded people have reported that I carried away a silver sacramental fan under my cloak. And I was not even in the church. I only cried out: 'Strike!' once or twice, in the street. I am a peaceful man. I have a poor little shop, in a populous quarter, and if there is a disturbance, the people will certainly rob it. Do you think I did it for myself? What had I to gain? Oh, fathers, protect me!"

"Are you a Christian or a heathen?" asked Junius.

"I don't know, benefactors; I don't know myself. Till the Emperor Constantine's time, I

brought offerings to the gods. Then they baptized me. Then came the Arian trouble, under Constantius. I became an Arian. Then the Hellenes came into power. So I became a Hellene. And now I have gone back to the beginning again. I want to repent, and return to the Arian church. But I do not want to make any mistakes. I knocked down the idolatrous shrine; then I set it up again; and then I knocked it down once more. Everything is in confusion. I don't know myself what I am, and what has happened to me. I am faithful to the powers that be, but I cannot find the truth at all. I miss every time. I am either too soon, or too late. The only thing I see is, that there is no rest for me,—or was I born to this fate? They beat me for Christ's sake, and then they beat me for the gods'. I am afraid for my children. Oh, protect me, benefactors, set the humble slave Sicumbricus free!"

"Don't fear, good friend," said Gargilianus, with a smile, "we will set you free. We will see about your case. You made me a nice pair of shoes, with a creak in them."

Sicumbricus fell on his knees, stretching forth his manacled hands hopefully.

Growing a little calmer, he looked shyly at his protectors, and asked:

"And how about religion now, my masters? Am I to repent and hold fast till the end? There will be no more changes? I am afraid, if they change again—"

"No, no," laughed Gargilianus, "make your mind easy. It is all over. They won't change any more."

Anatolius entered the church, unobserved by

the rest. He wished to hear the famous young preacher, Theodorit.

The oblique rays of the sun trembled in bluish sheaves on the surging waves of incense, as they pierced through the narrow upper window of the vast cupola, like a golden sky, the symbol of the world-conquering Universal Church.

One ray fell on the fiery-red beard of the preacher, who stood on the high ambo. He raised his pale thin hands, transparent as wax, in the sunlight. His eyes burned with triumph. His voice thundered, filling the vast crowd with emotion, and rising to heaven in a cry of revenge:

“As on a tablet of shame, I will write for posterity the story of the evil-doer, the Apostate Julian. And let all ages and all peoples read what I have written; and let them tremble before the just wrath of God. Come hither, torturer! Come hither, crafty serpent! Let us now upbraid thee, let us unite in spirit and cry out, let us sound the timbrels and sing the song of victory, the song of Mariam in Israel, at the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. And let the deserts rejoice and blossom forth like the lily, and let the church, which yesterday was widowed and orphaned in the sight of all, rejoice and be exceeding glad. Behold, from joy I am as one drunken with wine, and mad. But what voice, what gift of words can express that miracle? Where are thy sacrifices, thy offerings and mysteries? Where are the curses and omens of thy augurs? Where is thy art of soothsaying from the entrails of living men? Where is the glory of Babylon? Where are the Medes and Persians? Where are the gods who guarded thee, and whom thou guardest? Where

are thy protectors, Julian? All is vanished, all is scattered and melted away!"

"Oh pet, what a beard!" a withered and powdered dame standing near Anatolius muttered to her companion; "look, look, it is all gold."

"Yes, but his teeth—" said her companion doubtfully.

"What does it matter about his teeth, when he is so handsome?"

"Oh, no, no, Veronica, how can you say so? His teeth matter too. Can you compare the brother of Theophanus—"

Theodorit thundered:

"Behold how the Lord has broken the sinews of the evil-doer! In vain has Julian gathered malice, as wild beasts gather poison. God waited until Julian had put forth all the foulness that was in him, like some unclean sore—"

"We must take care not to be late for the circus," whispered a workman near Anatolius, speaking in his companion's ear, "they say there are she-bears from Britain."

"What? is it possible? she-bears?"

"Yes, it is quite true! One of them is called Mica Aurea,—Golden Crumb, and the other is called Innoxia,—Innocence. They feed them on human flesh. And there are gladiators, too."

"Lord Jesus, are there gladiators? we must take care not to be late. We need not wait till the end—let us slip out quick, brother, or all the places will be taken."

Now Theodorit began to praise Julian's predecessor Constantius, as a Christian benefactor, as a man of pure life, a lover of his kindred.

Anatolius felt faint in the crowd. He left the

church, glad to breathe the fresh air, that smelt neither of incense nor lamp-smoke, and look at the blue sky, no longer hidden by the golden cupola.

In the porch, people were talking loudly, with little reverence for the consecrated building. Important news had spread through the crowd. The two bears were to be brought past immediately in iron cages, on their way to the amphitheatre. When they heard the news, the people began to stream out of the church with preoccupied, eager faces, not waiting for the end of the service.

“What? Where? we are not late? is it true that Golden Crumb is sick?”

“Nonsense. Innocence had stomach-ache during the night. She ate too much. It is all right again now. They are both in good form.”

“Glory to God! Glory to God!”

However sweet the eloquence of Theodorit, it could not rival the charm of the gladiatorial shows and British bears.

The church began to grow empty. Anatolius saw the people running breathlessly from all the corners of the city, and from the deserted basilicas towards the circus. They knocked each other down, scolded and shouted at each other, crushed children, ran over fallen women, lost their sandals, and passed on. Their red, sweaty faces were as full of the fear of being late as if life had been at stake.

And two names passed tenderly from mouth to mouth, like sweet promises of unknown joys:

“Golden Crumb, Innocence,—Mica Aurea, Innoxia.”

Anatolius followed the crowd to the amphitheatre.

According to the Roman custom, the velarium, sprinkled with perfumes, protected the people from the sun, and filled the amphitheatre with a cool, red twilight. The many-headed crowd was already surging over the circular ranges of seats.

Before the games began, the chief officials of Antioch brought a bronze statue of the Emperor Jovian to the imperial lodge, that the people might behold the likeness of their new ruler. In his right hand, the emperor held a globe, surmounted by a cross. A blinding ray of sunlight pierced between the purple strips of the velarium, and fell on the statue. His face lit up, and the crowd looked at the shining head, with its self-satisfied smile. The officials kissed the feet of the image. The mob cried out with joy:

“Glory, glory to the savior of his country, to Augustus Jovian! Julian has perished, the wild boar is punished, who laid waste the garden of the Lord!”

Innumerable hands waved colored handkerchiefs and scarves in the air.

The mob greeted Jovian, as their image, their own spirit, their reflection, ruling over the world. Tears of gladness shone in many eyes.

Mocking at the dead emperor, the mob addressed him as if he was present in the amphitheatre, and could hear:

“Well, philosopher? The wisdom of Plato and Chrysippus did not help you, nor the Thunderer, nor Phoebus the Far-darter protect you! You have fallen into the devil’s claws, and they will tear you to pieces, Apostate! Where are your prophecies, foolish Maximus? Christ and His

God have conquered; we, the lowly, have conquered!"

All believed that Julian had fallen by the hands of the Galileans, and thanked God for that "saving blow," and sang the praises of the regicide.

And when they saw the dusky bodies of the gladiators under the claws of Golden Crumb and Innocence, the crowd was overcome by fury. Their eyes were opened wide, and they had never enough of the sight of blood. The crowd answered the roar of the wild beasts with a still more savage human roar. They sang praises to God, as if it was only now that they beheld the full triumph of the faith:

"Glory to the emperor, the noble Jovian! Christ has conquered, Christ has conquered!"

Anatolius turned in disgust from the foul atmosphere of the mob, the smell of the human herd. Half-closing his eyes, trying not to breathe, he fled to the street, and, returning home, fastened his door, closed the shutters tight, threw himself on the bed, and lay motionless till late in the evening.

But even here, there was no escape from the multitude.

As soon as it grew dark, all Antioch was lit up with fires. At the corners of the basilicas and the lofty pediments of the government buildings, myriads of lamps smoked, flickering in the wind, and torches flared in the streets. And the ruddy glow of the fires penetrated Anatolius' room, through the interstices of the shutters, with an ill-smelling odor of burning pitch and tallow. The drunken songs of legionaries and sailors were heard from the neighboring taverns, and the laughter, cries,

and abusive voices of women of the streets, and above all, like the sound of many waters, rose unceasing praises of Jovian the Savior, and curses at Julian the Apostate.

Anatolius, raising his hands to the sky, exclaimed with bitter mockery:

“Thou hast conquered indeed, Galilean!”

CHAPTER XXI.

CONCLUSION.

A great merchant trireme, with soft Asian carpets and vases of olive oil, was voyaging from Antiochian Seleucia to Italy. Through the islands of the Ægean Archipelago it sailed towards Crete, where it was to take on board a cargo of wool, and drop several monks, bound for a solitary retreat beside the sea shore. The elders, who kept to the fore part of the ship, passed the day in pious conversations, prayers, and the customary occupation of the monasteries, weaving baskets of palm-leaves.

At the other end of the ship, at the poop, crowned with an image of Athene Tritonides carved of oak, under a light awning of violet-colored cloth, to temper the sun's rays, were gathered other travelers, with whom, as being heathens, the monks had no intercourse. They were Anatolius, Ammianus Marcellinus, and Arsinoe.

It was a calm evening. The rowers, Alexandrian galley-slaves with shaven heads, slowly dipped and raised their long bending oars, singing a melancholy song.

The sun hid behind the clouds.

Anatolius watched the waves, remembering the poet's phrase: "the much-laughing sea." After the stir, heat and dust of the streets of Antioch, after the ill-smelling atmosphere of the mob, and the smoke of the festival lamps, he breathed freely, repeating:

"Oh much-laughing sea, take me, and wash my soul!"

Callimnos, Amorgos, Astyphalæa, Thera, floated past them, one after another, like dream-islands, now rising above the sea, now disappearing again, like the daughters of the ocean dancing their everlasting dance. It seemed to Anatolius that the days of the Odyssey had not yet vanished here.

His fellow-travelers did not disturb his silent reveries. Each of them was absorbed in his own occupations. Ammianus Marcellinus was arranging his notes of the Persian expedition and the life of Julian, and in the evening, as a relaxation, he read the famous work of the Christian teacher, Clement of Alexandria, entitled "Stromata," the "Variegated Carpet."

Arsinoe was making wax models for a large statue.

It was a naked, beautiful body, an Olympian god, with a face full of an expression of unearthly melancholy. Anatolius wished to ask her who it was, Dionysus or Christ, but could not make up his mind to ask.

The sculptress had long laid aside her monastic garments. The pious turned away from her in horror, calling her an apostate. But the glorious name of her ancestors, and the memory of the great treasures with which she had formerly en-

riched many Christian monasteries, saved her from open persecution.

She still retained a moderate fortune from her former wealth,—enough to ensure her a life of independence.

She still had a little estate on the shore of the Bay of Naples, not far from Baiæ, and the villa in which Myra's last days had been spent.

Here Arsinoe, Ammianus, and Anatolius had decided to rest after the stormy years which they had just passed through, in perfect quiet, in service of the Muses.

The former nun now wore almost the same costume as before she had taken the veil. The simple, noble folds of the peplum once more made her resemble an Athenian girl of the olden days. But her garment was of dark stuff, and her pale gold curls just flashed from under a dark hood which covered her head. There was a stern and almost severe wisdom in her brilliant black eyes, that never laughed. Only the arms of the artist, bare to the shoulders, shone white from under the folds of the peplum, while she worked impatiently, almost angrily, pressing and moulding the soft wax. Anatolius felt the daring force of those white, impetuous arms.

On that quiet evening, the ship was passing a small island.

None of them knew its name. From a distance, it seemed a barren cliff. But to escape the hidden reefs, the ship had to put in close to the land: here, round the precipitous cliff, were such transparent depths that they could see silvery-white patches of sand at the bottom, alternating with black tufts of sea-weed.

Beyond the dark cliffs, green meadows appeared. Sheep were grazing in them. On the head of the cape grew a plane-tree.

Anatolius noticed a boy and a girl beside its mossy roots. They were probably the children of poor shepherds. Beyond them, in a cypress grove, gleamed a white marble statue of goat-footed Pan, with a nine-stemmed pipe.

Anatolius turned towards Arsinoe, to draw her attention to that quiet corner of lingering Hellas. But the words died away on his lips.

The artist was gazing fixedly at her creation, with a smile of strange mirth, looking at the wax statue, the ambiguous and fascinating image, with its beautiful Olympian body, and the unearthly sadness in its face.

A feeling of oppression filled Anatolius' heart. He asked Arsinoe passionately, almost angrily, pointing to the statue:

"What is it? what are you representing?"

Slowly, as if by an effort, she raised her eyes: "The Sibyl should have such eyes," he thought to himself.

"Arsinoe, do you think people will understand you?" asked Anatolius.

"Is it not all the same?" she answered quietly, with a sad smile.

And after a silence she added, in a still lower voice, as if speaking to herself:

"He will stretch forth his hands to the world. He must be implacable and terrible, like Mithradionysus in his beauty and strength, pitiful and gentle."

"What are you saying, Arsinoe? What a contradiction! How can that be?"

“Who knows? For us it is impossible, but in the future—”

The sun sank lower.

A cloud lay beneath it on the horizon, waiting. Its last rays lit up the island with a melancholy tenderness. The shepherd and the girl approached the altar of Pan, to perform the evening oblation.

“Do you think, Arsinoe,” continued Anatolius, “that unseen brothers will take up the thread of our lives, where we drop it, and carry it on still further? Do you hope that all will not perish in that barbarous darkness that is descending over Rome and Hellas? If that were so, if we could know that in the future—”

“Yes, yes,” exclaimed Arsinoe, and her stern, dark eyes glowed with prophetic fire, “the future is in us, in our unreasoning sadness. Julian was right. We must work on to the end, without glory, in silence, estranged from all, and alone. We must hide the last spark of fire in the ashes of the dying altars, that future peoples and nations may be able to kindle the flame once more. They will begin where we end. Let Hellas die; a day will come when men will dig up her sacred bones, fragments of divine marble, and will once more pray and weep over them. They will seek out the rotting pages of our books in silent tombs, and once more, like children, spell out the letters of the old poems of Homer, and the wisdom of Plato! Hellas shall be born again, and we shall be born with her!”

“And with us, our curse!” exclaimed Anatolius. Once more will begin the struggle between Olympus and Golgotha! Why? Who will conquer?

When will the end be? Answer, Sibyl, if thou canst!"

Arsinoe was silent, with downcast eyes. Finally she glanced at Ammianus, and directed Anatolius' attention to him:

"He can answer you better than I. His heart is divided between Christ and Olympus, as yours and mine are. Yet he has not lost his lucidity of spirit. See how quietly and wisely he decides the quarrel."

Ammianus Marcellinus, laying aside Clement's work, was silently listening to their conversation.

"It is true," said the Epicurean, turning to him, "we have been together as friends for more than four months, and I do not know yet whether you are a Christian or a Hellene."

"I do not know myself," said Ammianus, blushing slightly, with a frank smile.

"What? And no doubts ever disturb you, and you do not suffer from the contradictions between the Galilean and the Hellenic wisdom?"

"No, my friend, I think that the teachings have many things in common."

"But how do you intend to write your history of the Roman Empire? One of the scales must outweigh the other. Can you intend to leave posterity in such strange uncertainty as to your beliefs?"

"They need not know them," replied the historian. "To be just to both parties, is my aim. I loved the Emperor Julian, but I will not let my love for him weigh down one pan of the scales. Let none amongst posterity decide which I was, as I myself do not decide."

Anatolius had already had an opportunity to note Ammianus' graceful courtesy, his true cour-

age in battle, from which all vanity was absent, his quiet confidence in friendship; and now he was involuntarily charmed by another trait in his companion,—the deep lucidity of his mind.

“Yes, you are a born historian, Ammianus,” exclaimed Arsinoe, “you are the passionless judge of our passionate age. You will reconcile the contending teachings!”

“I am not the first!” answered Ammianus, slowly.

He was so inspired by the subject that he rose and pointed to the parchment roll of the great Christian teacher’s work:

“It is all here already, and much more, far better expressed than I could express it. This is the ‘Stromata’ of Clement of Alexandria. He shows that all the greatness of Rome and all the wisdom of Hellas lead up to the teaching of Christ. They are forebodings, presentiments, hints. They are the broad steps, leading to the divine temple, like the Propylæ. Plato is the forerunner of Jesus of Nazareth.”

These last words about the teaching of Clement of Alexandria, spoken with such sincere simplicity by Ammianus, stirred Anatolius to the depths of his soul. He seemed to remember that all this had once happened before, down to the smallest detail,—the island, gilded by the evening sun, the strong, pleasant smell of pitch in the ship’s seams, and the unexpected and simple words of Ammianus, about Plato, as the forerunner of Christ. He seemed to see a wide stairway of marble, flooded by the sun, with many steps like the Athenian Propylæ, leading straight up to the blue sky.

Meanwhile the trireme was slowly rounding the cape.

The cypress grove was almost hidden behind the cliffs. Anatolius cast a last glance at the youth standing beside the maiden, before Pan's statue. The girl was pouring out a simple bowl of wood before the altar, bringing the god her evening gift, an offering of goat's milk, mixed with honey. The youth was about to play his flute. The trireme entered the open sea. The group disappeared behind a projection of the cliff. Only a pale blue thread of sacrificial smoke rose straight up above the grove.

Then a great silence came over the sky, the earth, and the sea.

The slow sounds of church singing were heard. The hermit-fathers were singing their evening prayer in chorus, in the fore part of the ship.

At the same moment, other sounds were borne to them across the quiet surface of the sea. The shepherd boy was playing an evening hymn to Pan, the antique god of joy and love and liberty. The heart of Anatolius was stirred with wonder.

"—Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven," rose the voices of the monks, and high up in the sky resounded the clear sounds of the shepherd's flute, mingling with the words of the Lord's Prayer.

The last faint glimmer died out on the rocks of the happy island. It once more seemed a dead cliff in the midst of the sea. Both hymns sank to silence.

The wind rustled through the rigging. The waves began to rise. The halcyon uttered its plaintive note. Shadows hurried forth from the

west, and the sea grew dark. The clouds gathered. From the horizon came the first mutterings of thunder. Night and storm were drawing nigh.

But in the hearts of Anatolius, Ammianus, and Arsinoe already shone the great gladness of the Renaissance, like the light of a sun that knows no setting.

The End.



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