A. M. Blackden

SOUL OF NYRIA

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THE MEMORY OF A PAST LIFE IN ANCIENT ROME

IN THREE BOOKS

By

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AUTHOR OF
"NADINE," "MY AUSTRALIAN GIRLHOOD," "AS A WATCH IN THE NIGHT," AND OTHER WORKS

With Critical Preface by

THE HON. RALPH SHIRLEY

AND

SIX PAGES OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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PERSONS CONCERNED IN THE PRESENT PRODUCTION

THE OCCULTIST.	Writer and Lecturer on Occult Philosophy and Introducer of the Instrument.
THE INSTRUMENT.	A modern Englishwoman who, in an abnormal state of consciousness, relates the life-story of Nyria, a slave-girl in Imperial Rome.
THE RECORDER AND EDITOR.	To whom Nyria, through the lips of the Instrument, dictates her story.
THE ASSISTANT-EDITOR.	Critical Examiner into historical verifications of Nyria's narrative and writer of the Critical Preface.
THE COMMENTATOR.	A Source of Information and Instruction upon the super-physical Level, whether individual or collective is indeterminable: which is apart from the Entity Nyria, but is also expressed on the physical level through the mouth of the Instrument.

PERSONS CONCERNED IN THE ROMAN LIFE OF NYRIA. A.D. 77 TO THE END OF A.D. 95

NYRIA.	Body-Slave to Julia.
JULIA.	Daughter of the Emperor Titus.
LUCIA VALERIA.	Youngest Daughter of the Emperor Vitellius.
VITELLIA.	Eldest Daughter of the Emperor Vitellius.
DOMITIA.	Wife of the Emperor Domitian.
DOMITILLA.	Niece of Domitian.
ANTÆIA.	First wife of Pliny the Younger.
GALLA.	A Roman lady.
SALOME.	So-called Wife of Marcus Licinius Sura.
PHYLLIS.	Nurse of the Emperor Domitian.
EUPHENA.	Wise-Woman and Ethiopian Slave in the Household of Julia.
ÆMILIA. THANNA. SAMU.	Attendant Slaves in the Dressing-Room of Julia.
CORELLIA. ÆOLA.	Attendant Slaves in the Dressing-Room of Valeria.
THE APOSTLE—OR PRESBYTER.	John of Ephesus.
DOMITIAN.	Emperor of Rome, A.D. 81–96.
FLAVIUS SABINUS.	Husband of Julia.

M. Valerius Paulinus.	Husband of Valeria.
P. Valerius Asiaticus.	Husband of Vitellia.
Flavius Clemens.	Husband of Domitilla.
Marcus Licinius Sura.	Lover of Valeria.
Clement.	Bishop of Rome.
Stephanus.	Goldsmith, Freedman, formerly steward to Domitilla.
Juvenal.	Satirist.
Cornelius Tacitus.	Historian.
Pliny the Younger.	Writer.
Martial.	Poet.
Matho.	A Lawyer.
Euphrates.	A Stoic Philosopher.
Archigenes.	A Physician in Rome.
Regulus.	A Friend of Domitian and an Informer.
Ascletario.	An Astrologer.
Alexamenos.	A Captain of the Prætorian Guard.
Gaius.	An Elder of the Church in Rome.
Gregorio.	Greek Slave-musician in the Household of Valeria.
Vibius.	Steward to Flavius Sabinus.
Crispus.	Body-slave to Flavius Sabinus, afterwards a Gladiator.
Chabrias.	Steward to Valerius Paulinus.
Pheidias.	A Slave in the Household of Julia.
Bibbi.	Beater of Slaves in the Household of Julia.
Balbus Plautius.	Gladiator and Professional Beater of Slaves.
Denarmid.	Assistant in the shop of Stephanus.
Lucius.	A Christian.

CRITICAL PREFACE

By The Hon. Ralph Shirley

To write anything like a systematic defence of the doctrine of Reincarnation or Re-birth would be outside the scope of an introductory chapter, but inasmuch as an acceptance of the *bona fides* of the present work suggests that the principle of a plurality of lives plays its part in the evolution of the human ego, it is impossible to dismiss the subject without putting forward some brief argument in favour of an hypothesis which has been adopted in explanation of the problems of human life by some of its foremost thinkers in all ages of the world's history, and has not been without its apologists during the present age.

We need not indeed go back to Pythagoras or to the Hindu sages for its defence. Even such a protagonist of modern science as Professor T. H. Huxley looked upon it as a possible solution of the difficulties of life. "In the doctrine of Transmigration," he says, "Brahminical and Buddhist speculation found ready to hand the means of constructing a plausible vindication of the ways of the Cosmos to man . . . this plea is not less plausible than others and none but very hasty thinkers will reject it on the ground of inherent absurdity."[1]

At an earlier date David Hume saw in it the only alternative to a sceptical philosophy. "The soul," he says, "if immortal existed before our birth. The Metempsychosis is therefore the only system of the kind that philosophy can hearken to."[2] Schopenhauer defended a variant of the same belief. "Were an Asiatic," he says, "to ask me for a definition of Europe, I should be forced to answer him: 'It is that part of the world which is haunted by the incredible delusion that man was created out of nothing and that his present birth is his first entrance into life.'"[3]

Dr. McTaggart wrote comparatively recently in his learned work, *Some Dogmas of Religion*, in defence of the hypothesis: "It seems to me," he says, "a natural inference that this life will be followed by others like it, each separated from its predecessor and successor by death and re-birth. For otherwise we should be limited to the hypothesis that a process of development begun in a single life bounded by death should be continued as an indefinitely long life not divided by birth and death at all; and to suppose, without any reason, such a change from the order of our present experience seems unjustifiable."

[1] T. H. Huxley. *Evolution and Ethics.*
[2] Essay on the Immortality of the Soul.
[3] *Parerga and Paralipomena.*

We do not, most of us, take the opinions of the poets as seriously as those of the men of science or the philosophers, but it is not a little curious how many poets of the first rank have in one form or another expressed a belief in this theory or at least played in a sympathetic manner with the conception. We have but to recall the names of Goethe, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning, in this connection, and the present Poet Laureate, John Masefield,[1] has expressed his faith in the belief in a more definite form than any of his predecessors. We need not, therefore, have any fear that we have ruled ourselves out of the advance-guard of the modern intellectual world by at least tentatively adopting the theory of re-birth as a plausible solution of the riddle of life.

It is indeed when we come, after rejecting a materialistic solution, to consider the possible alternatives to reincarnation, that we find ourselves more and more disposed to regard the old Eastern doctrine with sympathetic consideration.

If we had to ask ourselves what one factor it is beyond all others which goes to the root of the essential antagonism between the materialistic and the spiritual interpretation of life, we are, it seems to me, driven to the conclusion that the true answer is that, on the basis of the spiritual hypothesis, the life force antedates its material vehicle and is its originating cause, whereas on the materialistic hypothesis, the material vehicle antedates the life force.

In a spiritual interpretation of the universe, there would thus appear to be implicit a belief in the pre-existence of the spirit in some condition or other before the body came into being. Now to many, the principal reason of the occurrence of an earth life at all, lies in the fact that the object of this life is to usher an immortal soul into existence. It may, however, well be contended that so far from this being the case, if the soul is immortal it cannot be ushered into existence in the present life for, as Hume observes, "what is incorruptible must also be ungenerable," and alternatively, if it is ushered into existence at birth, as the materialist may not unreasonably claim, it cannot possess any quality of immortality which should enable it to survive death. We do not know what operating cause there may have been to produce our present life on earth, but if it operated once there seems no reason to suppose that it will not operate again. Are we not justified in supposing that the force in question, this attraction to the physical, is something inherent in the essential nature of the spirit? As Voltaire observes, "It is not more surprising to be born twice than once. Everything in nature is resurrection."

The old orthodox hypothesis that death brings about a total transformation of the individual will not bear investigation. Much more reasonable is the contention of the sceptic that it brings about annihilation. If this is not the case, the conscious ego must look back, hypothetically at least, to a past existence just as he looks forward to a life to come. Most of the arguments indeed which support a belief in the indestructibility of the conscious ego, would appear to be equally valid as evidences of its pre-existence.

We may, of course, evolve some ingenious theory of a form of pre-existence which does not imply the belief in a plurality of lives on earth, but it must frankly be admitted that it is not at all easy to conceive it. The critic

[1] "A Creed"—*Collected Poems of John Masefield*, p. 69. William Heinemann, Ltd.

of reincarnation should be ready with his alternative hypothesis and it is precisely here that the shoe pinches.

There may doubtless be many who would be inclined to reject the theory of re-birth, holding that the doctrine is in its nature unscientific. It is for their sake that the authority of Professor T. H. Huxley has been invoked. It may indeed be contended that it is in fact an extension on a broader basis of the principle of evolution which, if it holds good on the physical plane, may surely be equally valid on the spiritual.

For those who would reject the belief on the ground that it is antagonistic to Christianity, many passages may be cited which would leave the option of decision to individual judgment, the most obvious being the references to Elijah, identifying him with John the Baptist. The question of the disciples to Jesus: "Did this man sin or his parents that he was born blind?" has also often been cited, offering as it did an opportunity for repudiating the principle involved of which the Master took no pains to avail himself.

Those are on surer grounds who would give a verdict of "not proven." It is to such that the publication of these records may seem pertinent as an aid to the solution of a fascinating and obscure problem.

Mrs. Campbell Praed has been at great pains to discover historical evidences which might serve to confirm or refute Nyria's story. The results of these are cited in the appendix, and it must, I think, be admitted that the cases in which Nyria appears to be convicted of error or lapses of memory, are singularly few and unimportant. On the other hand, investigation has been successful in confirming a large proportion of her statements of fact with regard to incidents and individuals concerned, as also with regard to geographical details, while the character studies, which form no insignificant part of the record, such, for instance, as those of Domitian, Juvenal, Pliny and others, will generally, I think, be admitted to be singularly true to life as far as it is possible for us to estimate them at the present day.

Some of the evidences seem indeed trivial enough in themselves, but to discover a reference, in a later authority, to the beard of a philosopher, where Nyria emphasises the point, is not without its significance. And it is no less pertinent to unearth from records of the reign of Domitian the reputation and characteristics of a ladies' doctor of that period in substantiation of the statements of the narrator.

It is only the student who is acquainted with the minutest historical details of the time who will be able to put his finger on such facts. Battles, conspiracies and legal enactments fill the picture to the less erudite of historical scholars. It is in her lighter and more delicate touches, as well as in her descriptions of slave life and the slave market, that Nyria appears to be most effective and convincing.

It is hoped that the critical reader will be able to add something of value here and there where historical research has failed to bring significant facts to light, whether these should tend to confirm Nyria's narrative or the reverse.

One point in connection with this record calls for special comment and places it in a niche of its own quite apart from any alleged communications from beyond the borderline. Nyria was not hypnotised, at least from the physical plane, but in spite of this she entirely loses consciousness of her identity as an Englishwoman of the present day. The process by which she

does this is gradual at first but soon becomes complete, and she remains throughout the record a Roman slave girl recording the details of her life in Rome without any appreciation of the fact that upwards of 1800 years have elapsed since the incidents occurred. This adds to the vividness of the story as she is in the position of a person dictating her own autobiography in her own lifetime.

This physical condition is reminiscent of records which have recently been given to the world of dual (or multiple) personalities, such, for instance, as that of " Miss Beauchamp " narrated in detail by Dr. Morton Prince of Boston, U.S.A., in *The Dissociation of a Personality*.

It is perhaps futile to speculate whether such a transference of the consciousness could be achieved by the personal volition of the individual. It is noteworthy, however, that Nyria is reluctant in the first instance to recur to the painful episodes of the past and does not do so of her own free choice.

Lapsing into Roman life soon, however, becomes easy and painless, indeed one might almost say automatic, just as an individual with a dual personality slips from one state of consciousness into another, often in the very midst of a conversation. When the alternating personality returns, a sentence left uncompleted at the previous " change-over " may be finished without any sense of incongruity or awareness of the time interval that has elapsed. So with Nyria. At her next sitting she takes up her narrative exactly where she left off. The English consciousness is once more dormant and the Roman self-hood holds the field.

There are those who will attribute such phenomena to obsession by some outside entity anxious to tell her own story or narrate her own past experiences. Others, again, may point to the possibility that the Instrument was reading, while in a clairvoyant state, past events imprinted on the etheric film, a process which, though perhaps theoretically conceivable, is nevertheless, one would suppose, hardly feasible in practice without the possession of almost supermundane powers. However hard it admittedly is to believe that the Instrument was recalling her own past when she lived as a slave girl in the days of Domitian, either of these alternatives would merely serve to enhance the difficulty.

A third hypothesis acceptable to a certain type of mind is that the Instrument was reading the mind of the Recorder. There is, however, no evidence to suggest this form of thought transference and, while admitting that the Recorder's knowledge of Roman history was far in excess of that of the Instrument, we must bear in mind that the familiarity shown with small details was far beyond anything she possessed at the time, and was only subsequently obtained (and that partially) by long and very painstaking research. A personal disinclination to the reincarnationist hypothesis should hardly be allowed to weigh down the scales in face of the probabilities of the case. Admittedly, all solutions present grave difficulties and readers must be left to form their own judgment on the strength of the evidence submitted.

If the hypothesis of reincarnation be justified, how came it about, the critic may ask, that the Roman slave girl (as she believed herself to be) narrated her past life to an Englishwoman in archaic English of which, as a Roman slave, she obviously had no knowledge ?

There is an interesting exposition in Plutarch of a theory of oracular inspiration which may serve to throw some light on such a problem. The exposition is put into the mouth of Theon in a discussion between a group of friends at Delphi and occurs in the tract *De Pythiae Oraculis*. "The voice, the pronunciation, the phrasing, the metre—none of these things," Theon says, "is the God's but the woman's; the God merely presents the images to her mind and makes light in her soul regarding the future." "That," he says, "is what enthusiasm, possession by the God, really is."

This argument was advanced primarily to explain why the Delphic oracles had been ordinarily given out in such indifferent verse.

"It is not the vocal organs, according to Theon's theory, which are the instrument used by the God: the human mind, Theon insists, with all its existing body of ideas, all its natural or acquired faculties, is the instrument, and the Divine power cannot bring out of each instrument more than the instrument can give; every instrument by its special nature limits possibilities for the musician; he cannot get the sounds of a trumpet out of a lyre; all that the God can do is to suggest to the inspired person certain thoughts or feelings; these are then given to the world by the ordinary mechanism by which this particular person translates his or her thoughts or feelings into speech."[1]

The suggestion advanced is at least worthy of consideration. Whatever truth there may be in it, it is safe to say that the complexities of the human ego will remain to baffle the psychologist for many a generation yet to come.

[1] *Sybils and Seers*, by Bevan.

SOUL OF NYRIA

BOOK THE FIRST

THE INSTRUMENT

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY EXPERIMENTS

Here begins the Series of Conversations in which Nyria, body-slave of Julia, daughter of Titus, relates the story of her life in Rome from about the year A.D. 77 to A.D. 95.

THE RECORDER: I first heard Nyria speak through the lips of the Instrument at the house of a well-known Writer and Lecturer upon Eastern philosophy who died not many years back. As most of those who were concerned in this strange experience have passed beyond the reach of questioning, I am giving no names in this chronicle; therefore, let the introducer of Nyria be known simply as the Occultist.

He had recently met the Instrument in the house of a friend and by a chance experiment in hypnotism, if there be such a thing as chance, had, to the young woman's own surprise, on learning of it, discovered in her the rare psychic faculty of remembering what he supposed to be a former incarnation.

He was repeating the experiment in his wife's drawing-room and I was one of the three or four persons present at this and a subsequent performance.

Here are some notes which I made on those two occasions.

. . . . . .

November 22nd, 1899. . . . Bidden by her controller, the Occultist, while in the hypnotic state, to go to Rome, the Instrument shows at first great reluctance. "I do not want to go to Rome. . . ." Then, yielding to insistence, "Tell me what you want me to do there. . . . I can feel it. . . . I can see bits of it. . . . I see a great many steps—all marble. . . . I am on one of them. . . . There's a great crowd below. . . . Oh, what a long way to look up! Such a very large place! Oh, don't you feel small here!"

And now, a sudden spontaneous laugh. . . . "It's that boy selling fruit. He's throwing plums at me. . . . Such a bright boy! Dark, with curly hair, like the boy who brings fruit to Julia's house in the mornings. . . . No"—as if gesticulating reproval—"go away . . . I don't want any. . . ."

She describes an immense platform at the head of the stairway with "such a number of pillars in lines of three or four—carved and gilded and of different colours." . . . Then, through the great doors of the temple, a hall or vestibule of which she says: "The pavement is white marble with coloured pieces let in at the sides. . . . All round it are pillars. . . . Here is a very big statue by itself.[1] Down some steps and in the middle of this place there stands a great chariot of marble with gilding upon it and with two horses and, in it a single figure of marble—the driver. The chariot is half-way between the doors and the central hall which you come to as you go along. This is the principal part of the temple and is a very large space, almost round . . . not quite . . . with chapels and doors leading out of it. The roof is very high . . . going up in the centre, rounded and fluted. . . . There are wide windows at the sides. The light comes through them and through great arches. In the dark places they burn lamps with the oil in open vessels. But there are no lamps burning now. . . ."[2]

She tells of one important altar partially closed in by heavy curtains. When desired by the Occultist to go near and inspect the altar, she appears unwilling.

"I ought not to do that. I don't come to worship here. There are things kept there which are sacred to them. . . . They have nothing to do with me —those things."

The Occultist tries to convey to her that the Pagan worship is now obsolete and to be considered only as the symbol of higher truth which humanity was not then able to comprehend, and that she need have no scruples as to looking through those curtains at what is going on behind them.

She objects. . . . "But I could not see through those thick curtains."

He points out that she is using a different set of senses from her physical ones and that with the eyes of her subtle body she can see through any intervening obstacle.

She laughs unbelievingly. . . . "But how can I see through anything?"

"Yes, you can. You are seeing through those curtains now and you are going to tell me what you see."

She seems a little bewildered, but answers obediently. "I see a man standing before the altar. He wears a long white robe with a gold border. And he has on a head-dress—I ought to know what it is called . . . I cannot remember. It is curved upward, there is gold upon it, and there's something round and bright standing up in the middle." She speaks in a somewhat awe-stricken manner.

OCCULTIST: "Have you ever heard of the Flamen Dialis?"[3]

She replies at once. "Yes, I know that name," and repeats slowly, "Flamen Di..a..lis," accentuating the second syllable of the word Dialis whereas the Occultist had placed the accent upon the first syllable.

Bidden to accost the Flamen. "Oh, I couldn't speak to him. I have no right here."

OCCULTIST: "You need not be afraid. This Flamen, from all we know of him, was kind and good."

She answers, in a doubtful, half-reassured manner: "Yes, he is kind. . . ."

[1] I have not been able to identify this statue. (Ed.)

[2] To verify Nyria's description of the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus and the Chariot of Victory, see Appendix 1, and note to same, Bk. I.

[3] Flamen Dialis—his functions, his head-dress. See Appendix 2, Bk. I.

Then, "There's a large green stone on the altar: it has been brought to the temple."

OCCULTIST: "By whom?"

"By a patrician, as an offering to the goddess. . . . The name of the goddess? . . . I can't tell the name."

OCCULTIST: "Is it Pallas?"

She does not repeat that word, but says stammeringly, "Ath..e..ne."[1]

Now she calls attention to "another altar. . . ." "It's to a god . . . Jupiter. . . ." She does not add, "Conservator." . . . But says, "They look quite new, these altars," and when asked by whom they had been erected, "I don't know. I have never been here before. I will go and find out."

A pause, and then, again, a laugh. "Why, of course, it's the Emperor. They think me so stupid not to know. They say, "Where have you been not to have heard that? These places have been built quite lately."[2]

At this point the notes seem to have become confused with a discussion on the material plane concerning historical references to the rebuilding of the Capitoline temples during the Flavian period, and the bearing of this fact upon the slave-girl's recollections.

THE INSTRUMENT (resuming): "Here is another big place. . . . There are rooms which open one into another. . . . Priests come in and do different things connected with the worldly part of the temple. . . . A young man wearing a brown garment fastened on the shoulder, whose hair is closely cut, comes to fetch something and goes out again. This room is long and high, and has tables and chairs as I have seen in other houses . . . and carpeting . . . but not all over it. . . . There's an open fire . . . I suppose it is cold, but I don't feel cold. The windows look out over a terrace and that crowded place where we were before . . . I can see the light over the town. It is a beautiful view. Gilded roofs shine up here and there. . . ."

Suddenly she exclaims, as if in apprehension. "I must go back . . . I shall be whipped. . . ."

OCCULTIST: "I will go with you and take care of you."

Now she shrinks as if in pain. "Oh! The sharp stones hurt my feet. The people are so rude. . . . There are a great many litters here. It's the men going before them who push so roughly. . . . And they don't only push . . . they beat my shoulders. . . . Such a crowd! Many men walking and standing about. . . . Men with such big, firm, smooth arms . . ."[3]

In a moment or two she appears to have left the busy Forum. "Now we are passing houses with trees round them . . . I know that house: it belongs to a friend of my master. . . ."

Then in reply to the Occultist's questioning.

"Yes, now we are at the house of Julia. . . . Our house is very fine: we have everything of the best. . . . I can take you in by this door. . . . But you can see for yourself. . . . Here is a little open space . . . a sort of court. There are pillars round it. We can sit here, sometimes, in the sun. . . . White jasmine grows up the walls: it is very sweet. . . . I am always so fond of white flowers. . . .

[1] Domitian's partiality for Minerva—Pallas Athene. See Appendix 3, Bk. I.

[2] Built by Domitian in commemoration of his escape during the Vitellian riots. Appendix 4, Bk. I.

[3] Hairless arms of the Roman dandy. Appendix 5, Bk. I.

This is the room where people wait who come to see my master: you have to wait until you are called. . . . I can't remember its name. No, the atrium is there. It is a beautiful atrium—everything in our house is beautiful. It has a fine fountain in the middle and the water is scented. . . .

The walls are of marble and, all round, there are . . . I don't know the word . . . they are faces of my master's people. On feast days, we put wreaths of roses and jasmine round the faces. . . .[1]

No, there is no glass over the faces. . . . There is not much glass here. But Julia has a great silver mirror: it is heavy and very big. It shows the whole of her . . . and Julia is not small—she would make three of me. The little black boy holds it in front of her. . . . I have to polish it. . . .[2]

This is the big room where my master sees people. . . . My master's apartments are on this side and Julia's are further along on the other. . . . But I can't take you to the women's apartments. I must go and tell them I have come back. . . ."

A pause, during which the face of the Instrument is convulsed as with anger or distress. She exclaims in a low, tense voice:

"I hate that woman. . . . I *hate* her."

OCCULTIST: "What has she done to you that you should hate her so much."

THE INSTRUMENT: "Julia says the most cruel things anyone could possibly say. . . . And, at least, I am a woman, too. . . ."

A few days later.

The Instrument, again hypnotised by the Occultist, leans back in her chair unconscious. The slave-girl is speaking from—we understand—a position outside the temple on the Capitoline hill. The Occultist questions her concerning the ceremonies connected with the Temple. Now, she seems to be looking at something in the distance.

THE INSTRUMENT: "Is this what you want? I see a religious procession,[3] many people are behind it. . . . I see girls in white with long white veils and flowers in their hands and boys in white tunics swinging things with gold chains. . . . There is a man in the middle. He walks alone: the people do not press round him. . . . I have seen that man before. He belongs to the Temple. He is wearing the same long white robe embroidered with gold on the edge. His head is bent. Now, he looks up. The round thing in the middle of his head-dress shines in the sun. He has beautiful soft eyes. There is hair upon his face: it is a very fine face. . . . The head-dress is the same . . . curved at the top and there's gold on it. He is very great . . . much greater than anyone else. But he does not think himself great."

Her manner is reverential. But she objects when the Occultist tells her to join the procession.

"No, I don't belong to it. We are not allowed to watch the worship which we don't belong to, and we should not do so out of curiosity. . . . Now, they are going up a hill where there are trees . . . a little way outside the city. . . . They are to have a service in the open air. . . . I thought they always had them in temples. . . . This is some sacrifice . . . something that has to do with the earth and the green things."

[1] Wreathing the masks of the ancestors. Appendix 6, Bk. I.
[2] Mirrors in ancient Rome. Appendix 7, Bk. I.
[3] Feast of the Seven Hills—a religious service at which the Flamen Dialis officiated. Appendix 8, Bk. I.

OCCULTIST: "I want you to describe the service."

She: "But I am not on the hill. It is a long way off. I can see the people but I am not there."

OCCULTIST: "If you wish strongly enough, you can be there at once without any trouble."

She repeats: "It is a long way off and it's difficult walking. How could I get up that hill without any trouble?"

OCCULTIST: "Think that you are going to fly there, and you will fly there."

She laughs outright. "But I *can't* fly."

OCCULTIST: "You can float. Throw yourself out. Now you are floating. . . . Now you are there."

She . . . in astonishment. "Yes, that is true. . . . Hush. . . . One must not make a noise to disturb them (in a whisper). . . . Don't you see? . . . they are kneeling . . . they are praying. . . . There is a fire burning . . . Fruit is being offered. . . . Hush! They are singing. . . . Can't you hear? It is beautiful music . . . boys' and girls' voices alternating."

The Occultist perpetrates a thoughtless anachronism when he asks, "Is it like a Gregorian chant?"

She seems completely at a loss. "I don't understand you. . . . Oh, I wish you would not talk. . . . I can see the smoke going up and the prayers of the people are rising with it. Some of them are real: some are not. . . . The priest seems sorrowful. He stands with his hands raised to the sky. . . . I should very much like to know that man. . . . Oh, but I ought not to have come here. We are told not to come to these services. . . . Yet some of those who are kneeling are very reverent and one can't help feeling reverent too. And, if you feel like that, your thought goes up in a reverent way with theirs. But that must be wrong. For it is only to false gods that these people are praying, and I am doing wrong to listen." Her contrition has a ring of simple sincerity.

Again, material and superphysical conditions intermingle to create confusion, and my note-taking flags whilst the Occultist expounds the law of reincarnation to his fourth-dimensional pupil.

Thus he demonstrates the futility of worrying over a breach of discipline, which has occurred when she was a slave—no doubt a Christian one—in old Rome, pointing out that the body she then inhabited—and, likewise, as articles of faith, the pagan gods and goddesses—have ceased to exist hundreds of years ago. . . . To all of which she listens, protesting in petulant bewilderment.

"But I can't understand you. . . . You talk of *old* Rome. . . . I am in Rome now, and it is not so very old. . . ."

OCCULTIST (explanatorily): "I assure you that you are only seeing and hearing in a new body, the etheric sound-photograph of something that you saw and heard a little over eighteen hundred years ago, when you were in old Rome in a different body."

"But that's all nonsense," she cries. "It's dreaming, and when you talk like that everything seems to move and get mixed up and I can't see anything properly. . . . If you want me to go with you to Rome and show you places, I can do so. . . . But when you tell me to fly! . . . I must walk. I haven't got a litter. . . . And I don't know what it all means. If you would talk sense I could understand you. . . . But, really (speaking diffidently), I don't think you are quite. . . . I hope you won't be offended. . . ."

Then, politely changing the subject :

" Do you know this archway ? I wondered if you noticed it. . . . It's considered rather fine."

But the little altercation continues. He tells her to go back now to the city, and, when she complains that the hill is steep and the road rough and stony, he repeats his previous instruction to *will* herself upon the desired spot, and to imagine that she is floating down the hill and across the valley towards it. . . . A few moments' silence and, apparently, she has essayed the feat with satisfactory result. For her physical embodiment in the chair gives an amused, uncomprehending laugh.

" It does seem strange. . . . There's such a deep drop and you feel as if you must fall."

OCCULTIST : " But you have not fallen. . . . Now you are in the temple."

She : " No, I'm outside the temple . . . in a street. . . ."

After a pause . . . as of puzzlement :

" I can't understand why you don't see these streets and things. Are you not in Rome ? "

OCCULTIST : " I *was* once in Rome . . . I believe when you were there."

She : " But that is now."

Again he tries to impress upon her that they were then—both of them—in long-since discarded bodies. . . . That he is no longer one Nonius Asprena . . . whose personality, he has been given to understand, was his own at that time ; he is now . . . He says the name by which he is here known to her. And she ? he asks. Does she remember what she was called in Rome ?

She replies confusedly.

" I had two names . . . I can't remember . . . I must go back and find out."

He asks : " Do you not know that you are now Miss ———? " (Pronouncing the Instrument's English name.)

She (perplexedly, and as if searching for a clue) : " I think I have heard those words. . . ."

THE OCCULTIST proceeds with his exposition in professorial fashion.

" That name identifies you with your present physical body. . . . But you know that besides your mere physical vehicle, you have your emotional body and your mental body and that their subtler senses respond to rates of vibration beyond the reach of your ordinary senses. . . . As I explained to you, you are now using those subtler senses in recalling your Roman incarnation."

Hopelessly bewildered, she expostulates resentfully.

" I don't know what you are talking about. . . . They don't talk like that in Rome."

OCCULTIST : " Perhaps they did not when you were there. But, as I have told you, that life of yours in old Rome was over and done with nearly two thousand years ago."

She laughs in childlike scorn.

" I'm not two thousand years old ! Oh no ! . . ."

It appears from the notes that something is said about the dreaming-state, and the Occultist asks what she was doing in her dreams last night.

She seems to take this seriously.

" I was away last night. I had a great deal to do. . . . I have only a confused remembrance of it. . . ." Then, pettishly, " I don't know who

you are or why you talk to me like this. . . . And you jump from one thing to another. Now, it's about streets and places . . . and then flying and nonsense. . . . I can't understand you."

These first notes end here, and I have no record of any further experiments by the Occultist with "Nyria."

But, shortly afterwards, the Instrument came to stay in my house, and a few weeks later we went abroad together. Before leaving England, however, my personal relations with the slave-girl of ancient Rome had become established in the following unexpected manner.

One afternoon in December 1899, I was sitting alone with the Instrument in my study, and we were talking about a visit I had made to Rome the previous year. She had never been in Rome and seemed much interested in a small piece of marble which I had picked up among the ruins of the Vestals' House.

I was not touching her, as, leaning back in her chair, she absently fingered the piece of marble while commenting upon my remarks, when suddenly I noticed a change in her voice and manner.

Then, as she went on speaking, I realised—though knowing scarcely anything of the peculiar kind of divination she was unconsciously practising—that the feel of the marble had, by some process of psychometry, evoked her former Roman personality and that the slave-girl of old Rome was again describing what I at once recognised as the ancient Forum.

She said that now she was standing on the roof of the Vestals' House, and, when bidden to look round and tell me what she saw, spoke of a marble stair close by, from which the fragment she held had fallen. . . . Then, of the Citadel above and the Capitoline Temple, laying stress, anew, upon the vivid, fresh gilding of the dome,[1] by which I was again able to identify the period as late Flavian. Then, of some gardens in the near distance which seemed to correspond with Nero's Gardens of Adonis, and of a temple—doubtless that of Castor and Pollux, "with figures of men and horses at the top corners," adding that she could not see the central sculpture on the pediment, but that she would find out about it and let me know. . . .

The Instrument came to herself quite naturally, rubbed her eyes—a trick of hers on awakening, seemed a little confused, but did not remember what she had been saying.

. . . . . .

After this—my first personal touch with the slave-girl of old Rome—numerous attempts at further fourth-dimensional intercourse seemed to arouse only distrust and suspicion, so that for a time it was almost impossible to obtain from her information concerning her circumstances and associates in Imperial Rome.

I will not, however, weary the reader with a recapitulation of the slave-girl's persistent doubts and objections. The following gleanings from early notes of our talks will best convey the difficulties of the situation.

[1] The gilding of the dome of the Capitoline Temple was begun by the Emperor Titus and finished by Domitian. See Appendix 1, Bk. I.

CHAPTER II

From the Hercynidan Forest

The Instrument, awakening in her Roman personality, relates to the Recorder how she had been brought a captive from her own land to Rome and had become a slave in the Household of Julia, daughter of the Emperor Titus.

Nyria: "You have come back! . . . Was it yesterday that you were here? I think I have been asleep. I seem to have been dreaming. . . ."

And, when asked to take the Recorder to Rome, she answers, "Why do you always want me to take you to Rome? Cannot you go there by yourself. . . . Or cannot you get someone else to take you? . . . Of course, if you want me very much, I'll go. But I never like going to Rome."

Recorder[1]: "From what place are you speaking now?"

Nyria: "This is not Rome. It's the sort of place I come to when you call me. . . . The feel of it is blue and soft and rather lonely. Then you say, 'Go to Rome' . . . and I would rather stay here, but I have to go. . . . I can't understand why you come after me. . . . And you are not the only one. There was another. He was a man, but you are a woman. I can feel that, though I cannot see you . . . why can't I see you? . . . The other one was a very curious person. He asked extraordinary questions and he made me do things that were very strange. But he seemed a person of importance. Will he come here again?"

Recorder: "No, I think not."

Nyria: "I didn't like it. . . . One doesn't care to have a stranger coming on you suddenly and talking what seems nonsense about flying and driving you to do things you would rather not do . . . (apprehensively). You will not get like that, will you? . . . You seem different.—It's so extraordinary to be talking to someone you can't see. . . . Of course, if it was for work you wanted me one would not mind so much. . . ."

Recorder: "Then you will not mind helping me with the work I am doing by telling me about Rome and how people live there?"

Nyria (interestedly): "Are you paid for your work? We are not paid for ours. Of course, we have houses and clothes and food to eat . . . and my master is kind . . . and Julia . . . well, I dare say Julia is not worse than many other mistresses. . . . Yes, of course, my master is Julia's husband. . . . He is her cousin, I think. . . . Well, I suppose he does care for her. He is very quiet and gentle when she is there . . . much more of a man when she is not about. He is always good to us—the slaves."[2]

Recorder: "How many slaves were there in Julia's household?"

[1] It will be understood that to avoid interrupting the flow of Nyria's story, remarks or questions by the Recorder are omitted when these are clearly indicated by Nyria's answers. (Ed.)

[2] Julia, daughter of Titus, married her cousin, Flavius Sabinus. For Flavian family, see Appendix 9, Bk. I.

NYRIA (considering): "Oh, a great many. . . . Hundreds. Julia has her slaves and he has his . . . you don't mean the ones that are employed in their other houses? . . . For that would mean hundreds on hundreds. . . . I should think that, here, there are about four hundred. . . . You see, Julia has for her own person fifteen or twenty. These are changed sometimes, but she never changes me."

RECORDER: "How came you to be a slave in Julia's household?"

NYRIA: "Somebody brought me as a present for her.[1] I think it was one of Julia's admirers. . . . I was very little then: I only came up to about her elbow. . . . At first, she said that she did not keep a place for children. . . . I don't know the word. I cannot remember all the words in this language, and I have forgotten the language of my own country, though I should know the sound of it anywhere. I think it is beautiful, but the people here say that it is rough and harsh. . . ."

Then, when the Recorder asks some questions about her own country:

NYRIA: "I can only recall certain things. Other things I get from older slaves who know and tell me of them. . . .

My country was full of trees. The trees were huge. . . .[2] They had ever so many trunks and the branches used to spread down on either side and make archways. You could live under those trees as well as in any house. The roof would be quite thick with branches. . . . Yes, there were houses, but nobody cared much to live in a house. It was colder there than in this place, but not too cold. Sometimes the trunks of the trees were hollow. They would be so large that you could make a house inside one of them. . . .

Our men were good soldiers. They had rather red complexions and fair hair and white skins. . . not like the men here. . . . The women were fair, too. They were very good—not like the women in Rome. They were good wives and mothers . . . if they were not, they got punished severely. . . ."

RECORDER: "Tell me, did you ever hear of Veleda?"[3]

NYRIA: "Oh yes, she was the Queen, you know. She was sacred to the people, and was kept very carefully. I remember that I was allowed to go sometimes and play with her. She used to be very lonely. She said she would give anything to come down and be like other girls. . . . I was related to her. . . . They laughed at me here because I said I was a princess. I'm trying to forget all that. . . . I'm only a slave-girl now. . . ."

NYRIA (resuming): "Now when Julia said that she did not want babies to train, he who gave me told her that if she would take the trouble I should be worth my keep. . . . So for a long time I was allowed to play about in the sunshine and Euphena, the old Ethiopian woman, looked after me. But she had had a hard life, poor old thing! She, too, had been bought and she came from a long way off, and was getting too old and too ugly for service. She had a hut outside and never came into the house or the servants' quarters. . . .

Sometimes Julia would send for me . . . not very often—and I had to have a bath and my hair combed . . . I had a great deal of hair: it was fair and long and curly and hung down my back. Then Julia would look

[1] Nyria said later that the General who brought her to Rome was Rutilius Gallicus. See Appendix 10, Bk. I.

[2] Nyria appears to have been a "Bructerian, borderer on the Hercynian Forest," described by Tacitus. See Appendix 11, Bk. I.

[3] Queen Veleda. See Appendix 12, Bk. I.

me up and down and ask questions about what I could do, and when I got bigger I was allowed to go in for the robing, and sometimes I had to hold up the big mirror and to polish the silver taps of Julia's bath. . . .

There were lovely things in Julia's room. . . . The room was blue and silver, and so were the hangings of the bed. There were statues—little ones—on pedestals . . . and the table was beautiful,—all silver things—boxes and vessels to hold the dressings, different kinds of pastes and washes that we used for her complexion. . . .[1]

It is not quite fair to ask me about Julia—I hated her so. . . . She was always hard to me. If I vexed her she used to make me hold up the mirror as a punishment, till my wrists ached. I was too little to do that properly, there was a strong black boy for the purpose. . . .

Julia has, of course, a great many women to dress her. There is one for doing up her complexion : another for helping her on with her under-things. Then there is the head-woman for the draperies, and there are those for the head-tiring, among whom I am accounted to have most skill in the dressing of hair.

That was how I came to be Julia's tire-woman. . . . One of them had offended and had been beaten and her arms were sore so that she could not hold up Julia's hair, which is heavy. The other tire-woman was sick. . . . So the head-woman dressed Julia's head and did it badly, and Julia was very angry and struck her down. . . . Julia said, how was she to go out if there was no one to dress her head as it should be ; and then I asked if it might be the Most Noble's pleasure to let me try . . . for I had been practising upon the heads of the slave-women and had learned somewhat of hairdressing. So Julia did let me try, and being not ill-satisfied, bade me continue till the chief tire-woman was well again. . . . Thou knowest there is a trick in the making of the hair to look as much as possible. It is curled in front with irons, and there are curls at the back which must be carefully arranged. I like not the look of it, but it is the fashion of Roman great ladies."

Here the Recorder, finding it difficult to make the pencil keep pace with the slave-girl's rapid utterance, asks her to speak a little more slowly.

NYRIA (surprised) : " Are you writing things down, too ? My domina has a secretary who takes down the stories I tell her, unless it's anything private, and then she writes it herself."

RECORDER : " What sort of stories do you tell her ? "

NYRIA : " Oh, all kinds . . . about my country . . . what I remember—and about things that happen among the slaves. Sometimes that amuses her."

RECORDER : " I should be amused, too, in what happens among the slaves."

NYRIA : " Slaves' lives are not always amusing. . . . You never were a slave ? "

RECORDER : " No, never."

NYRIA : " Then, of course, you could not know anything about slave-life. Slaves get to know a great deal of what is going on, from the top to the bottom. As a rule, people don't take any account of slaves and talk freely before them. But I should not like you to put down anything that belongs to my domina. You must understand that she has the first claim on all that I can tell."

[1] Cosmetics and adjuncts to the toilette of Roman ladies. Appendix 13, Bk. I.

RECORDER: "I quite understand that. Perhaps I might ask her permission."

NYRIA: "But how would you see her? She is very particular about whom she receives. You know, in Rome when a woman is good-looking and has an assured position, envious persons do all they can to assail it. (Pausing.) Those are strange words, I don't remember using them before. . . . Shall I go on telling you about Julia—— But I was going to say that my domina will not have her hair dressed in that fashionable way. She wears it quite simply, coiled round her head, parted in the middle and waving above her forehead. She has such lovely hair, so soft and wavy. . . ."

RECORDER: "Who is this lady whom you speak of as your domina? Is not Julia your domina?"

NYRIA: "Of course, I belong to Julia. She is my mistress. But I do not steal time from Julia. I always finish my work first and then, if she does not want me, I can run up quickly by the short cuts to my domina's house. . . . No, I cannot tell you her name, I will not until I am quite sure of you. . . . You see, in Rome one is never certain whom one can trust. If you knew how people come and try to deceive one—men who want to gain her favour and who will tell all manner of lies—about being just returned from foreign countries and having important news to give her. . . . They get to know that I go there, and offer me money to carry messages and presents to her. . . . And you know that there are other men who go round the slaves and bribe them to speak evil of their masters—men who are paid for it by the State. . . .[1] But you would not do that. Oh, I am quite sure you would not."

The Recorder disclaims any such intention, and tries to lead the slave-girl on to talk about the mysterious Domina.

NYRIA: "I can understand your being interested in my domina. Everyone is or they would not be so anxious to know her. But are you sure that you do not mean her any harm?"

RECORDER: "Certainly not—only good."

NYRIA: "Can I trust you?"

RECORDER: "Don't you feel that you can trust me?"

NYRIA (meditatively): "Yes, I think I feel that. . . . But (with a note of alarm), do you know her husband? . . . If you do, will you promise that you will not tell him anything about her?"

RECORDER: "I do not know who her husband is, but I give you my word that if I do ever meet him I will not speak to him of you and your Domina."

NYRIA: "It does not matter what you say to him about me. He knows that she does often have me with her. . . . You see (hesitantly), I do things for her that she cannot ask her own slaves to do. . . . I don't always like doing them. . . . (Again great hesitation when pressed to explain.) Thou knowest . . . when she doth desire to see . . . to go to a certain house where she may not take her litter and her own bearers . . . or if it be a matter of which her husband hath no knowledge. . . . Then, if I were with her he would not question. . . ."

The inference is clear that the Domina has a secret love-affair and that the slave-girl is helping to shield her from discovery. The Recorder asks whether the Domina is a great friend of Julia.

NYRIA: "She and Julia are not really friends. She used to come more

[1] Nyria no doubt alludes to the delatores (informers). See Appendix 14, Bk. I.

often to Julia's house before there was that trouble about me. The Domina wanted to buy me and Julia would not sell me because, she said, I had been given to her, and I dressed hair so well. But that was not the true reason. Julia was wroth because she knew that I wanted to go and she is jealous of my domina. . . . Not that my domina is one to vie with other women, but she is much admired and, though she has not as much money as Julia, still her husband is very rich. . . . And there is another reason. Julia is dark, and she looks better for having me behind her, for, thou knowest, I am very fair, and it is the fashion for Roman ladies to have fair-haired slaves. . . ."[1]

. . . . . .

Nyria's mood on reawakening to her old-world existence was not always tractable, and the Recorder sometimes found it difficult to bend the slave-girl's inclinations in the direction desired. Nyria would protest fretfully: "I wonder why I cannot bear going to Rome, I don't mind so much when I am there, and there is something to be done, and I know what it is. . . . I did try to find out some of the names for you, but I could not get you my domina's name now, even if I wanted to, because I set my will against it in the beginning and I have put up something between me and my memory. . . . There is one name I was to give you—it is Vitellius, but I don't know why I was to give it. I am sorry to be disagreeable, but my domina is everything to me, and I am afraid for her. . . . I wish I knew why you come to me. Couldn't you find someone else to tell you about Rome? If I were a great lady you might like to talk to me, but nobody wants to talk to a slave. They don't count. You must know that, if you have slaves of your own."

RECORDER: "I have only two or three of what you call slaves to serve me."

NYRIA (puzzled): "I can't make out what sort of person you are. Can't you go to Rome by yourself? Why do you always want me to take you? The streets are open to all. . . . Where do you live?"

RECORDER: "A long way off."

NYRIA (pertinaciously): "But you come very often. How do you get here? And why do you ask me so many questions? I beg your pardon. Of course I am rude, but you began it. . . . And I don't think you would like anyone coming on you suddenly—you don't know from where—and asking you questions about people, and especially when you can't see them. Why have I never seen you?"

Now, after some further discussion, the Recorder, feeling it impossible to convey an adequate explanation of the position, puts forward the theory that there are realms in nature of which the inhabitants are invisible to the human eye, and suggests that she and Nyria may have entered some such region and be subject to its limitations. Nyria appears to accept the proposition.

NYRIA: "I understand what you mean. You speak more sensibly than that foolish person who talked about flying. But I do know those beings—some are good and some are bad and they are quite different from us. You feel to have life and warmth like me. I wonder if the reason that I can't see you is because there's something not right in it. . . . Won't you show yourself to me?"

RECORDER: "I have not the power."

[1] Partiality of Roman ladies for fair-haired attendants. See Appendix 15, Bk. I.

NYRIA : "Then it is because you cannot—not because you will not. Perhaps you will some day. . . ."

. . . . . .

At last, the Recorder, unable to parry Nyria's questions or to win her confidence, points out that much of their time together is wasted in profitless discussion, and that it might be better to discontinue their meetings.

RECORDER (loosening her hold of the Instrument's hand) : "I do not wish you to do anything against your will, and if you would rather I went away, I will do so."

NYRIA (seeming a little hurt) : "Do you really mean that ? . . . Don't try to persuade me by saying you'll go away because I won't do everything you want. . . . It's not that I doubt your word and that I don't want to help you. Really, I would like to do all that I can. . . . Where shall I take you ? We are outside the city now. . . . Is not this spot beautiful ? Look at those trees in bloom—that white thorn—and the pink one.—Do you see them. . . . Look over by the little stream."

RECORDER : "No, I cannot see them. . . . I can see nothing except through you."

NYRIA (in surprise) : "You can't see things for yourself ! Are you blind ? " And (as the Recorder accepts the implication) : "Oh ! I am so sorry for you."

She seems deeply touched and offers her services to try and make up for the disability. She eagerly enumerates various features of the landscape.

"I was going to tell you that if you looked under the leaves at the side of that little stream you'd find some violets—purple ones. Many kinds of plants grow along the banks of that stream. Stephanus comes here to get certain herbs that he needs for his potions. . . ."

RECORDER : "Who is Stephanus, Nyria ? "

NYRIA : "Stephanus is my friend. . . . Do you not know him ? I was thinking he might have come to doctor your slaves. . . . And then he has a shop which is very well known. . . . I should have thought you knew Stephanus's shop. He has lovely things to sell."

RECORDER : "But I am not rich enough to buy jewellery."

NYRIA (sympathetically) : "Oh, are you poor ! I am sorry. But Stephanus's shop is not grand, though the jewels he has are interesting and curious." Then, almost petulantly, "Why do you want to see Stephanus ? How am I to tell him about you, when he cannot see you nor can you see him.? . . . (In a distressed tone) : I know not why I do these things."

Thus for a week or two it continued. Nyria, in her story, drawing me on by fascinating hints of dramatic possibilities yet invariably baulking my curiosity by obstinate refusals to go further in actual fact. I felt disheartened and puzzled and, in my ignorance, doubtful as to the lawfulness of tampering with psychological mysteries. For sometimes, the Roman entity, on awakening into her life of the past, would show signs of apprehension and, in the person of the Instrument, of physical trouble.

This, on the first occasion, seemed attributable to the unannounced entry of a visitor, when the Instrument, just plunged into the Nyria consciousness, was sharply aroused to normal life by contact with a strange hand placed on hers as she leaned back in her deep chair.

There had been nervous shock, concealed at the moment, but when she went again into the trance condition, she murmured incoherently, moving her hands in supplicatory gestures as if in distress.

RECORDER (softly): "Nyria!"

NYRIA (wildly): "Where am I? I know not. . . . Everything seems to be turning round. . . . Yes, I can feel you beside me (speaking in a more natural tone). . . . Your hand is alive and warm. . . . Now I know we are on the steps—I don't mean the steps leading to the great temple, but those going down to the courtyard at Julia's house. . . . I must have been asleep. . . . One feels so strange sometimes when one wakes up—as if one had been a very long way off.

To-day, I can't see the places plainly. . . . Things shift about. Sometimes, they are quite still and clear and at other times I don't feel as though they belong to me or I to them. . . . I wonder if it is anything to do with you. . . . I don't want anybody else to come. . . . I'm getting used to you. . . . But don't let anyone else touch me. You can't think how it hurts. . . . I don't know how to explain exactly. Something seems to cut right through me and then I don't know anything more. . . . But I can go now. . . . What did you want to ask me? . . ."

THE RECORDER (wishing to avoid previous subjects of contention): "I should like you to tell me something about the Christians and their meetings."

NYRIA (shrinking): "I must not talk about them. . . . We have to be so careful."

RECORDER: "You need not be afraid. . . . I myself am a Christian."

NYRIA (doubtfully): "But I don't think I have ever met you at the Meetings."

RECORDER: "When I was in Rome I was not a Christian. But I have become one since that time."

NYRIA: "Then you can guess that we run great risks and we can only go to the meetings after dark with wraps round our heads. . . . We have a long walk—down into the caves outside the city."

RECORDER: "You mean the Catacombs?"[1]

NYRIA: "I know not. . . . It is where the ground is reddish and there are many rocks. . . . Do you want to go there? You can go either across the Forum or behind the Forum. . . . If the moon is up you have to be more careful. . . . You see, the streets are narrow and lighted only by torches and, generally, there are a good many people in them. Going to the Quarries you may meet Christians, and others who are not Christians, and if any of us were found out it might mean danger to many. . . . You go along the streets a good way and then you pass through the gate. . . ."

RECORDER: "Do you mean the gate which was wet—the gate they called the Porta Capena?"

NYRIA: "You surprise me, how did you know that? It is the gate that is wet—or there's another. . . . You can go out at either. . . . I am not sure . . . (as the Recorder suggests the name of a further gate). The Quarries where the Christians meet and where there is the red sand is nearer

[1] Nyria knew nothing about the Catacombs for, as one may learn from any good guide-book to Rome, the earliest dates from soon after the martyrdom of Peter and the greater number from after the middle of the second century. She was quite right, as will be seen further on, in her location of the Porta Capena and the ancient Quarries nearer the Appian Way.

the Appian Way. . . .[1] It is so odd—sometimes you know things one would not expect you to know, and at other times you don't know what one would have supposed you must know."

RECORDER: "Tell me, is that the gate through which Peter walked—when he went out of Rome—in the story of *Quo Vadis?*"

NYRIA: "I know what you mean. I have heard that story—when Peter saw the Lord. But you know, it was not that Peter was afraid: he was over-persuaded. He did not think of saving himself, but he thought he ought, perhaps, to preserve himself for the sake of the people. The Lord met him a good way out of the city—there was a boy with Peter who was showing him the road—he did not see: it was only Peter who saw the Light—our Lord spoke to him. Then Peter understood: There are some things that have to be, and that you can't escape, and he knew that if he had gone on our Lord would have had to take his form and be crucified in his place. . . . I have often thought—if something should come in which there was no choice and I had not the strength to go through with it. . . ."

RECORDER: "You know we are told that we shall not be tempted above what we are able to bear?"

NYRIA: "What is that? I know the words. . . . The Lord did not say that. . . . Oh, do you think I should be able?"

A further remark of Nyria's in relation to Pagan beliefs and the early Christian writings may be inserted here.

NYRIA: "But Christ says, "He that is not with me is against me."[2]

RECORDER: "Have you heard that text, or is it written?"

NYRIA: "It may be written.—I cannot read.—You know it has been preached to us."

[1] For the Quarries where the Christians met, see Appendix 16, Bk. I.

[2] Nyria's quotation of Christ's saying opens up interesting speculation as to the transmission orally of our Lord's teaching.

CHAPTER III

The Commentator Intervenes

Nyria's argumentative attitude and dislike to talking about her friends in Rome became, during the following sittings, more and more embarrassing, until there occurred a crisis which, though disconcerting at the outset, in the end cleared the road of obstructions.

It happened in this way. The Instrument having with cheerful compliance assumed the Roman personality, awoke as Nyria in a state of such extreme distress and terror that the Recorder, alarmed, tried to bring her back to normal life. But the girl seemed panic-stricken. Her features were convulsed, and she cried and moaned as though she were going through some horrifying experience.

Recorder (taking her hand and doing all she can to soothe her) : " Nyria, don't you know me ? "

Nyria (distractedly) : " Oh, I don't know where I am. . . . Why do you come ? . . . You can't help me."

Recorder : " Were you in trouble, Nyria ? "

Nyria : " I have been so frightened. . . . I don't know what has happened. . . . I don't know this place. . . . It's all so dark with black clouds driving round. . . . Now, rifts of light show through the darkness. . . . I see what seem to be steep hills rising all about me. . . . I don't know what they are . . . and all over them are faces which are so cruel. And there's a dreadful roaring like the roaring of animals. . . . Now I see that I am in a great round place. . . . With pillars. . . . I see horrible beasts that come between me and the people. . . . They can't hurt me, can they ? . . . Oh ! There are terrible things here . . . I can hear voices calling—voices of women in pain. . . . Is it a dream ? I can feel your hand now—alive and warm. . . . Oh, I am afraid. . . . Take me away. . . . Oh, do take me away."

She shudders and clings in a frenzied manner to the Recorder's hand.

Recorder (putting forth all the will-force at her command to dispel the vision) : " You are safe, Nyria. I am with you. It is only that you have had a bad dream. It has passed. Sleep peacefully. Nothing can hurt you now."

A long pause. Gradually, the terror subsides. A look of quiet content and something of wonder softens her face. The voice is calmer and more natural.

Nyria : " Now it is light. . . . Where am I ? . . . I know that you are beside me, but this place is different from any we have been in before. . . . I am in a country full of beautiful flowers—grey bluebells—not like ordinary flowers, for they have spirits in them. . . . I don't want to go back . . . it is so lovely in this place. There's a feeling of such peace and clearness, nothing could be false here. . . . Now I see long waves of light—like a

great arc of soft beautiful colours. . . . The colours seem to be sounds. . . . But I can't make them out. . . . I will try to get the words (seems to be listening intently—murmurs as if in assent). I must take them slowly. I cannot get them straight unless I do. . . . It is a message for you—some things you have to be told."

Here, there comes a further change, impossible to put into words, in the Instrument's face and manner. An Intelligence of a different order expresses itself through her lips. The Instrument speaks now in grave measured accents which convey the impression of practical wisdom and exceeding kindness. This Intelligence—whether individual or collective is not determinable—which at future times supplements Nyria's resources—may be known in these pages as the Commentator on super-physical levels.

. . . . . .

THE COMMENTATOR (speaking through the mouth of the Instrument): "I should like, if you will allow me, to give you a few words of advice which may help you in dealing with a rather complex situation.

The first thing I would say is—do not again suggest any possible association of your present personality—in regard to which she is still sorely puzzled—with that of the woman in Rome who has been called the Domina. Should you continue to do so you will set up vibrations that may prove troublesome and confusing and perhaps defeat the object you have in view.

It would not matter that you should discuss the case with the Instrument in her normal condition, but were you to imply to the Nyria entity any problematical connection with the life-story she is relating to you, the Roman child would be totally unable to grasp the idea and her mind would be in a state of hopeless bewilderment.

You may go on with the Roman story as fully as you please. That is intended. Only, take care not to bring your present self into the Roman picture and thus create confusion. You are right on general lines, in your answers to questions as to your identity. There is no harm in your suggesting that you are a part of that nature-world which she knows and loves and into which she vaguely supposes there may come beings from other spheres. And it would be unwise at any time to check her questioning. In so doing, you would check the information she might otherwise give. You must remember that the life of a slave was all repression. Also, that the Instrument has had so much liberty on the non-physical levels, unhampered by companionship or interference, that, finding these restrictions, she might perhaps be resentful—no—that is too strong an expression—anxious to break away. For, to her, the charm of these levels has been that here she could escape uncongenial society and have complete freedom. But if you can establish friendliness and perfect confidence you will get from her a very great deal.

Another point. Be careful not to jar upon or in any way sully what may, in the conditions, appear to you an unnecessarily keen sense of honour in discussing the private affairs of her friends. There's that question of the names. You will have them, but perhaps not just yet. You may feel it unfortunate that you have to deal with a certain obstinacy in the Instrument. Vibrations were set up in the past which are still very strong. But for one night when she went out with the fixed determination not to get those names, they would have been given you by now. That was from a right motive on the part of the Instrument, but the consequences must be accepted. It

would be impossible for her to get them at present. Be patient. Wait. You need not fear to press a point where physical pain is entailed. That will pass. Only, do nothing to shake her confidence in you. When information can be given with—as it seems to the Instrument—a clear conscience, it will be given frankly. But when there is hesitation, be careful of your own position. You may make or mar much in that way. And do not be disheartened if you get information that you may prove false or that you believe to be not quite accurate. Remember that, among the slaves, gossip was rife and was not to be relied upon in that day any more than it would be in this. And remember, too, that you have to deal with an immature soul and personality.

One other counsel. . . . You must guard against interruption. So far, it has not mattered, but you do not realise the strain upon the Instrument of being brought back suddenly. It amounts sometimes almost to physical pain. There ought to be no need for suffering, though the further she goes, the greater risk there is of that.[1] She will usually return of herself. Should there be sudden interruption, it is most important that no one coming into the room should be allowed to speak to or touch the Instrument. Ordinarily, you need do nothing. You employ no magnetism and have but, as it were, to remove yourself. The return should be easy and natural and, if possible, let there be a few minutes of quietude afterwards. And try not to expend yourself on the fretting of the soul. There are different roads by which one can advance and, for all, the end is the same. Purity of the heart and motive is what really matters."

[1] This change was immediately perceptible at the opening of the next conversation, when the Recorder awakens Nyria upon a hill described by her as across the Tiber—presumably the Janiculum Hill.

CHAPTER IV

"The Memory of the Great Whole"

The Recorder, who had feared bad effects upon the Instrument, accepted the intervention of the Commentator as evidence of judicious control at the back of this curious psychic development. It marked a change in the attitude of Nyria. She no longer objected to being sent to Rome, and even volunteered information concerning the Domina.

Nyria, resuming gaily: "Well, you do come after me! I didn't think anybody but goats could come here. . . . How did you know where I was! How did you come? Did you not tell me you were blind! If you wanted me, you could have found me lower down in the city.

Recorder: "I want you to take me back there now."

Nyria: . . . "The path is very steep[1]: you must be careful not to slip. You see, we are not goats. You had better not look down——Oh! I always forget that you are blind. . . . You know, we are right outside the city. . . . We are across the Tiber, and there's a palace not very far off. The road slopes up and that end of it turns back to the city and over the bridge. . . . This hill we are on is rough and wild. There are no trees or houses here—nothing but stumps and bushes.

No, it is not very far from the Appian Way. . . . Do you like looking at tombstones? . . . I don't. . . . There are different roads of tombs . . . hundreds and hundreds of them.[2] Now, you have to walk up this place and there is the city—you can see it straight in front. These gates are very fine—they are built almost like houses. There are rooms in the walls on each side in which the keepers live. . . . Yes, they are generally open now but they are shut sometimes—when there's any trouble or anyone in the city they don't want to get out."

The Recorder, knowing that the Instrument—this modern Englishwoman—had never been in Italy, was interested in checking her statements as to the topography of Ancient Rome. So far as her own knowledge goes, the Recorder has proved these statements to be correct.

Nyria: "Here is an opening that goes to the Forum . . . and there is the great Amphitheatre which did take so long in building. I do not like it (she gives a slight shudder). The Baths of Titus are higher than where we are—standing back.[3] We have passed the road below the Emperor's palace that winds near Julia's house which is on a flat place on the lower part of that hill. My domina's house is on another hill, not so fashionable as the

[1] The steepness of the Janiculum Hill. See Appendix 17, Bk. I.

[2] Nyria's remarks about the number of tombstones was spontaneous, and there must have been many more tombs at that time than the ruins now suggest. I am unable to locate the bridge by which the Tiber was recrossed. Probably the important Pons Sublicius—or the Pons Æmilius. Nor can I verify the gates she describes. (Ed.)

[3] Nyria describes these positions correctly.

one where Julia lives,[1] but the air is lovely. Her husband bought the house for her. . . . It seems so strange that I should not remember the names of the hills—Yes, I think it is the first name." (The Coelian, the Aventine and others had been suggested.)

The Recorder would point out, by reference to the map of Ancient Rome, that Nyria is right in regard to the relative positions of the places mentioned.

Nyria, after a pause, exclaims suddenly:

"Stay. . . . I have got two names. One is Valerius Paulinus—that is her husband. Her name, to herself, is Lucia, but she is called Valeria. The other name is Licinius Sura—that is her lover. . . ."

The Recorder again instances Nyria's topographical accuracy corroborated by the map, where upon the Aventine Hill are marked the Temple of Diana and the Thermae Surae.

NYRIA (when questioned as to the position of Licinius Sura's house,[2] replying without hesitation . . . : "Licinius lives on the same hill as Julia and there is a temple of Diana near. . . . Yes, it is true that he can look down upon the Circus Maximus. His house is on the brow of the hill just above Julia's house. . . . How didst thou know that about him?"

RECORDER: "I have read it in an epigram that Martial wrote."

NYRIA (in a tone of alarm): "Did Martial say anything about my domina? Oh, that would be dreadful!"

The Recorder reassured her on that point.

NYRIA: "Then I can tell you about my domina.[3] She was the daughter of the Emperor Vitellius,[4] whose name I was bidden to give you, who fought in my country and for whom the legions declared and who went back to Rome and then was set upon by the followers of Vespasian—that emperor who came after. . . . Thou knowest, Vitellius hid himself in the Palace, but was torn out and dragged through the streets with a knife put beneath his chin to hold up his head so that all might behold his face; and, in the end, he was killed. . . . Vitellius had two daughters. The elder, Vitellia, is a good deal older than my domina, and was married before her father died to one Valerius Asi..a..ti..cus (spoken slowly), sometime governor of a part of Gaul. They had brothers . . . the eldest was a soldier and was killed quite young and another brother had something the matter with his speech.[5] . . . Vitellia is rather large and fleshy—much bigger than my domina. Handsome but duller is Vitellia: her hair is not so bright and her eyes have a soft, heavy look. . . . Oh, yes, she is very good and she is kind. But sometimes, when I hear Vitellia talking to her sister—they take not much heed of me—she doth not scold, exactly, but it soundeth as if she would did she dare. . . .

Vitellia's husband is not a good man. I remember one thing she would say to my domina—that if she herself could bear with Asiaticus, then my domina ought to bear with her husband who at least doth love her. . . . And now that I know thou wilt do my domina no harm, I do not mind telling thee about her. Before her marriage, she and her mother were very poor.

[1] Lanciani, in *Ruins and Excavations of Ancient Rome* (p. 92) states, "We find that the aristocratic quarter *par excellence* was the thirteenth (Aventine)—Julia lived on the Aventine. (Ed.)

[2] For Licinius Sura's house, see Appendix 18, Bk. I.

[3] Nyria's "Domina"—the younger daughter of Vitellius. See Appendix 19, Bk. I.

[4] The fate of Vitellius. See Appendix 20, Bk. I.

[5] The marriages of Vitellius and their issue. See Appendix 21, Bk. I.

Vespasian arranged the marriage for her. He meant kindly. The man she married is rich and in a great position.[1]. . . Yes, I can take you to Valeria's house. . . . Now you can see it—on a sort of knoll at the back of the hill, and the garden is in terraces. . . .

Here are steps, near to the street, and there is a great open space in front of the portico and a wide entrance.

Dost thou wish to go in that way or by the way that I should enter? . . . Well, I go through that door in the wall. It is a handsome carved door. Within, are terraces and many flowers—there's a long slope of green, and crocuses grow in the grass—my domina likes them best that way. . . .

But, if thou wouldst see the house within, thou must enter through the wide portico and by the great door. . . . Thou knowest that in Rome all atriums are of the same kind—always the fountain and the small altar. This one is not so large and handsome as the atrium in the house of Julia, but methinks it hath more of taste and beauty.

The Domina's private apartments look towards the garden. The walls of her sitting-room are painted with pictures from stories she has told me. Near the window is a great marble couch soft with cushions and a lovely fur rug. Near it stands a marble table with things for writing, and also there are waxen tablets folded in pairs which can be scraped and used again and again. They call them dip—dip.[2] I forget the rest. There are books lying on shelves . . . my domina is always reading. . . . Of course, there are chairs and stools . . . and there are small statues and many objects rare and precious. Everything that my domina has of that kind she likes of the very best, even it be simple . . . and there are hangings of soft rich colouring. . . . And everywhere there are flowers. The Greek boy brings in the flowers and arranges them. . . . I only bring her wild flowers, for I have not money to buy others.

I must tell thee of that Greek boy. . . . He doth play on the harp and the flute and he can sing well also. . . . It is not a strong voice but the Domina taketh pleasure in his music. . . . And he hath an eye for the patterning of flower-beds and the placing of colours. He is clever in certain matters, yet, withal, stupid, for he hath not the wit to know when his service cometh amiss so that she is angered and doth forbid him her presence. Now, thou knowest, a slave may not show his humours, but the boy hideth not his bitterness and doth lurk in corners and stare till, she saith, he is like to drive her mad.

His name. . . . Wait . . . the sound cometh. . . . Geor..gio..Gregorio. That is not a Greek name, but they change the names of the slaves. . . . My name is not really Nyria. . . . I have forgotten my real name. . . .

I like not that boy Gregorio. There is something about his mouth and eyes that doth make me fear he might do a mischief. . . .

But in my domina's bedchamber all is white, save that at the end of the room there is an alcove with drawn curtains of pale violet fringed with silver, hiding that which sits therein: of the which, until times had passed, naught was revealed to me. All, white, save for the table of inlaid marble spread with gold and jewelled boxes which her husband gave her. He is always giving her presents and she would rather that he did not, seeing that she cannot pay him in the way he doth desire. And Paulinus hath the look of one ill to baulk of his desire. . . .

[1] Marriages of the Daughters of Vitellius. See Appendix 22, Bk. I.

[2] Nyria means *Diptycha* (twice-folded). See *Tabulae* (*Tabellae*), Smith's Dict. of Greek and Roman Antiquities.

He is Cæsar's friend and power lieth in his hand. . . . No, I remember not his being a consul.[1] It may be so, but I heard not of it. I do know that he had an appointment away from Rome—I think it was something military—and when he came back to Rome he was promoted to high service in the State.

I can tell that he hath a craving for his wife, the stronger because he feels that he can never really gain her. It is not given to Paulinus that he should understand Valeria, and it doth seem to me that, at its best, his love was as the fancy for some rare flower which is roughly plucked and crushed in the carrying.

I have watched her shrink when he cometh into her room. She cannot bear that he should touch her hand. . . . And he will sit down and make jesting remarks unseemly for my domina's ears. . . . And she will draw herself up and there will come upon her that deathlike coldness, and then I have seen his hand twitch as if he would strike her and his face grow red with fury because he sees that she is beyond his reach.

Oh, I know not what would happen if he should learn that his wife loved another man. . . . I dare not think. . . . He is very proud. It pleaseth him that she is so different from other Roman ladies and that there has never been a breath against her. . . . He will laugh about it in his coarse way, but I know that in his heart he has satisfaction in that thought. I have heard him say (Nyria's voice took on a curious manlike tone), 'Well, if she be cold to me, praise the gods, none other man hath more of her than I have.'

Once, I think, she would have gone away with her lover, but I am sure that he doth not wish to leave Rome. . . . It may be that he hath regard for her position . . . her children . . . and that he feareth to injure her. . . . Thou knowest, she hath two little boys. There was a girl, but she died. The boys are at a place which belongs to their father.[2] It is not far from the sea and is said to be very healthy. The Domina says she doth keep the children there because one of them is delicate. But I think that is not the real reason, but that she doth not want to have them with her. I have never seen them in Rome. . . . She hath been to see them more than once. . . . I have a feeling that she went there for a long time. . . . But how could that have been? . . . I was not with her. . . .

It is so curious . . . I seem to see things only in bits. . . . I can't remember very well. . . . Why do I say 'remember'? One does not *remember* things that are happening every day. . . .

Wouldst thou that I show thee the Domina? . . . Come out round this corner and down those steps. . . . This is the part of the terrace private to herself. . . . She is there—sitting in that marble chair which has a wide curved back and broad arms inlaid with stones, and there are cushions of embroidered silk and a stool on which she placeth her feet. . . . She was reading, but the roll dropped. . . . I could not tell thee its lettering, for Nyria cannot read nor write. . . . It is sure to be somewhat about Greece. . . . Thou knowest, the Domina always says that once she lived in Greece and that she knew the temple of Demeter in Greece. . . . Often did she speak of that part of the country. . . . There was a flat part, she said, near

[1] Valerius Paulinus, husband of the Domina. He did not become consul till after Nyria's death. See Appendix 23, Bk. I.

[2] Forum Julii, now Fréjus, not far from Cannes. For corroboration of Nyria's statement see Appendix 24, Bk. I.

the sea—at least I think it was—with a great deal of water around and rushes and flowers growing to the water's edge. . . . She said she was there as a child—and another place where she went afterwards—by a long straight road that got rougher as it went higher and that led to the temple. . . . There were two temples—the one by the water and the other, much bigger, in the hills. . . .

But when the domina talks like that, people are wont to laugh, for, thou knowest, she hath never been in Greece. . . . To me, it doth all seem as a story and I have no time to think of such things as are but fancy. Else, would my head fail to hold that which my service requireth of me. . . .

And when my Domina saith that she hath lived before, she will speak of how it might hap that in some future age, the spirit looking back and reading the story of the past might regard it as a book whereof the words may in truth have been written in blood. And yet to her, in that later life, the story would mean no more than words, and the memory of it, coming in flashes, would bring no pain.

'For the dead cannot speak,' she sayeth, 'and to Valeria in Rome the tale of one poor Greek girl is no more than the tale of a woman who is dead.'

But for myself 'tis enough to live in the present, and if I look back 'tis to the days when I was a child and played about the tree-houses of my homeland. Yet, even the pictures of those times have faded from my mind. And if that be so, how would it be possible to remember pictures of a far more distant past? And if I could remember, how know I that they had ever been? It seemeth to me more sensible that I should look forward to the future. But even that I cannot do. For always, when I try, a curtain seems to fall and I see naught of what may come as other maidens sometimes think they see—such as look for marriage and to bear children and possibly get their freedom, and such as Thanna who think to gain favour and to become high ladies in the State.

I never turn my mind on things such as those. My life is too full: and I know not what to wish for save fewer blows from Julia and peace and sunshine. . . . Nay, I fix not my thoughts on the future and this though Stephanus doth oft urge me, while bidding me share it with him. . . .

But from that, thou knowest, I shrink. . . ."

. . . . . .

Note by the Recorder.

In these foregoing chapters, the experimental stages of my relations with the Instrument and the case for Nyria's authenticity have been set forth as fully as the space allotted me allows: but I have still to make the reader aware of certain corroborative testimony to Nyria's story which came to me about four years earlier through an entirely different channel.

In January 1896 (note that I first met the Instrument and began the *Nyria* talks at the end of 1899) I was given a brief but comprehensive sketch of the life of a Roman lady of the Imperial era which had been obtained psychically by a clairvoyant friend when tracing some former lives of a small group of persons interested in the question of reincarnation.[1] This sketch was identical in plot with the story Nyria afterwards told me, except for one remarkable omission—Nyria herself was not in it.

The dramatic potentialities of that psychic communication of 1896

[1] The story of a Roman lady's life, received psychically in 1896. See Appendix 25, Bk. I.

impressed me so strongly that I made it the foundation of a "society" novel in which the sins of a former incarnation in Imperial Rome meet with their just retribution in London to-day.[1]

But though in that 1896 sketch of a Roman life there was no suggestion of any such personage as the slave-girl, it seemed that, by some inexplicable working of the subconscious mind, I had, in this novel, actually evolved, out of my own imagination and Tacitus' *Germania* a yellow-haired maiden bred in the Hercynian Forest—a sort of ghost-dummy of Nyria. And that the same kind of intuition—or, more likely, a sense of historic association—had made me choose the Flavian period for the setting of this reincarnation story. The idea that there might be an underlying occult significance in these mental processes never occurred to me.

Moreover, apart from the afore-mentioned testimony, there were in connection with the 1896 Roman life-story other flashes from the past, visioned by two different members of that little set of psychical researchers. . . . A picture of the Greek temple of Demeter seen clairvoyantly and painted shortly afterwards from memory, of which the description as well as of the country round the two temples was in complete accordance with the Domina's account reported four years later by Nyria. Likewise, from another psychic source, various scenes in the life of that Roman lady of the original 1896 record,[2] one giving a glimpse of the final tragedy in the Collosseum—all of which scenes reappeared in the Nyria narrative beginning in 1899.

I hesitate to dwell at any length upon these scattered corroborative threads lest, in this preliminary setting forth of the case, they tend to confuse the reader. But they made me realise later that the drama unfolded by Nyria had already been partially revealed through different agencies a considerable time before Nyria appeared on the stage.

For, again, let the fact be stressed that I made acquaintance with the Instrument, and through her, on the fourth-dimensional level, with the Roman slave-girl, in November 1899, and that I had received the sketch of the Roman lady's life which formed the subject of that earlier novel, in January 1896, four years all but two months before I had ever heard of Nyria or had met the Instrument. In fact, the novel was completed and ready for publication at the end of the summer of 1889. It will be seen, therefore, that the 1896 document could have had no possible connection on the physical plane with the later *Nyria* development, seeing that neither I nor the psychic friend who gave me the 1896 story knew at that date of the Instrument's existence.

Now, a point—one of the many which arise to one's mind when considering the strange case of Nyria and the Instrument—may be touched upon here. I mean the style of Nyria's language and its modifications from the time of the Occultist's introductory experiments through that of her more intimate relations with myself.

It will have been noticed that at the outset, when the Instrument was not yet wholly invested with the Nyria garment, her manner of speech was that of the ordinary Victorian girl and that as the ancient environment pressed around her with arresting actuality she would adopt the "thee" and "thou" mode of address and would make use of expressions belonging to a very much earlier period. Then in a moment she would fall back—or

[1] *As a Watch in the Night*, published by Messrs. Chatto & Windus.

[2] Scenes in connection with the 1896 document visioned by two other clairvoyant friends. See Appendix 26, Bk. I.

more correctly, forward—into the present-day vernacular, so that in her earlier talk there were grammatical irregularities which jarred upon the ear and which I have taken upon myself to soften by keeping her as far as possible to the same style throughout.

I would, however, make it clear that though I have been compelled to prune vigorously—often to cut away large blocks of Nyria's discursive tale, the story remains—except for occasional transpositions and such-like editorial corrections—in the words in which Nyria told it.

I cannot explain why, when the Instrument became completely merged in the Nyria personality, her phraseology should take on a mediæval English, almost Biblical character. Nor by what mental process of translation her Latin—which presumably was the Roman slave-girl's ordinary language—should here suggest the New Testament form—unless, indeed, there was any connection in the fact that the 1611 translation of the Scriptures was largely from the Latin Vulgate. The Instrument had no knowledge of Latin. In her normal personality she remembered nothing that had happened to her when in the Nyria consciousness. Much pondering gave no solution of the problem. . . . She had lived. . . . She still lives—now or two thousand years ago, what matter! She was Nyria. . . . She *is* Nyria. . . . That's all there is to it.

Once when she spoke of going back to get me the things I wanted to know, I asked her—"Where do you go?" and she answered—"Back into what you would call the Memory . . . the Memory of the Great Whole. That is where things exist after they have once happened and have been put there. . . . You go back into the atmosphere and the knowledge comes to you and you can carry it away. . . . But then one has to put it into words, and that is very difficult for me. There are times when the words come quite quickly and clearly, and there are other times when I can't get the right words, and yet the knowledge is pressing through almost like pain. . . . That is because I am not always clear in the part of me which does the work. . . ."

And thinking over the matter it seems to me that the ignorant little slave-girl may have touched the root of a mystery of Being which has taxed the better-stored mind of many a sage. And that she has summed it up in a simple phrase—

The Memory of the Great Whole.

These Appendices have been corrected for the Press by the Hon. Ralph Shirley.

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APPENDICES TO BOOK I

THE INSTRUMENT

Appendix 1. Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus

"The edifice of the Capitol was in the form of a square 200 feet on each side. It contained three temples, that of Jupiter in the middle, Minerva (Athene) on the right and Juno on the left. The temple was one hundred steps up from the Forum." See Adams's *Roman Antiquities*, p. 351.

Chariot of the Goddess of Victory. See Tacitus, *Hist.*, Bk. I, c. 86.

The Cupola of the Temple supported by eagles. Tacitus, *Hist.*, Bk. III, c. 71.

The gilding of the Temple is said to have cost 12,000 talents, i.e. £1,976,250. See Plutarch in "Poplic." It was begun by the Emperor Titus and finished by Domitian.

Note by the Recorder

The Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, as seen psychically by a friend (date, April 1898), corroborating Nyria's description.

"There is a small porch or doorway, the entrance to a sort of vestibule or passage: then another entrance to a large round building (I am not sure if it was oblong or round). (The Temple was oblong, with a dome.) In the centre there is a very large marble group—prancing horses and at the back of the chariot a colossal figure, very regal and commanding. Before this group there is an altar upon which incense is burning. A man enters. He is going through the Temple to visit someone connected with it. He either takes some stuff up from a corner or else warms his hands over the fire,—I cannot see which, but it is an act of oblation in either case—a kind of offering to the god or the power represented by the god. . . ."

Appendix 2

The person and functions of the Flamen Dialis, head of the Trinity of Flamens, represent all that is most sacred in the religion of ancient Rome. In them may be traced the Pagan prototype of the Pope's authority and of the essential tenet of the Roman Catholic creed—that of Transubstantiation. The Holy Cake was consecrated by the Flamen and a portion was always kept in his room to be in readiness should there be private need of the Sacrament. A special vestment was laid over the priest's shoulders for the moments of performance of the Sacrifice, and the ceremony would have been invalid were any accident to befall the head-dress worn by the Flamen—a mitred cap made from the pure white skin of a lamb slain in sacrifice bearing in its centre the Apex, which was the symbol of the Flamen Dialis.

Nyria's description of the Flamen's robes and head-dress, seen from a distance, proves as far as it goes to be correct. Although not allowed to wear a gold ring —the privilege of the equestrian order—and though debarred from contact of his flesh with any metal except bronze—the metal dedicated to sacred purposes (the Flamen was shaved with a bronze razor)—gold was permitted upon his robes and the outside of the bands beneath his chin, attaching the cap. The "something round and bright standing up in the middle" and of which Nyria says later, "The round thing in the middle of his head-dress shines in the sun," was a disc of pure gold supported by a small stick of olive-wood.

An exhaustive article in the *Dictionnaire des Antiquités* of Daremberg and Saglio contains full particulars on the subject and, in reference to the "baguette" or wand of olive-wood and the gold surmounting it, has this remark:

"La Baguette des flamines Latins rappelle la lame d'or que le grand sanctificateur d'Israel fixait sur sa tiare."

Also there is noted the similarity of the Flamen's ritual to the Mosaic ritual of the sovereign priest Aaron.

Appendix 3

Domitian's adoration of Minerva—Pallas Athene—is frequently mentioned. Martial, in an epigram to Domitian, presumes that Jove will not have sufficient in his treasury to pay the god's debt to the Emperor. "For what could he pay you for the temple on the Capitol. . . . What could the spouse of the Thunderer pay for her two temples? Of Minerva, I say nothing, your interests are hers." Martial, Bk. IX, Ep. 4. "He (Domitian) celebrated upon the Alban mount every year the festival of Minerva, for whom he had appointed a college of priests." Suetonius, *Vit. Domitian*, IV.

Appendix 4

The chapel with statue of Jupiter Conservator built by Domitian in commemoration of his escape during the Vitellian riots, is mentioned by Tacitus, *Hist.*, Bk. III, c. 74.

Tacitus gives an account of the destruction of the Capitol in the Vitellian insurrection and the escape of Domitian. Tacitus, *Hist.*, Bk. III, c. 69–71.

Appendix 5. Hairless Arms of the Roman Dandy

"Whose arms look sleek and polished with not a hair unextracted." Martial, Bk. II, Ep. 29.

Martial comparing himself with Carmenion.

"You are perfectly smooth from the daily use of depilatories, I am rough-haired both in limb and face." Martial, Bk. XI, Ep. 65.

Appendix 6. Wreathing the Masks of the Ancestors

Juvenal's Satire VIII begins, "What boots it to display the painted faces of your ancestors?" A footnote is appended in Bohn's Translation (p. 78) upon the practice of wreathing the *Imagines* (wax masks) set up in the hall.

"None had the right of using family pictures or statues but those whose ancestors or themselves had borne some of the highest dignities. So that the *jus imaginis* was much the same thing among the Romans as the right of bearing a coat of arms among us." Pliny's *Letters*: Note to Let. 17, Bk. V.

Appendix 7. Mirrors

"The mirror was usually held by the ornatrix (female slave), tirewoman, while her mistress arranged her hair." Ovid, *Amores*, Bk. I, XIV, verse 16.

"The 'specula' or looking-glasses of the ancients were usually made of metal, either a composition of tin or copper or silver, but in later times alloy was mixed with the silver. Pliny the Elder says that mirrors were made in the glass-houses of Sidon, which consisted of glass plates with leaves of metal at the back: they were probably of an inferior character. Those of copper and tin were made chiefly at Brundusium. The white metal formed from this mixture soon becoming dim, a sponge with powdered pumice-stone was usually fastened to the walls, and they were occasionally the length of a person's body." Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, Bk. IV (Note to verse 349, Bohn's Translation, p. 135).

Appendix 8. Septimontium—Feast of the Seven Hills, Inaugurated by a Religious Ceremony outside the City

Nyria's indication of the time of year by her previous mention of a fire in the Priests' Room at the Temple, suggests that this procession was connected with the Feast of the Seven Hills in December, and the dedication of the Sanctuary on Mount Oppius at which the Flamen Dialis officiated. See Smith's *Dictionary of Antiquities* and Suetonius' *Domitian*.

Appendix 9. Flavian Family

Vespasian (spoken of as "the honest tax-gatherer") had two sons, the elder, Flavius Sabinus, Prefect of Rome; the younger, Vespasian, afterwards Emperor.

The elder son, Flavius Sabinus, Prefect of Rome, had two sons—Flavius Sabinus (who married Julia, daughter of his cousin Titus) and Flavius Clemens (who married his cousin Domitilla, daughter of Domitilla, the sister of Titus).

Vespasian, the Emperor, had three children, Titus, Domitian and Domitilla.

Appendix 10

In a poem of Statius congratulating Rutilius Gallicus, then Prefect of Rome, upon his recovery from illness, the following lines occur:

"Time would fail me to tell of thy battles in the north, of insurgent Rhine, of captured Veleda's entreaties, and last, greatest triumph, Rome placed in thy hands to govern while the destruction of the Dacians was going on, when Gallicus, the chosen, took up the leadership of our great Chief (Domitian) and Fortune marvelled not." Statius, *Silvae*, Bk. I, c. 4.

Statius also speaks of Domitian as "lord god Germanicus." Domitian's arrogance was not so marked in the earlier part of his reign, and Statius' poem was probably written near the end of it.

"In the year 77 a considerable army was collected in Lower Germany under the command of C. Velius Rufus and Q. Julius Cordinus Rutilius Gallicus. To it came contingents drawn from the four legions of Upper Germany and the four legions of Britain. . . . This army crossed the lower Rhine and managed to capture that most troublesome German prophetess, Veleda of the Bructerii. . . ." *Five Roman Emperors*, p. 94.

Note . . . age of Nyria . . . Statius' first book of the *Silvae* was written in A.D. 94.

Appendix 11

Pliny (the Elder), who was well acquainted with Germany, gives a striking description of the Hercynian Forest.

"The vast trees of the Hercynian forest, untouched for ages and as old as the world, by their almost immortal destiny exceed common wonders. Not to mention circumstances which would not be credited, it is certain that hills are raised by the repercussion of their meeting roots: and, where the earth does not follow them, arches are formed as high as the branches, which, struggling, as it were, with each other, are bent into the form of open gates so wide that troops of horse may ride under them" (xvi. 2). Quoted from Pliny the Elder in a footnote to c. 30, Tacitus, *Germania*, p. 320 (Bohn ed.).

The German tribes are described by Tacitus as with "eyes stern and blue: ruddy hair: large bodies, powerful in sudden exertions but impatient of toil and labour." Tacitus, *Germania*, c. 4.

"The matrimonial bond is strict, and severe among them. Adultery is rare. . . . Its punishment is instant." Tacitus, *Germania*, c. 19.

Appendix 12. Veleda

Veleda. . . . : "A virgin of the Bructerian nation who ruled over a large tract of territory: according to an ancient custom among the Germans of supposing that many of their women have a prophetic spirit . . . and of believing them to be divinities. . . ." Tacitus, *Hist.*, Bk. IV, c. 61.

And again . . . of Veleda. . . . : "Persons were not allowed to see her, to increase the awe of her. She herself resided in the summit of a lofty tower: a relation chosen for the purpose was employed to convey the questions and responses, like a messenger between man and a deity." Tacitus, *Hist.*, Bk. IV, c. 65.

"Veleda, queen of the Bructerii, was regarded as a divine being. She lived in a lofty tower in the neighbourhood of the river Lippia (Lippe). . . . Tacitus, *Hist.*, Bk. VIII, c. 61, 65; Bk. V, c. 22–24; *Germania*, c. 8. Also Dion Cassius, LXVII, 6.

Appendix 13. Cosmetics and Adjuncts to the Toilette of Roman Great Ladies

Perfume "Liquid nard." "There were two kinds of nard, the 'foliated' and the 'spike' nard. It was much esteemed as a perfume by the Romans." Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, Bk. III, p. 451 (Bohn's Translation).

"Roman women used powdered chalk to add to the fairness of the complexion." Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, Note to Bohn's Translation, Bk. III, p. 441.

"The red colour which was used by the Roman ladies for giving a bloom to the skin was prepared from a moss called 'fucus,' from which in time all kinds of paint received the name of fucus." Ovid, Note to Bohn's Translation, p. 442, *Ars Amatoria*.

The eyebrows: "We learn from Juvenal that the colour of them was heightened by punctures with a needle being filled with soot." Ovid, Note to Bohn's Translation, p. 441, *Ars Amatoria*.

Also, same page, note "To mark the eyes." "To heighten the colour of the eyelashes, ashes and probably charcoal were used by Roman women . . . black paint made of pulverised antimony is used by women of the East at the present day to paint their eyebrows black. It is called 'surme' and was used in Rome."

Appendix 14. Delatores—Informers

"The delatores under the emperors were a class of men who gained their livelihood by informing against their fellow-citizens." Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*.

"The unsupported allegation of any one person relative to a word or action construed to affect the dignity of the emperor was sufficient." Suetonius, *Domitian*, LX, 12.

The rewards of informers: "When the accused was found guilty, the fourth part of his estate and effects went to the prosecutors," otherwise Informers. Tacitus, *Annals*, LV, 30, Note p. 173, Bohn's Translation.

Appendix 15. Yellow-haired Slave-girls

"Ogulnia, in order that she may go in due state to the games, hires a dress and attendants, and a sedan and pillow and female friends and a nurse and yellow-haired girl to whom she may issue her commands." Juvenal, Satire VI, line 352 *et seq*. And see note at foot of Satire VI, p. 51 (Bohn's Translation).

Appendix 16

The disused quarries spoken of by Nyria as the meeting-place of the Christians would seem to have been the ancient quarries beneath the Aventine near the present Church of St. Saba, whence Servius Tullius obtained the tufa blocks for the building of the city walls; or the Cervara, also beneath the Aventine in the Region XIII nearer the river. See Lanciani's *Ruins and Excavations of Ancient Rome*, pp. 33, 34.

The reddish tufa is spoken of by Lanciani as found in this part of Rome, not frequently elsewhere.

Appendix 17. The Janiculum Hill

"In the early days of Rome there was but one line of communication with the Janiculum . . . the road that passed over the Sublician bridge, crossed to the plain of Trastevere by S. Cosimato and ascended the Janiculum by the Villa Spada (Livy, I, 33; V. 40), and Valerius Maximus (I, 10) describes it on the occasion of the flight of the Vestals to Veii (de Aq., I, 18, p. 43), and Fabretti speaks of its rediscovery. . . . The ascent up the hill was exceedingly steep and hardly fit for carriage traffic. . . . Things were, however, improved in the sixth century of Rome when a new bridge and better road were built. . . ." Lanciani's *Ruins and Excavations of Ancient Rome*, p. 20.

Appendix 18. House of Marcus Licinius Sura

The house of Marcus Licinius Sura was situated exactly as Nyria describes—on the Aventine, facing the Circus Maximus. Its site is marked on the map of ancient Rome as Thermae Surae, the baths having been built later by Trajan's friend Lucius Licinius Sura.

Martial in his Epigram, "To a Detractor," complains that the latter carps at his best jokes, "jokes" which the immortal Silius deigns to receive in his library, which the eloquent Regulus so frequently repeats and which win the praises of Sura, the neighbour of the Aventine Diana, who beholds at a less distance than others the contests of the great circus. Even Cæsar himself, the lord of all, the supporter of so great a weight of empire, does not think it beneath him to read my jests two or three times." Martial, Bk. VI, Ep. 64.

Appendix 19. The Younger Daughter of Vitellius

The first mention in history of Vitellius' younger daughter is in a letter to Antonius, his opponent on Vespasian's side, in which Vitellius "offered him the consulship, his daughter who was marriageable, and a rich dowry" (Tacitus, *Hist.*, Bk. III, c. 78). Vitellia being then married to Valerius Asiaticus, this daughter could only have been the younger one, called (according to Nyria, for her name is not given in history) probably after her uncle Lucius, who, with one of Vitellius' elder sons, was killed in battle. "Lucius and Germanicus, the brother and son of Vitellius, were slain near Terracina when the former was marching to his brother's relief." See Suetonius, *Life of Vitellius*, Note to c. 18 (Bohn's Translation).

Lucia, the younger daughter, would have received the further name of Valeria on her marriage with Valerius Paulinus.

Appendix 20. Fate of Vitellius

See Suetonius' *Life of Vitellius*, c. 16–17. Also Tacitus, *Hist.*, Bk. III, c. 84–85, with whose accounts of the death of Vitellius that of Nyria is in accord.

Appendix 21. Marriages of Vitellius and their Issue

Soon after the divorce of his first wife Petronia, by whom he had a son "blind of an eye," he (Vitellius) "married Galeria Fundana, the daughter of a man of prætorian rank, and had by her both sons and daughters." Among the former was one who "had such a stammering in his speech that he was little better than if he had been dumb." See Suetonius, *Vit. Vitellius*, c. 6.

This confirms Nyria's mention of the Domina having a brother thus afflicted.

Vitellius' second wife is contradictorily described—by Tacitus as "prudent and virtuous" and of a "mild character" (Tacitus, *Hist.*, Bk. II), and by Dion Cassius as disdainful of the decoration in Nero's palace and as being ambitious and worldly. The latter opinion fits better the impression given by Nyria who implies that she was partly responsible for the unhappy marriage of her daughter Lucia—Valeria. There must have been another quite young child, for on Vitellius' abdication in Dec., A.D. 69, it is told that when he came down from his palace in mourning apparel surrounded by his afflicted family his infant son was carried in a small litter exhibiting the appearance of a funeral procession." Tacitus, *Hist.*, Bk. III, c. 67–68.

A still more touching picture—"It was a very melancholy sight to see the Empress Fundana go out of the palace leading her little daughter by the hand and shedding copious tears for her husband, whose unhappy destiny had reduced him so low as to seek for shelter in the compassion of his people"—is given in *The Roman Empresses*, Walpole Press, Subscribers' Edition.

Yet Lucia could not have been so very little, if not long afterwards Vespasian arranged for her an advantageous marriage. (Ed.)

Appendix 22. Marriages of the Daughters of Vitellius

The marriage of Vitellius' elder daughter Vitellia must have taken place immediately before the death of Galba or immediately after Vitellius succeeded him. Tacitus says, "Valerius Asiaticus, the governor of Belgic Gaul, to whom, a short time after, Vitellius gave his daughter (Vitellia) in marriage . . . went over to the party of the new emperor." Tacitus, *Hist.*, Bk. I, c. 59.

Suetonius says, in his *Life of Vespasian*, XIV: "He made a very splendid marriage for the daughter of his enemy Vitellius, and gave her, besides, a suitable fortune and equipage."

Appendix 23. Valerius Paulinus, Husband of the Domina

The husband provided by Vespasian for Vitellius' youngest daughter is described as follows :

" Valerius Paulinus, the procurator (of Narbon Gaul), an active and experienced officer, and before his elevation devoted to Vespasian, had brought the surrounding states to swear allegiance to him. Paulinus having gathered round him all those who, having been disbanded by Vitellius, zealously entered upon the war, secured with a garrison the colony of Forum Julii which commanded the sea, having the greater weight and influence as he was a native of the colony, and honoured by the prætorian bands, of which he had formerly been a tribune." Tacitus, *Hist.*, Bk. III, c. 42, 43. Also see Josephus, Bk. VII.

Valerius Paulinus was consul in the reign of Trajan A.D. 100.

Pliny writes to him : " You see it is not any pleasurable indulgence that prevents my attending you on the first day of your consulship. I shall celebrate it, nevertheless, as much as if I were present and pay my vows for you here with all the warmest tokens of joy and congratulation." Pliny's *Letters*, Bk. IX, Letter 37.

This was five years after the death of Nyria, therefore she would not have known of it.

Here Nyria makes a significant remark in regard to her method of procuring information.

" You know I only remember things in blocks. It is possible that he may have been consul in the time I have not worked upon. Unless a thing has to do with the subject I am working upon, I don't seem to take it into consideration. One has to work through a particular block—and it is not easy to get other things."

Appendix 24. Forum Julii

Pliny writes to Valerius Paulinus (husband of Valeria) on behalf of his (Pliny's) freedman Zozimus, who is consumptive.

" For this reason I intend to send him to your farm at Forum Julii (Fréjus, in Provence), having frequently heard you mention it as a healthy air, and recommend the milk of that place as very salutary in disorders of that nature.' Pliny's *Letters*, Bk. 3, Letter 19, p. 174 (Bohn's Translation).

Appendix 25. Outline of the Life of a Roman Lady obtained Psychically in 1896

She appears to have been married by an ambitious mother to a man in a good position—a consul at one time. The girl hates the marriage and rebels as far as possible, but uselessly. The man loves her devotedly. He is of a weak, passionate nature and has lived a very evil life, but he is so filled with love for his wife that he tries for her sake to grow better and leaves no stone unturned to please her, but without effect. She remains absolutely unmoved by his efforts, and refuses to see any good in him at all till at last, wearied of the struggle, he returns to his old life and makes no further attempt to lead a better one. Children are born to them to whom she is indifferent. Her only affection so far seems to be for a sister who is intensely sympathetic towards her while endeavouring to make her see the failure she is making of her life. This sister has strong influence but not strong enough for that.

Many men love the woman but she is cold to them all till at last one touches her heart. It would seem as if all her emotions had been pent-up until then. She loves him as he loves her and is happy for a while.

There is in the house a young Greek—a favourite and a sort of musician, but a slave, I think—a boy of about eighteen years of age. He adores the woman and is the only one who observes the new current of her feelings. He is furiously jealous of her lover and one day when rebuked by her for some fault turns on her and threatens to betray her to her husband. He is a strange boy with a gloomy jealous nature but sensitive and loving in a queer selfish way.

The woman well knows what would follow if her husband learns the truth. She orders the boy's tongue to be seared with a hot iron and that he be sold to an Egyptian slave-dealer to be shipped off to the East. The curious part of her character is that she does such things in a sort of wild impulse and repents bitterly afterwards, for she is really of a warm and generous nature. Her act to the boy is bitterly regretted and she tries to get him back to make up to him.

Time passes on and her lover's ardour begins to cool, though she does not suspect him till at last she finds him faithless to her. Maddened by the blow she denounces him as mixed up with a Christian plot. He is imprisoned.

One day there is a show at the Colosseum which she attends—fighting of gladiators and wild beasts. To her horror, she sees her lover among the doomed men. She falls fainting and is taken home, but she never recovers the shock. She lives on some years but is entirely changed. Her husband dies and she devotes herself to her two sons and to mystical studies (for which she has brought over great aptitude from the past) under the guidance of the Flamen of Jupiter whom she met at the house of a relative. (Dated)—January 13—1896.

APPENDIX 26. PICTURES FROM THE LIFE OF A ROMAN LADY, SEEN IN 1896 BY TWO CLAIRVOYANT FRIENDS, NOT INCLUDING THAT ONE FROM WHOM THE SKETCH OF THIS ROMAN LIFE WAS RECEIVED EARLY IN THAT YEAR

"I see an open space in a city. The Roman lady is carried by slaves in a sort of litter. Not long married, her husband walks beside her. . . . He has black hair and is heavily built. He is good-natured but does not in the least understand her.

Now they come to a large public building with steps and pillars. She gets out of the litter and goes inside. It is a place where are given recitations and readings of poetry or philosophy.[1] She has literary tastes and likes to hear and learn about style, etc. Her husband is not interested and only comes to show attention to his wife. . . . He stays about outside on the chance of seeing and chatting with people he knows.

This appears to be her first meeting with her lover. He is quite different from her husband—fairer, with a clean-cut face and deep-set eyes. He is more intellectual than the husband. He is presented to her and at first sight the two are attracted to each other.

Now, I see her in her own room. It is shaded from the sun. She sits on the right-hand side of a window which looks into a court where there is bright sunshine. Her lover comes in. He kneels by her side and speaks to her in terms of passionate love—I can only see it like a picture. I cannot feel what either of the two are thinking.

. . . I see her again in the same room. . . . He comes again but is cold to her. She is half-angry and reproaches him. . . . He leaves her.

. . . I see a woman with her who tells her gossip about him—that he loves another woman. . . . She is ready to believe this. . . . She thinks how she can be revenged.

. . . Some days after, I see men coming in with scrolls and things to sign. She is arranging to have him imprisoned for what she believes to be a slight offence or conspiracy. She thinks that she will intercede for him—that hers will be the hand to open the door to liberty and that he will come back to her. But in reality, he is far more deeply involved than she knows and she has ruined him.

. . . Now there is a vast round place—I suppose the Colosseum—and thousands of people. . . . He is brought into the arena looking haggard and worn and miserable. . . . Then I hear a fearful scream . . . and it is all a muddle—I can't see any more."

[1] Doubtless in the Odeum. There were four buildings so styled in Ancient Rome. (Ed.)

It must be apparent how closely these fragmentary pictures seen early in 1896 agree with Nyria's story not begun until late in 1899. . . . Coincidence, thought-reading do not explain the similarity. (Ed.)

BOOK THE SECOND

IN THE HOUSEHOLD OF JULIA

CHAPTER I

An Imperial Feast

Nyria describes the banquet given by Julia, daughter of Titus, and Flavius Sabinus, her husband, in honour of the Emperor Domitian. She tells of the Ethiopian woman's strange prophesyings and of how Euphena uttered traitrous allegations concerning Julia's parentage.

Nyria: "Now I will tell thee of that last occasion on which Domitian feasted at the table of my master Sabinus. For thou may'st know that there was much talk afterwards about this banquet and the strange prophesying which the old Ethiopian woman Euphena made in the presence of Cæsar.

First, thou dost wish that I should explain the order of arrangement and therefore I will take thee to the house of Julia and show thee how it is planned. Thou knowest that the house stands back on the lower front of the Aventine Hill facing the Palatine and not very far from the palace of Cæsar. It is enclosed on three sides by a vast courtyard and, behind, there is a further court in which are the dwellings of the slaves.

We are going up the broad flight of marble steps. Now we have entered by the State-entrance into the atrium. Ours is a particularly fine atrium and takes up almost the whole front of the building. But everything in this house is finer than in any other in Rome. We go through a great doorway at the further end of the atrium, past some public rooms in one of which my master's morning clients wait until he sees them in a room further back. Now, through all the centre of the house, there runs a wide marble space with many pillars and statues. In the middle of it is the tablinum, and there are other rooms for different purposes which can be closed or thrown open. The big space divides here, and on either side of the middle rooms run broad passages with doors that take thee on one side to my master's private apartments and on the other to those of my mistress.

The banqueting-hall lies beyond; but, before reaching it, we come to a beautiful marble court which has columns of carved marble around it and a covered way looking on to a garden. There are inlaid and cushioned chairs and couches in this court and in the centre a great sculptured basin wherein goldfish are swimming. It is in this court that the company assembles for the banquet. Being an affair of State to-day Julia will receive her guests at the great inner doors of the atrium after the fashion befitting each one's rank. For, though Julia's manners have often but little dignity, yet have I seen her hold herself as verily an emperor's daughter should. My master stands more forward and, as the stewards call the names of those arriving, all pass along towards the court and walk and talk and feed the

goldfish until slaves at either end make sound on musical instruments to announce that the feast is ready.

Thou wouldst know of the manner in which the names of such guests were called. 'Twas for the higher Roman ladies—'The Noble, the wife of the Noble,' or 'the Illustrious' or 'the Honourable' according to the rank of the husband. The Domina Valeria was 'the Most Noble Valeria'—the same as Julia, seeing that each was the daughter of an emperor—'wife of the Illustrious Valerius Paulinus.' 'The Illustrious' was only for very high persons—senators or consuls and many such were at the banquet that night. Plinius was 'the Honourable.' But Plinius cared not greatly for titles and if it chanced that I should announce him I would say, 'May it please Julia, Plinius waits.' Then there was Martial, who would always have himself announced as 'the Honourable,' and thus would I call him. And then again the lady Domitilla, who was Stephanus's mistress—she would not be called the 'Most Noble' even though she was entitled to it and her husband was very near Cæsar. She liked to be called 'the Domina Domitilla.' She said it was more simple.

It is a vast hall, the great banqueting-room, with many doors to the kitchens and various rooms whence the food is brought. The hall has a wondrous pavement of coloured marbles and rows of pillars set around which, like the walls, are made of various tinted marbles that gleam strangely in the torchlight.

In certain spaces, between the pillars, are curtains of embroidered silk of different thickness for summer and winter, which may be closed or, in the great heats, drawn apart leaving all open to the free air. But in the cold weather the great hall is heated by pipes, and fires in braziers are set upon tripods in various parts. We use many of these tripods, of all kinds and sizes, in gold, silver and bronze. Small ones of gold we set on the table to raise the decorations of fruit and flowers. To-day it was my office to direct the men in placing the larger decorations, and I myself did arrange those dishes which are choicest and most important. For I am accounted to have skill in the handling of flowers.

Also, beyond the table are set other tripods for the standing of jugs of water and wine. The wine is brought in vessels of chased silver and of finest glass engraved in colours, and there are goblets of the same. As it pleases thee, I will tell thee fully of the furnishings of the banquet and the setting of the table.

Thou knowest that in some great houses of Rome 'tis customary to place the guests in companies of three or four at the small wooden tables which have become the fashion of late. But in this house, for State banquets, there is but one great marble table, which has slabs that may be added or taken away according to the number of persons. The number is large to-day, I think about forty. All the slabs have been put in.

The table is rounded at the ends, which are adorned with precious stones, and stand upon supports of gold in the shape of stooping beasts. It has been for a long time in my master Sabinus's family, and not even one somewhat of its fashion, which on special occasions Domitian uses, can compare with it in splendour.

I want thee to know about the marble of Sabinus's table. 'Twas dug out of a quarry in Phrygia,[1] and is shaded in pink like the heart of a rose and

[1] Mygdonian marble—marble of Phrygia—was considered the best. See Ovid's *Heroides*, Ep. XV (Letter from Sappho to Phaon), v. 142. Note to p. 152. Bohn Trans.

veined with purple and deep crimson. Domitian, who often says clever things, declared that there had been a sacrifice to the gods on the spot where the marble was dug, and that the blood spilled on the earth had run into the marble and caused the purple-red veins. Or else that Bacchus had held high revel in that place and the oblations from the wine-cups had sunk into the ground.

It was a lovely table. The rose-pink shone up through mother-of-pearl dishes set upon the marble, and there were low lights floating in vessels of scented oil which came from a far place called Le..ba..non—if there be such a one—and being reflected in the marble caused the pink and red of it to gleam with a soft brilliance.

But these floating wicks were but for decoration. On the walls were great torches made of specially prepared wood which gave a strong illumination.

And I must tell thee of the fountain of wine, and the marble group in the centre of the table. 'Twas of four naked figures, each one holding a long pipe bent upward, out of which the wine rose high in a red spray and played across into four shells placed at the corners which received it. The wine made no stain upon the marble, for the machinery within was such that when the shells at the corners were full they did not overflow, but the wine went back again into the spouts.

At the table, Cæsar had his own chair, which was always sent from the palace beforehand to the house where he dined. It was of gold and ivory, with lions' heads on the arms, and, crossed at the back, were two great gold eagles. There were velvet cushions to it, embroidered in gold, and also a canopy. But at the beginning of the feast Cæsar did not always have the canopy. He would get very hot and it was his way to flush[1] easily. If afterwards there were a set entertainment, or if he thought he was not being paid sufficient respect, he would order the canopy to be put up.

The Empress likewise had her seat brought beforehand. It was of black ebony with beautiful inlay of mother-of-pearl. She liked a slender, high-backed chair. My mistress and my master, Julia and Sabinus, had their own chairs. The rest were on couches to hold three. Sometimes a small couch for one would be put in between. It would not have been proper to have them for two persons ; they were always for three or for one.

No, the people do not look the least as if they were lying down. The couches are low and covered with tapestry—is that the word ?—in purple and gold ; it is according to the fortune of the master. Of course, I am telling thee about our house : other people's houses might not be so fine, but we have everything of the best. You might think the couches uncomfortable, but they are not ; nothing is stiff or formal, but all is arranged for comfort. There is a piece for the back and a cushion for the elbow, and there are tripods for plates and glasses in case it is more convenient than reaching out to the table. In Julia's house people do as they choose. In the house of my Domina Valeria they would have had to be more careful.

About the order of going in—Julia walks beside the Emperor and Sabinus with the Empress. At a public or official banquet the Emperor and Empress would have gone in first, but at a private banquet Cæsar would be seated next the lady of the house and the Empress next her host.

Thou dost wish to know the manner of converse with Cæsar. Now, Domitian was very uncertain of mood even with Julia ; a small matter would put him out. He was always better tempered after he had well eaten and

[1] For Domitian's habit of flushing, see Appendix 1, Bk. II.

drunk, and Julia knew this and would press upon him the choicest dishes and sign often to the wine-bearer to fill his cup—he had his own cup, which was brought with his chair ; likewise he had his own servant. His body-guard stood close outside, not actually in the banqueting-hall. I have heard that some Emperors insisted upon their guard being behind them because of their fear of assassination, and I should have thought that Domitian would have done this. But he did not in the house of Julia.

The mode of addressing him is usually ' My lord ' or ' Cæsar ' or ' Great Cæsar.' Some will begin by saying ' If it be Cæsar's pleasure,' or if they are not sure whether he wishes to be addressed, they will bring in his name so that he may take notice or not as he pleases. But no one addresses him unless he has spoken first.

As they went along to the banqueting-room Julia walked close to Cæsar and, plucking at his sleeve, whispered in his ear. She could not speak loud for Sabinus was following with Domitia. I saw this while I stood aside until they had passed. Then I had to hurry into the banqueting-hall by a door of service so that I should be behind Julia's chair when she sat down.

I will tell thee of the libation to the gods. Domitian, being of the highest rank, should have made it with my master, all the rest standing. Thus would it have been in a Roman house where the old customs are observed. But on this occasion, in the house of Julia, as neither its mistress nor the Emperor had any regard for these ancient rites, few of the guests paid much attention to the ceremony. Nor did I myself give it close heed. This, I think, was the way of it.

Those men who carried the wine-vessels and the slaves under them would fall into line as the company entered the banqueting-room and, the chief of them leading, would go to the place prepared where there is a hole in the floor and a metal drain beneath it. Into this the head steward, carrying the wine-flagon in one hand and a cup, open at the bottom, in the other, would pour the wine through the cup while he recited a prayer in words somewhat like this :

' To the great god Jupiter and all these gods,' adding to the name of each one, as he says it, an adjective describing that god's special quality, ' whose blessings are shed in the firstfruits of everything that is given and on everything that is now spread for man's enjoyment. . . . Be it poured forth . . . ! '

Some of the guests would stand for a moment just as a matter of form, but most of them would sit down when they saw that Domitian was seated.

It used to seem to me such silly waste. But my master did have a real feeling about the libation. When there was only a small banquet he would take the wine-flagon from the steward and himself pour forth and say the prayer. Sabinus was always very fond of praying. . . . And that shows how little use there is in praying to those heathen gods, for they did not help Sabinus when he needed it at the last.

I don't think Domitian cared much about any of the gods. I expect it was because he thought it would please the people that he swore by Pallas. And then, though he would deride superstition, he was very superstitious himself in certain ways. I am sure that he was impressed that night by Euphena's sayings.

The food which is served at a Roman dinner ? . . . Well, at the beginning we have little things to give an appetite. Of course, we slaves do not ;

but—this will amuse thee—the slaves will often pretend that they are served like their masters. . . . Thou knowest, among slaves, there are some high up who have their own slaves to wait upon them, and at the Saturnalia they will spend a lot of money and have a banquet the same as those of their masters at which their slaves serve them, and they think it is all very fine and delightful. . . .

Now, before the real dinner, there are little cold dishes—fishes in oil, radishes, cloves, fruits and small meats flavoured so that they are hot and pungent. Then there are the regular hot dishes. First broths—such delicious broth !—sometimes snail broth, which is thought to be a delicacy, but for my part I like it not. After that, mountains of meat cooked in different ways. . . .

Oh yes, the people do eat a great deal. But there are many of them, and that means the serving of much food. Thou dost think it coarse—so do I. . . . The greater the banquet the earlier do we begin. About three o'clock, before the sun is down. It goes on a long time, for there are waits during the meal, and much laughing and talking among the men and women. Sometimes, between whiles, they will go out into the court, where there is music going on, but no one may leave the house before the Emperor departs, unless it be some official personage who has to attend to business of the State, and then he would ask Cæsar's permission to go. . . .

Yes, of course, there is music too in the banqueting-hall—it is strange, but I often do not seem to notice things until you ask, and then I see whether it is so or not—men come in and blow reed pipes and dancing girls enter. There is a raised platform at one side of the room on which they perform. Julia will pay great sums to dancers and to fine actors who come and recite.

Domitian and Julia sat at one of the great rounded ends of the table. At Domitian's further side sat a man of the State—a certain general, I think, but I remember not his name. Julia would not have had another woman next to Cæsar.

The order of seating was arranged by the stewards at the command of Julia, though sometimes I think the guests pleased themselves in their placing.

Thou knowest, I am not supposed to do anything at these banquets. I am there because Julia has a fancy that I complete her if I stand behind her chair, and she likes to have me there to fetch anything or to carry a message to my master.

Sabinus had the Empress beside him at the opposite end of the table. She looked thin and worn, as usual very well dressed, but as though she were scarcely able to support the weight of her grandeur, and she talked little and in a rather hard voice. She likes my master—but no one could help liking Sabinus.

Julia used to say that Domitia was dull enough to suit Sabinus, and that she herself liked to have lively company round her.

Pliny was on a couch[1] for three near the middle of the table with my Domina Valeria on one side of him, and his wife Antæia on the other. Julia was rather cross about Antæia, who is very young and simple, and said that if children were brought to feasts their protectors should not need to hold them by the hand all the time.

[1] Couches at meals. "Couches were usually made to hold three. It was customary for Roman ladies to be seated at meals, specially on ceremonial occasions." Ovid's *Amores*, Bk. I, El. 4. Bohn's Translation. Note.

Julia would have liked Pliny to be near her, for wherever Pliny is the talk goes well, and Julia has small art in conversation.

Pliny took the speech as a joke and Antæia made no trouble ; she just smiled and, part of the time, Pliny held her hand. She was quite happy to listen to him talking to other people—she thought him so clever. Afterwards I heard she was studying to please him ; he was teaching her and she had also a tutor. She was small and pretty with a bright look and soft almond-shaped eyes, wide in the middle ; she did not paint her face, but she used to try to make herself look beautiful. Her slaves did that for her. She had a head-woman who dressed her very well.

Thou dost always want to know how people are dressed. Julia is all jewels to-night. She has strings of rubies and emeralds and pearls and some large amethysts in front and one very large ruby. It is so like Julia to mix them all up like that. Her stola is white, but it is so heavily embroidered that one does not see much else and, thou knowest, stolas are not supposed to be ornamented except just round the edge. . . .

My Domina Valeria ? Oh, she is quite different from all the other women. She is wearing a white stola of silk—soft, lovely stuff, fastened on the shoulder with amethysts. She will be sorry she has put on the amethysts because of Julia's envy. Julia would give her eyes for these stones. Valeria has beautiful amethysts—two bands round the upper part of the arm and two bands at the wrists with slender gold chains catching them together. Except for these, her arms are quite bare, but hanging back from her shoulders she has white sleeves lined with pale violet and edged by a strip of white fur. On her head is a gold circlet which has points going up tipped with amethysts and pearls between. There is a close collar of pearls round her neck. She never has her neck so very much open as some of the Roman women, and to-night she is wearing her palla. Julia has taken off hers, but Julia likes to shew more of herself. My domina's palla is of pale violet embroidered in white silk and silver.

Valeria is not greatly given to talk, but her manner is gracious, and she doth always speak freely to Pliny who, she says, does not say foolish things, and knows how to treat a woman.

Tacitus, too, is her friend. He was sitting beside a woman who writes poetry —Sulpicia.[1] Yes, I think that is her name. He talked a little across the table to Valeria, and when people began to move about he came round near to her.

I am very glad that she has these two this evening—it will make all the difference to her pleasure—and that she is not at Julia's part of the table. She does not like Domitian. . . . Oh, of course, he admires her. All men admire Valeria, but she will have none of that kind of admiration. . . . Now there is something which I do not understand about Cæsar and my domina. Always there is Julia ; she goes on while others come and go. But I have heard it said, though Valeria never spoke of it to me, that one day he did something which offended my domina. I suppose he was making love to her or trying to.

Yes, her husband—Valerius Paulinus—he also is at the banquet. He sits on a couch with Martial and a Roman lady, who is a friend of Julia, called Galla.

Thou sayest that thou hast read about Galla. But her hair is not really golden if Martial says that. It is light brown,[2] and she powders it with gold

[1] Sulpicia, a Roman poetess. See Appendix 2, Bk. II.
[2] The fashion among Roman ladies of wearing yellow hair. See Appendix 3, Bk. II.

dust. This is a fashion with some Roman ladies, but it is not considered a fitting custom, being a mark of those women who are of light behaviour. My Domina Valeria would never do this. But it is true that for her there is no need, seeing that her hair, if it be brown like Galla's, has in it beautiful golden lights.

Paulinus has on a flame-coloured tunic that suits him well. He is dark, with a good deal of hair on his face—Valeria does not like men to have much hair on their faces, but she would never ask him to take his off. He is not very tall—broad and strong, he looks fat without being so. The muscles shew on his arms, which are big and firm and white. He is very much a man, though a man of common kind, and his eyes have in them the look of one who likes to please himself.

No, the man my domina loves is not here to-night, though he visits at Julia's house. But Julia would not ask him to meet the Emperor,—I am not sure—but I do not think that Cæsar doth greatly favour Licinius Sura.

Oh yes, there are many others here. Not far from my master are the Domina Domitilla and Flavius Clemens.[1] Domitilla has a beautiful face—it is the beauty of peace and goodness—regular features, a soft skin of palish yellow, a smooth curved nose and a rather wide mouth with a sweet smile. Her hair is brown, streaked with grey, she always wears it parted in the middle, waving over her ears, and knotted low upon her neck. She doth not favour jewellery, but I remember two quaint golden pins that she wears in her hair.

Flavius Clemens is better looking than my master Sabinus. He is tall and fair ; his hair falls in curls to his shoulder, and he wears a beard. . . ."

. . . . . .

Nyria resumes her story :

"Now that they were seated at table, Julia ceased from her private talk with Cæsar. It seemed to me that Domitian was in angry humour, and that because of it Julia signed to the flagon-bearers to fill his cup, and when he had drunk she asked him if he liked the wine, saying it was a special vintage from a place of which I know not the name.

Domitian answered that it was better than he should think Sabinus had the wit to purchase, at which Julia laughed and said that, in truth, Sabinus was not a wise wine-buyer, but that no liquor came on her table which she had not herself sampled.

And thereat, Domitian, whose face had been somewhat scowling, seemed to smile, and he replied that he might have known it, seeing that mere water ran in Sabinus's veins and that Julia's blood being of lustier quality must need the best vintages to keep it rich and fiery.

Methinks Julia was pleased at this, for she bent closer to Domitian and whispered again. . . . They began to eat of the pungent dishes of which I have told thee, and afterwards slaves came staggering under the piles of different meats in mighty platters of silver. After each course bowls of scented water were handed and delicate napkins that the guests might wash and dry their fingers.

Domitian noticed the silver plate, of which there is much in my master's family, and said, as if in jest, though I thought there was meaning in his voice, 'that were Sabinus's head ever forfeit to the State there would be a goodly haul for Cæsar.'

[1] Flavius Sabinus, Flavius Clemens and Domitilla. See Appendix 4, Bk. II.

'My lord forgets,' said Julia, 'that Sabinus would leave a widow, and it is in her that his estate would be vested.'

At which Domitian looked at her full with that reddish light in his eyes which sometimes, if he turns them on me, makes me afeard, and answered that should he be that Cæsar he would not leave unclaimed the most valuable part of Sabinus's property.

Julia bridled her head and retorted saucily that she might hold a different opinion on that matter.

Domitian turned a little and again looked at her, and he said that Domitian was not the man to go against a lady's wishes, but that he thought that he knew what in such case those wishes would be.

By the way he spoke and looked I think he meant that he knew she would be pleased to go to him. Julia got very red and said that there could be no keeping of any secret from the knowledge of great Cæsar.

I heard all their talk, for Julia would have me close behind her, and if she dropped her fan or kerchief or aught else, as she was wont to do, I had to go still nearer to pick such things up for her. Thus I saw also the face of the Emperor when he looked at Julia and his red eyes glowed again as he said in seeming banter that, after all, the change might suit her better, for if Sabinus gave her silver, he could give her gold.

Now Julia protested that 'twas shameful of Cæsar to make fun of her poor silver plate, seeing that she put before him the best she had, and that all her care was to give a fitting reception to the greatest of the Cæsars.

She smiled at him and her shoulders shook, and she became very red, and Domitian, who was getting red too, and full of wine, replied that truly he had no cause to complain of her generosity, for she had always given him of her very best, and that so long as she gave him herself he would not be particular as to the manner of her reception.

Then Julia felt, I think, that he had said too much, for the people on either side seemed to be listening. She only laughed and said 'twas kind of Cæsar to speak thus, and called his attention to the sconces of gold and enamel which held the torches on the wall, and had cost, she said, a pretty penny.

Domitian looked about him and muttered, and when he turned his head he caught sight of me and grinned but did not speak. Directly afterwards the General next him remarked upon the marble figures around the wine-fountain and Domitian said that the prettiest figure had been put in the background out of sight.

Julia heard him and asked what he meant, and she scowled at me so that I felt afeard of what might happen, when Cæsar answered her that the prettiest figure was myself, and that if I were undressed I should look very well in the centre of the table, instead of one of the marble images that upheld the fount of wine. At that, there was much coarse laughter and talk about the shapes of those images of naked women, and I got me to the other side of Julia and, stooping low, hid my face.

So for a few minutes I did not hear what was spoken until there came some mention of the Empress, and Julia said plainly that she thought little of Domitia's looks that evening. Whereon, Domitian said that she was but treating them to the faces she wore at home, and as it was no pleasure to sit opposite them he did not care to dine often with her at his table.

'But she is smiling now,' he added, 'and it may be that to Domitia Sabinus is better company than his own wife finds him.'

'The two are well matched for intelligence,' said Julia, whose way it was to speak sharp things which she thought were clever.

Now all the first part of the evening Domitian seemed to be in ill-humour, and when the General on his other side remarked upon the grand manner in which everything was done in this house, Cæsar said sarcastically that it had indeed the appearance of a princely household.

Then Julia put in proudly:

'Truly it is as Cæsar knoweth a princely household, and so it should be seeing that its mistress is the daughter of a Cæsar.'

She looked at Domitian as though challenging him to deny her right, and his manner changed somewhat. Nevertheless it still shewed displeasure as he said in a surly tone, that 'though Julia might be a rightful princess, Sabinus is far from being a prince,' and he added, 'When I gave permission for Julia's lictors, I did not intend that Sabinus's servants should wear the royal livery.'[1]

I understood now what had angered him, for the men had received new liveries, and a fine show they made in white and gold with crimson pieces down the front.

Thou knowest the house slaves were all clad alike. The outdoor slaves and bearers wore another kind of dress.

Julia seemed to consider what she should answer. Then she spoke meekly:

'If Cæsar will condescend to observe the men closely, he will see that there is a difference in the gold facings and that the fashion of the liveries is not the same as that of his own servants.'

To which he replied more gently that 'twas strange to hear her make excuses for Sabinus. At which she shrugged her shoulders and said that 'twas no use in blaming Sabinus for 'twas she who managed all things in her own house, and that should she make a mistake she must needs bear the consequences. She looked very handsome and defiant as she spoke and the Emperor seemed pleased at her thus answering him, for he only said with a laugh that he did not consider that a fair division, for that if she took the trouble of management it was but just that Sabinus should shoulder the responsibility. And he added something about the marriage laws which decree that one partner must abide by whatsoever the other may choose to do.

Said Julia laughing, that she felt certain such was not Cæsar's true way of thinking, for she knew that his views were more advanced, and that she thought society would be improved when he should remodel the laws of marriage.

Cæsar replied that he proposed to set about that business shortly and that 'twere best to begin it by dissolving a few of the worst-assorted unions. He might start, he said, with his own and Julia's.

'Twas plain by Julia's eager look that she followed his thought.

But he went back to the subject of the liveries, saying that he should not forget what Sabinus had done, nor should he permit it, and that if Julia were impatient for her slaves to wear the royal livery she must wait until they were the royal slaves.

Julia said no more on that matter, but ate and drank cheerfully. We all knew that Julia had no love for my master.

And yet as I stood behind Julia's chair and could see my master at the far

[1] Nyria uses incorrectly the term "royal": it should be "imperial." For Domitian's anger at the assumption of the Imperial liveries, see Appendix 5, Bk. II.

end talking pleasantly to the Empress, I thought it strange that any woman should not prefer him to Domitian.

I heard Julia say something about Sabinus having been chosen as Consul by the Senate and the people, and Domitian answered dourly that Sabinus was not yet a Consul, and that though the voice of the Senate might elect him, it was the voice of Cæsar which made the appointment."[1]

. . . . . .

NYRIA (resuming her account of the banquet): "I think it was when Cæsar spake thus that Julia sent me on a message to my master concerning the healths of certain persons for the drinking of which she wished him to give the order. For thou knowest there was a custom, towards the end of the feast, of drinking the healths of various people and my master would speak to the head-steward whose duty it was to call out the names. It was then that they drank from the fountain of wine in the centre of the table. One of the chief stewards would dip a long silver ladle into the hollow guarded by these statues of naked women and would fill from it a great flagon, out of which he poured into the guests' glasses. It was sweet and very rich wine, unlike the wine of thinner quality which played through the spouts across to the four corners.

The people made way for that steward so that he could reach the fountain easily. He had a different badge on his arm from the rest of the table-slaves, who, though all in the same livery, wore, each one, a badge marking his class.

The first toast was always the toast of Cæsar, when the Chief Steward would address the master thus:

'Most Noble and Illustrious Flavius Sabinus, most Noble Clemens, Nobles and most Noble Ladies, glasses are filled and it is now our humble duty and our highest privilege to drink to the greatest of the Cæsars. Hail to Domitian!'

Sabinus would stand, but most of the others did not: they waved their right arms high and shouted, 'We drink to thee, Domitian. Hail, Cæsar!'

Domitian would smile and lean forward and bow. If it pleased him, he would make a sign to the toast-master and give a toast. This time it was 'To the Most Noble Julia.'

But the Empress Domitia's health had to be drunk before Julia's. If Domitian were in a good temper, he would say:

'Hail to thee, Domitia!' If not, he would be silent.

Afterwards the healths of the Consuls—if any were present—would be drunk. It was always customary that the cup should be quaffed entirely and the drinker would turn the brim of his cup to the table. Then a slave, leaning over, would wipe the table with a damask napkin. People who drank out of glass cups had them rinsed between the toasts. Domitian, who used his own cup, did not have it washed. But the cup must be drained. For if the drops from the different toasts had mingled, that would have meant an ill augury.

Now, there is a thing I should tell thee—about the grapes I used to squeeze for Cæsar's cup. That would come nearer the end when he had already drunk a good deal. Julia would choose a specially fine bunch from a basket of fruit that I handed her, and likewise the ivory pressers, and with these

[1] For the election of consuls and the time of their entering into office, see Appendix 6, Bk. II.

she would squeeze the juice of two or three of the grapes and I would squeeze the rest into the cup and add a very little water—it is considered not quite right for Roman ladies to take no water with their wine, but Julia liketh not much water with hers. Then, afterward, I would put before her a tray holding many small bottles of essences and she would mix a few drops of essence with the grape-juice in the cup so that it doth seem some wonderful wine of strange and choice flavour. This cup is thought to be a great compliment and it must be prepared by someone near the person—not an ordinary slave, so I have to do it for Julia in her presence and she doth give it to the Emperor with her own hand. I think that oft when she doth command the cup 'tis to turn Cæsar's thoughts, or haply to excite his interest if the mimes and dancers who perform on the platform between the courses have not for him sufficient attraction.

But when Paris[1] doth sing and dance none have eyes or ears for aught else, and to-night Julia had engaged him at I know not what great cost.

Of course, he was not among the company, and I heard that he was ill-pleased at having to wait and eat in the antechamber prepared for the other performers—the more so because the Empress was Julia's guest.

I would have thee understand that Domitia was very fond of Paris and there was great talk and scandal concerning her and him. But the worst of that came afterwards. The talk had begun not long before when at a public performance at which the Emperor was not present, Domitia gave to Paris a mark of favour that was considered ill-fitting from the wife of Cæsar to a common actor who in truth doth rank no higher than a gladiator. For at the end of his dance, as Paris made obeisance before the royal seat, the Empress had bidden him come closer, and, taking a chain from round her neck, had with her own hands hung it upon the dancer's breast.

'Twas told in our household that Cæsar had severely reprimanded Domitia for her unseemly act, but I know not how this may have been.

If it please thee I can tell thee well of the appearance and the art of Paris, for often have I seen him perform at the houses where I went in waiting on my mistress Julia, and also at the public shows.

He was not young—about thirty-five, I suppose—tall, handsome, brown-looking. He had brown hair, brown eyes, a brownish face, and a bright red colour in his cheeks. His limbs were finely shaped. There was flesh upon them but not fat, and he had not great muscle as have the gladiators. For the different parts he impersonated he wore different dresses, but in some of his dances he had no clothing save a loin cloth and, because of his beautiful form, the Romans liked him best thus. His motions had a wondrous grace, and he danced, 'twas said, like one whom the gods inspired.

Usually he began in playful fashion as though 'twere the Muse of Comedy he sought to serve. And then the spirit of music would sway him. For, as he played upon the lyre which he held, his movements would become soft and long and slow, in unison with the measure. And then he would stand still and sing. His singing was marvellous fine art, they said. Of that I know nothing, but it sounded in my ear wild harmonies that stirred my heart and, truly, it was wondrous sweet.

This night of the banquet Domitia kept very still with her eyes fixed on Paris.

'Twas Julia who set him his part in the performance and he gave that

[1] Paris the dancer and lover of Domitia. See Appendix 7, Bk. II.

strange song and dance which had brought him much renown, and in which verily it would appear that he sang and danced his life away.

At the end 'twas like a dream. But, at the beginning, he played riotously in the manner of the Bacchæ with a wreath of vine-leaves upon his head, at first flinging himself into the most fantastic postures and the swiftest movements so that all felt like to dance themselves. Then gradually he went to a slower measure, and to gliding motions, lifting his feet above the floor and sustaining himself above it so that it seemed as though he belonged to the air, and did not need the ground for support. For he would raise his feet higher in each movement and likewise his arms and his head till he looked as if he would fain float away upwards far from all touch of earth. So, for some moments he rested, as it were, in mid-air, then took the wreath from his head and flung it from him, and came back to earth again.

But now he danced in soft, dreamlike fashion, seeming to draw away into the shadow until he vanished altogether.

The people called for him and forced him to return, applauding him mightily and throwing flowers, gold, and ornaments from their persons at his feet. And Paris would step forward and bow and smile, with gestures even more graceful than those he had made when he danced.

Domitian threw him nothing. He sat with his hands on the arms of his chair and looked and sometimes laughed, and from time to time whispered to Julia.

Julia never troubled to show favour. If she were not pleased, one knew it. If she were, she regarded it as her right. Pliny walked up and put something in Paris' hand. Others did the same. But Domitia sat cold and stiff, just looking at him, her eyes fixed and shining, the corners of her mouth twitching a little, otherwise making no sign. You would have felt very sorry for the Empress.

Then Julia broke off her whispering to Domitian and spoke in a loud voice to Paris, congratulating him upon the favour shown to him by her guests.

But, said Julia, the success could not be complete unless the Empress should give some sign of appreciation. Could it be that Paris had failed to win the Empress' approval ?

Paris only bowed. It was not his place to answer. He looked awkward and moved as if to retire. All might have passed off had not Julia whispered again to Domitian. Then, in an imperious voice, Cæsar deputed the Empress to give sign to Paris of their joint approval of his performance.

Domitia turned very white and kept from looking at Julia, who watched to see what she would do.

Domitian enquired if there were a jewel the Empress was wearing which she might present to the dancer, and Domitia seemed not to hear or not to understand his meaning. But Julia made sign to one of her house-slaves, desiring him to take Cæsar's orders, and Domitian bade the man convey them to the Empress.

Domitia looked very angry and afterwards I heard that many remarked to each other on the indignity put upon the Empress in forcing her to receive Cæsar's command through the lips of Julia's slave. She seemed frightened, too, and nervous, and began feeling her jewels as if considering the matter. She was foolish thus to hesitate for, as she raised her arm, Domitian exclaimed that he saw on her wrist a certain bracelet which it was his pleasure she should give to Paris.

Domitia went still whiter and clutched at the bracelet with her other hand as if she were loath to part with it.

'Twas of green stones engraved in gold and linked by a chain that hung oosely.

Now will I tell thee a secret that was known to few beyond Stephanus, the goldsmith—my good friend as already thou knowest. The bracelet was a gift to Domitia from Paris who had paid Stephanus a goodly sum for it. . . . And I think that Julia and Domitian guessed this and that 'twas the cause of Cæsar's insistence.

Thus, with all eyes upon her, Domitia was compelled to remove the bracelet and she was about to put it into the hand of Vibius the steward to take to Paris.

But Domitian gave a great laugh and bade the Empress pay Paris the highest compliment by clasping with her own fingers the bracelet on his arm.

'For,' said Cæsar, 'the favour of an Empress should not be lightly held nor lightly bestowed.'

Very cold and proud, Domitia rose and went to the platform where Paris bent on one knee, his head bowed, his face crimson, not daring to lift his eyes to hers.

Domitia seemed horribly frightened when she turned back and saw Domitian's look after she had obeyed his behest. For she must have guessed that he and Julia knew the truth about the bracelet. Domitian grinned and showed his teeth between his thick red lips, and Julia threw herself back in her chair and laughed outright. I think Domitia could have killed Julia at that moment.

After Paris had gone, some Jewish women sang songs of their own country —strange wailing songs—I did not care for them. The women were dark and handsome with large dark eyes and long noses and long black hair and pale faces. They kept on beating their knees and swaying from side to side as they sang, and there was something curious about their singing and about themselves that made you look and listen.

Domitian did not care at all for them. He said the women were like sour plums and gave him a pain inside, and that he wished for something more cheerful.

I laughed a little at that. I could not help it. He must have heard me laugh, for then he said that he was sure Nyria could sing better than that, even if she had a cold in her head.

I did not want him to notice me, and I tried to get behind Julia's chair again. But he leaned back and spoke to me, saying that it was not the custom in Rome for pretty women to hide their faces, and that there was no need for me to set a new fashion.

Julia looked round and scowled. He saw that he was vexing her, but he had drunk much wine and did not seem to care.

'Come on, Curly-locks,' he said, 'come round here. My footstool is big enough for you and for my feet as well.'

I turned to Julia to help me, but she would not. She stared straight down her nose, which always meant that she was angered. But she dared not gainsay Domitian. He caught hold of my dress and would have had me sit on his footstool.

'If it please Cæsar,' I said, 'I would rather stand.' But he looked displeased yet let me be, and there came on to the stage some black men who made a show of swallowing swords and serpents, and Domitian laughed at

some of their pranks, though, he said, 'twas amusement for boys and nothing else.

At that Julia said she was sorry Cæsar was so ill-entertained. To which he answered that, on the contrary, he had been well entertained, and most of all by herself, which somewhat restored Julia's humour.

But he would not leave me alone. 'Why,' he said, 'should not Nyria do something for her keep to amuse them?'

'Nyria is but a barbarian brat who can do nothing but serve in women's rooms,' said Julia.

Then Cæsar said he'd warrant I'd learned some tricks from my own country-women. Could I not show him how they clad themselves? 'Twould be sport for the Roman ladies and their lords to watch the robing and unrobing of a princess of my conquered land.

Julia laughed loud and said sneeringly, 'The brat says she was a princess herself, and so she ought to know all about their ways and manners.'

I burned with shame, remembering that Cæsar had likened me to the marble women round the wine fountain. He pulled my hair and asked if putting red on her cheeks were not the first part of a German princess's robing.

Now the gold fringe on his tunic caught in some of Julia's chains as she leaned towards him and, while she unhitched herself, he asked who had clad her so bravely this evening. Had it been Nyria?

'No,' Julia said, the brat had been late of coming in, and all the evening she had suffered because of the clumsy tiring of one of her other dressers.

Said Domitian, 'How was it that the maid was late?' and demanded of me where I had been. So I answered him that the Most Noble had given me permission after I had done the flowers to go out by myself for a while, and that I had walked that morning upon the hill-side.

Then Julia cried wrathfully that I was a wild thing, good for nothing but to tramp the hills and had best go back to my barbarians, and that she knew not why so much talk was made about me.

Whereon Domitian laughed and answered that it was in Julia's interests that he wished to know why I had been late. Did a slave understand so little of her duty that she was thus neglectful in performing it? Moreover, as Cæsar concerned himself with the welfare of his people, it behoved him to discover the position for which I might be fitted, since it was not that of a slave.

I understood not Cæsar's mood of banter and knew not how to reply. For I did not want Julia to learn that I had visited the Domina Valeria and had talked a little with Stephanus. And I would have thee know that upon Euphena truly lay the blame of my not coming in time for my mistress' dressing. But I liked not to get the old black woman into trouble.

Now I must needs pause in my tale of the banquet and, as thou willest, I will tell thee of Euphena, the old Ethiopian woman, and how she prevented me from tiring Julia's head.

Thou knowest that Euphena lived in one of the little huts round the outer courtyard where the slaves dwell. 'Twas a good hut which had two rooms in front and, behind, a kitchen and sleeping chamber.

Euphena was very ugly, though she would make the slaves laugh by boasting that she had been accounted beautiful among her own people. She was black and shiny like marble, and her face, I thought, must resemble the

faces of witches, so grim was it and her yellowish eyes so oft sending forth a strange dark fire.

She, too, did jeer at me for saying that I was a princess, and would proclaim that she herself was the true princess and came from a court far greater than any I could prate of. She had been married and had a baby girl who died just before Julia gave me to her to look after, telling her that I would serve instead. But Euphena hated me because I am fair, and because I had been put in the place of her own child which was black.

Thus thou dost understand, it was Euphena's business to see that I had my bath rightly and my hair well combed, and that my robe was ready, so that I should not be kept from my work for Julia by having to dress myself.

Nevertheless, on that day of Julia's banquet, Euphena did have the robe prepared and the combs for my hair ready, likewise the bands. I had three bands of gold braid for the evening to keep my hair back—and I might have dressed myself in good time had I been allowed to enter the hut.

But Euphena was squatting in front of the door and at first she would not speak, so busy was she in muttering to herself over the great circle she had made upon the ground with curious marks drawn within it. She was casting my master's fate. Afterwards she said that she was doing it at this hour because the stars in the sky were rightly placed, and that she could only read the signs when the stars were in a certain position in the heavens. But I have no understanding of such matters.

Euphena had learned the lore in her own country. She used to get white sand from the edges of the quarries. Then she would distil a mixture from berries which Stephanus gave her and would keep the mixture in bottle until it became potent. This she would mix with her white sand on the ground and would set forth those strange figures upon it.

Now, when I made towards the door to enter, she drew herself up on her knees and thrust out her arms to keep me away, saying that I must not step over the circle she had drawn upon the ground before she had read the figures.

I said that I should be late for the robing of Julia if I did not go in at once and get myself ready. Did I think, she cried, that the destinies would wait for me? It mattered little, she said, whether a thing so insignificant as I were late for any robing.

And she stooped again and went on muttering.

A crowd of slaves had come around and were leaning on the little wall around her hut. The men were all dressed for the banquet and were eager to know what Euphena read. But she took no heed and went on with her muttering.

I stamped my foot and told her that I must enter for Julia had bidden me, and Julia's word was law.

At that, Euphena flared up and spoke.

'What is Julia that she should rule Rome? Her word is law indeed, but yet lawgivers may be laid low, and the seeds are even now sown of that which shall bring forth her doom.'

There was a stir among the slaves. All of them hated Julia, and they pressed Euphena to tell more. For, said they, would not our master Sabinus glory in his freedom?

'Sabinus and freedom have no commerce with each other,' said Euphena. 'For in greater degree than any one of us, Sabinus is a slave—slave to a

female tyrant and soon to be slave and victim of the next most cruel tyrant in Rome.'

I was not able to hear further, for I passed behind Euphena and tried to squeeze through the doorway. For a while, her outstretched arms hindered me, being strong as bars of iron. And then at last, she dropped them and let me go. She said that my garment had caught the grey ash and that I had made for myself a part in the evil fate she had spoken of, which ere long would fall upon many in Rome.

I laughed and would not listen. But when I went within, I heard some of the men shout after me that whatever harm might befall, Nyria should not suffer : they would see to that. . . .

And Euphena went on with her muttering to the ground.

I sped to Julia's room as soon as I was dressed. But 'twas long past the appointed hour and Julia was exceeding wroth. For another girl—one Thanna to whom I had taught the art—had been forced to tire her in my absence and had not pleased my mistress in her doing of my work. . . ."

The Instrument's speech falters and it is clear that her strength is becoming exhausted. After a few moments' pause, she speaks again. . . .

" I think we ought to stop. But there is much yet about the Banquet that I can tell thee."

CHAPTER II

The Black Sorceress

Nyria tells of how Euphena read the stars, and of how she made certain direful prophecies concerning the fates of those present at the Banquet which Julia gave.

Nyria : "Thou knowest that when I left off from the Banquet to tell thee about Euphena, Domitian was trying to make me do something for his amusement. He wanted me to sing or dance or play. But I can do none of these things. I have always been very fond of music, but no one ever taught me to play on any instrument and I have forgotten the songs of my own country. I only know the songs which the slaves sing to the different gods and in praise of the Saturnalia. . . . Shall I tell thee about the Saturnalia ? But the time for the Saturnalia is not yet. I had better go on about the banquet.

Then Domitian said to me, ' If thou canst do nothing thyself, thou must find a substitute.'

The black men were just finishing their performance. But I did not see what they were doing. I was too frightened, for the Emperor was looking at me.

' How can I find that, Lord ? ' I said. ' When Cæsar commands, his slaves must obey. But the Nost Noble has ordered these to perform before Cæsar and if Cæsar be not satisfied with them, how can I, who am the meanest of his slaves, please him better ? '

I think he was only teasing me, but I did not know that then. He kept on saying that I must supply an artist if I could not do anything myself. Then he asked if I had not been fooling with the artists—with Paris perhaps —when I came in from my walk ? And was not that the real reason why I had been late ?

I said ' no,' and when he urged me, I told him the truth.

' Indeed, my lord, I did hasten back. But when I looked into the banqueting-hall I saw that one of the men had changed somewhat the flower decoration for which I am accountable, though I do it not all myself. Therefore I must needs replace the form of it as the Most Noble had made direction . . .'

I explained that thus I had been hindered a little and that afterwards, when I hurried to Euphena's hut, I had been further delayed at the door of it. And then I stopped and stammered lest I should be telling tales ; and Cæsar questioned me sharply, ' Whom saw you at Euphena's door ? '

' None, my lord, but Euphena herself.'

Said Cæsar, ' I know not who Euphena may be. By her name she should be a female. Else should I have construed " Euphena " into " lover." Dost thou speak the truth, child ? Was there none but Euphena there ? '

' It was so, my lord. Euphena would not let me pass. Euphena was—— '

I stammered again ; and again Cæsar questioned me sternly.

'Answer. What was Euphena doing?'

'May it please Cæsar, Euphena was reading the stars.'

He drew himself up at that and leaned forward, his mouth agape, his eyes brightening. Cæsar, they said, feared the astrologers.[1]

'Oh, ho! So we have a star-reader in the fair Euphena! Though I know not how Euphena could read the stars, seeing it was daylight.'

He turned to Julia. 'Produce Euphena,' he said.

Julia shrugged her great shoulders and answered boldly:

'How shall I produce Euphena? Does Cæsar suppose that I know the name of every slave and underling in this household? Cæsar, it appears, enjoys the converse of slaves, but Julia has other matters to fill her mind.'

Domitian smiled disagreeably. 'Produce Euphena,' he said.

I think Julia saw that she had spoken too straightly, for she took a cringing tone.

'How shall I produce the slave, my lord? It is some underling the brat knows of, not I. Or mayhap a street beggar, or the slave of some other household.'

And we who listened knew that Julia lied. For she did know Euphena.

Domitian called me to him. 'Canst *thou* produce Euphena, little one?'

I looked at Julia, sorely frightened.

'If thou dost wish, my lord,' I answered, not knowing what else to speak. 'But Euphena—is——'

I was going to say old and ugly, but I thought Euphena would not like that—yet it was the truth—and that Cæsar would not care to look upon her black face. Or that he would scoff at it: and though Euphena had not been kind to me I did not want her scoffed at. And so instead, I said, 'Euphena is—timid.'

'Timid!' Cæsar repeated. 'Is she then a young and lovely maid? And has she yellow hair and turquoise eyes like Nyria's?'

'No, may it please Cæsar. Euphena is——' and still I knew not how to speak of her.

'It seems that Euphena is something wonderful and mysterious,' said Cæsar. 'Of that we will judge for ourselves, eh, Nyria?'

'As it may please Cæsar,' I said, and I made a movement to draw away.

'Hold! Stay a moment, child,' he said. 'Euphena was reading the stars thou dost say. How could that be since the stars were not yet in the sky?'

'The stars were in the sky, my lord, and Euphena knoweth their places for she has much strange lore. Euphena says that it is only when a man's birth-stars are in a certain position that she can read his fate.'

'And whose fate was Euphena reading? asked Domitian.

I had like to have bitten out my tongue. But I answered him.

'The fates of my master and of the Most Noble, may it please Cæsar.'

'Oh, ho! Dost thou hear, Julia? Art thou not anxious to know what the stars and Euphena said of thee?'

But Julia pouted and her brow darkened.

'I listen not to slaves' talk,' she answered.

'No, that is left for Cæsar,' replied Domitian. 'Go, child, and fetch Euphena.'

I sped, for I dared not disobey Cæsar though I knew well that Euphena would flay me for my reward. It may be that the same thought struck Cæsar,

[1] Domitian's fear of the astrologers. See Appendix 8, Bk. II.

for he stayed me before I reached the door, bidding Vibius the steward call me back.

'Come, stand again beside my chair, child,' he said. 'Thou art so small we might easily lose sight of thee.' He nodded curtly to Vibius. 'Do, you, fetch Euphena.'

I crouched behind Cæsar's great golden chair for I was ashamed to face Euphena. All the room waited for her coming. Some laughed and said that now we should hear State secrets, and others that those who desired to question the gods should stand forward to hear what the voices of the stars had to say to them. But courtesy required that all should give place to Cæsar and to Sabinus and Julia.

Julia had no mind to see Euphena. I could tell that. She plied a great fan of green and gold tipped with red feathers, and I knew by the movement of her hands that she was displeased and thought, 'Alas! there will be more strokes for me to-morrow and I am sore of skin already.'

Presently Euphena came between Vibius and Bibbi—that was one of the men who used to beat us, a strong man too. Bibbi was not an Ethiopian, but had white blood in him of which he thought much. At the Saturnalia, Bibbi was the grandest of us all. He had hold of Euphena's arm and loosed it when she came near. They pushed her before them till she was at the front.

But she made no obeisance to Cæsar. Once she looked at him, and then at Julia, and I saw Julia look at her and it seemed to me that she shrank from Euphena's eyes. One might have thought that Julia and not Euphena was the frightened slave.

Euphena did not seem to care. She held herself proud and upright. She was a little shrivelled old woman and the bones stuck out on her arms and neck. She wore a scarlet petticoat and orange-coloured jacket which should have been buttoned to her throat. But the top buttons were undone and half her skinny breast was showing. On a cord, round her neck, she had a brownish stone with unknown marks upon it—a charm she said, and at night Euphena muttered the prayers which she said were graven on the stone. She feared greatly to lose this charm. Some of us would tease her, saying that her stone had not brought her much happiness. For Euphena had suffered a good deal. But she would get angry and answer that the charm had brought her the greatest happiness of all that could come to her, because it gave her power to bring distress on those she hated. A good many of us were afraid of Euphena. I think I feared her less than most because, although she beat me and was always cross, I do not think she ever really wished me harm.

She hated Julia worse than anybody. To-night, she looked at Julia with scorn in her eyes. 'Twas not for her to speak first, but I almost think she would have done so.

Domitian stared at her and then he gave a great long laugh.

'So thou art Euphena!' he said, and laughed still louder, and many in the room laughed with him. It was a way they had to gain favour. Julia was always first to echo Cæsar's laugh, but to-night she laughed not before Euphena.

'So thou art the lovely Euphena!' he said again, yet laughing.

'Thus, in Rome, they call me,' she answered. 'But I am no Roman woman.'

With that there came a fresh burst of laughter.

'Truly thou art no Roman woman, for Roman women are not so fair as thou art, Euphena,' mocked Domitian.

'Fairness is but skin deep,' said Euphena. 'Look for it in the eyes of those who lead honest lives, Cæsar, not on the faces of Roman women. . . . Nevertheless,' Euphena went on, 'I know full well that I was fair when Roman robbers stole me from my kingdom. And what I once was, that I must ever be. Therein is a deeper truth than thou dost understand, O Cæsar!'

'Ho! So thou wouldst teach Cæsar!' scoffed Domitian.

'A thankless task,' said Euphena. 'But there are many things I could teach Cæsar that it would be well Cæsar should learn.'

Some of us looked to hear her ordered fifty lashes, but it seemed to me that Euphena's words and bearing were what Cæsar had desired to amuse him. For he laughed still more.

'That's as it should be,' he said. 'For know that I have sent for thee here to-night that thou mightst teach me, as well as these noble lords and ladies, something of that which we do not know. For I suppose thou wilt admit, Euphena, that there are others in Rome who are ignorant besides Cæsar?'

Euphena looked him in the eyes and said,

'No man is truly ignorant save he who thinks there is nothing for him to learn. But there are many more important things in the universe than only those which Domitian holds of account.'

'Well, well, we will grant that we know nothing and that thou knowest everything,' said Cæsar impatiently, 'at least for to-night, since thou art here to give us instruction in the wisdom of the stars. So speak on, fairest Euphena, and be not afraid that thou wilt suffer for over-boldness. I pledge the word of a Cæsar that whatever thou sayest, it shall go unpunished.'

'What wouldst thou have me tell thee, Cæsar?' asked Euphena.

'That which thou wast reading to-day by the light of the invisible stars,' he answered. 'Or perhaps thou hast some other means of augury?'

'Means are many and all are good in their fashion,' she said. 'The book of Fate is most often closed to man, but should a page lie open, one who has eyes to see may read it easily.'

'So! Then read our fates. First, tell us that of the Most Noble.' And he bowed to Julia.

Then I, looking at Julia, saw her shrink. For Euphena's eyes were fixed upon her.

'The Most Noble?' Euphena repeated. 'Of whom dost thou speak?'

'Of thy mistress, the Most Noble Julia, woman,' said Cæsar angrily, and Euphena boldly answered,

'My mistress Julia has no right to the title of Most Noble save that granted her by the courtesy of Cæsar.'

'How! What dost thou say?' Domitian shouted in fury. 'No right! Woman, I pledged the word of a Cæsar that thou shouldst go unharmed, but I bargained not for insults to thy mistress.'

But Euphena seemed heedless of his wrathful words.

'Cæsar demanded a page from the book of Fate on which Julia's destiny is written,' she said. 'Be it so. Is it of the past or the future that he wishes me to tell?'

Meanwhile, many of the guests had left their seats and there were murmurs of reprobation at her audacity. But all were silent when Cæsar spoke.

'Begin at the beginning. What were the auguries which hung round the birth of the Most Noble Julia, daughter of Titus?'

'Over the cradle of Tatiana, the only daughter of Titus, were auguries of untimely death, none of lust and bloodshed. The daughter of Titus passed away in infancy. Before ye sits the daughter of Furnilla and of Lupus[1] the scavenger. No daughter of Titus, she.'

Then a sudden stillness fell, and then, at the back, some whispered to each other. Afterwards, I heard 'twas said that there had been scandal in Rome which Vespasian forbade to be spoken, before Titus divorced his wife Marcia Furnilla. But of that, I know naught. It was as though, for a minute, rage had struck Julia and Domitian dumb. Cæsar was the first to recover speech and he laughed again, long and strangely.

'No daughter of Titus!' he repeated. 'Come, come, Euphena, thou dost promise well. We demanded to be amused and verily thou hast made a good beginning.'

''Tis more than can be said of Julia,' said Euphena, 'even though she may be placed near the throne of Cæsar and would fain sit upon it.'

I think there was a dark meaning in Euphena's words and that she spoke of the plans of Julia and Cæsar, for neither said aught until Julia cried to him:

'How canst thou listen to the wild talk of a gossiping old Ethiopian?' and she bent and whispered to Cæsar while Euphena stood and looked scorn at both. But Cæsar only smiled,

'We would see to what length her wildness will take her,' he answered. 'Those whose ancestry be free from blot need not shrink from the old black woman's tales. Let her continue to divert us, I pray you. . . . But mark you, woman,' and he spoke threateningly to Euphena, 'though I have given Cæsar's word for thy safety, and though, as thou sayest, Julia stands near Cæsar, nevertheless she is not on the throne beside him and may deal with her own slaves as she will. Take heed lest thy mistress command that they slit thy tongue and sell thee for a beast of burden in the slave-market.'

Euphena spake back proudly, 'I have no fear that my mistress will slit my tongue or condemn me to the slave-market. The old Ethiopian is still too useful to the high-born Julia for her services to be dispensed with. While Domitian reigns in Rome and Julia holds his favour, Euphena will be needed for an instrument of the destinies to carry out their bidding.'

'Cæsar is proud to have a share in service so exalted,' Domitian scoffed. But I thought there was a troubled note in his voice and even something of fear of Euphena whose contemptuous stare was ill to meet. I saw the hand of Julia steal towards his and press it as if she sought protection.

'Go on, woman,' said Cæsar. 'Tell us more of the Most Noble whose fate according to thee should now be all on the ascendant.'

And Euphena answered, 'On the ascendant, truly, until her feet shall touch the step of the throne and shall find there no foothold. The empire of Rome is vast and the power of Cæsar mighty, but the realm of shades is vaster and the power of Death more mighty still.'

Julia seemed like to speak, but the words were choked in her throat. I know not what she would have said, for now it was the Empress who broke in. She had come up with my master and I could tell by the way she looked at Julia and the quick way she breathed that she was eager to know more.

'How say you, star-reader?' she asked. 'Is it that the Most Noble Julia

[1] The name Lupus has been inserted. For the accusations against Marcia Furnilla see Appendix 9, Bk. II.

will not compass her ambition and that the supreme control of life and death will not be hers ? '

Euphena answered her slowly, ' By the stars it is written that Julia will compass her ambition and that the power of life and death shall lie in her hands. But those hands which have committed violence are apt to tremble, and in snatching at the cup of life may take instead the potion of death.'

Now Sabinus came closer and stood against Julia's chair. Often have I thought that Sabinus was really fond of his wife. She sat all huddled up and affrighted. There was no true spirit in Julia.

As Sabinus touched her she turned and made a snarling sound and it seemed that the sight of Domitia kindled to strength her ire. She set her shoulders and looked straightly at the Empress and then to those around as she spoke with mocking courtesy.

' 'Twere a pity,' she said, ' that they should be interesting themselves in one so lowly as she was reputed to be, seeing that before them stood the highest and most virtuous lady in all the Roman Empire—the Empress herself, who sought not her own glory but was ever gracious and mindful of those beneath her. If indeed the stars wrote truly, would they not proclaim that Domitia loved kindness and hated tyranny ? '

Now, I must tell thee that we slaves who listened knew that Julia spoke in irony. For Domitia is as hard upon her slaves as Julia herself and as difficult to please. This I have heard, being acquainted with some of the Empress's women. It may be, I think, because she is so unhappy that Domitia is contemptuous and bitter and is not loved by the people.

At Julia's words, Euphena raised her skinny arms that seemed to point starward.

' True it is,' she said, ' that Domitia hates tyranny. Know, therefore, that in time hence when Fate's decrees shall be fulfilled, it will be Domitia's voice that shall bid the assassin strike and deliver Rome from the tyrant.'[1]

Euphena made the blood curdle in all of us. We felt that we were hearing dreadful things and we did not know what they might forebode. And yet Cæsar sat like a red-faced lump and did not chide the old woman for her ravings. It seemed as though he guessed not her meaning. I know not if it were that a cloud came over his mind as sometimes happened when he had drunk much wine.

I thought that for this reason—and because he kept silence and none could ever tell how Cæsar's mood might turn—many who had held somewhat apart drew near and made diversion by their questioning concerning certain methods of divination. Among these were Pliny and Martial the poet with Paulinus and my Domina Valeria. Domitia had shrunk back. There was a wild, startled look in her eyes, like that it seemed to me of one who looks through prison bars and hopes yet fears to be free. She said no more, but stood biting her lip and twisting her fingers in and out of the gold fringe on her palla. Domitia was never at rest.

Then Julia, seeing the faces pressing forward, bade Euphena read the fates of any such as might desire it, unless, she said, they feared she would predict for them no better joys than she had foretold for others before them.

I heard not then what Euphena prognosticated, for 'twas at this time that Julia bade me bring the grapes and the pressers and order the tray of essences for the preparation of that cup for Cæsar of which I have already told thee.

[1] Domitia's connivance in the assassination of her husband. See Appendix 10, Bk. II

There was whispering and talk and laughter between my mistress and Cæsar and I think it was now that some barbarians who play strange music upon certain instruments of their country, came upon the platform. But few paid them any heed, for most of the guests kept their eyes and ears fixed pon Euphena.

I saw a look in the eyes of my Domina Valeria as though she wished Euphena might tell her something. And Julia saw the look too, and with a loud laugh called Valeria by her name, bidding her come forward and hear what happy fortune might be written on the stars for her.

'For,' she said in gibing fashion, 'we understand that Paulinus is but lately ordered to Egypt,[1] and Valeria should be recompensed for that heart-breaking separation from her loved and loving husband.'

On that someone said—I think it was Martial, for often he vexed my Domina by ill-timed compliments—that mayhap Valeria would accompany Paulinus on his mission rather than both should endure separation, and that in such case Rome would be the gloomier, since one of its most brilliant lights would be extinguished.

And Julia laughed again and said that however much Valeria and her lord might desire each other's company, Paulinus knew well that his wife's health would not permit her to make so arduous a journey.

Paulinus' face was black. I saw him scowl at Martial and methought there was ill-blood between the two that evening because of the favour shown him by Galla. I saw, too, that Paulinus looked at Valeria as if he could have whipped her. She grew paler still and stiffened in silence when Julia and others urged her to hear what Euphena might have to tell. Then, seeing she must speak, she answered very distantly 'that in her opinion the gods were wise in screening the future from our gaze, and that for her part she had no wish to lift the veil they had hung before the eyes of men.'

At that Euphena took up the word.

'Oh, wise woman, remain ever thus wise. Pallas must have taught you wisdom, seeing that for your peace 'tis best the future should be hidden from your eyes.'

But Julia was full of spite and curiosity. 'Look!' she cried, 'that future is not hidden from the eyes of Euphena. The spirit of prophecy is upon her. Let her speak and tell us what she sees.'

Euphena was standing quite still, her arms clenched across her breast, her eyes wide open and staring strangely. Her lips were agape, but she made no sound.

'Tell us . . . tell us . . .' called they all, except Valeria who stood as if frozen, so proud and cold she seemed. And then—I remember not if it were Paulinus or Cæsar who commanded roughly, 'Speak, hag, and tell us what comes to thee.'

Once or twice Euphena tried to speak but could not bring forth her words. Then she began muttering. And the muttering waxed louder and her speech more clear as she told of things that were plain to her and yet as naught to the rest of us who heard her: told of a mighty concourse of people and of the air full of sounds—sound of the tread of feet, of shouting and applause, of a great burst of trumpeting and cries of 'Hail, Cæsar!' 'Twas the Games, she said, and all Rome, from the highest to the lowest, was gathered to the Show.

And then she told of a gladiators' contest, and I remember not of what

[1] Egyptian expedition. See Appendix II, Bk. II.

besides for a dimness and a giddiness fell upon me. Yet, through the mist I seemed to hear cries and groanings and there was a strange roaring. . . . 'Ah . . . ah! 'Tis the beasts roaring. Ah . . . ah!' . . ." (in a scream of terror).

And as the slave-girl's voice came through the lips of the Instrument—this woman of to-day—it broke in that wild shriek of horror. The Instrument's hand clutched that of the Recorder. . . . Then, after a moment, the hand dropped. Nyria spoke—agitatedly but no longer in terror. . . .

NYRIA (resuming): ". . . I cannot remember: 'tis all confused. Euphena was there. She was seeing something terrible . . . something that seemed to frighten her and to affright those who listened. . . . I saw Valeria standing white and cold and affrighted also.

And then I heard Euphena saying—something like this, 'that there were hearts to be fought for and lives cast away which must float upon the ages before they could drift back to her feet.' . . . And Euphena seemed to be reproaching Valeria for this thing of her doing. . . . There was something about jealousy and betrayal. . . . Oh, I know not if I have got that right. . . . I knew not what dreadful meaning lay beneath Euphena's words. I felt sore afraid, and I was very cold although the rooms had been so hot. . . . Julia was plying her great green and gold fan. . . . And when Euphena told of the noise of the people and the echoing shouts and the roaring of the beasts. . . . There *were* beasts! I saw them pressing all around the banqueting-hall . . . coming nearer to me . . . and nearer. . . . And the dizziness took me again and all the place faded . . . and I lost myself. . . .

I know not what happened then. . . . Someone picked me up out of the throng and they poured water on my face. Cæsar sent Vibius to me with a cup of wine and I drank of it and felt stronger.

I was ashamed. But I was tired. I had been out all day and there had been no time to eat.

They let me sit on a stool against the wall. I feared their anger. Domitian looked at me and I liked not the manner of his smile. But I saw that I should not be scolded and felt less afraid.

Euphena was talking to Flavius Clemens and Domitilla. I am quite sure that Domitilla did not wish to ask her fate. She stood with her hands on Flavius's arm as though she would protect her husband. A pained but calm smile was on her face. I heard Domitian say to Euphena:

'Thou hast told naught about my own household. Tell me this: The boys,'[1] he named them—'Vespasian and Domitian, sons of Flavius Clemens and Domitilla—will they be good rulers after me?'

'They will rule no wider kingdom than their own souls,' answered Euphena. 'They are not ripe to rule. Yet the sons of such parents are too ripe and worthy to be either tyrants or dupes.'

Then I mind me that Plinius came up to notice how I fared, and that when Domitian spied him as he stood holding his young wife's hand, Cæsar bade him, with some jesting compliment, seek Euphena's auguries on the stout sons he should give for service to the State.

Now, Plinius had ever a clever polish to his speech and I have heard it said that 'twas his sole merit with Cæsar to be a whetstone to his master's wit.

[1] For the sons of Flavius Clemens and Domitilla, see Appendix 12, Bk. II.

And he smiled and turned his response to Cæsar's pleasure, while shielding as best he could Antæia's blushing confusion, by saying that what he most wished to know of the future was whether he should always be as happy as he was in the present.

And Euphena answered, 'Man is no fit judge of happiness, for he measures it only by the desire of the moment. Nevertheless,' she added, 'even if the thing which Plinius loves most be taken from him, yet will he find his joy given back to him when the days of his mourning shall be over.'

Antæia, having but a child's understanding, would have had Euphena tell her in what manner her husband should be called upon to suffer. But Plinius said quickly, 'No, no. I do not desire such knowledge. Royally have the gods smiled upon me up till now, and I will not shrink before their frown.'

Then, further said Euphena, that not only would the gods continue to smile on Plinius, but that governors and princes whould show him favour and that the Emperor himself would be his closest friend.[1]

Whereat some of the company looked at each other and laughed a little, for though everyone liked Pliny it was not thought that he could ever be in closest friendship with Domitian, albeit Cæsar did grant him favour.

'Twas then that Sabinus leaned over to speak to Julia and thus, unawares, bringing himself forward, seemed to remind Cæsar of somewhat he had forgotten. Full well I guessed 'twas the words I had spoken when Cæsar had questioned me concerning Euphena's markings on the ground, and I had said she was casting my master's fate.

He looked from my master to the old woman and loudly bade her answer him.

'There is one,' he said, 'of whose auguries thou hast told me naught. What wrote the stars about thy master Sabinus and about his house?'

'Little but what bodeth ill,' she answered. 'Soon shall the house be without its head, and when the ruler passes from it the house shall be shattered and fall in ruins. Even now, the cloud hangs over it, and bloody darkness surrounds this banquet.'

She held her arms out around her as if she would compass the dwelling. She was quivering and her fingers pointed to the wall where were the torches and the wreaths of flowers, and it seemed to me that she saw shapes dark and dreadful lurking everywhere.

Drawing in her arms with a curious and ominous gesture she foretold that evil hap was about to come upon the godless, and that since with the godless the godly must likewise suffer, many at the feast that night and elsewhere in Rome would be embroiled in the terrors which should shortly befall the city.

'How can there be peace,' she cried, 'when death strikes at the lifting of a tyrant's finger?' . . . 'But rest satisfied,' she cried, 'ye shades of Sabinus and Flavius Clemens'—and she reeled forth a string of other names that I cannot remember. 'For,' said she, 'he who is your judge and your executioner will be called in worse terrors to his own doom.'

Then fear and confusion came on all present, and many moved from around Euphena as if in dread of what might befall.

Domitian rose from his chair, red of face and then pale, and, it seemed, like to foam with fury. Yet, scarce could he speak save to mutter darkly

[1] Euphena's two prophecies to Pliny would have referred to the death of his first wife Antæia, and his very happy later marriage to Calpurnia, and the second to his great friendship with Trajan as shown in the Letters of Pliny.

and call vengeance on all prophets of ill. Nevertheless, he gave not command of vengeance upon Euphena, though Vibius and Bibbi waited ready to drag her away.

Euphena stood looking in a scornful way at Julia, who gave her affrighted glances and pressed close to Domitian's side.

'Twas all Julia could do to quiet him. She bade him not be troubled at what the woman had said. Had she not prophesied evil to all—to herself as well? And since she, a weak woman, paid no heed, surely the greatest of the Cæsars need not suffer disquiet.

Domitian listened in silence. Then of a sudden, he broke into a great laugh, and said that verily 'twas a fine evening's amusement to invite Cæsar to a banquet and provide a soothsayer to foretell his end.

Thereon he drank more wine, and made appearance of merriment, yet 'twas plain that he had been much disturbed. In truth, all of the company were ill at ease.

I had come back to my place behind Julia, but none took notice of me, for which I was thankful since else I might have been blamed. Flavius and Domitilla were the calmest. They went among the guests talking in gracious, dignified manner. Sabinus, too, stood calm. 'Twas not for him to make excuse and thus, mayhap, lay himself open to Cæsar's censure. He spoke courteously, saying that he trusted Cæsar had not been ill-amused by the old woman's wild talk.

I trembled for my master. Domitian looked at him straight, and frowning as if pondering in what fashion to shape his displeasure.

'Verily,' he said, 'the amusement provided had made him merry. But 'twas in his mind that others might not be so well amused when further acts of this interesting drama should take place.' Then he said to my master that he believed Flavius Sabinus had been elected consul and should enter into his office in a few months.

Sabinus bowed silently.

Then Domitian said that he feared he had been unwise in sanctioning the appointment of his valued kinsman to the office, for there were dangers attached to it, and it might be that harm would befall Sabinus.[1]

My master looked straightly also as he answered Cæsar:

'Flavius Sabinus, my lord, like other men, can live but once and die but once. Therefore may he comport himself during life as befitteth one of his *gens*, and may the favour of the gods grant him an end that shall be equally befitting.'

For a minute none uttered. Euphena stood waiting. . . . Now Domitian spoke to Julia, and she looked across to the Ethiopian and said:

'You have done what was required of you. Go.'

And Euphena walked forth untouched."

[1] Election of Flavius Sabinus to the office of consul. See Appendix 13, Bk. II.

CHAPTER III

On the Palatine

Nyria relates how Euphena warns Julia that a certain potion may, on the third time of taking, have an ill effect: how Julia silences the Ethiopian's evil croakings by the gift of a gold chain: then, how Julia orders her litter and pays a visit to Domitian at the Palace, taking Nyria with her, and of how, in that thought-progress, the Recorder becomes one of the train.

Nyria: "Thou would'st know what happened after the Banquet. . . . That thing which I remember best is the old black woman, Euphena. I thought she would have been angry with me, and I waited for her to scold, but I saw her no more that night. I was afraid and I went not to the slaves' court but just slipped off my dress and rolled myself in my mat. Of course, I ought to have got my own night things, but I was afeard to go out to Euphena.

I did not help to unrobe Julia. I was wanted for the dressing and the head-tiring. The under-women did the disrobing and thus learned the order of Julia's apparelling. The head-woman superintended and saw that her mistress was comfortable for the night, but I did not have to attend.

I remember that Sabinus came that night and asked admittance. He never dared demand it: he always asked humbly. I was at the door and took the message—and it was that he wished to see her. But Julia refused. She said that she was tired, and Sabinus went away looking sorrowful. Then I rolled myself round and tried to sleep. But I was called to go to the atrium for something that Julia had dropped. The atrium was all deserted and there were no lights except the night lamps which were always left burning. Even the fountain was turned off. I went past the door of the chapel where was the altar to the household gods. Sabinus was in there saying his prayers to his gods. I could not hear what he said, but I saw by his attitude that he was praying.

When I went back, I laid me down and I would have liked to pray for Sabinus, but I did not know to whom I should pray. I did not think Sabinus's gods helped him much, and I did not seem to want to pray to those Roman gods. So I just rolled myself in my blanket and lay by Julia's door without praying. But I thought of my master and tried to make a kind of picture of him. I should have liked best if Julia had gone to him and been kind. I could not help feeling that Sabinus was in danger. There seemed great meaning in what Euphena had said.

Julia went to bed looking very cross. She had said good-night to everyone in the fitting manner, but she did not seem happy.

Then the next morning when I awoke I did not go out to get my things at Euphena's. I washed my face in Julia's own bathroom before she was up, and I combed my hair with one of her combs, and put on a wrapper of one of

the girls, for I had not my morning robe. I had no business in Julia's bath-room, but I was afraid to go to Euphena.

By and by, I saw the old crone coming towards the loggia outside Julia's rooms where I was waiting to be called for the dressing of Julia's hair. My heart beat at sight of Euphena. It seemed greatly daring in her to approach so near when she had not been summoned—unless she had come for me. I feared that she might want to claim chastisement for me for having betrayed her so that she had been made scoff of by Cæsar the night before. But when she saw me, she looked at me straightly and bade me tell Julia that Euphena waited. I answered that I, too, was waiting to be summoned and would give her message when I went in. She answered, 'That will do,' and turning round, sat her on the step, with her skinny arms folded on her knees, and looked out across the courtyard. I could not bear her silence, so I went near her and said:

'Thou art not angry with me, Euphena?'

'Angry!' she said. 'Why should I be angry? What canst thou do to make Euphena angry?' And this she said as though I were not worthy even to anger her.

'Because I spoke of thee and of thy powers last night to Cæsar,' said I. 'So that he summoned thee to prophesy before him. In truth, Euphena, I had not thought he would do that.'

'One does not expect children or fools to think,' she said. 'Tush! child, do not fret thyself for so small a matter. Thou wilt have enough to fret for ere long. The gods use strange and simple means at times to compass their will and if thou hadst not spoken, still should I have been summoned to Cæsar's presence. For it was necessary that Domitian and his lawless wanton should hear the truth.'

Then said I, 'But will these things come true, Euphena?'

'Wait,' she answered. 'The stars do not tell falsely.'

I stood humbly silent. I was frightened. Euphena spoke strangely, and when I looked at her, she drew with her lean finger the pattern of a bier upon the ground.

'So—a fine corpse she will make!' Euphena muttered. 'And thou and I shall dress her for the burying, child? Thou wilt like that. It will repay thee for the many whippings she has ordered thee and the blows she has dealt thee with her own fair hand, eh, Nyria?'

'If you mean Julia,' I said, 'she has been cruel to me, but yet I do not want to see her dead.'

'Dead women cannot strike,' said Euphena. 'Thou art not used to death, though in tending Stephanus's patients thou shouldst have learned not to shrink from it. For thyself, child, death shall threaten thee more than once before it shall snatch thee at the last.'

Then Samu—who was one of the under-women—called me, and as I went in I heard Euphena whine after me for Samu to hear:

'Speak for me, pretty one. For an interview with the divine Julia is an honour that the highest among her slaves may not demand. Yet would I see and speak with her if it be possible.' And Euphena bent double, putting her hands to her head so that Samu laughed scorn at the ugly thing. But I ran in and made obeisance to Julia.

'May it please the Most Noble, Euphena waits without,' I said, as I took the combs and pins and shook out the tresses which Julia added to her own—I know not wherefore, seeing that she had much hair upon

her head. But Julia was not satisfied unless I raised it to the height of a tower.[1]

'Euphena!' Methought Julia's face changed. 'What wants the hag?' Julia was never over-civil to her slaves.

'She craves permission to speak to the Most Noble,' I answered.

I saw a strange, frightened look come over Julia's face. She seemed to shrink from seeing Euphena. I listened for her to say that she was concerned with her robing and could see no one, but instead of that she shrugged her shoulders petulantly and, crossing the room, sat down before the mirror to have her hair dressed.

'Let her enter,' she said, and I waited, expecting she would stop my work, but instead of that she turned upon me crossly:

'Get on, Nyria, why art thou so slow?' And I went on to comb out her hair until it hung like a great black cloud round her.

One of them had gone to summon Euphena, and presently she entered and stood within the door, her arms folded and a lurking look of malice in her face. I could scarce take my eyes from her, and called forth a short word from Julia for my bungling.

'Well,' said Julia sharply to Euphena, 'what is it?'

'Knowing that the Most Noble would summon me if I came not, I but forestalled her pleasure,' said Euphena.

Then Julia, with her hands on the arms of her chair, looked across at Euphena and catching sight of her head-woman and the two girls stooping, the one in folding a robe and another in the polishing of some silver ornaments, she said angrily:

'Go, ye gaping fools. What stand ye there for? Do I need all the females in the household to listen because I choose to speak to one of them? Begone.'

Ere one could think, they had passed behind the curtains. But I knew full well that one of them would listen. This one was a girl called Thanna. She was of the country—a stout girl, well-looking, with a round face, dark eyes and quantities of dark hair, which she would try and dress like Julia's. She was not a good waiting-maid unless Julia chid her. But she managed to guard herself from punishment, and when she performed her task ill did contrive that the blame fell on me. She was ever talking of when Julia should marry her to somebody and would always have her fun, so that she would laugh and joke even with Bibbi, whom most of us hated—he being the slaves' beater.

Bibbi was a brute. He had no feeling. He liked beating us. Bibbi was the strongest man among the slaves and a good lasher.

I thought it strange that Julia did not send me away too. But often it seemed that to Julia slaves were no more than posts. And this though many of Julia's slaves would have been glad to do her a mischief by telling some evil tale of her. Slaves can listen easily, but they know there are always others who would betray their fellow-slaves to curry favour.

I waited for the command to go. But Julia said no word to me. I think she had forgotten. So I went on brushing.

'Well, what is your errand, O black beauty?' she said jeeringly to Euphena.

Julia was never over-civil in her speech, and she wished to seem clever and oft would sharpen her wits on us.

[1] The Flavian lady's coiffure. See Appendix 14, Bk. II.

Euphena answered her boldly :

' Julia, reputed daughter of Titus, may call her slaves what names she pleases. But the time will come when she will be glad of any one of them to stand between her and destruction.'

' Well—well. What made thee tell all those lies last night, old fool ? '

' I tell no lies,' said Euphena calmly. ' The stars speak truth and I am but their mouthpiece.'

' And so the stars told thee to talk that folly ? '

' The stars are the servants of the gods, O Julia, and I am their servant, not thine only. They bade me warn thee, Julia, while there is yet time. Soon it may be too late. Once, twice, have I saved thee from exposure. This third time the potion may fail, and though thou be no child of an emperor and but an emperor's wanton, yet the warning may avail thee to save thy skin if thou hast the will to take it.'

' Knowst thou that I can have thee stripped and lashed in the Forum till the blood spurts ? ' said Julia between her teeth.

' But thou wilt not. Euphena's skin is safe, so long as Julia needs a wise woman from the wisest of all races to succour her.'

' What is it that thou dost want of me ? ' said Julia snarling and dropping back in her chair till all her long hair was caught so that I could not brush it.

' Nothing,' said Euphena. ' I need nothing, O Most Noble Julia. Nevertheless, the stars which warn if listened to, may save their victims. And thou hast promised me my freedom, Julia ? '

' Not while I have need of thee,' laughed Julia. ' Dost thou think that I can part with thee yet ? Nay, nay—not while I am young and good-looking and Domitian lives. But if one of thy magic potions should act upon Domitia, so that she stood no longer in my road, there is no knowing, Euphena, what I might not grant thee.'

Euphena shook her head.

' I have no business with Domitia. My work lies only with thee. Whilst thou art my mistress, Julia, I am bound to serve thee. Other than that I will not do.'

' Thou canst serve me best by obeying my orders, old fool, and not in setting up the wisdom of thy age against that of youth and comeliness. Take this and consider the matter. It may make up thy mind for thee, and thou wilt come back later more ready to obey.'

She picked up a handsome gold chain set with emeralds that lay half out of a casket near by and flung it at Euphena. The old woman's eyes glistened and she made a snatch at the gaud, catching it in her hands and laughing with joy at its glittering length.

' Now that is a gift fitting from a princess,' she cried. ' Thou canst command me, Julia. But remember,'—and she came closer,—' it is not with Domitia alone that thou hast to contend.'

Yet, I don't think Euphena would have minded doing Domitia harm, though she did not hate her. And here, I will tell thee, Domitia was very nearly drugged. I heard it from one of her women. She was brought a cup—but it tasted ill and she threw the cup away. Twice this happened and afterwards she would take nothing but what her own women prepared for her. I wondered why Julia gave the chain to Euphena. I think it must have been to bribe her. Thou knowest, Julia had had Euphena since before she got me, but it had only been quite lately that Euphena came often to her apartments and then she would be with her a long time. We used to wonder

Photo: Anderson *Rome*

THE EMPEROR DOMITIAN

what Julia could have to say to her. Yet none of us would have told Julia anything about Euphena, because Julia had not her slaves' confidence. So I know not how she found out about Euphena's powers. Perhaps Euphena told her herself.

Thou seest, masters and mistresses never really know what their slaves think and feel. The slaves are a people by themselves and are not themselves when they go into the dressing-rooms. Of course, sometimes thou hast a master or mistress who is thy friend and whom thou canst speak to, but it is not usual. Clemens and Domitilla were like that. And Valeria was like that, too—to me. But with Julia it was quite different. Euphena did not talk after Julia had given her the chain. She just cringed a little and bent low down to her knees which she had not done before. Euphena loved jewels. She loved things that she could deck herself with. Sometimes, to make her kind to me, Stephanus gave her chains of shells and things made up of coloured beads. He would bring them to her as a present. But he always took care to say before he gave them, 'And how hath Nyria fared of late?' She understood.

. . . . . .

After Euphena had gone, taking the chain with her, Julia remained very quiet with her head down. She did not even look at herself in the mirror, I saw that she was in deep thought, for her brows were knitted. I went on pinning up her hair without her scolding me or saying that I drove the pins in.

Presently a sort of shiver seized her, but I do not think it was from horror, for she broke into a laugh and sat up staring at herself in the glass as though she were pleased with her looks and muttering to herself. . . . I heard her say, 'Ah, that will be good—very good indeed.' And then in a pettish way, 'What's the use of getting her out of the way, when there remains the other?' Then again, 'But with a clear road before her, where may not Julia go?'

And when her hair was dressed, she took off her wrapper—the hair was always done last—and she stood up in all her robes and seemed well pleased at the sight of herself. Then she said, 'I look well'—and turned to me, 'Do I not look well, Nyria?'

I was startled, for she seldom spoke thus to me. If she asked or took anyone's opinion, it would be that of Æmilia her head-woman. I thought she would have scorned to question me and I was not ready with my answer, which made her angry.

'Speak! she said. 'Is my beauty such that it blinds thee?'

I answered looking at her.

"The Most Noble is well-looking surely."

But she was not satisfied.

"Bah! Thou art faint in thy praise. If I were that pale gowk, Vitellius' daughter, mayhap thou wouldst have found something better to say.'

But I, bending low, answered nothing and she turned again to the mirror and gazed at herself from head to foot. It was propped against the wall, for she had sent away the slave who held it.

'Ah,' she said. 'The daughter of Vitellius may claim the blood of an emperor in her veins though Euphena denies the claim of Julia. But which would look best, I wonder, upon the throne of the Cæsars?'

And again was I startled, not knowing how I should answer.

Still Julia questioned me.

'Should I not make a fine empress, girl—a better one than that skinny peevish woman who flouted me last night?'

But I had no mind to answer her, for Julia was false and, had it pleased her, she would have got me reported to the Empress for treason. So I just shook my head and said:

'Nay, Most Noble, how should Nyria judge?' which angered Julia again. But she was too pleased with herself to be angry for long."

. . . . . .

NYRIA (resuming): "Now, after she had thus questioned me, Julia commanded that her litter should be in waiting and her women finished the robing. You can see her if you will, but speak not loud. She is there, choosing from that golden box her head-woman holds before her what jewels she will wear. She is going to the Palace to visit Cæsar.

Her dress. . . . I am never good at describing clothes. . . . Well, she has on, underneath, a white garment that falls in folds very close together: it is of the finest, softest wool. Over that there is another garment which is draped from the hips and beautifully embroidered in silk and gold thread. The material is a mixture of silk and wool. . . . The colour . . . oh, Julia mixes up colours and always has too much of everything. There is almost every shade in that embroidery, worked on bronzy-red . . . a good deal of violet, but that goes with the palla, which is purple.

The palla comes last; it is a kind of cloak draped from the shoulders. . . . Sometimes Julia wears a veil over her head . . . you see, her hair is elaborately dressed and it would depend on the jewels she is wearing. The litters are covered over. To-day she has on a veil of fine silk and she wears undersleeves beneath the palla of softest silk which crease from the wrist to the elbow. The wind is fresh this morning, otherwise she would go with arms bare." . . .

I asked Nyria to let me accompany her if Julia should take her to the Palace.

NYRIA (demurring): "There might be trouble. Julia would see you."

Upon which I pointed out that since I am invisible to Nyria herself, I should also be invisible to Julia.

NYRIA: "But she may hear you. . . . I did take somebody to her house once. . . . I had to leave him outside. . . . It was the man who told me to fly. . . . But I think I might take you. . . . Wait. . . . She will say in a minute if I am to go. . . . Do you see those lovely yellow stones? . . . The Emperor gave them to her . . . in a long chain that goes three times round the neck . . . and there are gold bands clasped with them below the shoulder and round the wrist and chains like the necklace hanging over the arm. . . . And Julia has most lovely pearls, too, from Britain, which were given her by the Emperor. . . .

Yes, she says I am to go with her to the Palace. . . . Thou knowest . . . when Julia visits Cæsar, she doth see him alone and desires no great retinue. Nevertheless, it would not befit her dignity were none of her women in attendance, yet there is naught of state in having one so small as I. . . .

You must wait, for I have to get ready. . . . If you like to come forth, her litter is outside. . . . This is the big hall . . . the atrium. Dip your hand in the fountain and you will see that it is scented. . . .

Can you walk? I have to walk behind the litter. . . . I hope you will

not be tired. . . . It is a nice road to the Palace. We do not need to go through the streets.

Now, we must go up those great marble stairs. . . . See, there are orange-trees in pots placed at intervals on either side. . . .

You go up and up and you come to rows of beautiful pillars . . . quantities of them. . . . Some are red and some have gold on them and other stones of different kinds let in near the top. . . . And now we are in that wide open place where are so many statues. . . . They put up statues to everybody in Rome and I never stop to look at them. . . .

But I believe these are very fine. Such a number of women! I like the shapes of them. . . . They were all daughters of a king . . . and what was it that happened? . . . Did they *all* have husbands?[1] . . . I have heard the story: it must have been the Domina Valeria who told me.

Now we are going into the Palace. . . . Julia never gets out of her litter until she is at the door of the first reception-room . . . through the long hall. . . .

Here are more marble steps, with a pattern upon them. . . . In the hall are things of great value: it is a pity that thou art not with someone who could point them out. I never look at anything: I so dislike coming here.

There are a good many soldiers about. We passed long lines of them down that side and this. Those standing on either side of the door are officers.

This is where the carpet begins. . . . Here is a very long room. It is beautiful: the walls are all inlaid with marble and there are fine statues in the corners. But I always walk straight through and look only at the litter in front of me.

Julia waits in the litter till they have found out if the Emperor can see her. He always does see her, but there may be other people there. He sends them away, unless it's a State call, and then soon they go away of themselves.

I hold my shoulder for Julia to put her hand on as they help her from the litter. . . . Ay! (with a little laugh) 'She weigheth heavy' . . .

We shall be in the throne-room in a minute. . . . Art thou nervous? I have been here so often that I ought not to be. But when I am with the Emperor I forget that he is a man. He seems to me like a huge animal. . . .

Now they have opened the door and there are those men with the rods. . . . What are they called?[2] . . . Thou knowest . . . they carry those bundles of golden rods strapped in front of them by straps that go over the shoulders and round the loins. They wear tunics and cloaks—and things on their heads; and they have the high kind of shoe which is laced up the legs . . . there is a word. . . . I remember not the name. They are always fine-looking men, for they add to the dignity of the Emperor or of whomsoever they are with. . . . I think they belong only to the Emperor and to those who are concerned with the State. Julia had them when her father was alive and she would like to have them now, but it is only when she is with her husband in some affair of State that they go before her: she hath them not for herself.

Cæsar has risen . . . he does not do that for everyone. He gives his hand to Julia. Two or three other men are with him. One who is dressed in white with a purple border and carries a roll of parchment with a blue seal hanging from it is talking to the Emperor. . . . He salutes Julia.

[1] The Portico of the Danaids. See Appendix 15, Bk. II.

[2] Nyria meant the lictors with the gilded *fasces*, which had an axe in the middle of the bundle of rods.

The manner of the royal salute is thus . . . thou knowest, the soldiers have longer spears when they are on the royal-guard duty, and to salute the Emperor they grind these very long spears which come above their heads. . . . They make a movement across to their left shoulders and then to their foreheads and then down to the ground . . . that is a royal salute.[1]

But, for warfare, they carry shorter spears and hold them nearer to the head-piece. These are of older date and did see much service in the time of Titus . . . it was in the thought of Titus that a man could serve better with the shorter spears because they came to closer grip with the foe. But Domitian doth like the look of the tall spear-heads which, when the sun be upon them, do shine with a blue light. . . .

Thou knowest what a spear-head is like. . . . They are broad things, wide as thy two hands together and shaped to a point, and, at the other end, they are flat and have a clamp of metal round the lower end which always rings when they make this movement. . . . Titus would have laughed at that, for he cared not for such show. . . .

Now we are through the long line of soldiers and we are outside in the sunshine. . . . I know not why it is, but when I am at the Palace something seems to tell me that one day I shall go there in evil plight. . . . Thou knowest, the women of my country are said to have the gift of prophecy. I never go up to the Palace without feeling that claw at my heart. . . .

Yet Cæsar is kind. Sometimes he gives me presents. Once he gave me some gold chains. . . . Stephanus will not let me wear them . . . and, of course, I could not wear them, for Julia would be angry. . . . And Stephanus will not have them for his shop. . . . I wanted to give them to him. But he said it would not do . . . that people would know and there would be trouble. So I buried them. Thou wilt not tell. . . . Say thou wilt not."

Then, replying to a question from the Recorder:

"Methinks the gentleman with the parchment roll was Plinius, but I only noticed that he saluted Julia. I never like to look at the men. . . .

Plinius,[2] Juvenal,[3] Martial. . . . Yes, I can tell thee about them. Plinius has a great deal to do with writing. He is . . . what is thy word for it? . . . a gentleman. He says amusing things in a quiet way and does not make coarse jokes. . . . I can tell thee of him another time. He has faults, but they are only little ones and one passes them over. . . . I remember Martial. . . . He goes to many of the great houses. But he is poor himself and lives in small rooms high up in a lodging-house near the river. . . .[4]

Hispulla? . . . Yes, I think I have seen her. . . . There is a very fat old lady who comes to Julia's.[5] The bearers puff so when they bring her. She has some good jewellery: she complains of the heat."

[1] The Imperial Salute (not verified) and the Pilum (spear). See Appendix 17, Bk. II.
[2] The younger Pliny. See *Pliny's Letters*.
[3] Juvenal. See Juvenal's *Satires*.
[4] Martial. His dwelling-place. His poverty. See Appendix 18, Bk. II.
[5] The corpulence of Hispulla. See Appendix 19, Bk. II.

CHAPTER IV

The Gossip of Thanna

Nyria tells of the accident through which she made acquaintance with the Domina Valeria and of how she was taken into the shop of Stephanus and heard the story of the bracelet: then of the evil rumours concerning Sabinus which Thanna had gathered at the Palace of Domitian.

The Recorder asks Nyria how and when she had learned from her friend Stephanus the true story of the bracelet which Domitia had, at the Emperor's command, given to Paris.

Nyria: "It was one day some time before the feast of which I have told thee when I was carrying a basket of flowers as a present from Julia to a friend. I had the basket on my head and was walking on, just thinking to myself and did not notice that I was in the way when the Domina Valeria's litter came along the street. She has fine black bearers . . . particularly strong men. They do not mean to be rough, but it is their custom to push and clear a way for the litters they are carrying. The head-man struck me on my shoulder, which was bare, and I cried out. The flowers fell, but I caught some of them. My shoulder was bleeding and the blood ran down my arm and my robe.[1]

The Domina stopped the litter and spoke to the man. Then she called me up and said she was sorry and asked if she could do anything for me. I scarce could answer, though not for the pain. That seemed naught . . . as thou wouldst understand if thou hadst had so many lashes laid on at a time as was oft my lot.

But it was so strange to be spoken to by a great lady as if I were like unto herself. . . . I knew who she was, for she had come sometimes to Julia's house. . . . And just then Stephanus ran out, for the litter was passing close by his shop. 'Tis in one of the narrow streets where are small high houses. . . . Stephanus's house is the third from the end.[2] . . . The Domina told him rather imperiously to take me into his shop and bind up my arm, and that angered him. He hath big square teeth in his upper jaw, and he bit them down upon his lip and made a snarling sound in his throat. 'Twas the way he showed his wrath.

He signed to me to come, and he drew round to my other side and put his arm round my shoulder lest it be harmed. . . . And after he had dressed the wound he gave me my amber beads from the shop and brought me things to amuse me. . . . 'Twas then I saw the bracelet which he was making at a table within where he used to do his work so that he could likewise watch the shop and see who entered.

[1] The rude treatment of pedestrians by litter-bearers and fore-runners. See Appendix 20, Bk. II.

[2] The shop of Stephanus. See Appendix 21, Bk. II.

The stones of the bracelet had come from the East, he said. They were bright green chrysoprase and he was engraving a legend upon them.

Stephanus could engrave very well. He had sharp-pointed instruments with which he made marks on the stones, and then he filled in the marks with gold. He worked at a dresser with drawers, in which he kept his instruments and the gums for fixing the gold on the stone.

He said he was engraving upon it the copy of an old Eastern motto. Of these he had a book wherefrom customers chose as they pleased, and when I tried to spell out the words, he told me their meaning.

It was this :

'No crown is brighter than the crown of love. Happiness and long life are much, but love is greater than all.'

Oh yes, he knew that the bracelet was for Domitia. Paris had not told him, but Stephanus always seemed to know everything.

Then he said to me something about wanting to set such a crown upon his own princess's head. That made a laugh between us, because when Stephanus had first seen me he had picked me up and tried to kiss me : and I told him that was not befitting and that he should show more respect to a princess. I was very small then or I would not have been so foolish. After that, he used to call me 'my princess,' and I liked not that others should hear him, for I was but Nyria, Julia's slave.

Now I answered him :

'Princesses do not wear crowns save when they reign,' and he said :

'This princess hath reigned since she was ten years old. Her throne is in the heart of one Stephanus, goldsmith and jeweller in the little street off the Via Argentaria.'

I laughed, for we had turned it into a joke. What I liked best—and yet least—was when Stephanus said 'my little lady.' I wanted to be a lady, though I am only a slave. And I liked it least because I knew that Stephanus was laughing too when he said 'princess.' But when he said 'my little lady' there was less laugh in him. Yet I like Stephanus best when he is merry.

He is very merry at times. He hath a great laugh. His big shoulders shake and his face will crinkle up like an autumn leaf and his eyes shine and twinkle. . . .

He is not very tall, but tall enough. . . . I like not very tall men. His hair is dark and curly and he has hair on his face. He has rather curious-looking eyes . . . a kind of golden brown with odd lights in them sometimes. His complexion inclines to red, but his arms and neck are whiter than his face. He wears a tunic generally, but when he is in the shop he puts on his toga . . . it looks better. . . .

Thou hadst thought that only a Roman citizen can wear the toga[1] . . . and I believe that is so. But Stephanus is a Roman citizen. He was brought over from Greece a long time ago and he was a slave, but now he is a freedman, and when a man is a freedman he can wear anything. . . . His mistress was Domitilla . . . she is a cousin or niece . . . I am not sure which . . . of Cæsar. She is a very sweet lady.

Oh no, he is not her servant now.[2] But he goes very often to see her, and if there is anything special she wants done, she asks him to do it. He was her steward and, thou knowest, a steward is a very important person. . . .

[1] The Roman Toga. See Appendix 22, Bk. II.

[2] Relations of Stephanus with Flavius Clemens and Domitilla. For historical references, see Appendix 23, Bk. II.

It is in this way. My master's steward walks about among the people in the mornings and sees that no one comes who has no right to be there. . . . I speak not of the slaves but of the clients who come to see my master. . . .

My master sees the slaves all together at the morning service in the chapel. He is like a priest then and he leads the service. It is for the family gods: there is a small altar to them in the atrium and a larger one in the chapel.

Fresh flowers are always put on the altars and wine set as an offering and there's something else . . . I can't remember what it is. I'll find out and tell thee. . . . I have to be at the service sometimes, but I do not go if I can help it. . . .

These are the gods who are supposed to watch over the family interests. They are the spirits of an..ces..tors (pronounced hesitatingly) and homage is paid to them thus. . . . There is a little singing . . . and there are a few prayers. My master Sabinus stands in front of the altar and opens his hands, and lifts them. He prays a prayer in which any members of the family may join, but they must be of the same blood or by adoption. The slaves may not speak in that prayer. But there are others in which they join. Sometimes, the service is before the clients come: sometimes it has to be after. . . . My master is very particular about this service, though there are some in Rome . . . those who have no family . . . who care not for it. It is for this that men must marry; else there would be no children to do honour to the spirits of the ancestors. Julia careth not: she doth not want children: my master would like to have them. . . ."

Nyria, recalled to the point from which she had wandered, says with a little conscious laugh:

"How didst thou know that Stephanus would marry me if he could? Did he tell thee? . . . No . . . Well, it is not that Stephanus talks, but he lets people see and they always tease me about him. . . . Oh, not Julia. Of course, she would not know anything about it unless she had to. . . . But I do not think that Julia would like me to marry yet, though she might make me do so later on. Masters and mistresses always want their slaves to marry. . . . Because . . . thou seest . . . their children are the property of the master.

But how would it be, thou dost ask, seeing that Stephanus is a freedman and I am a slave? . . . There are two ways . . . one by my being freed, and if my master Sabinus thought I really wished to marry Stephanus I am sure he would free me, but I do not think that Julia would give me my freedom. Or else, Stephanus might marry me while yet I am a slave. . . . I should have papers that would be filled up and I should still belong to Julia . . . unless Stephanus could buy me. . . .

Dost thou know about being married? . . . I understand it not. I do not want marriage. But if it had to be somebody, I would rather it were Stephanus. . . . Sometimes the slaves are forced to marry. . . . There are such dreadful stories. For the masters like their slaves' marriages to be in the 'Family'[1] and the women are not really married . . . first there is one and then another . . . it makes me shudder. . . . I am lucky, but that is only because Julia keeps me with her. I've been fit to be married for two or three years.

If I married Stephanus I should live in his house, but if I had children I

[1] The Familia—or household of slaves.

should be obliged to give up any that Julia wished to take, and she might claim me for work too.[1]

I get dreadfully puzzled about it all, and sometimes Stephanus makes me feel sorry when I do not want him to come near me. For I think Stephanus is the best man I know, and that it would be well if I could care for him as he wishes. . . . I asked the Domina Valeria, and she said 'Never marry a man you do not love. If you feel now that you do not like him to touch you, you would want to kill him afterwards.'

But I do not feel that I should ever want to do that. I like to have Stephanus for a friend. . . . Thou knowest, he does doctoring and I help him with the nursing and he tells me what to do. . . . He learned doctoring for the love of it, and he knows a great deal about herbs and I help him to gather them. I like that part very much. . . . Stephanus tells me of many things. . . .

Oh, thou knowest how a man talks. . . . Stephanus knows that I like not to hear him swear. . . . He would swear by Hecate—methinks it was Hecate, goddess of virgins—he doth not hold with girls being unmarried, and he always said that was why he must needs swear by her.

Yet he was always very gentle and respectful to me, even when he was merriest. I never had a hard word from Stephanus. He was so gentle when he touched one, though his hands were big and strong.

But he had a quick temper. I have seen him angered when patients gave trouble and would not take his potions. He would turn on his heel and say they could rot there and die. It was dreadful to hear him. He tried to give up his swearing, because I said I would not go with him on his round if he spoke so.

And I have seen Stephanus wring a bird's neck when he was angry. Once, when there was a patient who was very ill and a cock kept crowing outside, he strode out and wrung its neck before you could think.

He himself had a bird that talked, which an old woman whom he tended gave him ere she died: and this bird would pick up the words of those who went past and who spoke ill of Stephanus. For there are always some ready to abuse as well as others to befriend.

So the bird would whistle, as Stephanus came up, and call, 'Here comes Stephanus, rogue and robber.'

And Stephanus would shake his fist at it and say, 'I'll have thy neck, thou lying clown.'

For he did not like being called names, though the bird would fall into a chuckle and Stephanus would laugh too.

One day, in his passion, it might have gone ill with that bird, but it had caught my name and would whisper from its perch:

'Here comes Nyria. Hie thee, Stephanus, quick. The maid looks wan.'

And then, when I came in, the bird would flutter its wings and dance on its perch and cry:

'A potion. . . . A potion,' till Stephanus and I were fit to die of laughing.

Stephanus said he could not part from the bird because it gave him word when I was coming.

But it was a treacherous bird and one dared not speak aloud in his hearing. He was quick to pick up every phrase and all the gossip of the street. He

[1] To verify Nyria's information concerning the Roman laws of slavery, see Appendix 24, Bk. II.

would shout till anyone passing thought 'twas some person that talked to him.

Stephanus called the bird by some long name belonging to one that lived in hell, of which now I mind me not. . . . Ascalaphus.[1] . . . Methinks 'twas so. . . . I will find out. . . .

Stephanus's bird had a beak that pecked hard and it would try to kiss me thus and to rub its head against my fingers. But folks said that Stephanus should not keep such a bird because it was a disgrace to the street. . . .

For, if a lady's litter stopped, the bird would cry :

'Here comes a fine dame. She is worth a good bargain.'

Thou shouldst know that Stephanus was often called the witch-doctor because of the cures he made, and some said that the evil spirit which helped him lived in the bird.

But Stephanus had doctored Euphena when she was ill of fever, and 'tis true that he had commerce with her and sometimes brought her, himself, berries that she got from him for her magic, though oft-times he gave them to me for her. He said that these could do no harm and that they amused her. And I have heard them talk together of things that seemed to me wondersome and to savour of witchcraft.

For there is no doubt that Euphena hath much strange knowledge. If Stephanus desired to learn whether a patient would mend, he would come to her and describe the case and then ask :

'Say, Mother, will she live ?' And it always came to pass as Euphena said.

He did the gathering of his simples early in the morning and sometimes —when Julia was away from Rome—I could go out with him then and help gather them. For some reason, Julia did not care to take me to Albanum when she went there to see Cæsar.

And at other times I would snatch an hour or two to go out with Stephanus after Julia's tiring and robing were finished, if she did not want to take me out with her. For then I had no work except the flowers. We always had our orders. Julia would say at her dressing if she wanted us.

Oft I wondered how Stephanus found time for doctoring with all his other work. But he had a young man in the shop with him to be there when he was called away. Also, this youth would take the jewels to customers, unless they were very valuable, and then he and Stephanus would take them together."

"Now I mind me of somewhat I should have told thee. 'Twas Domitian who first took Paris into favour for himself and thus brought him to Domitia's notice. And of this did Juvenal make great game.

'Tis thus,' he said, 'that the sparrow or the chaffinch doth act foolishly in permitting the cuckoo to sit upon his nest, for if he so doeth, then will there be no room for him, and who shall say to which are due the eggs that lie therein. But Domitian, not satisfied with being the cruellest knave that ever ruled over Rome, must needs be a fool likewise, wherein he doth outdo Nero, who was no ass for all his braying.'

Now, thou knowest, in the beginning Domitian did care very much for Domitia and he would have cared for her still, though I dare say he would have got tired of her in the end because Domitian was by nature fickle. So men said of him, but I think 'twas not wholly true, seeing that he ever held

[1] Ascalaphus, turned into an owl. See Appendix 25, Bk. II.

to Julia. But 'twas known that he had never really won Domitia who always hated and despised him for his theft of her. And though he was her master, from the first she covertly scorned him. Then, as time went on, she grew bolder, and, unmindful lest she lost her state, did openly show her love for Paris.

Nevertheless, when Domitia went forth in pomp with Cæsar, she did uphold her dignity and was in very truth an empress. Oft-times have I thought 'twas because of this that Cæsar kept her at his side.

Belike, he wearied of the peevish look on her face. I have heard him say that ' quicker than a storm might do she did turn all sweet things sour, and that he'd liefer have Jove's thunderbolt cast before him at a feast than sit opposite Domitia's scowl.'

Yet would it have needed a stout heart to oppose Cæsar. If Domitia had had more courage she would have left him boldly or else have comported herself better to his liking. But she lacked the strength for either.

Methinks, she would not have minded much had Cæsar put her away. But this he did not do, mayhap for fear of the people.

Nevertheless, there came to Domitia certain times of happiness. For Cæsar did oft sojourn at Albanum and companied there with Julia. And Domitia having a villa of her own at Gabii did make excuse to stay in it and had Paris in secret to visit her. But she could not be with Paris openly partly for fear of Cæsar, and likewise because Paris, being engaged for a certain period to play and dance, dared not be absent long from the city.

I heard it said that Domitian kept her short of money, or she would have paid Paris' forfeit to the theatre and gone with him far from Rome.

But I know not if Paris would have liked to go. Juvenal thought not and said that a man was a fool who made any woman his mistress, but that a greater fool was he who did serve two mistresses whereof only one was a woman and the other his art, seeing that between the two he could serve neither well.

Stephanus doth tell me everything himself, yet he liked not that Juvenal should speak thus freely before me. Oft did I laugh when Stephanus would have silenced Juvenal and I would say to him :

' It matters not, Stephanus, for thou wilt tell me thyself, later.' And he would make answer :

' Thou art a very catling with thy wheedling ways, for when thou comest round Stephanus how can his tongue lie silent ? '

Whereat Juvenal would laugh and say :

' Another fool, eh Stephanus ! Truly I reckoned there was one less in Rome than thou wouldst give me to believe ! But thou dost ill name this maid. For the cat in Egypt, where they have brought the species to such perfection that they must needs worship it, is reckoned a very mine of wisdom : and Nyria, methinks, is not so wise as she should be else would her shoulders suffer less from the whip. And for the wheedling ways of which thou speakest, in very truth, are they not the natural gift of her sex ? What woman ever born knew not how to wheedle a man ! Verily, he must be strong who dare face unaided a wheedling woman. Were I a lawmaker in Rome, I'd teach her youth . . . each man of them . . . to avoid women until he had grown strong as are the gods.'

Whereon Stephanus would chuckle afresh, for he always had the laugh and the last word, and he would say :

'By thine own showing, friend Juvenal, were man no stronger than the gods, he would be in ill plight before a woman. For how did Apollo and his compeers submit themselves to the wiles of even mortal maidens!' "

. . . . . .

After a short interval, when the Recorder asked Nyria to continue her account of what happened during the few weeks which had now elapsed before the Saturnalia, she continued her story.

NYRIA: "Nothing very particular happened. One thing which I remember is that on the next time Julia went to see Domitian, when, after the robing, she bade me call her women and gave her orders, 'twas Thanna that she bade attend her . . . which seemed to me strange, for Thanna, being dark, doth not suit her so well as I who am fair. Alack! I was afeared that Domitian had noticed me overmuch for Julia's pleasure.

Thanna had only a woollen garment to go in . . . not a fine embroidered one like mine. But she twisted a red veil that had embroidery upon it round her head and shoulders . . . one, she had told us, that was bought with kisses at the shop of an old Jew pedlar, and Thanna was proud to say how cheaply she had got it. . . .

I thought Julia had a different air when she came home. She was more cross and yet she seemed pleased with herself; she looked angry, but there was something of triumph in her look as though she had got what she had been wanting.

Thanna, who was always full of every bit of news she could pick up, came in bubbling with somewhat and eager to tell it to us. But Thanna was ever one to drive a bargain. So she offered to sell her news to each of us and tried to barter it to Aemilia for a gilt comb that Aemilia wore and to me for, I think, amber beads. Some price must she have from every one of us slaves.

Of course we laughed and said we would not. Then, said Thanna, neither would she tell.

But I did not think she could have learned very much, because, thou knowest, Domitian always sent me away when he talked alone with Julia and I knew they were even less likely to have kept Thanna in the room.

But it seemed as though Thanna really had something special to tell.

So Aemilia gave her one of her combs—not the gilt one—and she got something out of each of them. I shook my head, for I had no mind to pay and neither was I curious. Nor did I care to have dealings with Thanna though I am not proud.

Julia and Sabinus dined alone that night in a small room off the atrium. Part of the time I was behind her chair, and as they talked I saw her look at Sabinus more scornfully than usual. He was humbly pleasant as ever, and trying to interest her in what he had done.

He had been to the Senate that day. There, had he been summoned for some questioning as to his opinions, which he said had surprised him, for, he said, he thought they had known his views upon the measures that were being brought forward and upon certain reforms that he desired to put forward during his consulship.

I did not understand all their talk. There was something about giving greater privileges to the slaves and making it easier for them to get freedom. Sabinus wished a law passed that any one of them who had done some very worthy deed—such as saving his master's life or that of one of his family, or standing his master in good stead on any momentous occasion—should

by law have his freedom offered him and be permitted to take it if he wished.

This had been the subject of much discussion and most of those in the Senate, I understood, had objected to it on the ground that such a question as freeing a slave should be left wholly to the discretion of the master. Many of the wiser and kindlier men of the Senate opposed Sabinus and he did not understand this.

Sabinus had been, I had heard, already nominated consul by the Emperor himself, and he began asking Julia about Cæsar's own views on the matter. Had they changed and was Domitian likely to withdraw his support ?

Julia answered scornfully that the support of Cæsar was an uncertain thing. She said that was partly why she had always tried to keep Domitian's favour—in order to further Sabinus's interests, and if indeed the Emperor were his friend, he might thank her, Julia, for it.

' Oh, if that were but so ! ' said Sabinus, resting his arms on the table and leaning across to look at her. Then he said some half-broken, warm words that made my heart bleed for him. But Julia answered him coldly that the servants were still in the room and bade him go on with his dinner and not be a fool.

And I saw that Sabinus was hurt, and in a few moments he changed his talk and began to speak of his cousins Flavius Clemens and the Domina Domitilla. But Julia was scornful again.

' I hate that woman,' she said—' a puling meek-mouthed fool. One who would be one thing to your face and another behind your back.' Those were not her words, but it is the sense of them.

' No,' said Sabinus, ' that was never the way with Domitilla.' Julia laughed and said did he not know that Domitilla belonged to the secret sect that called themselves Christians ? And yet she paraded Rome as if she were fit to be the wife of a prince, which those who dealt with such mean, underhand, rebellious plots and practices, were not.

Sabinus flushed and looked very vexed, and went on eating in a meditative manner. And so did Julia, she seeming busy with her own thoughts.

Every now and then a bitter smile would catch the corners of her mouth and I, standing by her chair, saw it and wondered.

Presently, Sabinus looked up and asked Julia courteously whether, since she had heard somewhat of that sect, she knew aught of one Clement whom they reckoned as their head-priest and who seemed a learned and holy man of note among them.

Julia shook her head and said she knew naught of priests. . . . Then she asked icily :

' Where didst thou see this wonder ? '

Sabinus answered simply that he had met him at the house of Flavius Clemens with whom Clement was distantly connected.[1] ' Therefore,' said Sabinus, ' he is in some sort a relative of my own, and as such I should like to show him hospitality.'

Julia made a mouth of disgust and said : ' I advise thee to be careful, Sabinus. Domitian hath no sympathy with this secret sect and whether he call in question thy views upon the amendment of the laws or no, he is not likely to approve the reception in this house of one who is known to be a partner in that band of irreligious conspirators. . . . I care nothing myself,' she went on, ' for any man's religion. Let him worship what gods he will.

[1] Clement, third bishop of Rome. See Appendix 26, Bk. II.

Nor does Domitian, I fancy, if the truth were told, hold serious scruples on that score. But he hath a superstitious leaning to the gods of his ancestors, and moreover, he is Cæsar and bound to uphold them. He will have his thumb upon this band of canting conspirators, and then—where wouldst thou be ? In any case I do not see why thou shouldst trouble thyself about this man. The Flavians are a big brood with many hangers-on whose pockets are empty and who clamour for them to be filled. Let others fill them, say I. I will not be concerned in the matter. Only, should danger overtake thee, remember that I gave thee warning.' And with that she quaffed a big goblet of wine and set it down.

'Nay, I have done no wrong,' said Sabinus gently. 'Domitian must know that I serve the Roman gods. I seek none better. Though they forget me —and I sometimes think they do—yet will I still serve them faithfully, for they are the gods of my fathers and they should be the gods of those that come after me. But alas ! there are none.'

He said that so sadly that my heart grieved for him, but Julia only laughed and said, 'For my part I thank the gods that there are none to come after me—at least no milksops like thee. Thou hast not the spirit of a mouse, Sabinus. If thou hadst been more of a man thou mightst have ruled—who knows ?—even Julia.'

Said Sabinus sadly, 'To my mind, there should but be one sort of government for husbands and wives and that is the rule of love.'

Julia threw herself back and laughed again. 'Such ideas would have suited Numa and his Egeria,' she sneered, 'but assuredly no woman of the days of Domitian.'

Presently, they sent me away from table and I was free to go and get my supper. Euphena was supposed to give me my supper. Vibius, the chief steward, arranged all that.

I went to the dressing-rooms and would have passed to Euphena's house. The women were sitting on the steps of the loggia outside Julia's apartments and were talking together. Even Aemilia seemed excited.

'Here comes she who has not paid, and she shall learn nothing,' exclaimed Thanna.

'It does not matter, Thanna,' Aemilia said. 'If what thou hast heard be true, Nyria will know it when it comes to pass—perhaps before, for Rome is a sink of foul talk, and such sinks leak.'

'Nay, but I was the first to bring it and shall I not be paid ? ' cried Thanna sharply.

'Thou art an evil bargainer,' said Aemilia—'one who would bargain with her master's fate.'

'I care not,' said Thanna. 'Ye may all be sold, but I shall go with Julia to the Palace, and some day I shall wait upon an empress. Sabinus gone, Domitia will soon follow. Think of that, girls ! An empress forsooth ! That is better than to be only the wife of Sabinus.'

'She remains the same woman,' said Aemilia acidly. 'Julia will always be Julia. I wish thee joy of thine empress, Thanna. For myself, I would rather be sold.'

'No, no, Aemilia, thou wilt not be sold ; thou hast too good an eye for colour,' said Thanna saucily. 'Julia loves colour and the royal purple and gold will become her.'

I listened transfixed. What were they going to do to Sabinus ?

'Of what dost thou speak ? ' I said. 'Hath ill happed to Sabinus ? '

'She has not paid. She shall not hear. She shall not hear,' shrieked Thanna.

'Nay, but it may, after all, be well with Sabinus,' said Aemilia sadly. 'For the gods are more tender than man.' And I knew by the sound in her voice that Aemilia could only mean one thing, and horror struck at my heart for I loved and pitied Sabinus. I went over to Aemilia and took her hand.

'Has the edict of Cæsar gone forth ?' I said. 'It cannot be. Sabinus knows nothing. He is but now talking of his consulship to Julia.'

'Nay,' said Aemilia shaking her head. The Emperor sends forth no edict when it is a deed of which he is ashamed. The command will come to Sabinus, when it does come, under the mask of a message of friendship. . . ."

"Now will I tell thee what came to my knowledge afterwards.

It seemed that Thanna had been talking to a man of the Guard who was making love to her, and after her way—for Thanna was very sharp though she was young—she would not grant favours without a good return.

She told him that such as he could give her nothing in money or jewels worth selling her kisses for—since the Guard was known to be but ill-paid. But that she would be kind for a bit of news that should make her hair curl without the aid of irons.

Then he told her this—that he had heard in snatches things that had been dropped by the Emperor and by Julia in unguarded moments. Also, that Domitian had been with one or two of his advisers—or those he called his advisers, for Domitian took ever his own way—and the Guard had gathered that there would be work for the Prætorians in the removal of Sabinus. What the fate was that should come upon him they had not heard. And since he was already elected consul and since it appeared he must hold that office—at least for a little while—his doom would not be immediate, and they supposed that Domitian meant to let him serve and then bring forward some accusation against him. It was perhaps for this reason that Domitian had sent a hurried message to the Senate House that day."

CHAPTER V

The Call of Aeola

Nyria tells of the threat of Gregorio against Valeria: of Euphena's strange warning to Stephanus and of her own musings and of the Voice that spake to her on the hill-side. Then of how, during the Saturnalia, she serves Julia and is called by Aeola to the sick bed of the Domina Valeria.

Nyria: "It was about this time that Stephanus talked a great deal to me of marriage and explained all about our marriage laws. I promised him that I would think upon the matter; and, for that I would go forth by myself, not letting him come with me.

I did not mind at all being alone, except that I was hurt because now Valeria did not seem to care so much about my company.

The last few times that I had been to see her she was preoccupied. . . . I could tell that, even though no one was by. And once, Gregorio met me on the steps and cried at me, 'Yah! Go home. Thou art not wanted here. . . . Thou needst not come in.'

I took no notice, only, when I did enter and saw that 'twas true she wanted me not, I went away very sadly.

But I came again, and still again, though Gregorio would meet me going out and cry again, 'Doth she want thee! Who was right? Now, it is neither thee nor me, but a worse one than either who is her favourite.'

I was startled and looked at him and he said:

'Ah! thou needst not stare: it is true: thou wouldst not believe how often he comes. And Paulinus away—think of that! And she who is said to be the proudest and coldest lady in Rome! But I will be even with them. 'Tis no unmeet thing to favour one of the household, but another matter to take a lover from outside—a stranger and from a half-alien brood. But I will be even with her. Paulinus shall know.'

And as he said that, Gregorio drew his lips back over his gums and showed his teeth, making a hissing sound.

'Paulinus shall know when he returns, and then we shall see who is master here—the rightful lord or this half-breed dog of a Jew.'

That frightened me. I did not answer, for I cared not to discuss Valeria with the boy. And when Gregorio saw that I would not gossip with him, for he but wanted someone to spit out his jealous rage upon, he left me alone.

And, once or twice, when I met him in the road, he stopped and hissed, 'Paulinus shall know,' and when I made to go on, he cried, 'A fair-weather friend thou! Dost care nothing to hear how things go with us?'

But I shook my head and went on.

Now, Stephanus had got wind of Euphena's prophecies at the banquet, and had questioned me. Indeed, I told him truly all that had happened that night. Then went he to Euphena and questioned her, and the outcome was that he came back to me and said:

'Supposing it were true and that Julia should die, what fate, thinkest thou, would be thine, little one? They would sell thee—and maybe to a harder master.'

'I would pray Sabinus to keep me,' I answered.

'He may not choose to do so, or he may not have the power. Euphena says ill-omened things of Sabinus, likewise.'

I looked across at Euphena. She sat at the door of her cabin, heeding not our talk. Her skinny arms were clasped around her knees and her yellowish eyes seemed to turn inwards. She was in one of those strange moods in which she said prophetic things.

It was towards evening. Stephanus on his rounds had called in to speak to me and to bring Euphena some more of those berries he used to give her. It was growing dusk and I was waiting the summons to Julia's dressing-room.

When I told Stephanus that Euphena was seeing things, he took my hand and led me across to the hut door.

'Here is Nyria, Euphena,' he said. 'Look well at her and tell me what thou dost see of her fate.'

Euphena's yellow eyes were dazed and it was as though she saw us not. Nevertheless she spoke.

'Take thy hand from off her, Stephanus: thou art staining her with the blood.'

Stephanus snatched his hand away and looked at it.

'There is no blood upon my hand, Mother. Thou art mistaken,' he said.

'Nay, but there is blood,' she answered in a deep, gruff voice—'And it is dripping—dripping on her robe. Stand back, Stephanus.'

And Stephanus drew back, but he answered:

'I have not spotted her robe. What dost thou mean, Euphena?'

And I was frightened, for she looked so fearsome.

'The hand must shed blood,' answered Euphena. 'But woe unto him that lifts it: and woe unto her for whose sake the blood is shed. Woe—woe!' she cried rocking herself to and fro. 'For neither love nor riches nor power of the mighty can save the maid for whom a doom be written.'

Stephanus looked a little frightened too.

'Art thou speaking of this maid?' he said. 'Is it for the sake of this maid that I shall shed blood? For now help me, Hecate, I fear me that might come to pass.'

Euphena only rocked and moaned.

'Tell me what is coming to her,' said Stephanus stooping forward; his eyes looked red in the twilight as he searched Euphena's face.

"If doom be laid upon her, shall I not avert it?' he asked.

But still Euphena only rocked and moaned, her eyes half-closed, staring at nothing.

'What dost thou see, Mother? What dost thou hear?' cried Stephanus.

'I hear the shouts of the populace,' she answered. 'I hear the tramp of the Prætorians. I hear the people acclaiming Cæsar. I hear a sound as of many winds blowing through the trees. Louder and louder it grows till it becomes a wailing and a mourning—a mourning for the lives of the innocent victims. . . . I hear the roaring of many wild beasts. . . .'

Stephanus drew back and snatched my hand again and drew me close to him. Then my fear left me. I did not remember that Euphena was speaking of me until Stephanus said:

'What has this to do with Nyria?'

'Nyria! . . . Nyria!' said Euphena in a strange muttering voice. 'I know not. . . . But it doth sometimes come to pass that the innocent bear the burden of the guilty. Sin and suffering end not alone with those who bring them about.'

'But Nyria is safe, for my arms will protect her,' cried Stephanus.

'Safe: yes, safe—but not in thy arms, Stephanus. She will be held in the arms of one stronger than thou—even as death is stronger than life.'

'Thou liest, old hag,' he cried stormily and, turning, caught me fast in his arms even where I stood.

'Now by all the gods of Greece, this shall not be,' he said. 'I will save thee, Nyria, hap what may—or die in the saving.'

Then I laughed. It seemed so wild and strange. But I was angry when he kissed me there under the sky, for many slaves were passing to and fro and any might see.

'I shall be in danger of Julia—both of the whip and of her tongue—if I go not when she calls. And thou canst not save me from that, Stephanus,' I said.

'Be my wife, Nyria,' he answered so earnestly that I was fain to listen. 'Come to me and I will protect thee against anything and everything—even from Julia herself. I mean it, dearest. The gods alone know how greatly thou hast need of a protector. Think of it, Nyria, I beseech thee.'

'Euphena hath turned thee silly with her mad talk, Stephanus,' I answered. 'But I will think of it. Farewell.'

For so I thought best to get me away.

'Nay, say no more. Euphena is an evil augur.'

I put my palm over his mouth. But when he kissed it again, I fled, and after that I kept even more out of Stephanus's way: and so, oft I wandered on the hill-side alone.

Thou knowest it was late autumn and the leaves were turning red and brown. A little trailing pink flower I was fond of was all dead and there were only long brown wreaths of it left. But in some places were scarlet berries on high straight stems, and clusters of another kind in the bushes and some others that were good to eat. I would nibble them as I walked, and nuts which I could gather on a part of the hill-side—rich ripe nuts that I would break with a stone upon the ground, and sitting down would make a meal that lasted me some time.

Now, when I went up the hill-side by myself, I used to wander about with the goats: then sometimes I would climb down one side of the hill a little way and sit myself upon a knoll which doth overtop the Quarries. In this place the rocks stand up at the edge of the knoll where it falleth steeply downward, and below, there windeth a narrow road that is almost hidden as it goeth along the cliff side. And often I would see through the spaces between the rocks, or when I bent over the knoll's edge, certain persons hurrying along the narrow path. But I knew not who the people were until Stephanus told me that they belonged to that sect called Christians; likewise, he warned me that I must not talk about them—though then I knew not why.

I guessed from what Stephanus said that they had some praying-place round there, and I used to stretch over and watch them. Sometimes, they would look up, and when they saw me they always seemed worried, so I would turn away, or I would lie flat down on the ground and just put my head over.

I got interested in these people. They looked so grave and sometimes sad —not like ordinary people when they were going to some big sacrifice at one of the temples. Those, even if they had paid a good deal for what they were going to sacrifice, would still look cheerful, for they would feel sure that the god would help them.

But these people looked heavy and downcast as they wound along under the hill with their cloaks up to their faces. It was chiefly early in the morning that I saw them, or sometimes of late evening when I went up there to watch the sun set. But Stephanus did not like my doing that because the dusk fell quickly and the hill was rough for climbing down.

I wondered if these people had a god. They never carried his image in procession as I heard that some strange peoples did. Nor did they seem to have processions. They looked rather as if they wanted to avoid each other, and they seldom talked together.

I wondered many things about them. I used to have many thoughts up there on the hill-side, and I did not like Stephanus stopping my going at sunset, for that was a very beautiful time.

I remember it used to seem to me as though it were the earth that was setting and not the sun—as though the earth were sinking gradually into sleep and that the sky was going to draw the night curtains so that she might slumber gently.

And always, somewhere behind the sky, there seemed to me to be Someone very great and wonderful who was waiting to say good night to the poor tired earth, and yet who would not go away. It was like a nurse with a little child. I never saw that Someone's face, but I always felt Him there.

Then I would stand at the edge of the knoll and stretch my arms out wide and lift my face to the sky, and when the breeze came over me it always seemed like a bit of the veil which that great Someone wore, touching my forehead. And sometimes it seemed to me that I heard a Voice calling softly, 'Nyria. . . . Nyria.'

At first I wanted to answer, but I knew not what to say, as when Julia calls me, or my master. . . . Then, I have to go with folded hands and bow myself and stand silent and wait the command. . . . But when the Voice calleth I can but open my heart and listen and wait. . . . And then it hath seemed to me that I hear the Voice say:

'Some day, Nyria, thou shalt see my face.' "

. . . . . .

NYRIA: "Of course, in the Saturnalia,[1] we slaves were supposed to do as we liked. We were not obliged to serve our masters and we could go away if we pleased. But if we did not do as the master desired we got whipped when we came back.

More often, the master allowed his slaves to do as they pleased. Stephanus said that Juvenal had told him this was because of the strong feeling there is in the matter, and that there would be an uprising if the Saturnalia were done away with. Also, it is a religious festival and there are services to a god . . . Saturn. This begins the holiday and, thou seest, if the slaves attend the services, that doth count in their favour. If it could be proved that the slave had not attended any of the ceremonies and had just made holiday for himself, that would go very much against him; but if it were

[1] The Saturnalia. See Appendix 27, Bk. II.

known that he had attended most of the ceremonies, then would the priests perhaps speak in his favour and, sometimes even, excuses would be made that he had been kept away in employment by the priests and he would get off from punishment in that manner.

So at the beginning of the Saturnalia there was always a great clearance of everybody's household, and all the slaves could be out together, and none dared say a word.

But if a master or mistress did specially require the service of any of their slaves during the Saturnalia, then they had to bargain with them for certain moneys and the slave had the right to refuse his service. But it was not worth the slave's while to do that, for immediately the Saturnalia was over he was again his master's property and would be punished.

One thing—if a slave worked for his master for money during the Saturnalia, it was usual for the master to give him afterwards—at a convenient time—a holiday of the same length. That was by favour of the master: the slave could not demand it. Good masters gave it: others did not. Thus, thou seest, if the slaves lost their Saturnalia they had poor chance of getting any holiday.

Sabinus paid generously the slaves he employed during the festival and he always gave them a holiday afterwards. Thus Julia's household was well served by the men-servants: it was her women who failed her; therefore in the time of Saturnalia it usually came to pass that of all Julia's women for the robing none remained but myself.

Aemilia was married, and for those days liked to take her husband and children into the country to her parents who had a farm in the Campagna. . . .

Thou dost ask if Aemilia being Roman-born[1] were not free-born and why then she was a slave. But it doth depend upon what is meant by free-born. If one were born in the city of Rome of freed parents, that counted. But in the country the small farmers were usually freedmen, and though a freedman could not be made a slave, I think there was a way in which his child could. There were certain loopholes. For instance, Julia, seeing the daughter of a freedwoman or a farmer, would find out to whom the land belonged—or who had been the last master of the girl's father, and would pay him for the girl, and the girl would become hers. And though the parents might complain, it could not be helped. I don't quite know the law, but that was the kind of thing that happened.

I do not think Julia ever suffered for only having me, for I worked doubly, so that she should not miss anything. But it was hard service.

There was not even Thanna there to help me and Euphena was away the first part of the time. Euphena often went away at the Saturnalia.

The table-men Sabinus kept were very kind in filling the ewers and vessels that were needed for Julia—the oil-cans for her lamps and the scented oil for rubbing her body and also for the hair. Some of it was kept in a large quantity in heavy jars that I could not lift. And there were the scent-bottles and scented water for her bath. I had to rub her. That was hard work.

The men would polish the mirror for me when she was out. But what with having to get my own food, see to my clothes and clean the little cabin, I was kept very busy.

Sabinus generally contrived to have a set of bearers for Julia. Her own went off, and she used to grumble a great deal about the way the others shook her. It was no pleasure to be in attendance at such times.

[1] Treatment of Roman-born slaves. See Appendix 28, Bk. II.

Now in that time there came one day which was of great import to me.

Julia had been to the Palace alone that day. I had got all her clothes ready for the robing. When she returned she was angered and was talking much about some strange delay that was troubling her, and saying that things might chance which would do her harm.

She kept murmuring :

' Blockhead ! Laggard ! ' and words like that. ' And he will let the fool be one too many for him yet ! ' she said.

What that could mean I did not know. But when she said very sharply half-laughing, ' that only dead men could be trusted to hold their peace,' I had a sudden fear, for I thought of my master and I wondered if she had been plotting against him.

But I had much to do and little time to think, for Julia had a few friends dining with her that night—a small dinner-party—I scarce remember who the people were, but it was her boast that the Saturnalia made no difference in her household plans, and that she could bid her friends welcome to a properly tended board, as at other times.

That was true, but it was not her management but Sabinus's. Thus, this evening, I followed Julia, bearing her fan and scent-bottle. But I had forgotten the handkerchief—or rather, I thought she had taken it, and as napkins were supplied she did not miss it at first.

But afterwards there was talk of fine-woven flax with a woman who was there and who had a mind to purchase some that had come from a place in the South. And Julia desired to show her the embroidery on her kerchief, and finding she had it not, reprimanded me and bade me fetch one at once.

It was then that I went back to Julia's rooms. The lights were low—there was only one silver lamp kept burning, for Julia punished us if we burned the scented oil needlessly. So it was my custom to extinguish the lamps swiftly as she left her rooms, leaving but this one swinging silver lamp hanging from the arm of a white stone boy.

And in the dark as I entered, the room was full of shadows, and upon the step of the wide window there crouched a small dark figure which rose up as I came forward and then shrank against the wall.

I was not afraid, for I fear nought save Bibbi's lash, Domitian's notice and Julia's tongue, and it was none of these, I knew. Then, seeing that the form seemed that of a woman, I wondered if Thanna or one of the others had come back, and cried out :

' Who art thou ? Speak.'

It was Aeola—the waiting-maid of Valeria—I knew her not at first.

' Ah, Nyria ! ' she cried and rushed forward and caught my hand. ' Ah, Nyria—it is thou ! '

' What dost thou here ? ' I answered. ' What is it ? What hast thou come for ? Speak, Aeola ! '

And I took her and shook her a little, for she seemed stupid and a sudden fear filled me lest all might not be well with Valeria.

Then I remembered that it was the Saturnalia and that Aeola most likely was having holiday, too, and perchance had come round only to see me. But it was an ill hour to call, for Julia waited still and I must needs hasten back.

' Come in an hour hence,' I said. ' If thou hast aught to see me about, Aeola. I may not delay with thee now.'

Then she found her tongue.

'Thou mayst not delay without me,' she said. 'That is—if thou carest for her thou wilt not delay for aught else, but will come back with me quickly. For she is ill—very, very ill and calleth for thee.'

'Who is ill?—Valeria?' I asked.

'Ay, with the fever and lying sick unto death it doth seem. Oh, Nyria, if Stephanus would but come with me!'

'Hath she seen no doctor?' I asked.

'No doctor—none. There hath been no one to see her. How could there be? For there was no one to send. It is the Saturnalia. None but I am there.'

'And thou hast left her all alone!' I cried. 'Go back: Go back and tell her I am coming.'

'There is no need to tell her,' sobbed Aeola. 'She will not hear me or understand. She but crieth for thee—and for . . . others——' Aeola stopped and stammered and I wondered who the others might be.

'I asked her, should I fetch thee,' Aeola went on hurriedly, 'but she answered not. There is none come to her bedside. The lady Vitellia is abroad, and there is none other. No one has been near her these three days.'

At that, I would not wait to crave Julia's permission but caught Aeola's hand and together we ran down the steps and through the courtyard. We met one of the table-stewards—Crispus was his name.

'When Julia calls for me,' I said, stopping him for a moment, 'tell her that Nyria, too, claims the Saturnalian right, and is gone. But that she will return.'

He called after me—the man was wont to make fun of me——

'So little stay-at-home has found wings!' he said. 'Does Stephanus send for thee? Who is his messenger?'

And he caught Aeola's veil that she had wound round her head and tried to look beneath it. But I pulled her away and bade her run.

Crispus laughed but did not follow us.

At the great gate I stopped. 'Art thou afraid to go down into the city alone?' I asked Aeola.

'Nay—and yea. . . . Why?'

'Dost thou know the house of Stephanus?'

'Yes, I know where he lives,' she answered.

'Go then,' I said. 'Tell him that Nyria needs him at the villa of Paulinus on the Cœlian where Valeria lies sick with fever. And if he be not there, remain till he come.'

'But, Nyria'—Aeola hesitated and blushed—'how can I stay in the house of Stephanus—now at night? That is not well——'

'Valeria will not be well if thou dost not do this. It is for thou or I—and since Valeria needs me, it must be thou. No scandal can touch thee, Aeola, for waiting at the house of Stephanus, since all Rome knows that it is Nyria he loves. So prate no more, but go.'

I did not mind speaking plainly like that to Aeola, but I wondered afterwards how I could have said it, for I was not one to speak of Stephanus's caring for me.

But I had not time to think of anything but Valeria, and on I ran. We parted just below the Aventine, where the narrow winding street goes down between the houses to the Forum—it is a shorter way than the main road—and I ran along the wide upper road to the Cœlian."

CHAPTER VI

Nyria Claims the Saturnalia

Nyria tells how, having sent Aeola for Stephanus, she goes alone up the Cœlian hill, then how, by turns, the three tend Valeria during the night.

Nyria: "It was very dark on the hill. But where the big villas stood there were torches stuck on the gate-posts, and between the villas along the road were also torches on high posts. . . . Thou knowest, that was a thing Domitian had done which was very good for Rome.[1]

Down in the street the houses were badly lighted, but among the dwellings of great folk things were better managed. It had been settled by Domitian that each big house should have its own torches and then, I think, a certain number of those living near paid for the ones which came between, so that when I got on to the lower Cœlian the road was not really dark.

The Aventine was not so well lighted, because after you passed Julia's house there were not so many of note. For there was but one road to the temple and Domitian said that the priests could look after it themselves. That was what I heard. Then the frontage of Julia's house took up a great deal of space, and we were supposed to have torches at each of the entrances. But, besides, when she gave a dinner-party or upon any great occasion, Julia had torches stuck in sconces every two or three yards along the walls.

But again the road became dark before I drew near the villa of Paulinus on the upper Cœlian.[2]

Thou knowest it was in the curve at the bend of the hill near the top, and there were no other houses just near it—I think there was one right on the top of the hill where somebody lived, but I can't remember just now to whom it belonged.[3]

Paulinus's house was almost in darkness. Aeola had only left the hanging lamp alight at the big entrance near the outer door, but I went round to the side gate, for I knew that way to Valeria's rooms and ran towards them. I remember that I stumbled and hurt my foot against a bit of stone coping that jutted out, but I was too frightened for Valeria to stop to think of it even though my foot bled greatly, as I saw afterwards, and I had naught to bandage it.

But now I went in. Aeola had put a little shell with a burning wick upon the step, but the outer room was dark.

I was not sure then how Valeria's bedroom lay and there was no means of making a light. So I went across very slowly. All the time, I left a bloody footmark on the floor, but that I knew not.

[1] The Roman Torch. See Appendix 29, Bk. II.

[2] For verification of the Valerian villa, see Appendix 30, Bk. II.

[3] This villa was no doubt on the site of what subsequently became the Lateran palace, and dates back even further than the Domus Valeriorum. See Appendix 31, Bk. II.

There was a glimmer of light somewhere beyond and I went towards that. Then I heard a low moaning sound. It was not like Valeria's voice, and for a moment I stood still quite frightened and listening. Now, it came again, and I knew it was Valeria, for I heard her call my name twice. . . . And then, 'Oh, why doth she not come? . . . Why am I here all alone? Why doth no one come?' And then she asked for water till it made my heart ache. I went through the room. There was an archway with curtains, and when I opened these I saw her bedroom beyond through a little ante-chamber. I went in, it was lighted, and Aeola must have had hard work, for the room was orderly and neat and all that Valeria could need stood upon a tripod near her bed. There was fruit, but it looked bruised and shrivelled, and I saw that the ice had melted, and when I touched the water it seemed hot, but not so hot as Valeria herself.

'I am come,' I said. 'Domina, Nyria is here.' But she did not know me. She looked strangely at me and then said quite sharply:

'If they had sent for Nyria, she would have come.'

I did not stop to talk, but held the cup to her lips which were burning and her poor hands nearly scorched mine as they touched me. Then I wiped some of the grapes and gave them to her. She took one, but lay back again and I waited hoping Stephanus would come. I wanted to do several things but I did not like to leave Valeria. She lay very still with her head back on the embroidered flax of the pillow—all her bed was beautiful—and stared—so strangely. Her eyes were large and shining, but she did not seem to see me. Only when I moved about, her look followed me.

'Why doth no one send for Nyria?' she said: and then turned her head aside and lay quite quietly, seeming to think. But Aeola was a long time coming: and I wished very much that someone else had been there. Presently, she grew restless and began muttering and then her hands set to pick and pull at the embroidered coverlet. 'Is there no one whom I can trust?' she cried. 'No, not one. I have none. But Nyria could be trusted. I want Nyria. Why doth not someone send for Nyria?'

It hurt me to hear her. I went across and knelt down by her and took her poor hands and tried to still them.

'Nyria hath come, Domina,' I said. 'Nyria is here.'

She looked at me for a minute and then she turned her head away. 'You are a good girl,' she said. 'I am sure you mean to please me, and I have not always been kind to you. But I want Nyria.'

Then I saw it was no use trying to explain, and I drew back and crept across to the outer door to listen till someone came. But it seemed to be a long, long while. I wanted to get fresh snow, but I dared not leave her though I knew where that would be kept. But I was afraid to go lest she called me. So I could only wait.

I went back once or twice, and straightened the bed. I took the coverlet off her and, when I saw she was not sleeping and tried to comb back some of her hair, for it made her so hot, she caught my hand and held it to her face: then she said 'Dearest,' in such a sweet low voice.

I started, for I could not think she meant me. But she said it again and murmured, 'Oh, stay with me. Do not leave me.'

'Domina, Nyria will not leave thee,' I answered. But when I bent over her I saw again that she was wandering, and then a thought went through me that seemed to fill me with shame, for I did not want others to hear her cry for a man who was not her husband.

I remembered what Aeola had said about 'others.' I felt that Aeola would not betray her, but I longed for Stephanus to come. I could trust Stephanus, though, maybe, Valeria would not have done so.

When I was going across the room again, to watch at the outer door, I heard a stir behind me and looking back I saw Valeria had risen. She was half-sitting, half-leaning. Her hair was all about her shoulders and her hands were clasped upon her bosom. Then she threw them out and tried to rise upon her feet, with a look in her face that was beautiful and yet so sad that it made me full of pity.

'Marcus,' she called quite loudly, and her voice was clear. 'Come back to me. Oh, why wilt thou leave me when thou knowest that I need only thee? Leave me not, Marcus, or if go thou must, why then, take me with thee.'

I heard all those words because she spoke so clearly, but as she struggled to rise, weakness overcame her and she fell against the bed.

I ran back and tried to raise her. I was stronger than thou mightst think, for I was practised in weights seeing that Julia was a heavy woman.

But Valeria though thin—and she was very thin now—was strangely heavy, and I struggled with her, for she dropped back like a dead weight in my arms, and just then I heard a stir and looked up. I saw someone through the door and Aeola cried in a whisper, 'Nyria,' and behind her there was a broad shadowy figure which I knew to be Stephanus.

'Help me,' I cried to Aeola. 'The Domina hath fainted,' and Aeola came running in, looking pale and frightened, with her long hair and her veil wet from the night dew. I saw that she must have been out in it for some time, and guessed that she had not waited in the house of Stephanus, but by the door.

Aeola tried to raise the Domina's head as I held my arms round her, but cried:

'I cannot do it. Let Stephanus come.'

So then I called him.

'The Domina hath fainted. Help us to lift her.'

He came right in and put down the things he carried, but he never said a word. Though Stephanus was a great talker, he never talked when there was anything to be done or anyone was ill. He raised the Domina in his arms and laid her on her bed, drawing the coverlet neatly round her, for Stephanus was gentle and deft as a woman. Then he took her wrist and held it.

'Now, Nyria,' he said, 'go fetch my things, and thou, little one' (to Aeola), 'bring ice—or snow—and bandages.'

I brought his wallet—a leathern one in which he carried his instruments and medicines—and watched him while he measured a few drops in a glass and forced them between Valeria's lips. Aeola stood half-frightened.

'Will Nyria not come with me?' she said. 'I am afeard. The ice-house is so dark; I cannot go alone.'

Stephanus just jerked his head towards me. 'Go with her,' he said. Stephanus was always short like that—even to me—at such times.

So Aeola took a swinging lamp and a large glass ladle and bowl. I carried these and she carried the lamp, and out we went and round the house down to the entrance of the snow-room.

That, thou knowest, has a door let into the ground. Down brick steps we went till we came to another door which was very stiff and heavy, and I wondered not that one so young as Aeola should mind coming alone.

The door was very thick and heavy, with great pieces of metal at the corners that stuck into its setting, and it would not open when Aeola pulled—so we set the lamp and bowl down and both pulled together. At last we tugged it open, and a great rush of cold air came out as we stepped within.

'Fix the door,' Aeola cried, 'lest it slam': and I put a block of wood to keep it, while Aeola went on, bearing the lamp in her hand. It cast strange shadows on the ceiling as she went towards the great stone vats where the snow was kept.

We had to be very quick, for no one was allowed to carry even a lamp long in the ice-room lest the ice or snow should melt. There was no ice at all left, but the snow seemed firm.

Aeola explained while she ladled it out, that a fresh supply of ice should have been ordered and that the ice-ships were then coming up the Tiber. But no order had been given, and when all the servants went away for the Saturnalia there had only been a very little left.

'How came they all to go away?' I questioned. 'Why did not the Domina plan to keep some?'

But Aeola pursed up her mouth and shook her shoulders and would not say.

'It was cruel of them,' I said. 'Surely one among so many might have waited and helped thee, Aeola?'

'The Domina would not ask them,' answered Aeola. 'And thou knowest, Nyria, no one is glad to give up his Saturnalia for nothing.'

'Except thou,' I answered.

'And thou, too,' she retorted.

Stephanus was cutting bandages and spreading them upon the bed and had laid the damp sheets around Valeria. Stephanus was skilled in fevers but, all the same, she lay like one dead. . . . He spread the snow between the bands of linen and wrapped it round her forehead and wrists and hands for the fever was very high, and he wanted to bring that down first. Then he asked Aeola for some milk and she ran to get it. Yet there was but a very little, for in Saturnalia time the milk-sellers, like everyone else, were apt to fail. But Aeola had kept a little that was pure and sweet.

"One of you must go down into the market to-morrow,' he said to Aeola, when he had made Valeria as comfortable as was possible.

My heart bled to see her looking so, yet I was glad that she did not speak before the others as she had done before me alone.

'Now,' said Stephanus to Aeola, 'thou must tell me how came this fever upon her and who has seen her in it. But do not look so frightened. It will be well with thy mistress if we can get the fever down.'

'I am not frightened now Nyria is here,' said Aeola, 'that is if Nyria will stay.'

I just nodded my head.

'Nyria will stay,' said Stephanus with a half-smile. 'But we have Julia to reckon with, little one, and thou must be brave and strong for much depends on thee, and thou canst not count on Nyria.'

'But she *can* count on me,' I answered. 'This is the Saturnalia, and I may claim some days at least of freedom.'

'During the other Saturnalias thou hast served thy mistress just the same,' said Stephanus looking at me. 'Thou hast found another mistress, it seems. Pray the gods she be not as hard a one.'

'I do not leave Valeria while she needs me,' I answered. 'If I have to go back and tell Julia, I shall come again.'

'Well, well,' said Stephanus impatiently. 'But it is Aeola I must charge, and Aeola who can tell me most. How came this fever ?'

'Nay, I know not,' said Aeola shivering, and I saw that Aeola was bursting to speak more freely but shrank from disclosing aught concerning her mistress.

'Thou needst not mind telling Stephanus anything,' I said. 'Thou knowest I would die to serve Valeria, and Stephanus is my friend and——'

'And likewise must die to serve thy friend,' said Stephanus with a little laugh. 'Have faith in me, Aeola. Dost thou know aught that could have brought thy mistress to this pass ?'

'Nay, I think not,' said Aeola slowly. 'But I cannot tell. . . . Lately, it hath seemed that Valeria cared naught for anything but her own thoughts and—the visits of——'

I was about to put my hand before her mouth, but Stephanus thrust my arm down. 'Stay, Nyria. This is no time for secrets. Speak, Aeola—the visits of—whom ?'

'Marcus Licinius Sura,' replied Aeola, and covered her face with her veil. For Aeola was a modest maid and though young, she, as well as I, knew what such intimacies led to.

Stephanus answered not, but he went back to the bed and stood looking down in silence upon Valeria. Once he touched her temple with one finger.

'She is somewhat cooler,' he said, shaking his head. 'There hath been mind trouble here—as I thought. . . . What doctor hath visited her, Aeola ?'

'None,' said Aeola.

'None !' he answered in amaze.

'None at all, Stephanus. My mistress said no word, and how could I judge whom to send for ?'

'Truly, nay. And so thou thoughtst there was but one doctor in Rome and he Stephanus,' replied Stephanus patting her shoulder with a smile, for Stephanus must ever have his little joke when things were going well enough to give him time.

'I commend thy judgment, Aeola, but another doctor she must have, for it is not fitting that the wife of Paulinus should be attended only by one who is unregistered as I am. Hath the lady no relatives ?'

'None in Rome, I think,' Aeola answered. 'Paulinus is not returned from Egypt and the lady Vitellia is absent also.'

'The lady Vitellia—so . . . who is she ?' said Stephanus, putting his things together as he spoke.

'The Domina's sister,' answered Aeola—'wife of Valerius Asiaticus. Were she in Rome it would be well,' and Aeola gave a little sigh.

'Those not in Rome cannot serve her much. Is there no one of her family or friends,' asked Stephanus, 'who could be appealed to in this plight ?'

Aeola looked at me. . . . 'Nyria knoweth that though the Domina hath many friends in Rome, none are like to be of service now.'

'Friends !' repeated Stephanus, 'and thou callest them friends ! But no matter, if there be none to appeal to, then must we do our best. When does Paulinus return ?'

'I know not,' answered Aeola. 'My mistress never speaketh of him, but 'tis said . . .'

'Ay—go on,' said Stephanus. ''Tis said—what ?'

Aeola blushed and hung her head and murmured, 'that she looketh not for his return.' . . . I pressed her hand and whispered, 'Never mind,

Aeola. Stephanus needeth to know. Else how can he judge what is best to do? And we may trust Stephanus.'

I looked at Stephanus and felt proud, for I knew that when he saw I trusted him nothing would make Stephanus unworthy of that trust. Truly he is a good man and a kindly one. He sat him down for a moment and thought.

'To-night we must do as we are, Nyria; wilt thou remain?'

'Assuredly, I will stay,' I answered, 'till the dawn—or till such time as it seemeth needful. Thou knowest, Stephanus, at the Saturnalia we may do as we will, and even Julia hath no claim upon me now.'

'Ay, but Julia will make thee pay for thy liberty, poor little maid,' he answered. 'And such liberty! But do as thou wilt, if that be so, I will go home towards the dawn and fetch such things as be needful, and leave a written message for Denarmid' (the boy who helped him). 'Then I must see who is of best repute in Rome to attend the Most Noble Valeria. But she will be very weak and need nourishment. Thou must be prepared for that, Aeola. One of you must go down into the market to-morrow and buy such things as I shall order.

'Ye two can sleep in turn to-night,' he said. 'I shall lie outside within call and will look in once or twice, so that even if Aeola sleep at her watch it matters not, and she may have to be alone to-morrow night if Julia keepeth thee. And in the Saturnalia it is hard to hire even a watcher. All Rome is off its head.'

'I shall be here,' I answered, and Aeola saying 'I will find thee a rug, good Stephanus,' ran off. Then Stephanus turned to me and came closer.

'Now thou hast a spirit that I like, Nyria,' he said. 'But why keep it only for such cause as this? Dost thou not think, my dear, that if thou wast to hold thus loyally to poor friend Stephanus as well as to yonder noble lady, it would be kinder to him and better far for thyself?'

'I do hold to thee, Stephanus,' I said, putting my hands in his as he held them out, 'thou knowest it. Thou art the best of friends.' And I bent my face down to his hands, for I loved Stephanus very much just then.

'Then, Nyria, give me something of a reward,' he made answer. 'See, we are alone, and if Stephanus hath done his best to serve thee, let thy lips reward him.'

I looked up and saw that his face was all flushed and trembling, yet still I liked him because he had been good, and I made as though I would kiss him. But he drew back and held my hands very tightly, looking full in my face with such a strange look of yearning tenderness, and yet as though he would not hurt me.

'Nay, I need no lips of a saint to kiss,' he answered, 'nor yet of'—it was a Greek word he said—I have forgotten, but I mind me it meant—of a spirit of the air. 'Thou art sweet in every shape, Nyria, but sweetest far as the woman thou dost not know thyself to be.'

I laughed. 'Now if thou wilt have none of my kisses, Stephanus, thou canst not complain. Never say I would not offer thee one. . . .' And I drew away from him. But he made as though he would have caught me again, only just then Aeola cried softly from the doorway:

'I have brought a warm——' she said a word I cannot remember for a plaided quilt—'from Paulinus's rooms.'

Stephanus thanked her and said, 'Get thee now to thy slumbers, Aeola,

and let Nyria watch the first hour or so, for she must sleep a little before the dawn.'

And Stephanus strode off carrying the bundle with him. I could not help thinking well of him as I sat beside Valeria's bed.

She seemed to have fallen into a slumber. Only once I moved the snow bandages and changed them for others, as Stephanus had bidden me, and once, when she seemed wakeful, I gave her milk to drink, and she turned over and soon went to sleep again. But though she had opened her eyes and looked at me, I saw she did not know who it was that tended her. I sat very still and looked round the room. The violet and silver curtains were drawn over the archway at the end and I wondered what lay behind them. Thou knowest it was not till later that I learned the secret of that shrine wherein sat the marble divinity with flowers set and lights burning, whom Valeria in her heart did worship. . . .

Nor, methinks, had Aeola knowledge concerning that Greek goddess, for, by command of her lady, she said, no one might lift those curtains nor enter therein save the Domina herself.

And now, as I looked at the alcove, methought that mayhap Valeria kept the place for a private study in which she wrote her strange fancies. . . . For Valeria made scorn of the gods of Rome.

I was very glad that the Domina had not betrayed herself before the others in her talk of 'Marcus.' I knew that Aeola must already have heard somewhat and I was sure that I could trust Stephanus, nevertheless I did not want her to speak thus openly in their hearing.

She looked very ill as she lay there. The shaded lamp hanging above, a little to one side, cast shadows on her face and there were deep dark circles round her eyes and mouth. The corner of her nose looked blue and pinched, and every now and then her forehead would twitch, or her hand, and I could not bear to see it. I wanted to help her and there seemed nothing that I could do.

I let Aeola sleep as long as I could. Twice Stephanus came in and just glanced at Valeria. He went away again directly, though the second time he pointed to Aeola as though he thought I should awake her. But I would not. I remembered that Julia did not get up early, and it was useless my going down there too soon.

Then when at last I got up and was shaking my dress and preparing myself to lie down where Aeola lay, I suddenly saw Julia's embroidered handkerchief fall out of my sleeve wherein I had tucked it the night before as I ran up the hill.

'Julia will chastise me,' I thought, 'if she knows I have taken it,' for Julia was ever one to suppose the hardest of her slaves. Yet she could but scold me for not bringing it back to her. So I laid me down to sleep and it was late when I awoke.

'Stephanus hath but just gone,' said Aeola. 'He would not have thee disturbed. I was to tell thee that he will return as soon as may be with the best doctor he can get. . . . Oh, if thou canst come back to me, Nyria, thou wilt ?'

'Of course I will come,' I answered. 'I would not leave thee, but it is right that I should tell Julia.'

'Thou wilt not let her keep thee ?' asked Aeola.

'She cannot,' I answered proudly.

All the same, I expected to have trouble, but I would not tell Aeola so. 'Thou art not afraid to be left ?' I asked.

'Nay—not now, by daylight: and Stephanus will be back soon. Stephanus loveth thee very dearly,' said Aeola gently. 'But thou dost not love him, Nyria ?'

'Nay, what is love ?' I answered. 'Methinks I love Stephanus, but he is not satisfied. We are over young, thou and I, Aeola, to talk of love and over busy too, meseems.' And I kissed Aeola and betook me on my way to the house of Julia."

CHAPTER VII

The Whipping-Post

Nyria tells of how she goes back to claim the Saturnalia from Julia: and of how Julia in her wrath orders that she be beaten at the whipping-post by Balbus Plautius, the Public Whipper of slaves.

Nyria: I went down the hill as quickly as I could. I was divided between hoping that Julia might be still sleeping, so that I could get in unobserved and prepare for her robing, and the hope that she might be up so that thus I need not be so long away. But the Most Noble was awake and sitting up upon her couch. Very red and big she looked, with all her hair ruffled and her sleepy face angry. She heard me moving in the dressing-room and called out to know who it was.

'Tis Nyria, Most Noble,' I answered and entering made my obeisance.

She raised herself then and sat forward leaning on her hands. 'So, thou runaway, thou hast returned! And what hast thou to say for thyself?'

'Most Noble, it is the Saturnalia,' I answered.

'And what has that to do with thee?'

'I am a slave,' I answered, putting my hands again to my forehead. 'I render the service of a slave and as such I claim a slave's dues.'

Julia was so angry that she could not answer for a minute. Then she broke forth:

'So that is what thou hast to say. Dost realise that thou art lower than the least of my slaves: and by no means entitled to their privileges? Thou foreign brat, bought as a babe and tended at my trouble and expense! Is this the return thou wouldst make?'

'Most Noble, I have endeavoured to serve thee faithfully,' I answered humbly. 'But . . .' I stopped. I was about to say: 'One came to summon me last night—and I thought of naught else.' But I feared to betray Aeola lest Julia's vengeance should overtake her.

'But what?' repeated Julia crossly. 'There be nothing thou canst say to make me think less ill of thee, Nyria.'

'Then, Most Noble, I will not seek to try, for time presses and I came but to tell thee that for the rest of the Saturnalia, Nyria's services are needed elsewhere.'

'Nyria—my slave! Her services needed elsewhere! How darest thou speak so? I forbid thee, girl. Dost thou hear? I forbid thee to leave this house. Hearest thou?' she repeated petulantly, as I made no answer.

'I hear, Most Noble. Nevertheless, the custom of the Saturnalia is on Nyria's side. I have ever served thee, as I said, and claimed no due. This time—oh, this time, Most Noble, let me go.'

Julia fell back and laughed.

'A pretty way to sue,' she cried. 'First to defy me and then, finding that

fail, to humbly pray thy due—thy due indeed? Go, get ready the bath, girl.'

'I go, Most Noble,' I answered: 'and I will attend thy robing as thou desirest. But it cannot be for long. I am called away. I have asked thee of thy favour to grant me that which is my right, but if thou wilt not, then Nyria must take it.'

Julia sprang out of bed and caught me by the shoulder. Her face was scarlet and her great limbs were shaking. She shook me violently and, as she did so, there dropped out from my sleeve the embroidered kerchief. She pounced upon it.

'What's this? What, hast thou been stealing, girl? My kerchief!' Then she swore by—I forget which god—'This is the cause of thy flitting,—to pilfer my goods.'

'Most Noble, I have taken nothing. The kerchief dropped because I secured it there last night when I was called away—the kerchief that thou didst send me for.'

'And why not have brought it if thou wert honest? A truce to such false excuses, Nyria. Thou shalt have twenty lashes for this. I keep no thieves in my household.'

'Most Noble'—my heart sank, for if Julia kept me to beat me, it would take so long, and, besides, I should be unfit to help Aeola. Twenty lashes made one bleed, though ten might only raise weals. And yet I would not stoop to ask her to let me off. Then I remembered that Bibbi was away during Saturnalia—and who was there to lash me? Maybe, it was but a threat which Julia could not carry out. I moved across the room and Julia picked up the kerchief herself and bade me hasten.

'Thou wilt not have much energy left for work when I have done with thee, girl. And methinks thou wilt think twice before thou goest forth holiday-making in such plight as thou wilt find thyself.'

I went on filling the vessels, bringing water and oil and setting out Julia's things, with my heart beating fast. Yet all the time, I felt that perhaps she would not be able to get the beating done. Of course, I could have thrown down whatever was in my hand and run away. Outside her gates, she could not touch me. But I did not want to do that, for it was like to go harder with me when I returned, and I thought that if I helped Julia to dress and did her hair very nicely, she would let me go.

But I did not yet know Julia. When she had had her bath and was partially dressed, with a silken wrapper round her shoulders, and her face had been done, the complexion tinted and her hair arranged, she suddenly bade me bring the bell that rang into the outer atrium where there were always more slaves waiting. It was a little silver thing which she struck—there were different bells for different things that she wanted, and the louder bells would carry further.

One of the men raised the curtain and made an obeisance. She asked him sharply who was in attendance and, firstly, whether Bibbi was there. He only shook his head and smiled. He was not one of Julia's men.

'It is the Saturnalia, lady.'

'Now may the Saturnalia perish and may all the gods wreak destruction upon these besotted holiday makers. Is there no one to do my bidding?'

'Crispus is here.' And he mentioned two or three others—they were all Sabinus's servants—the men who had waited the night before and one or two underlings.

'Who hath the strongest arm?'

The man turned back his sleeve and held out his own arm. It was brawny and muscular, covered with hair—unlike those of the Roman lords—and full of knots. He gazed proudly at it.

'My arm is strong, lady.'

'Good,' she answered. 'Go, whip me Nyria.'

I shrank behind her chair, for they looked at me in surprise.

'Nyria! lady!'

'Ay, Nyria, dolt. Did I not say so? She stole a handkerchief last night—one of my best from—I mind me not the name. Give her twenty lashes. 'Twill warm her blood and make her more attentive to her tasks and keep her, mayhap, from thieving any more.'

The man shook his head and turned back his sleeve slowly.

'Thy pardon, lady, but I whip not Nyria,' he answered, and a great thrill of joy went through me.

Julia turned upon him crossly. 'Did I not speak?'

'Ay, Most Noble, thou didst give me an order which no law of Rome can compel me to fulfil.'

Julia looked very angry. She began—bursting out with something, and then stopped short.

'Go, fetch me one less disobedient than thyself,' she said.

He made an obeisance, dropped the curtain and went away. But Julia would not let me out of her sight, and both she and I waited till he came back again. She was eager to have me whipped, I saw, and then I remembered that though she could not whip me for having run away during the Saturnalia, for that was my right if I chose to take it, yet she could have me whipped for stealing, for it was the law that twenty lashes might be given for a small offence of theft, and this was by favour of the master or mistress. For if she so chose, she could have me sent away and placed in the public prison to be kept until the law should deal with me.[1]

I guessed that Julia did not want to lose my services since she was alone and that, therefore, a whipping was more to her taste.

It doth seem a long time when one is waiting to be whipped.

Well, presently, Crispus came back again. I was sitting then cleaning some jewellery of Julia's—no, I was putting the room tidy—Julia sat in a chair—it did seem to me that she was not thinking of me half the time, but she was fanning herself, and when Julia fanned herself hard in that way it meant that she was very cross; she was a person who got hot quickly—yes, that was like Domitian, but I do not think he got hot in the same sort of way. Julia's heat was a kind of blood heat; she took fever very easily. Domitian would flush in his face when he really seemed to be quite cool in his body and in his manner.

But I was going to tell thee—I had to go about the room, and Julia watched me as though she feared I would slip away. She bade me push back the curtains between the bathroom and the room where she sat so that she could see me all the time, and when I wanted to empty things that should have been carried right out for the cleansing, she bade me set them near the door and wait her pleasure. I told thee why I did not run away. Now, I began to wish I had done so. For it seemed as though Julia were serious about whipping me. Then, presently, Crispus called at the door to know if he might

[1] Nyria is quite correct as to the regulations for the punishment of slaves. See Appendix 32, Bk. II.

speak to Julia and she bade me give him entrance. He made obeisance and then he said :

'Might it please the Most Noble'—but it did not please Julia at all—'there be none in the household who would deal chastisement to Nyria,' and Julia was affronted and asked whose slaves they were and by what right they refused her orders.

Crispus, methought, was about to make reply, but he seemed to change his mind and a kind of smile came over his mouth as he said that, 'it were best they should themselves reply on that point to the Most Noble.'

Then Julia stormed at him and said that it was he who had set the example of insubordination. But she dared not say much, for Crispus was a skilled servant in many ways, and one upon whom both she and Sabinus did depend.

Now Julia bade him summon the household—as many as there were—saying she would see them outside her own room. And Crispus made the obeisance and withdrew: and I looked round the room and wondered whether I dared make a dart for it. But methought I need not fear, seeing there were none to whip me.

So when Julia bade me spread her robe and stand behind her as she went to the steps by the window—I did so and smiled to myself, for it seemed to me that since these six slaves would lay no finger on me and slaves could not be hired nor pressed into service during the Saturnalia, Julia would have time to let her wrath evaporate.

But Julia cast her eye along the row of men as they stood before her and made the obeisance, and scornfully she spoke :

'Dogs,' she cried. 'By what right dare ye reject the orders of your mistress!'

And with one voice they cried :

'We are Sabinus's slaves,' and one more courageous than the rest, came forward and said :

'Oh, Most Noble, thou knowest that by the laws of Rome we obey him who hath bought us. He it is who is our master and whose commands we are compelled not to reject lest vengeance overtake us. But the Most Noble—Most Noble though she be—and the lady-wife of him whom we serve—has yet neither bought us nor is entitled to our service save at command of him who is our master.'

And thus he answered, feeling secure, for, I afterwards heard 'twas he who had attended Sabinus to the Senate House that morning and had received orders from his master to return home for that he himself would be detained till long past midday.

'Where is Sabinus?' Julia called. 'Fetch me him!'

Thou knowest it was ill-bred of a Roman lady to speak so of her husband and her lord. But Julia minced not small things and cared little for courtesies towards Sabinus.

Now, the man who had spoken and whom I had not thought to be in especial my friend answered that his lord was out, and he made excuses when Julia demanded again where Sabinus might be—for I saw that she had half a mind to send after him. But though the slaves knew where he was, they would not say.

So presently she folded her arms across her great breast, beating on her hip with the fan she carried.

'Think ye to oppose me?' said she. 'Nyria shall be whipped, and that before the sun has reached its highest point in heaven. Hast thou a mind to defy me further, or is there one of you who will seek me in the streets

or at——' She said the name of the office—and the name of a man whom I guessed not that she knew of—'twas one of the public whippers.

'It seems,' she said, 'that it he whom I need. Go, get me him. Or if he, too, be brain-sodden—and is keeping Saturnalia like the rest of mad Rome, send me hence the ablest to be found at the——,' she named a public office where slave-beaters were kept—I recall not the word.

Thou knowest, there are large offices in Rome where thou couldst procure any sort of person whom thou mightest need—a clerk or a secretary or a whipper—or one to take for the day any special office.

Now, these men were not slaves like oneself, but slaves of the Government and hired out. Their services had to be paid for, and I felt a dreadful pain in my heart when I knew that this shame of being exposed to a stranger, and of having the lash of the public whipper curling round my shoulders, was to fall upon me. I drew me back behind Julia—I did not mean at that moment to run away, because it seemed impossible, but I suppose Julia thought I did, for she turned round and pulled me forward and kept her hand upon me while she cried out:

'Am I to be obeyed in my own house, ye scum? Or will ye let this thief and liar escape? If thou dost, a ten times greater vengeance shall fall upon her once this cursed Saturnalia be over.'

And when she saw a shiver half of fear, half of indecision pass over the men, she cried out:

'Bring the ropes and bind her to the post.'"

After a pause, Nyria goes on:

"I would tell thee that the whipping of slaves was done after this fashion. We were beaten in the courtyard where there is a platform and a post to which we slaves were bound for the lashing. One could see the place from Julia's rooms. The more publicity the greater shame. And there the men were beaten as well as the women, so that by the marks at different heights which the ropes had worn on the wood thou couldst tell where a man or a woman had been bound.

Thou wert given a linen loin cloth to hold round the lower limbs, but yet the lashes came through. We were beaten round the shoulders and body to the ankles. Sometimes the beater would cry out that thou must hold up thy arms—for he is forbidden to lash the arms, neck or face. Then wouldst thou fasten thy garment with a pin and hold up thy arms. From ten lashes to fifty were given—thou couldst not have borne more than fifty, I generally got about fifteen—it depended on what I had done. Sometimes it was twenty or thirty. If Julia was out of temper one might be beaten every day, and that is worst of all, for, when the flesh is bruised or swollen, if a weal be lashed anew it becometh a sore. . . . To faint is nothing. . . . One is thankful to faint. . . .

Now, Crispus looked very black. He made a movement as though he would have stepped towards Julia, but two of the others, who were strangers to me, came forward hesitatingly and bent before her. Then one hastened to fetch the ropes and the other put out his hand to take me.

I had no mind to cower before Julia, but what I could not bear was the man touching me, so I shook my head and bade him let go. 'I will come with thee,' I said, 'if you layest no finger on me, but touch me and I'll bite and scratch like a wild cat.'

Julia heard and laughed. 'So, my pretty Nyria—my dainty well-dressed

waiting-maid! The great Domitian's darling! This is fitting language, verily. Out then, cat, as thou callest thyself, and let us see thy downy fur laid bare.'

So I went towards the whipping-post. I had to cross along beside the men, and Crispus looked at me as though he had half a mind to snatch me back. But since I had to go I would not cringe, and as Pheidias—that was the man's name—did not touch me, I was bound to follow him.

And then the other one came back with the rope and set to work to slip the noose round my ankles and wrists.

I could see that Julia was watching and that nothing escaped her, but presently Crispus crossed over before her eyes. 'Set those nooses slack,' he said, 'see they tighten not upon the maid's skin or I will have a mark on each of thine for every one thou makest upon her. Hounds!' he cried.

Then one of them said something about 'Fine words flying truly, since Julia called them dogs if they obeyed not orders, and Crispus said they were hounds if they did.'

'Curses on thy ready tongue and hand,' answered Crispus. 'Thou wouldst have done better to stand in the maid's place for disobedience than to chastise such a child.'

Then Julia called them sharply, and asked who was going for a whipper, and Pheidias bent low and said if it pleased the Most Noble he would go.

He had not been long in Sabinus's service and he did not know Julia and feared to disobey her. But I saw Crispus follow him as he crossed near where I stood and heard him say:

'The beaters are all out keeping Saturnalia like the rest of the world—if in truth the great god be not too high and wise to grant them pleasure at his festival. Curses on their calling! But mark, if thou dost bring other word than that, thou scurvy, bloody-fingered wretch, I'll have a lash off thy skin for every lash that leaves its line on Nyria.'

And Pheidias just shook himself and answered shortly, 'What can I do? A slave lives but to obey!'

'A slave is not the less a man,' answered Crispus, and Pheidias went away.

Julia got tired of watching, and, seeing I was safe at the post, she went indoors, and the others moved quietly away, though I could see them sitting in twos near the corner of the house and talking together as time went on. Crispus had gone towards the servants' huts and, by and by, he came with something in a little jar in one hand and a bigger jar and cup in the other.

I looked not at him at first, for mine eyes were turned towards the gate, wondering whether Pheidias would return with the whipper soon, or if salvation should come to me by other means, and wondering, too, what Valeria had done and how Aeola was getting on without me. I longed to know about Valeria.

Now, Crispus came close up to me.

'Art thou magnetised, Nyria?' he said, 'for, in truth, it seems to me that thou art in that sleep the conjurers cast upon birds and serpents when they would work their will upon them, and in very truth it would be better so. . . . 'Poor maid!' he exclaimed, and I turned and looked at him. 'Art very troubled, Nyria? Cheer thee, for if the scoundrel bring a lash I will cut off the half of it when he is not looking; and see, I have brought one of Mother Euphena's ointments which, if thou wilt rub it into thy skin, little one, will render thee hard and impervious to the pain. It is good, for I have

tried it. And thou knowest Mother Euphena, ugly old scarecrow though she be and hard upon thee at times, Nyria, like all the rest of the world, yet is she witch enough to be wise about her potions.'

I answered not a word and he set down what he carried and, removing the lid of the little jar, shewed it to me half full of Euphena's ointment. Then, with a small piece of wood, he took some ointment and put it on a large leaf and held it out to me. But I shook my head. He looked at me very kindly :

' Thou art stupefied, poor maid. Now all plagues rest upon that pest-spot's head. She is the devil's worst disease that he hath ever sent among men. Drink. See, I will give thee wine : it is that thou needest ' : and he poured from the bigger jar to the cup and held it to my lips, not seeming to care if Julia saw him. But I pushed it away.

' I am afeard thou hast put in a drug, Crispus ? ' I asked. For it was the custom among the slaves, if one knew he was going to be whipped, to drink some drugged wine or vinegar beforehand—or, if he could not get it himself, one who was a friend would bring it, for when the slaves were cut down from the post, they were generally too stupid with pain and too sore to move themselves and had to be carried or led. So, it mattered not if they seemed to be drunk, and the drug working would sometimes send sleep and so make them forget the pain.

But I did not want to be drugged, for I feared to lose my senses after it and I wanted to get away as soon as I could.

Crispus half smiled. He began to shake his head, but when I looked at him he stooped and answered me :

' Now I could almost say a plague on thy truth-loving nature, Nyria, for I cannot tell thee lies. Behold, there is but a grain or two in the bottom of the cup.'

I took the cup out of his hand and emptied it upon the ground and wiped it well with the edge of my garment. Then I held it out.

' Wilt thou spare me another cup, Crispus, and I will take it thankfully. But I need no drug.'

' Thou art a little fool, Nyria,' he answered. ' Why shouldst thou suffer more than need be ? '

' The pain of the lashes makes only my body suffer, but if I cut myself off from my soul, both I and it suffer sorely.'

I scarcely knew what I was saying, seeing that a sort of cold horror came over me. For, just then, I saw Pheidias re-enter and, with him, a great man shrouded in a long dark cloak—a very big man he was, and a corner of the cloak was folded crosswise over his head half concealing his face. He followed Pheidias to the steps of Julia's rooms and there made his obeisance.

Crispus snatched the cup from me. ' Hearten thyself, child, if thou canst,' he said. ' Crispus's hand has been powerless to save thee, but Crispus's sympathy is with thee. I had rather bear the brute's lashes on my own shoulders than that they should touch thine.'

' Thou art very good, Crispus,' I answered. ' I knew not that such a matter as this would be aught to thee.'

' Because a man is light of tongue and liketh to game when he hath leisure, didst thou think he had no heart ? But, see, thou hast not used the ointment, Nyria—Quick ! Dip thy fingers, spread it over thy breast and shoulders—or wilt thou let me ? '

I pushed it away. ' 'Tis too late. They would see it, and thou knowest, Crispus, my lot would but be fifty lashes instead of twenty.'

Julia stood upon the steps and spoke to the great man in the cloak. At her bidding, it seemed, he unwrapped himself and disclosed the whip he carried. It had a very long lash and in a pocket he wore there seemed to be several lengths which he could knot on if so desired.[1]

Julia was not satisfied with the whip and bade him take off the end and substitute a newer piece. The handles of such whips fitted the one inside the other, so that he could lengthen or shorten the handle as he wished. Then Julia bade him come to me and said she would herself count the lashes. Pheidias led him, and another man—a name like Euge—was called up also and they took their stand, either one at a short distance from me on either side. This was usual lest by any chance a slave should escape. But Crispus spoke to the Whipper who had come,

'Thou art—— [What was his name?—The first name began with a B and the second with a P—I think it was Plautius—Balbus Plautius] and thou hast chosen a profession well fitted to thy ancestry,' he said severely. 'Now I, Crispus Sabinus, am looking for my freedom which it hath been foretold me, shall shortly be mine. Having cultivated a good arm and a stout leg, it seemeth to me that the profession of gladiator might suit me better. Now thou knowest, good Plautius, a tussle with one such in the arena might happen to advance thy interests. Look to thy training, friend, for the day will come when Crispus shall be free to pay back with interest the lashes thou bestowest on yonder little maid.'

And that was the last thing I heard. Balbus Plautius took up his position, and then I felt the first lash curl. Thou knowest, when thou art whipped it is like the hissing of a serpent, and somewhat of the way a serpent springs. Though I had never had a serpent bite me, I should think the cutting of the lash hurt more, because the serpent's tooth would only make one small spot, but the lash makes a long quivering line. Still, it doth whizz round thy head and doth frighten thee in somewhat the same kind of way. I had folded my arms over my breast. We women always did that because it was agony if the lash cut one's bosom, and seeing that thy bosom was not exposed, of course, when thou wert in attendance, they were free to lash it. I had nothing on but my lower under-garment. The other things had been slit off—that was the dreadful part of it—because only men were there. Usually, women came and did it for thee at the last moment.

As I was trying to unfasten my dress, Pheidias and the other one came forward to help me. But I bade them stand back, I shook my head. I wanted to speak, but I could not. Then did Crispus turn on them.

'She is at the mercy of one brute. In the name of pity and justice, let her be free from more,' he cried.

But seeing that I could not manage my fastenings, he said: 'May I, Nyria?' quite gently.

Afterward, when I thought it all over, I was surprised at Crispus, because he always seemed just a merry roystering fellow who did his work well, and was clever and skilled with his fingers but troubled not himself at all at anything. And all the words he had ever had with me had been teasing or joking. Yet I let him help me. I did not so much mind his touching me, and then he drew back and I heard the lash whizz.

Thou knowest, it is quite a difficult thing to let fly the lash as it should be done, for it must not fall upon the upper part of a maid's shoulders nor

[1] For the whip used for the beating of slaves, and the barbarity of Roman mistresses in watching their punishment, see Appendix 33, Bk. II.

upon her face, nor should it fall upon her arms : and yet one was wont to protect oneself with one's arms, because it hurt less there and I hoped to save myself a little in that way. . . . Now, there came a long quivering pain all round me, and another . . . and another. . . . I felt sick—half with fright, I think, for I do not believe it hurt me so very much at first. . . . I did not seem to realise the pain. But it was the shame and fear of it. . . . And then I heard Julia call out :

' Hold, good Balbus.' Julia never forgot a name if she wanted the bearer of it to oblige her. Usually, she addressed other people's servants and often her own by the class they held instead of by their own names, but I think she called him Balbus, and I lifted up my head feeling dizzy and wondering whether she would bid him cease.

But that was not her thought. ' Twist that hair upon the brat's head,' she cried, ' and see those arms are raised. By what right doth the mean-spirited little witch keep them fast ? '

Shuddering, I tried to bind my hair and pile it up together. Crispus held out a little pointed piece of wood he had brought for the ointment and I pinned up my hair with that ; and then I stood and held up my arms and the lashes fell again. . . . They went on. . . . I forgot to count. . . . 'Twas like a dozen serpents at once, striking me. . . . I could not see the men for they stood a little behind me where Bibbi always stood, and I shut my eyes lest the lash should strike them and just stood and bore it. . . . And presently, I felt a curious stiffening all over me and a kind of singing in my ears. . . . I knew that it was the faintness and I was glad when that came. I had not cried out. I never did. I could endure. But twenty lashes was more than I was accustomed to, and when it got past twelve the pain became dreadful, for the lash did drive into thy sore flesh. At first thou didst seem just a standing bleeding thing scarce knowing what should hap. Then, so sharp was the agony, thou didst seem to be even more alive—and, afterward, as I said, the stiffening came and everything got horribly dark. . . . It was a very bright sunny day, and, though the weather was cold, standing in the sun so long waiting had made me feel sick before. Yet I loved the sun. . . . And now it seemed like something warm folding me round and, in a kind of way, holding me up. Then I felt as though I must drop into it, and when that black cloud came over the skins of my eyes, I opened them and saw the lash quivering just above my head against a purple sky. My face felt wet and I had a feeling as though the air was dropping blood. I think it must have been, because I was bleeding myself by that time. . . . And then across the courtyard I heard Julia's voice again calling out slowly the number of the lashes. I had heard her at first, but I had lost the sound of her voice in between. Now, it came back as if I were in a dream. . . . And then something seemed to slip from under me and I felt myself falling, falling, falling, surely a long way.

What really happened was that I must have dropped and as I fell, thou seest, being held up by the ropes, the ropes ran up against the broken flesh on my legs and arms and made the sores worse. Thou knowest, we did not have our wrists fastened together at the back. There was always a separate loop round each wrist, because we had to hold our arms up high. . . . Then I know not what befell. . . . When it was over—I think I had had all but the last two lashes—Julia went indoors and paid Balbus. But while she was gone to get the money, I suppose he came forward and wanted to help take me out of the ropes and said something about it being a sore pity.

But Crispus flew at him and snarled and bade him take his great hands away for that they had done enough of harm.

That was what Crispus told me afterwards: and that Balbus bent over me as I lay on the ground when Crispus was trying to slip off the nooses without hurting me, and he said:

'Had they told me 'twas for this job they might have got another to come. For Balbus Plautius is no butcher, and ''twas a butcher that they needed.'

But he went up and took the money, for that, thou knowest, was his living."

CHAPTER VIII

By Valeria's Bedside

Nyria tells of how, by the kindness of Crispus, she was carried in a litter up to the Valerian villa and of how the Domina Vitellia entrusted to her the nursing of Valeria: then of how Valeria in her delirium betrays her love for Licinius Sura and Vitellia is perturbed thereat.

Nyria: " When I came back to myself, the room was almost dark. There was a little window at the back, but the curtain was drawn over it leaving only a glimmer of light. Someone had stretched a piece of cloth on the floor and laid thereon a cup with a little wine in it and some pieces of light cake of a kind that we slaves used to make for ourselves. I looked around. But I was alone. The backs of my legs were very sore . . . and all down the sides of my thighs. I felt very sore, too, down my back—just below the shoulders, and there were two or three great cuts across the upper arms. I had on no garment, but someone had wrapped a soft white cloth round me. It was stained all over. They had put ointment on me, and the blood and ointment had marked the sheet.

As I was thinking what I would do, the curtain between the rooms was pushed aside and Crispus peeped through them. When he saw me sitting up, he came in. 'How art thou, Nyria?' he asked. 'Thou shouldst not struggle to sit up.'

'But I have to get about my business,' I said.

'A truce to thy business,' he answered. 'This is the Saturnalia. Dost thou not remember? And not even that she-beast Julia can make thee work.' Then he came close and kneeled down beside me. 'Thou hadst best have had some of the drugged wine, Nyria,' he said. 'For the gods have been hard upon thee, child. Drink this,' and he lifted a cup to me.

'It is not drugged?' I made answer before I sipped it.

'Nay—of what avail to drug thee now?' And at that I took a big draught, for I trusted Crispus.

'In truth no—it would not do to drug me now, for I must get upon my feet,' I said. 'I am ashamed before thee, Crispus,' and I tried to pull the sheet around me.

'Nay then, thou needst not be. For if Julia forgot thou art a woman, Crispus hath not forgotten it. Think not shame, child, for none hath looked on thee save these eyes of mine, and for once Crispus was blind.'

He was very kind and gentle and soothed me. 'Nay, friend, thou must suppose Crispus to be but a dotard without eyes or sense: and this, too, thou mayst remember, Nyria. I had a little sister once.'

It was the first time he had spoken of her, but I had heard that he had lost his little sister long ago and grieved sore after her, so I smiled at him and said, 'Well, then, I am grateful to thee, Crispus, but words will not pay and I

have naught else to do it with. Wilt leave me now? For I must robe myself and be gone.'

'Whither goest thou?' he asked rising upon his feet. 'Thou art not fit to enter on any fresh adventure, Nyria.'

'But I must,' I answered. 'Do not try to stay me, Crispus.'

'Since I cannot,' he answered, 'mayhap Stephanus could. I would have fetched him to thee, but I liked not to leave thee alone. Now, if thou needest a messenger, little one, tell me, for I will do thy bidding.'

'Nay, it is no messenger I need,' I answered. 'I go, Crispus, to the villa of Valeria, wife of Paulinus. She is sore smitten with the fever and hath but little Aeola—the youngest of her handmaidens—to tend her.'

'And that was where thou wast all night?' enquired Crispus.

'Yes, I stayed with Aeola. But Stephanus was there too: and Stephanus will be there to-night, he doth not neglect his patients. Though the noble Valeria is no patient of his,' I said, 'he came because Aeola and I sent for him, not knowing what else to do. Detain me not, Crispus.'

So Crispus went out, bidding me call him if I needed help. But first, he fetched a jar of water that he had warmed, and placed it in readiness for me with a pile of soft rag which he had routed from one of Euphena's cupboards, for he knew that it would hurt me sorely to stoop. And so it proved, for my dressing was a labour: and it hurt my shoulders much when I tried to draw my garments over them.

At last I had made as brave an effort as I could, and then I went out and called him. He sat upon the low mud wall outside and was smoking one of those queer curly pipes with herbs that some of them used to smoke.[1] It astonished me to see him, for it was not considered fitting for any slave who was about to tend his master or mistress to carry the breath of such an odour with him. But he answered me laughingly:

'Sabinus hath given me leave, Nyria. Now look not so afraid; Julia is not my mistress, remember. See, I will tie up thy arms for thee, child, and then I am coming with thee if go thou must: and behold, here are thy bearers coming, for it is a little noble lady who is going to visit the great Valeria.'

There was a litter being borne across the courtyard of a kind that tradespeople and suchlike folk hired on the outskirts of the Forum.

'What is this?' I asked.

'It is for thee. Those poor little limbs cannot bear thee up the Cœlian.'

'But how didst thou get it? And I have naught to repay thee with,' I answered.

'Sabinus advanced me a couple of sesterces, and that was enough. He is a good fellow, Sabinus, with a kindly heart and a gentle soul—fitter than to mate with that sharp-fanged she-wolf of his.'

They put down the litter and Crispus helped me into it and bade the bearers not to shake me when they raised it. It was my first ride in a litter since I was quite a little child, when sometimes I had been taken up by the wives of some of the slaves who had meant to be kind to me and would take me for a ride if they had a treat of one.

We went along, and as we were crossing the courtyard there came a message by Pheidias that Julia demanded my presence as soon as I was fit to

[1] It has been objected that there is no mention by writers of that period of smoking such as Nyria describes. I have been unable to find any, and it would be interesting to learn if such a record exists. (Ed.)

stand—to which Crispus, signing me to be silent, made answer. 'Tell the Most Noble that by grace of the gods who are kinder then men, Nyria is able to stand though not yet to work, therefore she attendeth the Saturnalia according to the law of the land and is now on her way to give thanks in the Temple.'

We did not talk much going up the hill, for I was tired and I wanted to keep all the strength I had for Aeola. The bearers put me down just outside the gates of Paulinus's villa, and then Crispus paid them and sent them off.

It was about sundown and there was a gleam of reddish light, I remember, but the shadows were beginning to fall. I was much later than I had said I would be, and I was afraid when I thought of how troubled Aeola might have felt.

'Thou wilt take this,' said Crispus lifting a package which he had brought with him. 'There is a little flask of wine and some bread and meat, Nyria, for though I doubt not Stephanus will see after thee, he may not chance to come just yet and thou wilt need food. Eat—and thou wilt feel stronger.

'I thank thee,' I answered. 'I thank thee very much, Crispus. Thou hast been a kind friend to me.'

'Wait—who is this ?' he answered as the gate in the wall opened.

It was Aeola who looked out—very small and frightened.

'Oh, Nyria, thou art come,' she cried when she saw me. 'I was wondering what had chanced to thee. The day hath seemed so long.'

'I was kept,' I answered. 'But thou shouldst not have left the Domina, Aeola. How is she ?'

'Sleeping—and there hath been a great doctor here. But she is not alone now. The lady Vitellia hath arrived.'

'The lady Vitellia !' But I thought she was absent from Rome.'

'She hath but returned to-day and came hither at once, knowing nothing of my lady's illness.'

Aeola clung to my arm and, seeing the face of Crispus suddenly over my shoulder, shrank back. Crispus smiled and I turned and spoke his name.

'This is Crispus, my very good friend, Aeola. Salute him, for were it not for his good aid I should not be here.'

Aeola blushed right up to the roots of her hair and saluted him as she would have saluted a lord.

'It was very kind of thee, sir,' said Aeola, and speaking in her little, low half-frightened voice.

'Nay, nay, thou art kind to me,' said Crispus. 'But thou wouldst be kinder still, sweet maiden, if thou didst not think me such an ogre.'

I thought Aeola would never have done blushing, so I pulled her arm and said, 'Come in, we must hasten. Thou canst thank Crispus another time—and, truly, we have much to thank him for.'

'One moment, Nyria,' called Crispus. 'I will be hither to-morrow about the fifth hour to learn how thou art and the lady thou befriendest. Perchance if thou art not free to come and speak to me, this maiden will.'

I nodded and said 'Yes,' that one of us would. And then we ran in, Aeola clinging to my hand.

'I told the lady Vitellia about thee,' Aeola said breathlessly, 'and she bade me bring thee to her when thou didst come. Enter, but tread softly, for Valeria sleeps.'

'It needeth not for thee to remind me,' I answered. 'Go, tell the lady Vitellia I have come and wait her pleasure.' I did not want to be taught

by Aeola how to be careful for Valeria, and I waited till Vitellia should summon me, though my heart craved for Valeria.

Vitellia came into the outer room to speak to me and when she saw that I moved with pain and difficulty, she asked me what had chanced. Then was I covered with confusion.

'Hast been in trouble, child?' she asked.

I answered meekly that I had been under correction and, as I stood near her, she drew my garment aside and glanced at some of the marks.

'Nay, thou mayst have been in fault, but others have erred likewise,' she said in that gentle, severe voice of hers. 'Aeola tells me thou didst come hither last night and share her watch over my poor sister who fares but ill, I fear.'

'Ay, lady,' I answered and waited meekly.

'Thou art of Sabinus's household?'

'Julia is my mistress,' I answered.

'Julia! ah, yes. That accounteth for it,' she said looking at me pityingly. 'And thou art the yellow-haired little damsel I have seen here before. Thou dost visit the Most Noble Valeria and bring her flowers. Is it not so, child?'

I answered that by the favour of Valeria this had been my privilege many times.'

'And Aeola telleth me thou art skilled in nursing? She is but a child. Art thou free to serve Valeria for a while, or will Julia demand thy presence?'

'It is the Saturnalia, lady,' I replied. 'I claimed my right and came last night, and by that right I have come again.'

'At a bitter price, I fear,' said she. 'Thou lookest more like to be upon a bed of sickness thyself. But listen, and I will tell thee what the doctor said.'

Then quoted she one—Aspergius—Aslargius—some name like that. 'He,' she said, 'is of repute in Rome, and was brought hither by one Stephanus who himself is not qualified, I find.'

'Stephanus is but the slaves' doctor, lady,' I answered. 'He is goldsmith and jeweller by profession, but hath studied medicine and surgery and knoweth much of these things.'

'So it doth seem, for Aslargius—methinks she said—spoke of him as one wasted in his own trade. But he is only a freedman and is not fitted to follow the much higher profession.'

I could but bow my head. I did not like her to speak slightingly of Stephanus, though I knew she did not mean it unkindly. Then she gave me the written list of directions that the great doctor had left. But I shook my head over it and nearly cried as I put it back into her hand.

'What troubleth thee?' she asked.

'I cannot read, lady,' I answered. 'If it will please thee to repeat to me the great doctor's words then Nyria will faithfully carry them out. But I am but a poor ignorant slave-girl and it hath not pleased the giver of wisdom to vouchsafe knowledge of letters to Nyria.'

'He hath given thee other knowledge,' she answered looking at me gravely, 'which, if I judge aright, hath stood and will yet stand thee in good stead. Come then, Nyria, I will read thee the doctor's directions,' and she read the paper over to me slowly while I committed the words to memory as I had been wont to with Stephanus's directions. 'Now tell me,' said she, 'What must thou do first?'

I answered her and repeated the directions so well that she stared at me in some surprise.

'Truly, if you canst not read with thine eyes, thy little mind is a book-scroll upon which one may write freely. To-night I shall myself stay with Valeria, but I must rest a while, for I have had a long journey, and now thou mayst take thy share. But do not exhaust thyself needlessly, for thou lookest not over strong and thou hast suffered much.'

I ventured to answer that it mattered not. I was there to serve Valeria and she should have faithful service.

And then making my obeisance I went into the inner room. Valeria lay stretched so motionless beneath the sheet that it seemed to me with a sudden terror that she lay dead. I moved swiftly across and stood at the foot of her couch, scarce daring to breathe. The shadows made her poor face sharp and unsightly and there was but the faintest motion of her breast. But still I saw that she lived, and my feeling of thankfulness was so great that for a moment it almost turned me faint again. It was then, I think, that I first wanted to pray. I would have liked to thank the gods and yet I could not think that they had known much about it.

I looked round swiftly for an altar—or at least an image before which I might light a lamp and place a vase of flowers, but there was naught. The violet curtains I told thee of hung closed and thick with silver fringe. Afterwards I found out that behind those curtains was the only goddess whom Valeria loved."

NYRIA (resuming): "I stayed beside Valeria the whole night. Aeola crept in once for a short time and asked me many questions, but only in a whisper, because Valeria slept. Aeola told me that she had served Vitellia. Vitellia had had some food sent in for herself, but she had brought none of her own waiting-women and had said that she might only stay a short time, for she would not remain long away from her husband, 'seeing that is the duty of a good wife,' she had said to Aeola. 'Methinks a good wife must have many duties,' said Aeola in her funny little way. 'But if one were loved it would not matter. . . .' And then she looked at me shyly wondering. . . . 'And what said to thee he whom thou callest Crispus? And who is Crispus,' she asked, gazing at me with her lips apart as one who would catch flies, and her eyes round and big. . . . 'Serveth he Julia?'

'Nay,' I answered. 'He serveth not Julia,' and I laughed, remembering how in the morning he had refused to serve her. ''Tis not his way to serve Julia when Julia's commands do not please him.'

'Ay, but he is courageous,' murmured Aeola. 'How dare he disobey? though, in truth, he seemeth a great lord himself.'

'Thou art a silly little fool, Aeola. Crispus is but Crispus—one of Sabinus's dressers. That is what he is, and serveth at the table since Sabinus liketh his wit and merry humour. 'Twas he who pulled our veils last night. Dost thou not remember?' and Aeola crimsoned. I saw that she remembered very well.

'That—that was Crispus! But he seemeth different this eve,' she answered. 'He was laughing at us then.'

'Ay, Crispus laughs at everything and everyone,' I answered, 'save folks that are in trouble. If thou wouldst win his favour, Aeola, pull a long face; be faint and weak and thus find the road to the heart of Crispus.'

Aeola looked at me still as though she thought I were laughing at her and glanced at Valeria's long mirror opposite. She put aside the short brown

curls that hung over her forehead and drew her little round face into solemn shape.

'My face is short,' she said, 'and round—I cannot pull it long. And there be naught ill with me.'

She stood before the mirror turning her small body, and then lifting her arms she pushed back the embroidered sleeves—for Valeria always dressed her maidens well, and liked them to wear soft bright colours. Aeola had on a rose-red robe bordered with white; 'twas simply made of muslin, I think, but it became her well, and the sleeves were wide and fell open from her little, thin girlish arms which were smaller even than mine. She turned to me and paused a moment and then said:

'Crispus would not look at me, thinkest thou, Nyria?'

'He looked at thee this eve,' I answered. 'But be silent, Aeola, or else go away. We must not talk while Valeria lieth sleeping. Hush thee and get to sleep, else Crispus would not like thy face with all the colour gone from it. . . .'

Then I stayed there watching. There was medicine to give Valeria and milk with some drops in it, and that roused her. She opened her eyes, but though she looked at me she seemed to see me not, till, as I was putting down the cup, she caught my hand and kissed it and murmured 'Marcus' soft and low.

It made my heart ache to hear her. For I knew that it was the name of Licinius Sura and that 'twas for him she craved.

I laid her gently down among the pillows and smoothed the coverlet and sat beside her whilst she held my hand, kissing it oft and cooing 'Marcus' and fondling it as though it were a child. Other words she said which I could not wholly catch, but they were all of tenderness. Then, suddenly, it seemed to me that this was unfitting, for I am but a slave, and though Valeria knew it not 'twas Nyria and no 'Marcus' to whom she thus spake.

So I withdrew my hand, whispering gently to her and trying to turn her into sleep. But, as I stepped away, her eyes rolled round on me with a stare that shewed they could not see me. And now, a strange strength came into her voice and she cried: 'Marcus, why art thou so unreasonable? Have I not given more than ever I gave before? Am I not wholly thine? What matters it then how one gives? There is none to share thy kingdom, for thou dost reign supreme in Valeria's heart.' Then, half raising herself, she clasped her hands before her and stared out across the room. . . . 'Marcus. . . . Beloved,' she cried again, 'come back to me, come back. Surely it is not thus that thou wouldst leave Valeria. Ah come,' she cried and her voice rose to a wail. 'Have I not said that I would go with thee?—That thy people shall be my people and that all thou dost desire shall be my desire? What care I for the status of a Roman matron? What care I for Paulinus? Is it because of him thou frettest thyself? Ah me! Dost thou know me so little, dear love! Bid me not see Paulinus again, and thy word is law. Command me as thou wilt, Marcus. Command me, for Valeria lives only to obey thee.'

All this and much more she said, sometimes speaking quickly, sometimes slowly, and dropping her voice into a cry that seemed to go right down into my soul. Oftentimes she raised it and her tone was full of pain. I stood there listening, not knowing how to silence her and scarcely daring to do anything, fearing lest I should perhaps awaken her to consciousness. I forgot she would not know that she had spoken thus to me, and while I

wondered and sorrowed at the sorrow that seemed to be filling her, I heard a soft tread and the movement of garments and Vitellia stood beside me.

At first, she heeded me not but stood there gazing at Valeria, her eyes large and dark and full of tears with a great and, as it seemed to me, a godly pity in them. Once she stepped swiftly to the head of the couch and re-arranged the clothes around Valeria. In doing so she laid her hand for a moment upon Valeria's mouth as though she longed to force her into silence. Then she turned to me and hesitated again as if she were not sure whether to speak.

I had drawn back into the shadow, waiting till she should notice me. At length she called me. 'Nyria. Thou hast nursed fever before ?'

'Ay, lady,' I answered.

'Thou knowest that many a one such as my poor sister prateth of matters that are of no moment, seeming to be distressed by that which is naught. 'Tis but a dream that disturbeth Valeria.' She paused and looked at me questioningly.

''Tis but a dream, lady,' I answered, and a swift sigh broke from Vitellia's lips. She seemed relieved. 'A dream,' she said, 'which might assail anyone —a madness of fever from which even one such as Valeria might not be free.'

I bowed my head. It needed not for me to speak. Yet knew I full well that Valeria's dream had shape in reality.

Vitellia looked at her very earnestly. Then she turned to me again. 'Thou art a sage little soul, Nyria, fit to be trusted, I feel sure. Remember, though oft one prateth of that which matters not, it is not seemly for a watcher to prate again of what she heareth or may chance to see in a sick room.'

Now this cut me. For I loved Valeria and I was not wont to be disloyal.

'Thou are a wise girl, I know,' said Vitellia again.

'I am Nyria, lady,' I answered, 'slaves speak not secrets—and if they did, who would listen ? Am I not a slave ?'

Vitellia seemed surprised at my answer. 'Thou art not Valeria's slave,' she said kindly. 'A slave should be loyal to her own mistress, but needeth not to be loyal to another.'

I held my hands out.

'I am Nyria,' I said again. 'I have naught but faithful service to render. My lips, like my hands, are at Valeria's service. I say no word that can injure her.'

'Nothing that thou couldst say could injure the lady Valeria,' replied Vitellia proudly. 'But gossip is rife in Rome and it is not well that the name of one so highly placed should be bandied about. But I will trust thee, Nyria.' She laid her hand on my shoulder as she went out, and seeing that I winced with the pain, for she had touched a sore, she added 'Poor child, thou art injured and needest rest. Thou shalt sleep at dawn, Nyria.' Then she went away.

I got some sleep towards morning because Aeola took my place. Later on in the day, Aeola had some sleep. We took it in turns all the time.

Vitellia saw the big doctor when he came and they questioned as to who should take care of Valeria. But there was a difficulty about hiring servants and Vitellia had not many of hers at hand. She could have spared one but the woman was exhausted with the journey, for they had come a long way. Yet Vitellia herself, though she was tired, seemed always a strong woman.

Aeola wept when Vitellia spoke of sending her from the room and prayed that she and I alone might wait upon Valeria.

I said nothing while Vitellia spoke to Aeola. I just stood quietly by, with my eyes upon the ground, waiting lest she should question me. I always felt that Vitellia trusted me. So when presently she said, 'Thou art not nervous, Nyria. Thinkest thou that thou canst give time and strength to help the Domina Valeria back to life?'

I was not surprised and I said: 'My time and strength are at the Domina Valeria's service, lady. Nyria asks nothing but to serve her.'

Then said Vitellia, 'That is well. The lady Valeria will reward thee after her own manner, I have no doubt. But save her life if thou canst—and careful nursing will do it, the doctor says—then will I see thou dost gain and not suffer, Nyria.'

'I need no gain, lady,' I answered, and making my obeisance again, I went from her presence back to Valeria while she talked a while with Aeola.

A messenger had come that morning to say that her lord Asiaticus was nearing the gates of Rome and would reach it that day. It was but for a short time that he was returning and Vitellia would not leave him. They would both be going away again before very long, Aeola told me; meanwhile, though Vitellia came every day to see her sister, she could not stay all the time.

Stephanus came up that morning, too, I remember, but when I would have taken him in at once to see Valeria he shook his head and said it was not for him to attend her now since the care of her had passed into other hands. But me he bade unrobe that he might see my wounds, and sorely did he curse and gnaw his beard and vow vengeance upon Julia. Crispus had found him the night before and told him the truth and Stephanus was at once sorry and very wroth. He swore all sorts of curses upon Julia, but seemed angry with me, too.

'For thou art but a fool to endure it,' he cried, 'seeing there is a good home waiting for thee and a hand strong enough to protect thee—ay, even against Julia herself.'

That made me cry a little, for I was feeling very stiff and sore and it hurt me that he should speak so. Then Stephanus bade me not blubber like a babe but act like a wise woman who knew her friends, and, seeing I sobbed the more, he was wroth against himself and kissed my wounds and said:

''Tis enough to bring madness on a man to see such wrong done. For though they sacrificed young things upon the altars of the gods, it seems that the gods are not satisfied but allow baser sacrifices in the privacy of the household.'

Stephanus went on binding my wounds and putting on fresh ointment. He had brought a flagon of wine with him and made me drink. ''Tis not so rich a brand, mayhap, as that of thy friend Crispus,' he cried. 'Since when hast thou drunk Crispus's wine, Nyria?'

'Since yesternoon,' I answered, 'when Crispus gave it me.'

He looked at me very sharply. Stephanus had a way of screwing up his eyes when he wanted to make out anything very particularly. 'Ay—he told me that. Thou dost not then take favours from Crispus, Nyria?'

'I took many yesterday,' I answered. ''Tis by favour of Crispus that I am alive, methinks.'

'Now that is untrue,' said Stephanus roughly. 'For though thou hast been whipped brutally, thou hast somewhat more stuff left in thee, Nyria,

than to die like a dog beneath the lash. But I would learn more of this Crispus. What doth he—following thee about thus ? '

' Kind things,' I answered. ' Else, it would not be Crispus. Abuse not my friend, Stephanus. If thou lovest me thou owest him much.'

' Are thy debts mine then, Nyria ? ' said Stephanus tenderly.

' Ay, if thou wilt help me bear them and wilt not scold me,' I answered sobbing.

' Nay, little one,' he said putting his arms round me very tenderly. ' The day will never dawn on which Stephanus will seek to scold thee. But it doth make his blood boil, Nyria, to think that another standeth closer to thee.'

' None standeth closer,' I answered. ' Thou art foolish to talk so, Stephanus. Crispus is but Sabinus's body-man and steward, and thou hast seen him often and knowest him as well as I. Dost thou not remember the story of Loyola, that little sister of his, and how she went from him and took half his heart too. Well—bend low, Stephanus, and I will whisper thee a secret. Methinks perchance there is a maid to whom, if he would give the other half, she would treasure it well.'

' 'Tis not Nyria,' said Stephanus looking hungrily into my face. ' Thine eyes are blue as the skies of Greece, child. Rome knows no skies like those. But let no lie be writ on them.'

' I lie not,' I answered. ' If thou wouldst use thine own eyes, Stephanus, methinks thou mightst discover the maid for thyself, for she is not a league hence. And now, if thou hast done binding me, I will go.'

Stephanus let me go and put together his ointments and his bandages and, seeing I had not drunk his wine, he was about to empty it angrily on the carpet. But I stayed him with a gesture and bade him water the ground outside. ' But if thou wast to ask me prettily and not seem so cross, Stephanus, perhaps I would pledge thee,' I said, drawing my robe up on my shoulder.

So then he held the cup out, and I quaffed, letting him keep it to my lips, but, as he drew the cup away he leaned forward quite suddenly and kissed my mouth all wet with the wine.

I said, ' That was rude, Stephanus, and I shall go.' Then he laughed and I saw he was not cross any more, so I crept to Valeria's door and listened. But she seemed to be silent. So I went with Stephanus to the terrace where Valeria used to sit and, there, standing upon the edge of it, was Aeola all laughing and blushing, and who should be below leaning on the step with his head just reaching to her shoulder, but Crispus.

' How now,' said Stephanus crossly. ' Here cometh that scoundrel courting as I thought. Now, if thou favourest him, Nyria ? '

' Hold thy peace,' I answered. ' Seest thou not he hath not eyes for thee or me ? '

Stephanus's mouth went into a large round O and he whistled softly.

' By Hecate ! ' he cried, ' 'Tis one thing to rob a man of his mistress and quite another thing to steal a child.' "

CHAPTER IX

The Lover of Valeria

Nyria tells of how Stephanus brought the doctor Archigenes and how the great doctor Symmachus also came to Valeria who lay betwixt life and death; and of how Marcus Licinius Sura wrote a letter to Valeria and charged Nyria with its delivery when Valeria should be better.

Nyria: "Valeria's fever increased. She was very ill, and for some days . . . I know not how long . . . it was as much as I could do to tend her, my own body being sore and my brain heavy after the beating.

Stephanus came up whenever he could. But I did not want him much, for it was not for Valeria that he came. By his bringing, a great doctor was now in attendance upon Valeria. . . . Aslargius, I think he was called.

Then one day Stephanus was had up to confer with this great doctor who knew not if Valeria would live or die. When I heard that, it made me sick of heart, and afterwards I questioned Stephanus upon what had been said between them.

Stephanus was puffing and seeming important, for I believe he was pleased that the great doctor desired his opinion. And when I asked him whether the great doctor had taken his advice and whether the new direction would be from him as well, Stephanus answered:

'Oh yes' . . . that the doctor had proposed one or two things, but that it was not much good proposing anything, because it was Valeria's mind which caused her sickness. . . . And I saw that Stephanus understood that which I knew already, though he had not heard her say those words which I had heard her speak in her wandering.

Then, when Valeria seemed to be worse instead of better, there came a second great doctor . . . he who was called Symmachus. He thought much of himself, and methinks he would not have met Stephanus had he known that Stephanus was but a goldsmith.

Now Symmachus wanted to let blood and Aslargius would have agreed, but Stephanus was never in favour of blood-letting. He was wont to say that there was too much blood let already in Rome from healthy people—meaning, I suppose, the slaves who were beaten—and that the letting of sick folks' blood would not appease the gods, who seemed to like a healthy stream.

But I do not believe Stephanus had made that up himself. More like, methinks, 'twas something Juvenal had said to him, for Juvenal was always growling about the ill-treatment of the people and Stephanus was not wont to say such clever things.

Now, thou knowest, had the word of both these great doctors been for the blood-letting that of Stephanus would have been of no account, but Aslargius would not go against him. He said Stephanus had shown much wisdom in

the beginning, though methinks Stephanus's wisdom was in sending for Aslargius—and he agreed with Stephanus that blood-letting weakened afterwards, and that a delicate woman who drank but little wine and was not full-blooded could ill spare what she had. Symmachus was wroth at first. But when Stephanus prescribed blisters for her feet and somewhat strong lotions to rub on the palms of her hands, which brought the fever down amazingly, Symmachus was fain to be content. . . ."

At this point there occurs an unforeseen interruption. Later, Nyria opens the conversation by correcting a former statement. . . .

"Now I mind me of somewhat I must say to thee. One thing I told thee was not right. The name of that doctor was not Aslargius. 'Twas Archimenes.[1] He was the second best doctor in Rome and in great favour with women. There was a bigger one who served about the court and was more skilled with men—they called him Celsus.[2] And one, Symmachus, who also saw Valeria, was likewise of high repute. But were a woman in ill plight, 'twas ever Archimenes that was sent for by reason of his soft tongue and gentle ways that gave every woman confidence. And though some said he let women cure themselves and never really did so himself, yet methinks that was not just. It was but his traducers who spoke in that way. For he had certain wisdom. And he was kind and pleasant to all—even to a slave like me.

Symmachus came not often, and I guessed he would not have come those times were it not that Valeria was wife to Paulinus, and Symmachus lived in a fine house and kept many slaves, for the keep of which long fees were needed.

Much of this Stephanus told me. 'Twas I that took Stephanus in that day when he arrived to meet the great Symmachus. . . . A lean, spare man was Symmachus with a peaky beard and narrow dark eyes which kept themselves almost shut and only opened wide with a sort of affronted look when one did not pay him sufficient due.

He looked not at me nor rose to greet Stephanus, at which both Stephanus and I were vexed. For, seeing that Stephanus came as a doctor, he was their equal for the visit. Now Archimenes seemed of a kinder nature.

Archimenes was a big man, broad, and wore his robes loose. He had a way of carrying pouches which contained powders or sweetmeats for little children. Not that he ever gave me any then, but I heard that when he was called in to some noble lady's house he had ever a bit of preserved fruit or sugared violet to lay upon the tongue of any little one who would not look at him. I liked Archimenes. He was kind to me. He had a kindly way of saying, 'Well, how are we to-day?' and he always seemed to draw me in: he never thrust me outside as though I were but a slave and, if Vitellia were not present, I remained in the room, or near by, at call.

Once, my robe slipped and shewed him that my shoulder was bound up. I saw him glance at it, and though he spake naught then, seeing that he was examining Valeria, he said to me afterwards:

'What have we here, little one?' and turned the sleeve back:

I looked, affrighted, at Vitellia, since for very shame I dared not say, and she made answer for me:

[1] Valeria's Doctor. Nyria made a mistake, which I corrected later, in one letter. The name was Archigenes. See Appendix 34, Bk. II. (Ed.)

[2] For Celsus and Symmachus, see Appendix 35, Bk. II.

'Nyria hath been in trouble, it was a painful matter, but she is better now. Art thou not, Nyria ?'

Then said I, 'Ay, lady, it is naught.'

But he was adjusting the bandage that had slipped and spoke to me kindly:

'There beats a brave heart in this small body, I am sure. Hast many stripes, such as these, my child ?'

I did not answer and he looked at Vitellia. But she shook her head, smiling:

'Nay, I know not. Nyria is proud and will not speak of what ails her. Moreover, she hath her own doctor.'

'So,' said Archimenes, 'and who is that ?'

'Stephanus, may it please thee, lord,' I answered. For Archimenes was a great man and it was right to speak to him humbly.

'Good Stephanus !' he answered. 'Thou couldst not have a better.'

Then he told me that Stephanus had bound me well, but that I must take care of the wrappings upon my arm, and, as I turned away, I heard him say to Vitellia:

'A slashing that was undeserved, I'll warrant, lady. I'd like to give the whipper a trouncing.'

'Alas, I fear the mouth that ordered and not the hand that whipped most needs rebuke,' Vitellia answered.

'Ay, that is so,' he said. ''Tis one of the crying shames of Rome.'

'Ah me !' said Vitellia sadly. 'Much of it, I fear, is greatly the fault of the women. In yonder poor child's household 'tis the mistress who rules and orders punishments, and in so inhuman a fashion as would make many a man—most certainly her own husband—shrink therefrom. If but the women had learned gentleness and held to their wifely duty, there would be less of trouble in Rome.'

Archimenes placed his hand upon his heart and made a courtly bow. 'Not so, lady. 'Tis unfair to over-blame the women. Were men less coarse and vindictive our women would not have the force of man's stronger nature to set them upon the same way.'

I liked Archimenes' talk and I knew why Stephanus had brought him—because he seemed to have a big heart and to be tender towards women, for this many Roman men were not.

And Stephanus himself was always soft-hearted over women nor could he have raised his finger against any woman unless it might have been Julia.

I went down to see Julia as soon as I could walk. Perhaps it was silly of me, for I knew she would be very angry. But I would have liked to attend upon her too, and I could have gone there twice a day for the dressing and still have sped up to help Aeola nurse Valeria. Now, I found that Julia had none to serve her save Euphena whom she had sent for and bribed with much gold. But Euphena could not dress hair properly and thou canst guess what a figure Julia looked. For Euphena remembered only the ways of her own country and she wanted to braid Julia's hair with coloured silk and to loop it low down over the ears. Julia let her do it once—so she told me—but when it was done, swore at the fright she looked, and would have slapped Euphena, had not Euphena laughed her to scorn, bidding her get another dresser and she would go and serve Domitia.

That was often Euphena's threat, and it seemed to make Julia more angry

than anything else—I know not why. She complained to me about Euphena and would have had me stay and serve her. She spake now in better temper because she wanted me to come, but when I said that I could only stay an hour, she grew angry again. Yet she let me wait upon her and do all that I could. Only when I said I was going, she slapped me over the shoulder with her hand-mirror—a great silver piece with a carved handle—and made my wound break out afresh. Nevertheless I went again for I could not help being sorry for Julia. No one served her for love, and Euphena, sitting in the sun and hugging her lean knees, said, when she saw me coming,

'Little fool, what dost thou here? Truly, if the fly hath escaped from the spider's web, he had best remain outside it. Else some day the spider will bite his neck and suck his blood.'

But I shook my head and laughed and said that if the spider were Julia then had she bitten me so often that a bite more or less mattered little; and I was grieved for her since none would serve her for love and she was, just now at least, without suitable service.

But Euphena mumbled: 'Gold she hath in plenty to pay her way to the grave. Beyond that, even thou canst not follow her.'

Truly, methought, if Euphena glowered after such fashion and talked of the grave to Julia's face, she was but a dismal companion. And yet Julia seemed to cling to Euphena and would not let her go.

'Thou art ungrateful, Nyria,' she said to me many times, 'since thou wilt leave me to the mercies of that black-skinned hag who talketh ever of death and the dungeon. How know I but that she will compass mine end some day?'

That was one evening when Julia was very fretful and seemed to be thinking miserable thoughts. Often she would sit for quite a long time doing nothing, saying nothing while I waited on her.

And now when she grumbled at Euphena, I said,

'Surely, the Most Noble need not distress herself. It is impossible to suppose that one placed so low as Euphena could wreak harm on one who hath so much as the great and mighty Julia.'

''Tis truth,' she answered, 'nevertheless the hag has dealings with witchcraft, and one never knows whither that may lead.' And Julia nodded her head and went on muttering to herself. Presently she spoke again just as I was leaving.

'Thou said'st wrong, Nyria, in prating that Julia hath all she doth desire. What woman hath?' And Julia arose and looked at her great, comely shape in the mirror. 'I am beautiful. Yes—and I have wit to lead me along a somewhat difficult road. Yet am I not the Augusta, neither have I, it seems, such service as that sour-faced jade thou adorest can claim.'

I knew she meant Valeria and that made me angry and, lest I answer rudely, I withdrew.

. . . . . .

Thus, while the Saturnalia lasted there were but Aeola and myself at the Coelian villa.

The Domina Vitellia was in her house on the Esquiline, where, if need were, we sought her. But that was not often, for every day she came to Valeria.

The Domina Vitellia's husband, Valerius Asiaticus, was a General and oft away with his soldiers at some distant place, whither she would sometimes go to be with him. Lately, he had had fighting, short and sharp, in which he

had been successful, and he was now come to Rome that he might see Cæsar and take directions for the government of the conquered peoples.

Now, in Rome it was said that Domitian preferred to keep Valerius outside the walls of the city. Yet he dared not to oppose him greatly because Cæsar feared Valerius Asiaticus.

So said Juvenal, of whose sayings I heard through Stephanus . . . and that 'twas for this reason Domitian feareth Valerius Asiaticus. Said Juvenal, 'Asiaticus though a bad man in many ways, hath much power over the soldiery, and seeing that the Prætorians guard Cæsar and that Domitian feeleth he is safe while they rally round him, he doth mistrust lest Asiaticus come to evil commerce with them. . . .'

Thou mayst ask why Domitian doth not order that Valerius Asiaticus be destroyed. But there would be a risk in that lest the legionaries should rise. 'Even now,' saith Juvenal, 'there is much disaffection and were the Prætorians to become dissatisfied Domitian's chances would be few, seeing that Valerius Asiaticus hath the ear of the soldiery and doth ever see that they are liberally supplied in food and pay.' I mind that I have not myself yet seen Valerius Asiaticus, but I know his figure, for Stephanus hath pictured him to me . . . a big man, broadly built, with a great square beard—and a thick thatch of hair and little twinkling eyes deep-set beneath low brows . . . reputed lazy in peace but bold as a lion when roused.

Yet did Stephanus laugh loudly once when I spoke of the fine qualities his wife Vitellia doth attribute to Asiaticus, making of him, it seemed to me, somewhat of a god—verily, on her showing, a most noble lord. Whereat Stephanus cried out in scorn :

'A noble lord ! I trow nobility is at a premium in Rome if this be the best she can shew. Why, Asiaticus is a coarser brute than I would have to tie my shoe-thong, Nyria. Skip thou out of sight should Valerius Asiaticus come by, for Domitian may be a brute, but a clever brute is he, and Asiaticus, save when he hath the smell of war in his nostrils, knoweth naught but of bestiality.' "

NYRIA (continuing) :

" And now I must tell thee of that which happened when I had been with Valeria it may have been two or three days.

It was one morning when I was sitting on the . . . I would I could mind me of that word . . . Loggia, it is not. Loggia means a small square place and this was wide like a terrace and half covered over—Porticus was a word which was used—that meant the covered space over a principal door —or window—they were the same because the windows opened in like doors. But this was another word. . . . It doth not really matter. Put what seemeth good to thee.[1]

Well, then, I sat there having had my midday meal. We had meals in different ways—one or other of us prepared them. A little soup, maybe, in a cauldron and a few pieces of meat in the stew or some floured cakes—but often Vitellia sent us food from her household—and there were other ways. Crispus brought many a basket of fruit decked round with leaves, and meat and olive cakes, but he brought them to Aeola. I thought that Stephanus had spoken too roughly to him for that he should care now to do aught for me. Yet Crispus only laughed and said I had a dog who shewed fight even more fiercely than Cerberus if one approached me.

[1] Nyria meant no doubt the Vestibulum. See Appendix 36, Bk. II.

And then after eating I fell a-drowsing—for mine had been the morning watch—Aeola had gone within and I loved to lay my head in the sun as thou knowest. . . . And through my sleep I heard a voice without, cry to me softly . . . calling a name that sounded to me as in a dream.

'Twas the name of a maid of old who had slept on through the years until a young and beauteous lord of rainbow-hued wings and shining presence came and awakened her with a kiss.

I had heard the story when I was little and played about the cabin-door—the Greek slaves told it me. And of how the shining god-prince had borne away the human maid to be his bride, and from the twain had sprung a great and god-like race that peopled Thessaly. . . . My domina loved the tale.[1] . . . Not long since, had I seen her in her marble chair and watched Licinius Sura at her feet on the stool whereon I was wont to sit, and had listened to his voice as he read her the tale. And when 'twas ended I turned me away again, they not knowing. And as I passed to the gate Gregorio's mocking words came to me :

' Thou seest—'tis not thee nor me she needeth. . . .'

And now, a second time, I heard the voice call that name. . . . I will try to give thee a sound like it. . . . Xidera . . . Xydra . . . it cometh back to me.

' Xydra ' was what the voice called—' Xydra sleeping ! Doth she wait the embrace of her rainbow-hued lord ? '

So then I sat up and rubbed my eyes and looked to see who spoke. 'Twas Marcus Licinius Sura . . . a comely figure . . . a shade too slender mayhap, for I—if I have a choice—like men to have strong muscles and stout limbs—somewhat as hath Stephanus—though I would not tell him so. This man was rather thin, his arms not so white and womanish as the arms of many a dandy in Rome, and his legs brown. His brows were drawn together in a dark narrow line, but his eyes gleamed plainly and a smile widened his mouth.

' Ah ! now I see 'tis no princess but the little watchdog maid. She whom they call Nyria.'

I got up then and made my obeisance.

' 'Tis Nyria, lord,' I answered.

' And what dost thou here ? ' he questioned. ' Has the Most Noble Valeria added to her staff of maidens, or did she see that there is but one faithful watching-maid in Rome and hence must steal or purchase thy services. For sure, it is the Saturnalia and such as thou should be dancing in the Campus Martius.'

For, during the Saturnalia this was given up to the slaves.

' I know not, lord,' I answered. ' While I am free I wait here upon the Most Noble Valeria, for she is sick.'

' Sick ! ' he answered and his brow darkened. ' Now that is not unlikely for I told her it would chance if she were not wise : and I trow,' he added mumbling as to himself, ' that wisdom and Valeria are not mates.'

I answered not, seeing that such speech was no concern of mine.

' What hath she, child ? Speak. In what way is Valeria sick ? '

' With the fever, may it please thee, lord,' I said.

' Now, in truth, it doth not please me,' he answered sharply. ' Thou art

[1] I have asked several students of Greek literature about the story of Xydra, and have been unable to find any confirmation of Nyria's version of " The Sleeping Beauty." (Ed.)

a poor little watch-dog or wouldst choose thy words better. The fever, in truth! . . . Is it serious? Who hath seen her?'

I gave him the names of the doctors, putting Stephanus first as was but meet, seeing that Stephanus had been the first to tend her.

'I know not this Stephanus,' he said. 'But Rome goes on apace and there may well be strangers. . . . A Greek by his name who has sprung into a prominence of which Licinius Sura in his hermit life knows not. As for Archigenes . . . 'tis but an old woman with a woman's faddish fears. Symmachus is better but he is not in charge here, thou sayest?'

'The lord Symmachus came twice or thrice,' I answered. Now it had been, I must tell thee, five or seven days since I had come, for there had been time for Symmachus to have been called.

'And by whose bidding?' he said. 'Who hath charge here seeing that Paulinus is away?'

'The lady Vitellia,' I made answer and told him of the coming of Valeria's sister.

His face changed. 'Well now, it is time for all who be not saints to pass without, for their room is better than their company to Vitellia,' he answered: and I wondered that he spoke so free to me. 'Is she within?' he said shortly.

I shook my head. 'Not so, lord. The lady Vitellia comes but once a day. More often towards evening.'

'Why, now, I wonder'—he said and paused. Then thrusting his hand into the pouch men wore at their belt he brought forth a handful of coin and selected therefrom one that I could not see. 'Say, child, thou hast service for gold pieces I warrant. Couldst spend one upon sweetmeats or gew-gaws in the lower streets?'

He held it out, but I shrank back. 'I am well supplied, lord,' I answered proudly. ''Tis to Julia's household I belong.' I was ever proud to say that, for Julia's household was of repute and though we were fed with blows there was no lack of other food.

'But now thou art not with Julia?' he said astonished.

'I serve the lady Valeria by special favour,' I answered, 'and I need no money for the serving.'

'Thou art different from the rest of thy sex,' he answered, coolly putting back his coin within the pouch.

'I'll rebuke thee not. Licinius is not so rich that he can spare coins to unwilling maids. But since thou wilt not accept what I offer perchance thou wouldst not deny me my request. I would see thy mistress. Wilt bear her this message—that Licinius waits without and craves her pleasure?'

I shook my head again sadly. 'Valeria knows naught of any man's pleasure,' I answered sadly. 'She sleeps a sleep nigh unto death and we may not disturb her.'

'How!' he exclaimed. 'Is there danger of death? Now by all the gods of Greece and Rome, 'tis ill chance. . . . Does she know naught?'

I nodded silently. 'Naught, my lord,' I said.

A sudden sickness seemed to seize him and he sat him down upon the step, turning his back to me and staring on the ground. For a while he said nothing. . . . Then, 'But yet she speaks at times, perchance?'

'Ay, fevered words, my lord.'

'And hath she said aught of me?'

'I know not, lord. She hath said much of one, Marcus.' And this I said

looking straight before me and thinking it were best to tell the truth, but wondering how he would take it.

For a while, he made no answer. Then he took his tablets and stilus from his vest and laid them on his knee.

'Nyria,' he said. 'If I should write a few words to Valeria—say, wouldst thou see she hath them when the fever leaves her?'

Now when he spoke thus, I felt as though I had come to a crossing of the ways. Two roads seemed to lie before me, each leading I knew not whither. But one would mean saying 'No' and the other 'Yes.' I hesitated. Yet I seemed to see again Valeria's pale, sharpened face upon the pillow as I had watched it through the night and heard the rambling, broken sentences fall from her lips.

'Twas not much to do—to give comfort to her whom I adored: and I answered 'Yes.'

He nodded gloomily. 'Sit thou there and wait. I will give thee the message when it is finished.'

I obeyed him, sitting silent in the sun as before, while his stilus travelled quickly over the waxed slips of ivory. Presently he folded them together.

'Nyria, hast thou a morsel of silk and somewhat by which I may seal this?'

I rose obediently. 'Ay, lord, I will fetch what thou requirest.' And then I brought the taper and a strand of violet silk from Valeria's embroidery basket. He looked at the silk as though he knew it and there came a gleam of tenderness to his face.

'Where didst get this, child,' he said gently.

So I told him.

'Ah, I thought so,' he answered, and bound the silk threads about the tablets, sealing them with Valeria's stem of violet wax, but his hand shook so that a drop fell on the edge.

'I want no prying eyes to read my missive,' he said, smiling a little as he lifted it. 'Dost understand, Nyria? Can I trust thee?'

'None ever said they could not, lord,' I answered.

'I believe thee,' he answered. 'Thou wilt guard it?'

'As Valeria's self,' I answered: and making my obeisance I withdrew.

He came again. Aeola was outside and saw him coming. But he spake not to her, saying to me in her hearing that he knew her for a little fool, which sore hurt Aeola.

Aeola was not very wise, but she tried hard to do her best and it was not kind nor seemly in a stranger lord to speak thus of her. Of me, Licinius questioned—'How is Valeria?' And then I told him that the fever had been high—that was since Stephanus had ceased giving advice—and though they attended her carefully and gave her drugs yet still she seemed sore troubled in her mind, and that, methought, was why she could not get well.

So I told him, there being no reason why I should not thus speak, seeing that he questioned me closely. So then he said with a smile:

'She needeth another doctor. See, little watchdog: ask Valeria when next she knows thee if she would not have the great doctor Marcus to her side.' And this he said laughing, but I saw that there was meaning in his words and I liked them not, for 'twas not seemly to joke of Valeria's state.

So then I was silent and he looked at me gravely and said he:

'I trust thee, maid. Is Marcus Licinius a fool therefore?'

I answered him, 'Lord, let them that have trusted me speak mine answer': and with that he seemed satisfied, but just as he was going away, a thought seemed to strike him, and back he came and laid hands upon my robe.

'Maiden,' he said, 'thou carest for Valeria? Is that not so?'

I answered, 'Yes, lord,' but I was not willing to mention my love for Valeria beside his.

'See then,' he answered, 'thou wouldst not withhold from her that which should make her well again?'

'Nay, lord,' I answered. 'That would I not do.'

'Whatever it were?' he questioned.

'Whatever it were,' I answered.

'Then when Valeria hath sense to know me, bid me to her bedside, and I will heal her': and with that he turned away, seeming not to need an answer. And well it was so, for I was in no mind to give one. My thoughts had strayed to Paulinus; seeing that he loved his lady I pitied him because she loved him not. And though I would not have had him nigh her, 'twas not fitting that a stranger should stand in his stead.

. . . . . .

Well then, the days went by and I know not what happened. It is all a mist to me—a mist full of pain and fear, for there were nights when Archigenes—ay and even Stephanus—stood by Valeria's bed and looked grave, and Archigenes was for sending a messenger to Egypt—the country where Paulinus was. But Stephanus being wiser, bade him pause.

'For,' said he, 'If Paulinus should come it might but hasten her end: and 'tis a long journey and who knoweth that the messenger, when he reach the spot, may not find Paulinus, who might have gone further. Time enough to send when there should be something more certain to tell.'

And Archigenes' after-thought seemed to agree with the thought of Stephanus. 'For in very truth,' said he, 'Paulinus cometh home to a wife—or to no wife—but his coming cannot keep her: and, gossip hath it, she doth not desire that he should come.' And this Archigenes said looking at Stephanus just to see what he might know. But Stephanus said little, for he could keep his teeth over his tongue if need were: and though Stephanus gossiped freely among his own kind, he was not one to speak of private matters with a doctor who was greater than he, since such idle chatter might bring him into evil notice. Stephanus was wont to say that he had a wise head upon his shoulders, though methinks he was not always so wise as he boasted.

But I was sore frightened seeing that Valeria was so ill, and nothing that they said comforted me, and I would not listen to Stephanus when he talked of love to me, for all my desire was towards Valeria. I kept me very close beside her till the end of the Saturnalia drew near and soon I should have to go back to Julia.

Once again Licinius prayed me to admit him, but I was not willing without Valeria's word.

'But she asketh for me,' he said.

'There is no meaning in her talk,' I answered. 'Wait. When she is well enough, if that ever be, she shall know of thy coming, and shall command thee herself.' So I sent him away and I wondered and I longed and wept sore, for my heart was very full: and the lady Vitellia seemed sad likewise. And Aeola would have wept for company had she not had her own happy moments

when she had been talking with Crispus—or so I guessed—at the gate. At first she told me everything he said. 'Twas idle talk, and I had not thought Crispus such a fool; it was as though Aeola had bewitched him. And, after a while, Aeola, when I questioned her, would shake her head with a merry smile or with a long long look like one that seeth heaven, and at times she said, 'such talk would not please thee'—which in truth it would not—or else that Crispus's sayings were but for her. And when I asked her did she not long to play ball or bones again, she would answer me as one who had grown to the height of all knowledge, that such things were for babes. At which I answered her 'Thou art old, Aeola! and thou wilt pass down into the grave before Nyria who hath learned nothing of these wondrous matters which seem to have added years and dignity to thee.'

And Aeola had but a smile or a sigh for answer and said,

'Thou too, Nyria, wilt learn these things some day.'"

CHAPTER X

The Voice on the Hill-side

Nyria tells of how, in deep sorrow, she went forth upon the hill-side and there met Bishop Clement: and of how Clement prayed with her for the life of Valeria: and of how their prayer was answered.

Nyria: "Now I knew that when the Saturnalia was over I should have to go back to Julia. 'Twas this thought which filled me with a fear that seemed to haunt me like a ghostly dream . . . the fear that I must leave Valeria in the hands of Death and that they might draw her whither I could not follow.

And in that time of sadness, one day towards sunset as I wandered upon the hill-side of which I have told thee, there came to me one who brought light into my darkness.

It was a day in winter as thou knowest, and the sky was grey with heavy clouds, and great patches of purple shadow lay upon the hills. I cared not for the spirits of dead men that so many of the Romans feared, though I had heard of this and that one's ghost passing down the streets and in and out among the shops urging one and another to do his bidding in some manner . . . maybe—were he a descendant—to perform some duty to the dead man's manes left unfulfilled. The Romans were weaklings in such matters though strong of arm and courage against fleshly enemies, and yet the fancied sight of somone's spirit was enough to send a pack of Prætorians flying with swift heels. And thou knowest that all the Romans prayed freely to their ancestors that they might sleep in peace. For me it mattered not since I prayed to none, either god or ghost. But I bethought me, as I breasted the hill that day, and saw the shadows fleeing hither and thither underneath the curtain of clouds, that I wandered amid a troop of ghosts. But my heart was too full of grief to be troubled by such fancies. I minded naught could I but leave Valeria strong and happy. Alas! well I knew that she had sorrow eating her heart: and as for Licinius Sura being a good doctor I warrant he had doctored her better had she never seen him.

I sat me down upon the hill-brow above the Quarries. Near by, was a brier-bush with a few leaves tinged red and brown left on it. I wondered then if that were like Valeria's life.

Once, the bush had been beautiful and had borne fruit and sunned itself and grown in strength. But it seemed to me that someone had come along and wantonly harmed the plant or, maybe, 'twas a goat which had trodden it down and torn it, and the poor brier-bush had not recovered from the hurt and needed sunshine to give it new life. And as I sat there, methinks the tears had gathered in my eyes and must have gone on falling down my face though I knew it not. I was thinking of Valeria. Often and often, had I wished that I too could go into a temple and offer sacrifices for her. But I had naught to bring, for I had no money to buy the birds or even fruit, and yet I would gladly have sacrificed my own blood if the pouring out

of its drops could have brought health to Valeria. And as I sat, somebody said to me: 'Why criest thou, little maid?'

Then I looked up and there stood before me one I had seen aforetime passing with Clemens and Domitilla. A great man, he seemed, though maybe not over tall yet great far beyond his stature. A grey cloak fell around him fastened by a jewel at the throat set in a quaint scroll-work of gold . . . simple but uncommon. I knew not who he might be, but I saw that beneath his cloak, he wore a garment with a purple border, and that may have been a sign of his being of high family. He had a flowing beard of brown, in which grey hairs were mingled, and large kindly eyes of melting blue. His nose was thin and somewhat high-bridged, large, too, withal, and giving to his face a look of dignity. His mouth was most gentle in repose and gentler when he smiled. His brow was broad and the brown hair, parted in the middle and thickly streaked with grey, fell downward upon his shoulders. At first he stood silent, his purple-bordered under-robe gathered in his arms and the long grey cloak falling to his sandalled feet. 'Why criest, little maid?' he said once more.

I rose then and to him I answered:

'Sir, I mourn for my lady who lieth sick unto death.'

With that, I covered my face with my hands and it seemed that I could not keep from crying, since the saying of it brought the truth nearer to my knowledge.

'And wouldst thou save her?' said he who spoke most kindly.

'Ay, would I not!' I answered. 'But that is not for Nyria to do seeing there are three great doctors who have done that which they could and so far failed.'

'And thou art Nyria?' said he.

'Ay, Nyria, sir,' I answered. 'I am but a slave.'

'And who is thy mistress, maiden?'

'Julia is my mistress, sir,' I said, 'but I weep for Valeria, wife of Paulinus.'

I was looking in his face and I saw a change come over it. 'Valeria,' he answered, 'what is she to thee?'

'My friend, if I may call her so, sir, seeing she is not my mistress and hath been wondrous kind.'

'Kind—to thee. . . .' And then he said: 'Now sit thee down, little maid, and let us talk awhile. It is Valeria thou sayest who lies sick unto death?'

I nodded, for I could not speak. He sat him down on the knoll beside me, and smiled so tenderly that it seemed as though he had known me always.

'It is Valeria whom thou wouldst save?'

'Sir,' I answered, 'I would give my life for her.'

'Thou needst not give thy life, maiden, nor is it thine to give. Give but thy heart to Him Who holdeth all in the hollow of His hand, and He perchance, shall save thee thy loved friend by reason of the love thou bearest her.'

'Who is this,' I answered. 'Ah! sir, tease me not. A poor maid with a breaking heart is not fit sport for gods or men; say, who is he who can save Valeria, and I will seek him. Liveth he in Rome?'

'Ay, in Rome. But not in Rome only. His habitation is higher than the heavens, for His glory is above them all and earth is His footstool.'

Methought he must be speaking of some emperor greater than Domitian, and though I knew that many rich and noble strangers came to Rome, yet it was not likely that I, a poor little slave, should know the names of all. 'Sir,' I said humbly, 'I know not of whom thou speakest.'

'Nay, but thou shalt know, Nyria,' he answered and searched my face so long, that I, humbly waiting till he spoke, could not utter a word. At length I said: 'Sir, canst thou do aught to save her?'

'Wouldst thou that I should try,' he answered.

I fell then on my knees before him and clasped the hem of his cloak in my hands.

'Oh, sir,' I said, 'I pray thee, trifle not with Nyria, for my whole soul would be small barter for the life of Valeria.'

He raised me most kindly and sat me again beside him.

'Hast thou ever prayed, Nyria?' he said, and his question confounded me. 'Sir, I know not to whom to pray else would I have prayed for Valeria. . . . But, the gods of Rome'—I paused, for I knew not of what faith he might be.

'Speak on, little maid, fear not,' he said. 'The gods of Rome—what dost thou think of them?'

'Sir, they help no man. They feed upon the sacrifices, mayhap,—or the priests do—'tis all the same. But of what benefit are they? One saith to me "Worship Apollo" and another "I worship only in the temple of Jupiter," and another "Bacchus" and another "Athene." But who are they—What do they? It cannot be that they can save Valeria, else why do they care nothing for the pain and sorrow with which Rome is filled?'

His hand held mine very closely. 'Child,' he said. 'Thou hast asked a question that many wiser minds have asked—ay, and will ask till the kingdom of heaven shall come among men. Alas! Sorrow and suffering there must be, for though goodness is eternal yet man is evil. Nevertheless shall Valeria be saved, for I will save her.'

'Oh, sir,' I said, scarce daring to breathe. 'And wilt thou—canst thou save her?'

Then said he, 'Wait here for me while I depart for a little while and am alone.' And, leaving me, he walked up to the hill-brow, and stood looking out into the sky.

His tall grey figure shewed dark against the pale light, but over in the west whither he faced, there grew a faint glow which spread and deepened into rose-red until a beam of it seemed to touch him like a shaft of flame, and he bowed his head and remained in silent commune with himself while I waited and wondered, all my thoughts full of Valeria and of him. Then back he came to me and standing before me he said: 'Rise, Nyria, for I would say somewhat to thee, and thou must ask thy heart to give me the true answer.'

'Sir, I always try to speak truly,' I said, and rose at his bidding.

'I know it, my child, but the truth is hard to know. Ask then thine own soul, Nyria. This that thou desirest—supposing it were to come upon thee in answer to thy desire that she whom thou lovest should regain all that illness has taken from her—and yet, if a new measure of life to her meant pain and suffering and sorrow to many and to thyself perhaps most of all—wouldst thou then still desire it?'

'Sir,' I answered, folding my hands upon my breast and looking up at him. 'Would Valeria be happy?'

'Ah, child, thou meanest would earthly happiness such as seemeth the crown of womanhood, be hers? Yes, that would be her portion in a measure and the after-measure of pain thou canst not save her if it come. For there be some things, Nyria, that are beyond the power of men to control, and the gift of life is most often one of them. But seeing thou hast centred thy soul

upon this thought, and hast lifted up thy heart's longings this many a day for Valeria, thy desire may be granted thee.'

'Sir, I care nothing for aught else save Valeria's well-being. Let her life be granted her and for happiness to myself I bargain not, I bear whatever comes.'

'Thou art . . . brave,' he said, 'and according to thy desire it shall be unto thee. . . . I ask thee, Nyria, hast thou ever prayed?'

'Nay, sir,' I answered. 'I know not how to pray.'

'And if thou wast in the presence of Cæsar—or of some great potentate and wert about to ask him for Valeria's life, how wouldst thou word thy prayer?'

'Sir, I should kneel at his feet,' I cried, casting myself down and spreading my hands to the skies. 'And I should say unto him: "Oh, good lord, thou in whose hands are all powers of life and death, seeing it be thy will to grant or to take from us, I beseech thee listen to Nyria and bestow upon her who so sorely needeth thy favour, the boon and the blessing I crave—that Valeria may know health again and that happiness may shine upon her. And this not because Nyria asketh it of thee, but of thy great and wonderful goodness."'

I forgot what I was saying. I forgot that I was praying to the skies—I forgot everything but Valeria. I seemed to see that great Cæsar he spoke of somewhere before me and I thought if only he would listen. . . . And then, when I stopped there was silence—a strange silence. The wind came sighing in the brier-bush and, looking-up, I saw before me that all the western sky seemed to have opened into one glorious sheet of gold. But across it ran a crimson streak that looked like blood: and turning round I saw the kind stranger kneeling too, close by me, and he put his hand on mine and said:

'Nyria, thou hast prayed: and He to Whom thou prayest, has heard and will answer thy prayer.'

He talked to me very kindly going down the hill. He said many things and I liked to listen. Where the road was steep, he said, 'Nyria, hold my hand,' and I said, 'Sir, I know the road, and the goats are not better climbers than I.'

He smiled. But for the smile I thought he had not heard me, for he walked on very quietly holding my hand, and anon he said: 'Nyria, whose flocks are these?'

So then I said:

'Sir, I know not. They belong to many lords in Rome and some to farmers.'

And then he said, 'Nyria, who tendeth them?'

And I answered him: 'Sir, they wander alone and sometimes I have found a little goat that hath lamed himself and bleateth sore: and I have borne him in my arms and sought out the herdsman . . . for many of them I know . . . till one should claim him.'

'Ah, Nyria,' he said. 'So these herdsmen know their flock.' He was silent a moment as we passed down the track, and then said he to me:

'And, Nyria, who tendeth thee?'

'I am like one of the little goats,' I answered, 'save that there is no herdsman to tend me: or if there be, he is long in coming.'

And the kind stranger pressed my hand and said in his soft way. 'Nyria, may he not have come?'

'Alas no, sir,' I began. 'There is none save Stephanus, and if thou knewest Stephanus thou wouldst know that though he is kind and good, he is not, methinks, all that Nyria would have in her herdsman.'

'And who is Stephanus?' asked the stranger. 'Doth it chance to be he who keepeth the goldsmith's shop down in the Via Argentaria?'

''Tis he, sir,' I answered. 'Knowest thou Stephanus?'

'Nay, I know him not, but it would pleasure me to know him. Wilt thou bring him to see me, Nyria?'

'Willingly, sir. But whither shall we come?'

'That I will tell thee,' he answered. 'What dost thou do with thy time when thou art free, Nyria?'

I answered him that I spent most of it upon the hill-side.

'Alone?' he said.

'Save when Stephanus and I wander forth in search of herbs,' I answered. And somehow from the questions he asked me he led me on to speak of that—ay of that which never yet have I spoken of to any—'Twas the Voice upon the hill-side and how I listened to it and how it had said to me that some day I should see the face of him that spoke. And the stranger listened most kindly. And by and by he said to me:

'Knowest thou not the God Who speaketh thus to thee?'

'Nay, sir,' I answered. 'I have wondered oft if it might perchance be the chosen symbol of one, as of Bacchus in the vine, Athene in the olive, and great Jupiter in the thunder. But I hear the voice of One that speaketh to me in all these and in many more.'

And then he paused upon the hill-side, and drawing my hand up between his folded palms, he laid it on his breast.

'Nyria,' he said, 'hearken to me. That which thou hearest is the voice of the great God Who is so much greater than those whom thou hast known as the Sun is greater than the stars. Blessed art thou, my child, for none save the great God Himself hath revealed this unto thee. He is above all, Nyria! He is everywhere. In the whisper of the wind: in the shining of the sun: in the forming of a rain-drop, or the little face of a flower. And He is in thee, Nyria. Thou hearest Him through all these sounds without, but thou wouldst hear Him, if thou didst listen, speaking in thine own heart.'

Then to me it seemed, as I listened to what the stranger said, that I did indeed hear an echo throbbing in my heart. No words it spake, but softly cried upon me to give myself to the teaching of this stranger. And I looked up at him and said: 'Sir, tell me of this god.'

'For that I sought thee, child,' he answered. 'For the Father willeth not that anyone be lost of His little flock: and thou art most surely of His flock, Nyria.'

'Sir, I know not.' And I shook my head. 'I am but a poor slave—one of the least of Julia's household, and there is none to speak well of me save Stephanus, and none to shew me if indeed that which thou sayest be true.'

'Thine own heart hath spoken for thee, Nyria. Listen thou to it. And He whose voice speaks also in thy heart will surely not be denied when He biddeth thee give Him entrance.'

'But, sir, I know him not,' I said . . . 'though 'tis true that oft methought his voice hath spoken in my ears and hath seemed to say that some day I shall see his face.'

'Were that not enough, little one, He would give thee one more assurance by the mouth of his servant Clement. Was it not for Valeria's life thou wert

pleading to-day? Didst thou not pledge thyself wholly to whatsoever power should save her whom thou lovest?'

'Most truly so, sir,' I answered. 'Yet, hath this wondrous god power to save the life of Valeria?'

'Thou shalt see,' answered he who called himself Clement. 'Thou didst ask Him, Nyria, and He is never deaf to the prayers of His children. 'Twas to Him who is the God of all gods that thou didst pray.'

I was silent, deeply humbled. For it seemed to me so strange and presumptuous that I—Nyria, a slave of Julia's household—should have dared to lift my voice to Him who ruled earth and heaven.

Then spake Clement to me. 'Thou shalt abide His mercy, Nyria. According to thy faith it shall be unto thee.'

'And will Valeria live, sir?' I questioned clinging to his hand.

He stooped and parted back my curls.

'Valeria shall live, loyal little heart, and shall owe her life to thee.'

Meseems I thought more of those words he said than of almost any others when I ran down the hill and through the valley up towards the Coelian. He had bade me meet him again. He would often pass that way, he said, and he would look out for me and later on I should bring Stephanus and he would welcome him also.

Now I speeded home and saw Aeola sitting in the twilight on a step at the corner of the house with Crispus bending over her. He had brought, as was his wont, a basket full of winter fruit and some gay scarlet blossoms which she was twining in her hair.

But she could not twist them to her liking and Crispus put his hand upon her head tenderly as I went by softly, so that she saw me not, and did it for her.

I was too full of gladness to blame her for leaving Valeria, for I never thought of questioning what the great Clement had said. I minded me as I ran home how Sabinus had talked of him to Julia and spoken of him as a holy man and one in good repute among the Christians.

I ran in to Valeria. She lay sleeping. Aeola had left the silver lamp burning by her bed and it seemed to me that her face looked less sharp and shadowed and there was a faint clear flush upon her cheek—not the burning patches of fever. I knelt at the foot of the couch and laid my head upon it out of very gladness: and then, raising me, I whispered to her: 'Domina, thou shalt live. Hast thou heard the word gone forth? Life and happiness are thine, dear lady. Oh haste thee to grow well and take them to thyself.'

She seemed to smile faintly in her sleep and I fancied that the words might have reached her in some way I knew not. I was so very happy. I wanted to tell someone. And when it came over me that it was not to Valeria I should speak, but to him who had granted Nyria's desire, I listened for the Voice which Clement had said would sound in my heart. And it came—breathing softly. Scarce a sound—scarce a whisper—scarce a word. And yet it said to me, 'Speak, child, for I am here.' And I put my hands together: and out of very gladness words overflowed.

'Dear god. I know thee not, but from henceforth thou art Nyria's god, for I thank thee, oh! I thank thee, and behold, I am thy slave.'

'Nyria,' said Valeria softly. 'To whom art thou speaking? Is there anyone here?'

'None other, lady, save . . .' I paused. I was about to say, 'One whom thou canst not see, but I saw she was confused. So I stooped over her and

smoothed her pillow. 'Nyria is here, dear lady. She hath watched long beside thee: and thou art better. See, the fever is gone,' and I slipped my fingers into her palms which felt cool to the touch. 'Now thou shalt grow well.'

'Well! For what?' she moaned. 'How can the body grow well when the mind is sore diseased.'

'One met me upon the hill-side, lady,' I answered, swiftly mixing her a a cup of milk with a few drops of Stephanus's famous potion which he had left beside her. 'One who is skilled in divining, and seeing me sad, he questioned me of my sorrow. So when I told him thou wert lying here weak and suffering he sought the knowledge that never faileth . . . for that is the phrase that all diviners use—and he bade me take heart for that thou wouldst assuredly recover and claim the happiness awaiting thee.'

'He said that—happiness to Valeria! Nay now thou art telling one of thy wonted tales, Nyria. What happiness can come to me?'

'He spake not of the nature of it, lady, but bade me believe that 'twas undoubted. Think of it, and haply the gods—and he who is greatest among them all—will grant thee thy desire.'

She took the cup from my hand and drank it and handed it back to me with a deep sigh—and yet methought seeming far stronger than she had been before. 'Nay, now if the gods could send to me that which I most desire, I would believe thy word, Nyria. . . . Ah, who cometh there?'

Her eyes were searching across the room. The heavy curtains that hung over the door had parted and someone stood between them—someone who spake in a voice that I as well as Valeria had learned to know well.

'Nyria refuseth me admittance, so I must needs seek mine own way unbidden.'

It was Licinius Sura.

She held out her arms to him and cried: 'Ah, Marcus! Comest thou indeed! . . . Now, is my joy assured.'

And I went out and left them alone together.

I sat me down on the steps outside Valeria's chamber and, truly, it seemed a long time that I waited while she talked with Licinius Sura.

By and by, Aeola stole up from outside and slipped her hand in mine. She sat her down close to me and laughed a little and chattered and then grew silent and sighed. But I heeded not, for my mind was full of greater portents than the loves of Aeola and Crispus. And presently she said: 'What aileth thee, Nyria? Didst thou not hear when I told thee how Crispus said there had been great doings down at Julia's—men coming and going and lords from the Senate talking gaily with thy master, and he going about with a grim, grey face.'

To the which I answered her testily:

'Crispus is like many a man in love, and love methinks bodeth madness. What right had Crispus to speak to thee of Sabinus's affairs?'

'Nay, I meant no harm, Nyria,' whispered Aeola. 'Thou knowest—Crispus and I. . . . Crispus trusteth me . . . and thou dost trust Crispus, Nyria?'

'I trust none,' said I, 'save those who have proved their worth. . . . Hush, Aeola, prate not. Here are the lady Vitellia's bearers. Alack! What shall I do?'

I rose to my feet and thought raced through my mind.

'Prove, Aeola, that thou art worthy of the trust Nyria hath put in thee. Be wise now. . . . Haste thee to the lady Vitellia's litter. Keep her in

converse. Let her not approach Valeria's room till I shall appear. Understandest thou ? Then do as I bid thee.'

Aeola whispered : ' Nay, have I ever failed when thou didst charge me, Nyria ? The lady Vitellia shall not pass till thou appearest.' And she drew her head-stole closer and ran down the steps.

I paused not but turned me to Valeria's rooms. I ran across the antechamber and coughed, for I wanted to give them a sign of my approach : it was presumptuous to enter unbidden. Nevertheless, there lay no other course open to me. I drew the curtains apart and bowed myself between them, seeming not to see the pair who sat in each other's arms.

' The lady Vitellia cometh, Domina,' I said, breaking in upon their converse with my warning.

' Vitellia ! ' exclaimed Valeria with a sharp note as of terror in her voice. ' Alas ! Marcus, thou must leave me. But how ? . . . Which way cometh she, Nyria ? '

' Aeola stayeth her upon the steps, lady.'

' A pretty pair of conspirators by all that's loyal to love ! ' cried Licinius laughing. ' Well done, small Xydra. I gave thee not credit for so much sense.'

' But Marcus—Marcus, what wilt thou do ? ' cried Valeria clinging to his arm and with the red flush mounting in her cheeks until I saw that if her excitement were not stayed, this visit of her lover would have done her harm instead of the good which I fondly hoped for. ' There is the other entrance, lady,' I ventured. ' The lord Licinius, if he will, may follow me. I will escort him through the lord Paulinus's rooms and through the ——' it was a word beginning with a V . . . the sound of which now I mind me not— ' and out by the great atrium and so to the outer gates.'

' Well spoken, watch-dog. Come,' cried he, ' lead the way, little Yellow-hair.'

' Marcus,' cried the faint voice from the pillows. ' Thou wilt not leave me thus ? '

I looked not back and yet I seemed to see Valeria raising herself, her arms extended and all the passionate feeling in her poor, white face which had paled to deadly pallor again.

' Nay, I must leave thee, sweet,' he said. ' Yet this is but a foretaste, Valeria. I may come again ? '

' Ah, but Marcus—the risk of it,' she whispered, lying in his arms.

' Had . . . thou knowest, the one who tried to steal the golden apples[1] kept by the Hesperides . . . any thought of risk when he faced the fateful maidens in his quest for the golden fruit ? I am not so brave as he, for am I not faltering before thy sister ? In very truth, Valeria, 'twould need a doughty warrior to confront the disapproving glance of Vitellia's eyes. But I must go, beloved. It sufficeth that thou hast bid me come again.'

' I said not so, Marcus.'

' This is sufficient answer ;—and this—and this,' he answered and in the silence, I knew, he kissed her. ' Get thee well, Valeria. 'Twas for this I came. Otherwise thy grand new doctor Licinius hath failed of his undertaking. Get thee well, beloved, and we will meet many times. Be it here or——' he stooped and whispered in her ear—I did not catch the words.

Then he followed me. I let him out, swiftly running on before him through the passages.

[1] It was one of the labours of Heracles to obtain these golden apples.

In the outer atrium I paused and pointed to the entrance.

'There lies thy way, sir. Haste thee.'

'Good,' he answered, drawing his mantle about him. 'I see thou art astute, sweet Nyria. Thou hast not been brought up in Rome to no purpose and that may be well for this one who as yet is in thy debt. Come, let me repay it, pretty maid.'

I looked to see him finger his wallet again, but he held out his arms instead! 'Thou dost despise gold, I know. Let me give thee that which sometimes even gold cannot buy.'

I cried, 'Shame on thee, sir,' for I knew full well what he meant. 'Twas always thus with Roman lords who were not true gentlemen at heart like Plinius. 'Shame on thee, sir,' I said again hotly as he would have stayed me. ''Twas not for this I brought thee hither.'

''Twas to escape the scorn of that most immaculate matron Vitellia,' he said, 'and I thank thee, little watch-dog. But a soft embrace and a touch of those ripening lips—would taste sweet in passing and none be the wiser.'

'But twain the greater fools, lord,' I answered, bending low before him, and drawing my chin away as he placed his hand beneath it.

'Power of Venus! shed some softening spell,' he cried with a merry laugh that made his eyes dance and, even to me, he looked comely! . . . and with that Licinius swung his mantle o'er his shoulders and disappeared through the doors of the atrium while I ran with burning cheeks back to Valeria's side of the house.

Vitellia was but pacing the portico towards Valeria's rooms listening to Aeola, who poured forth a lengthened history of Valeria's illness.

'The Domina awaits thee, lady,' I said with a low obeisance to hide my scarlet cheek. 'Will it please thee to enter. She is better, methinks, this last half-hour.'

The lady followed me across to the rooms and entering before her as was my duty, I whispered Valeria that she was coming.

By and by, the lady Vitellia came out again and called me to her in the ante-chamber.

'Aeola is a good child,' she said, 'but ignorant. In truth, I would rather take thy word, Nyria, than any other, and thy tending has borne fruit. It is indeed well with Valeria to-night—almost I should have said that one more skilled than those doctors who have attended her had been with her but lately, for there is new life in her eyes and her voice hath gained strength.'

'Yes, lady,' I answered meekly, but said no more, though in truth I knew that one more skilled to cure her had but just lately been beside her.

And yet my heart burned when I thought of him. I liked not to take the boon of Valeria's life from the hands of Licinius Sura. Nevertheless, I knew that I had prayed and promised I would bargain naught if she might be spared, and 'twas not well I should question the means.

Thou knowest the slaves had all to be back the day after the Saturnalia ended. The time was twenty-one days—three sevens. The law gave fourteen days but there had been somewhat about the third seven which was likewise given.[1] Thus, on that morning, Julia's women and every other Roman lady's women would be there to perform the robing and those who had been kept back by payment for service during the Saturnalia would then be free.

[1] Nyria's remarks upon these alterations in the duration of the feast of Saturnalia are corroborated by writers on the subject.

But now must I tell thee somewhat which happed about Gregorio. He had come back once—just after I went to stay with Valeria, and had come round the corner of the house in that sly, suspicious way of his, with his big eyes rolling and his body bent nearly double. . . . In his hand, he bore a great bouquet of flowers. And I saw that he had been drinking deeply of the cheap common country wine that was largely sold in the booths at such times. His full, red lips were apart and moist and his eyes were large and round and dark and shining, full of a sort of moisture. He looked excited—more like an animal than a lad. He was curiously made, Gregorio, as thou knowest. He was a little hunch-backed—not much—not enough to make women scorn him, only one shoulder was higher than the other. But as he always walked with that long, softly striding, slouching gait, bending his knee each time, the hunched shoulder seemed natural. He had had his hair dressed at the barber's and 'twas all in curls shiny with oil, and he wore a wreath of paper flowers upon it. It was not fitting that he should come in this guise to his lady. But Gregorio loved to play the lord, and I guessed he kept on his wreath to show that he too was a free man to-day.[1] For, thou mayst know that at some banquets the Roman lords wore wreaths—at banquets without women—and at a drinking bout—it seemed to go with much drinking. If there were a State banquet or one at a really nice house they did not do it. But the slaves always aped their masters.

Gregorio scowled at me and he was going through unbidden, but I stayed him saying, 'Thou canst not enter.'

He turned then upon me. 'I go not at thy bidding,' he answered, showing his teeth. Gregorio had a way of half stooping with his head thrust forward and his mouth open, the lips drawn back and the teeth shewing.

'Then thou wilt go at someone else's bidding,' I answered. 'For the doctors are here and I have but to ask them.'

Gregorio stood still and hesitated. He looked down at the flowers in his hand.

'I—brought them for her,' he said.

'She shall have them,' I answered. 'I will give them to the Domina when she waketh.'

He had made as if to put the flowers down, but suddenly snatched them up again.

'She shall not receive them from any hand but mine,' he exclaimed bitterly and then going to the edge of the steps, he flung them far out into the dust of a distant part of the courtyard. Then again he turned on me and his voice was like a hiss between teeth.

'Yes, to-day I go at thy bidding,' he said. 'But hark thee, Nyria, some day thou shalt go at mine. Dost hear, maligning, evil, white-faced cat? Thou shalt go and shalt not return.'

Then he went away.

'Now, thou knowest, Valeria did not talk to her slaves. Only with me and sometimes with the boy Gregorio, did she ever hold any converse, and it was chiefly after his music that she made much of Gregorio. Then she would compliment him upon his singing and that carried him off his head. He was fond of music, but he was fonder of Valeria . . . only it was in such an odd, bitter way. Not what I call being fond. . . .' "

Here, Nyria's voice failed. . . .

[1] Slaves during the Saturnalia were permitted to wear the *pileus* or badge of freedom, and otherwise adorn themselves like their masters.

CHAPTER XI

At Julia's Toilet

Nyria tells of her return to the service of Julia: of Julia's wrath, and of how she is again tied to the whipping-post and this time is beaten by Bibbi, chastiser of slaves in the household of Julia: then of how, when she is in attendance upon Julia at the Campus Martius, Alexamenos of the Prætorian Guard asks to speak with her on a matter of deep import.

Nyria (resuming after some hours' rest): "I was going to tell thee—only I broke off—that next morning I went back to Julia's—the next morning after Licinius Sura came to the house of Valeria.

I want thee to remember about the slaves. . . . Valeria's slaves duly took over their work. But her head-woman liked not to take orders from me. She would have been very difficult and disagreeable, but that the great doctor, who was very kind to me, made it convenient to come because he knew that I was going back to Julia, and Stephanus had told him that it was needful for him to see the slaves lest they be not fit to take charge of Valeria. Stephanus knew more about slaves than did Archigenes. Now Valeria's head-woman was quite fit to take charge of her had she been less disagreeable, so I tarried until the doctors came, else I should have gone back to Julia's earlier. The doctors were much pleased with Valeria's appearance. Thou knowest, Stephanus was modest with the modesty of pride, and he would never go in to see Valeria without Archigenes' command. But this morning he was sent for and I heard somewhat of their talk. 'Art thou not surprised?' said Archigenes. 'In very truth, this is a resurrection from the grave, and a right good testimony to thy drugs, Brother Stephanus, and to yonder little maid's careful tending.'

Then Stephanus grew red with pride and pleasure as I, knowing his face, saw plainly, for the great doctor said 'Brother' only of one of his own kind. They came out together in great good humour and when Archigenes called me, Stephanus told him of my difficulty with the head-woman, at the which Archigenes said he would himself settle the matter, and with that he sent for her.

He said she should take her orders only from him or Stephanus who would come when he could not. But he said naught of me, which was wise, else the woman had like to wreak her vengeance against me on Valeria, for, as thou knowest, the slaves are sometimes very ill-natured. And after some talk Archigenes left, but Stephanus waited to walk with me to Julia's.

So, then, I being ready with my bundle in my hand laid it at the door of the ante-room and went in to say farewell to Valeria. Aeola was in the room but went out when I entered. And as I came close to Valeria's bed I saw how much better she looked. She put out her hand and caught mine.

'Art thou going, Nyria,' she said.

'Yea, Domina,' I answered. 'For thou knowest the Saturnalia is over and Julia will be sending for me. Moreover, there is naught to keep me, seeing thou art on the mend.'

'But thou canst not go, Nyria, until thou hast given me that letter,' she said. 'Thou knowest the one I mean, child. 'Twas from Licinius Sura, who gave it thee for me when I was past the reading of it. What hast thou done with it, Nyria?' Her hand tightened on mine and she shook my arm.

'I have it here, Domina,' I answered, and took it from the inner pocket next to my breast where I had carried it.

She almost snatched it from me. 'Ah, 'tis well: 'tis well, Nyria,' she cried and broke the seal. I saw that she would have no eyes but for the letter.

'Shall I go, Domina?' then I asked, fearing I should be late.

'Yes: yes, child, go. I need thee not,' she answered unfolding the page, and soon I saw that she was deep in its writing and had no more to say to me. So I straightened the coverlet over her feet and stooped and kissed them.

But she spoke no other word and I withdrew.

Stephanus was waiting for me without and carried my bundle. We walked down the hill together and on the way I told him of Clement and all that he had said. Stephanus was interested.

''Tis a kindly man,' he said, 'and the gods grant that he doth live up to that look he weareth. Even not long ago when Clement passed my shop, I have seen him turn to note Denarmid . . . 'Tis the boy who serveth the shop . . . and such a smile gave he him that I minded to question the lad as to what truck he had with Clement who, as thou knowest, is a Christian, and perchance the boy . . .'

'Is one also . . .' said I.

'Ye gods! would I not flay him if I found it out. I'll have no Christians crossing my threshold, Nyria, thou mayst be sure.'

'But supposing, Stephanus,' I said, slipping my hand in his, 'that I became a Christian?'

'Ah! Whatever may hap, the threshold is for thee, Nyria, and only waits to have the flax bound upon it and the wine and meal poured upon its bar.[1] But for others, nay—I have no faith in Christians. They are neither honest men nor sound knaves. As enemies or friends I want them not. But this Clement . . .'

'Ay, Clement,' I said . . . 'Thou wouldst not speak so of him, Stephanus, if thou didst know him.'

'Like enough. I'll take thy word, Nyria. But till I find me a Christian with whom one can deal fairly I'll heed them not.'

'Well, Clement wanteth to see thee, Stephanus. He bade me bring thee to him!'

'Tell thy new friend where Stephanus may be found. He can seek me out if he will.'

'But Stephanus, he is own cousin, is he not, to Clement and Domitilla?' I said.

'Ah! That changeth somewhat the face of it. Clement's cousin hath mayhap a claim to the fealty of Stephanus. But never Christian shall command it.'

I talked no more about it then because we were drawing near the pitch of the Aventine and passing through the vale between the hills so near to Julia's house that my heart was full, wondering what would greet me.

[1] Marriage customs in ancient Rome. See Appendix 37, Bk. II.

Stephanus shifted my hand to his other one which bore the bundle and passed his arm around me.

'Thou art silent, Nyria! Is it because thou fearest to face that she-wolf? Now, the gods defend thee, dear, from her hands. Say but the word and Stephanus will make office to see Sabinus this evening about the marrying of thee.'

But I shook my head. I liked his arm around me, I liked the warmth and comfort of his presence. But I wanted not to wed him. 'I think I am not for marriage, Stephanus,' I said.

'Tush, Nyria! Every maid is for marriage that hath the chance. Wouldst wither and grow old unwed, my dear?'

'I care not. Old age seems not to come before me as it doth to Thanna and the other girls. Yea, even to Aeola who fears, as thou sayest, to wither all unwed. But marriage—the marriage of which thou speakest, Stephanus—methinks it would not content me.'

Also I was frightened at the thought of going back to Julia. For the end of the Saturnalia meant the day of reckoning.

'I wish thou wert my father, Stephanus—or my brother,' I said. 'Then would I come with thee most gladly.'

'Now the gods forbid that bargain. 'Tis no father and no brother I would be to thee,' he answered wrapping his arms around me. 'Embrace me, Nyria. There is none to see: and who can tell when I shall look upon thy face again, once thou hast passed under the rule of, sure, the hardest task-mistress in Rome!'

I let him kiss me, and then I took my bundle and ran off. 'Fare thee well, Stephanus,' I cried and waved my hand. But I sobbed as I ran, for I hated going back. I dropped my bundle at Euphena's door where the old woman sat glowering in the sun.

'Julia hath a fine dish of ——' something like soup or broth—it was a phrase that the slaves used when there was something dreadful coming—said she.

I stayed not to chatter, but ran around the house and to Julia's rooms. Sounds of turmoil reached me as I ran. The women were shrieking and Julia's voice was raised. 'Twas always so after the Saturnalia. The slaves came back full of wine and insolence, forgetting they were not always free, and Julia's wrath could ill-countenance the least breach of discipline.

Samu—one of the underlings—darted out as I came in. I thought she was half drunk, for she lurched. But Julia had been hitting her. I saw a great red mark upon her cheek: and Julia herself followed hard upon her footsteps. She had an uplifted brush in her hand and as Samu paused, terrified and breathless, with an awkward lurch against somewhat that stood in the way—or mayhap at sight of me, Julia belaboured her soundly from behind.

Then, seeing me, she stopped beating Samu and yelled a whole string of angry words at me.

I covered my face and made the obeisance, and lucky it was I did so for Julia flung the brush at me just then and 'twas only by dipping that I avoided it. Julia herself lurched forward, nearly tumbling over Samu, who, seeing there was another object for her mistress's wrath, uprose swiftly and scurried fast away. But Julia came on at me like a tower of storm and caught me by the hair.[1]

[1] Cruelty of Roman ladies to their dressers and tiring-women. See Appendix 38, Bk. II.

'Here, thief and traitress, sneak and truant! Darest thou return? Thou shalt have a warm welcome and I assure thee none shall be so well received. Hath thy skin healed yet, Nyria? 'Twere better not, seeing it will but put Bibbi to the trouble of laying it open again.'

She pulled me round to the inner room. She was but half dressed and hot and bloated from the bath: and such a figure she looked that Thanna, who had been taking a lesson in impudence from some women in the Suburra, leaned against the inner doorway laughing and making rude grimaces. Now, Julia rang a string of abuses at Thanna. . . . 'Pantomime jester. Hast thou been training to play with the——' some low word that meant the lowest of the mummers . . . not like Paris—but the people who went round performing in the streets. 'Art practising thy ugly faces to go out and win a few denarii—before the——' she used an awful word—it meant the lowest of the drink houses in the Suburra. . . .[1]

Thanna could not at once pull her face together nor cease from laughing. Besides, she was courageous and cared little for Julia. Also, she knew very well that it would not suit Julia to punish her and me at the same time, for we two dressed her hair best: and Julia would now be tired of lacking service.

And Thanna told me afterwards how she had been mightily amused to find the state of Julia's hair-cupboard where her combs and pins and false tails were kept, and at the tags of string and ribbon that were yet in her hair, knotted there by Euphena, so that Julia had not been able to get them out.

Thanna laughed on a little: and then she held herself more properly and said with a sort of familiar insolence, 'Let it be peace, Julia. Thou knowest the end of the Saturnalia is somewhat disturbing. Thou hast thy good times all the year round. Grudge us not our few poor days.'

Julia glared at her, but Thanna suddenly dropped low upon the ground.

'When thou art empress, oh, most mighty Julia, extend the Saturnalia. Then will I spend mine in offering sacrifices for thee.'

Julia was half mollified at that. She still clawed me by the head; then, suddenly, she threw my hair in a cluster towards Thanna so that I nearly rolled over at her feet.

'Thou art an insolent baggage, Thanna, but useful. Do thy duty and I'll say no more. Get me the things for my robing, and be sharp about it. But first bind this hussy to the hook and bid one of those lazy——' a horrible word . . . 'to call Bibbi.'

But I was sore wrath at this and rose up before Julia.

'I'll stand beneath the hook, lady, and Bibbi must beat me if thou orderest, but Thanna shall not touch me.'

'Now thou art a fool,' whispered Thanna. ''Tis no use to answer her thus. Give her a dose of flattery and there need be no hook for thee to-day—nor whipping either. But come along, I'll not tie thee too tight.'

'Thou'lt tie me not at all,' I answered. And with that I turned and walked towards the hook, putting my hands up to twist my own hair round my throat so that she should not touch it.

'Cease chattering and trouble me not,' said Julia seating herself. 'Thanna, get the washes for my face. Why art thou fooling?'

Now Thanna was forced to turn away and left me standing. . . . There was a hook which Julia kept fastened to the wall in her dressing-room

[1] Nyria's references to the Suburra, of which a part was frequented by the lowest and loosest in morals of the population in Rome, is corroborated by the writers of the time.

where sometimes she would have one of us tied when the order had been given for a whipping. So I was used to it and knew what would come.

Bibbi grinned when they took me out to him. 'Pleased to meet thy old friend again, Nyria?' he said. And when they stripped me—Thanna and Aemilia—he came and looked over my shoulders and examined the marks.

'So thou hast been having rare feeding this Saturnalia, Nyria? These are no marks of mine.'

'But those that come will be,' I answered, turning round over my shoulder. 'Get on if thou must.'

'Nay, I like not to hasten,' he said. ''Tis no kindly thing to do. I'll warrant thou thinkest ill of me, Nyria, and I would fain win thy good fellowship first.'

''Twere kinder to get on,' said Aemilia firmly, 'and prate of good fellowship another time. Thou art ready, Nyria?'

I nodded, and then the lashes fell. . . . Twelve only he gave me, though I think fifteen had been ordered, but I lost count ere twelve had fallen.

Thou knowest—it is worst when one has been but lately beaten. For, when the flesh is bruised and swollen, the hurt is greater if a weal be lashed anew. And thou knowest, that one had needs be thankful to faint. . . . Yet Bibbi sought to spare me. Gentler far were his lashes than had been those of Balbus Plautius.

I only knew myself again when they put me upon the straw bed in Euphena's cabin. She had moved away from the door and was growling and muttering to herself.

'What, Nyria again!' she cried.

'Yes, Nyria again,' said Aemilia. ''Tis shame indeed to beat such a defenceless lamb. But Julia knoweth naught of shame.'

'Thou hast seldom spoke more truly. Nyria hath been carried forth fit for the burying many a time. But never fear thee, pretty one,' Euphena said to me, 'thou shalt scout death'—scout was not the word—''scape,' it was—'to-day, too. But when death shall come to thee, there will be no carrying forth and no burying.'

I heard her say that and wondered what she meant. But I was in too sore pain to care. They laid me down, and then Aemilia sought out the ointment and wiped me over with a soft rag and gave me warm milk to drink. But I would have none of it. And then she was called away to tend her little ones and to get her husband's midday meal. So I lay there half in stupor, half waking, half sleeping, full of pain and wondering how, this time, I should crawl up the hill—for there was no Crispus to get me a litter—and I had promised to be back on the Cœlian that night. Presently I must have dropped asleep and when I awoke, it was drawing out towards late afternoon—Thanna sat there in the gathering twilight doing some plaiting work, for Thanna was clever with her fingers.

'So thou hast wakened, Nyria?' she said. 'I came to give thee the news.'

I answered not, and then Thanna said:

'Am I not kind and generous, Nyria?'

'Oh, very,' I answered. 'For what dost thou wish to bargain it, Thanna?' . . . I said, trying with difficulty to raise myself.

'Nay, this is no time for bargaining,' said Thanna rather sadly. 'Since all the rest doth know, thou mayest as well hear, Nyria. We are all agog with what hath happened.'

'What is it;' I said still rather dazed. 'Hath Samu suffered so that she is ill after Julia's beating?'

'Samu! Nay . . . I saw her cooking sugar cakes in the sun, a few minutes agone. Guess again, Nyria, but go higher in thy guesses.'

'Hath aught ill chanced to Sabinus?' I asked, remembering my poor master and what Thanna's last news had portended.

'Sabinus is of no account to-day,' she answered. 'There is one greater than he in the household, and she it is who is ill.'

'Not Julia,' I asked, opening my eyes, for Julia was never ill.

'Yea . . . the great Julia: and is not that somewhat to make thee sit up? Julia's excitement this morning must have been too much for her majesty, Julia hath not lately chased us round the rooms, remember, and methinks that then she exercised herself too greatly'; and Thanna bent double laughing.

'But what is wrong with Julia?' I asked.

'The gods alone can tell: unless Euphena could throw some light on the matter. Sick she was when I went back to her room after tending thee and wondering she had not come forth to witness Bibbi's lashing of thee . . . for Julia is ever one who liketh to be entertained, and save for thee, so pretty a show hath not been her portion this twenty days. But thou mayst fancy how she surprised me when I found her looking——'"

RECORDER: Here Nyria stopped suddenly. . . .

It was not that the Instrument's voice weakened. But the slave-girl herself appeared conscious of a check upon her utterance and she said that she could not go on—that there were "waves" which came between . . . and that she could get no words.

The Recorder drew away and presently the Instrument came to herself, quite naturally, but unable to explain the cutting-off of the current.

When trying again on several occasions later, it still seemed that the invisible wires were not in good working order or that the connection with Julia's house was not clearly established. Nyria cried distressfully.

"They have taken away all my words—I like not being interfered with. . . . I *can* do it. . . . I want to do it. . . . But they will not let me."

On comparing dates appended to most of the Nyria talks it appears that about three weeks elapsed before the conversation with Thanna was picked up at the exact point where it had broken off. There were in the interim several conversations with Nyria containing information concerning Juvenal, the Vestals and other historic personages, which for the preservation of dramatic unity are placed elsewhere. But for some unaccountable reason, there occurred this break in Nyria's recital of the tragedy of Julia and Sabinus.

. . . . . .

NYRIA (resuming her tale of the doings in the House of Julia): . . .

"I was very much surprised at what Thanna said, and could scarcely believe that Julia was ill. I said to Thanna: 'Then how camest thou to be here? How doth Julia spare thee?'

Thanna laughed. 'Ah, Nyria, if thou wert well enough to attend, thou wouldst now be in request. But I . . . thank the gods . . . am not needed, since Thanna is useless in illness,' and Thanna shook her head with a waggish air. 'I offered . . . oh, yes, of course, I offered to remain in attendance for am I not devoted to Julia? . . . and mayhap Julia would have

desired me, though that I know not, for Julia ruleth not within to-day. 'Tis Euphena—Queen Euphena—who holds the reins of our noble lady's government . . . and quoth Euphena to me . . . "Get out, thou baggage. Thou art built for masquerading. Get thee gone. And if Nyria be well enough send her hither." But thou art not well enough, art thou, Nyria?'

'Nay,' I answered, and laid myself low upon my pillow. 'No, Nyria is sore sick. Thou canst carry that message back for me, Thanna.'

And Thanna rose and sauntered forth laughing.

But when Thanna had gone I rose and sought me from a chest where I kept my store, a pot of ointment and roll of soft rag, and after I had anointed myself I drank a little wine from a jug Euphena kept for herself. And later on Thanna brought me my dinner. She told me that Julia seemed better and that a messenger had been sent to the palace. But I did not think much about that. By and by, when the sun began to drop I rose and clad myself decently, for I wanted to go up to the villa on the Coelian. I was not so bad as I had been the time before but I still felt stiff and sore. . . ."

RECORDER: Again, the Instrument's voice weakened, and for a short time she remained passive.

NYRIA (resuming): "Thou knowest that was for me a time of great confusion of mind, and I know not if it were that I felt too sick to walk up to the Coelian or that Euphena called me to attend on Julia. I do know that Julia was forced to keep quiet all that day, and that I was with her towards evening . . . because I remember my master coming home, and that, on being told she was sick, he desired to see her. Whereat Julia scoffed, for her old spirit and strength were coming back to her, and she said scornfully and yet laughing, 'that were she not sick before, the sight of him would make her so.' Yet did she let him come in and he entered most humbly, and 'twas during his stay with her that a messenger arrived from the Palace with a missive—the purple-bordered scroll with Domitian's seal. And Julia, who was always impatient, would have him in before her and broke the seal and read it beneath the eyes of Sabinus. Whereat, many a husband would have questioned its contents, but Sabinus only looked longingly at her and she told him naught. But a smile of satisfaction seemed to come over her face, and then again a look of petulance, and she seemed to be thinking somewhat, with the scroll curled up in her hands, and her eyes fixed across the room yet not seeing Sabinus. Thereon, he spake to her gently and hoped that there was naught to trouble her. To which she answered pettishly: 'That if all the world did their own business, there would in truth, be naught to trouble her.' And as he stooped over her and laid his hand upon her couch she pushed him away.

Then he said something about having supped alone and having longed for her company, at which she laughed and answered sarcastically that 'twas a pity the gods did not plant similar tastes in both their breasts.

Sabinus rose and stood looking gravely down upon her and then said most gently: 'Thou art harsh, Julia. I like not to think that thou dost mean the half of what thou sayest. 'Twould be sad indeed if a pair mated as we are, found their best joys apart. How will it be, beloved' . . . I mind me he called her 'beloved'—it seemed so sad . . . 'when death hath closed the gates of this life upon us and the long road of that other life . . . the which we whom the gods have united must traverse together—shall open before us—then, Julia, there will be no distractions for either in the society

of others. . . . Shall we not now, find some joy in each other's company lest when that time come upon us we find no joy at all ? '

I was fain to listen for I sat by the door keeping the curtains as I had been bidden.

Then Julia looked up from her pillows and answered : ' Truly, there would be no joy for me, Sabinus, if it were but a long dull road with thee that I had to traverse. Why croak of such things ? I am sick of death and all this talk of it which hath been dinned into my ears by the hour together of late.'

' Truly,' he answered, ' the breath of death is abroad in the land. For many there are whom the gods now summon to those other regions. But though, in very truth, the reins of life and death lie in no man's hands, yet doth it seem that in a measure, at least, Domitian is permitted to guide them. And seeing thou dost guide Domitian, why shouldst thou fear death, Julia ? '

' I fear not death, croaker,' she answered, sitting up on her couch angrily. ' Get thee gone. 'Tis thou who pratest of death. Truly, I am not one to pray, but if I prayed the gods, 'twould be that when they summoned thee they would of their charity permit me freedom from such ill company.'

I mind me that Sabinus sighed. ' Hast thou a heart of stone, Julia ? ' he said.

' I had like to have no heart nor brain nor body either if I listened to thy maudlin talk,' she said. ' Get thee gone, Sabinus, dost thou not see I am not well, and thy presence and this ill-omened talk doth fret me.'

' The gods give thee better health, dearest,' he answered, and would have stooped to kiss her hand, but she pushed away his head.

' If I am to have good health, Sabinus, first give me rest and I like not such salutations ; none of my slaves come slobbering my hand without permission, and why shouldst thou ? '

' I am no slave, Julia,' he answered standing upright, ' and I would that thou shouldst know it. For, in truth, it doth seem to me, I have been thy slave too long.' And with that he turned and left her.

I lifted the curtain for him to pass, and as he went forth without casting a glance behind him, Julia raised herself upon her elbow and stared after him with a puzzled look ; and then a sort of half laugh broke from her mouth. ' Haste thee, Nyria,' she cried. ' Look without, along the passage. Was that Sabinus who passed ? '

I obeyed her mood though I saw that she scoffed.

' Ay, it was the lord Sabinus, lady,' I answered.

' In truth I knew him not,' she said and sank back upon her pillows still laughing.

This is all I remember about that. Now I will tell thee about the next day.

There were great doings at the Campus Martius upon the next day. It was always so after the Saturnalia. The Campus Martius was given over to the slaves during the Saturnalia, and for two days afterwards it was being swept and re-decorated : and then, always, games were held there, the which were usually attended by the Emperor and many of the nobles and ladies in Rome, who would go upon that occasion, methinks, to make show that the field was their own again ; and each with many slaves in attendance—such as had been there as free rioters but now would attend as slaves.

On this day, Euphena advised Julia not to go to the Campus Martius. But Julia would have her will, saying that she felt well again : and this time she took me with her.

There was another of us there. . . . I know not whether it were Samu or Aemilia. . . . All that I remember was the going along behind Julia's litter and then crossing the great field; and as we came near the side where the chiefest in Rome did assemble, Domitian was just arriving with his retinue and bodyguard. Here, a stand was erected, having coloured poles wreathed with flowers, wherein some would take their seats to witness the games. But seeing that these were not like those which took place in the Circus Maximus—for there was no chariot racing, but games of different kinds in different parts of the field—most of the nobles, and the ladies too, liked to walk about over the grass and look at what was going on. But it was not so much to witness the games that they came, methinks, as to talk together and love-make and lay plots.

Julia was lazy, and so, likewise, seemed Domitian. She had her litter carried and placed near his and they talked together. Julia was eager and anxious and for a time seemed almost to be reprimanding Cæsar, at which he scowled, and I myself heard him tell her not to prate loud enough for all Rome to hear. At which she cast a contemptuous look around and said:

'Then send these vermin away,' which angered Domitian, for he had his Guard near him: and Domitian thought a great deal of his soldiers. But he signed them to stand further back: and I, too, withdrew to a distance, caring not to watch the games, and yet idly looking at them and at the many passing and re-passing around me. Ladies in litters and noble lords striding beside them and, here and there, a group of slaves talking, but all keeping themselves beyond an open space in front where Julia sat beside Domitian, with the lictors a little way apart, and the soldiers grouped at the back under the trees to Domitian's right.[1]

'Twas then that one Alexamenos, whom I knew, approached and said softly that he craved a word with me.

I turned and smiled upon him for I liked Alexamenos; but now there was something about his manner that I did not understand.

He seemed eager not to be overheard: and yet when I saw the way he looked at me and at my robe and at my hair, I thought he could not have anything serious to say. We talked a little at first of the games and of the weather, for the sun was warm that day, and he asked me if I was not afeared that 'twould brown my skin, to the which I answered 'No.' But when he came close to my side I suppose I shrank a little apart, for he looked somewhat hurt and said:

'Thou dost not like me, Nyria?'

'Ay, I like thee well, Alexamenos,' I answered.

'I would that thou didst like me more,' he said.

'The liking of such as Nyria is no rich bargain,' I answered. ''Twill not much advance thy interests.'

He said, 'I would ask nothing better to advance me than thy favour, Nyria, if thou wouldst but bestow it.'

'My favour thou hast,' I answered. 'But what it can do for thee I know not.'

At the which he looked at me rather strangely and then said: ''Twas scarce of myself that I would now speak to thee, Nyria. Say, hast thou power in thy household?'

And this, I suppose, he said because it is well known that in some

[1] "He made an addition to the soldiers' pay of three gold pieces a year." Suet., *Vit. Dom.*, VII.

households the word of a favoured slave is law: and many a lord and lady of seeming strength and position, will be ruled by some pampered slave and boast of it. But I shook my head.

'There is but one law in our household,' I said, 'and that is Julia's.'

'So I feared,' he made answer: 'and 'tis an evil influence that reacheth even to the Palace.'

'Ay, and over all Rome,' I answered—'or so men say: for Julia doth rule all men.'

'Julia doth not rule the soldiery,' he said. 'If that were so, there would be an uprising.'

'Then Domitian doth not rule them?' I answered.

'Domitian the emperor doth; not Domitian the tool of Julia. But see, we bandy words, Nyria: and there is somewhat I would say to thee—secret and of importance. When wouldst thou hear me?'

'Thou canst not say it now,' I answered, for by certain movements Julia was making, I guessed she would be calling her bearers, and would soon be going.

'But there is somewhat that I must say unto thee—for much dependeth on it. Say . . . thou dost not love Julia, Nyria?'

I made no answer to that but to rise on my feet and shrug my shoulders. 'Julia hath no need of love.'

'Not even the love of Sabinus?' he said.

I answered not. For it seemed to me ill to discuss such private matters as the loves or hates of my master and mistress with one who was outside the household.

'Ah, be not offended with me, Nyria,' he said earnestly, and catching my robe. 'I am no prying inquisitor, nor do I desire to spy upon thy master or mistress. Say, wouldst thou serve thy master, Nyria?'

'He is my master,' I answered. 'What should I do but serve him?'

'Ay, but there be service and service. If thou wouldst serve him, wilt thou meet me to-night by the lower gate in the wall outside thy house and let me speak with thee?'

'I make no such meetings,' I answered coldly and folded my wrapper closer round me.

'Misunderstand me not, I pray. 'Tis to serve thy master that I ask it of thee. I would save him if it were possible.'

'Doth danger then beset Sabinus?' I asked and looked Alexamenos straightly in the face.

'Ay,' he answered simply, 'it doth. In very truth Sabinus hath known naught of danger until now. Yet thou and I may serve him, Nyria, if thou wilt.'

'My life is my master's,' I answered. 'If this be true I will aid thee, Alexamenos. But look,' and I paused and turned as I was hasting to Julia. 'If thou wouldst make mock of me, then I will never speak to thee again.'

'Make mock of thee! Oh, Nyria,' he cried. 'Is that what thou thinkest of Alexamenos?' He caught the edge of my robe and raised it, stooping his head humbly as though he would have kissed it. But a loud laugh broke from his companions and, looking up, I saw them joking about us. We could see that quite plainly and Alexamenos rose up and stiffened angrily so that the joints of his breast-plate and shoulder-pieces clicked.

All this I saw though I fled confused to Julia and remained as near as I durst behind her chair. She was taking farewell of Cæsar and seemed less

ill-pleased : and as the bearers picked her up and bore her away, I following, I kept my eyes upon the ground when we passed the company with Alexamenos at their head. For he had a position of prominence in the bodyguard.

Now, as we crossed to the field, we passed near the place where the gladiators do their exercises. The field, thou knowest, is a wide track going all round and bordered with trees and hedges, so that the Campus Martius is closed in by green, save on one side near to the poor quarter beside the river. Here, the turf is worn away and there is a railed-in space for the practice of the gladiators and yet further space where certain of the public are allowed to watch the trials. There, to my surprise, I saw Crispus leaning on the rail just within. He was stripped save for his loin-cloth and had been wrestling. He smiled when he passed me. I knew that he was practising for the school and I wondered what Aeola would say, for she liked him to give all his spare time to her. But though Crispus was fond of Aeola, he had a passion to be a gladiator and 'twas well known that Sabinus had promised him his freedom.

Sabinus was at the Senate House at this time. He went there every day."

CHAPTER XII

The Warning of Alexamenos

Nyria tells of how Alexamenos came secretly to bid her warn Sabinus of his impending arrest, of how she confers with Crispus on the matter and of how Sabinus refuses to seek safety in flight.

Nyria: " Julia was well enough that evening to go to dinner which was served in the smaller triclinium. She and Sabinus were to dine alone, but my master sent a messenger—Sabinus was always thus particular—to say that he was detained on important business of the Senate.

He did not come in until she was half through her meal, and with her bitter tongue and questionings, he had like to have little dinner had it not been for Crispus who served him well. Sabinus cared not to speak of State matters before the slaves and would have hushed Julia's tongue had he dared, and when she said unto him:

'Why didst thou send thy men back again? It is not fitting that a member of the Senate should return to his house unattended,' he made answer evasively. But afterwards it was reported among the slaves that there had been trouble in the Senate and that Sabinus wanted not to implicate his own men.

I was glad to be dismissed, which Julia permitted me before she rose from the table, and I hurried through my work, leaving her room in order for the night and then ran fleetly to the gate in the wall where Alexamenos waited by a stone bench set in the shadow a few feet higher up by the wall.

'Ah, Nyria, I thought thou wast not coming,' he said.

'Nyria never fails to keep her word if it be within her power,' I answered. 'But now speak, Alexamenos, and that quickly.'

'Thou art chary of thy time, Nyria,' he said. ''Tis not often that I have a word with thee.'

'Thy way and mine lie different roads,' I answered shortly, 'and if it were for thee to attend on Julia thou wouldst know that I had other work to do.'

'Is that the real reason, Nyria?' he said gently. 'Nay, I fear that it is not quite the truth, for there are long hours when Julia is closeted with Domitian and thou dost wait without. Yet never have I dared to spend part of that time with thee.'

'It would not be seemly,' I answered. 'Thou hast other things to think of, Alexamenos, as well as I. Thou wouldst not have thy Guard see thee gossiping with a maid?'

'Oh, Nyria,' he cried, 'thou art a little saint or else some ice-cold statue. . . .' And he caught my hand and held it up between his own close to his breast and drew me nearer. I was troubled and surprised. But just then, I heard Thanna's laugh over the wall and the sound of the

gate shutting behind me. I guessed Thanna had been watching and it made me so angry that I cared not what Alexamenos might think.

'Haste with thy speech,' I cried. 'Thou dost say Sabinus stands in danger and yet wouldst bandy words such as these. Tell me what is the trouble that is like to overcome my master?'

''Tis trouble at the Senate,' he answered darkly. 'Nay, no real trouble, for what there is doth make a poor excuse. They can find naught better to say than that Sabinus hath the interests of the poorer classes of Rome too dearly at heart and doth think too much of them beside the patricians. Thou knowest, Nyria, 'tis the vengeance of Domitian that would overcome him. Draw nearer and let me whisper, for walls have ears, they say, and there is no road in Rome without an echo. Nay, I will not finger thee. Thou mayst trust me, Nyria. See!' He folded his arms behind his back and I crept closer, raising my head while he stooped to whisper.

'Domitian hateth Sabinus and would remove him from his path. It is not meet that I should tell thee why, but this I may say, were Sabinus to die, the next to suffer would be the Empress Domitia herself.'

'I know: I know,' I answered. 'I can understand. But tell me first what manner of danger threatens Sabinus?'

'The usual kind of danger, but it will come in this wise. Thou knowest that one so highly placed as Sabinus cannot be removed by open force, nor yet by that treachery which strikes in the dark like common murder. 'Twill be in the seeming cause of justice that he is taken away and made to suffer. Lo! Listen, for these are my orders and thou knowest, Nyria, a soldier hath but to obey. And thou knowest too—or mayhap thou dost not know—that one who, wearing his emperor's uniform, doth betray his secret commands is worthy of death. Soon—ay—very soon, I shall be bidden come and take Sabinus from his home. . . . Nay, I cannot tell thee when, for Domitian hath not yet fixed the hour.'

'But thou canst save him,' I cried. 'It is for thee to come and take him prisoner, canst thou not see he be not harmed, and afterward release him?'

'Nay, in the fulfilment of my duty, there will be no opening to save Sabinus. He must flee. This is what I would have thee tell him. Seek him, Nyria, if he will listen to thee. Tell him there are foul plots breeding against him. Hint not what the nature of them be, for if thou dost betray me—I care not for myself, but no good will be gained for I shall but be destroyed and another sent in my stead, and 'tis best that I should do Domitian's bidding if it must be done. But should Sabinus escape before then, I will see that none of us shall be able to find him. . . . He must take ship. There are boats now in the Tiber in any one of which he can land further down the coast or—if he will—go hide himself in Gaul. . . . And this, Nyria. . . . Though Domitian be young, he may not reign for ever. Nero was but a little over thirty when his time came to an end.'

'Are there those among ye who would do away with Domitian as they did away with Nero?' I asked.

'Nay, I know not—nor dare I tell thee if I knew, but this I know, tyranny cannot live for ever seeing that justice and mercy alone are eternal!'

I looked at him, for these were strange words to fall from the lips of one of the Prætorian guard who were soldiers and meters of vengeance before all else.

'Thou dost speak strangely, Alexamenos,' I said.

'Mayhap I do, Nyria, for I have learned strange things of late. 'Tis not the will of God that ill-doing should prosper in the land. When thou hearest of oppression and wrong, be sure it is the will of man, not of God.'

'Of which god dost thou speak, Alexamenos?' I asked.

'Of Him Who is the Father of us all,' answered Alexamenos. 'Of Him Who sorrowed so at sight of the suffering and sin which fills the world, that He sent His only Son down to be a sacrifice for erring mankind.'[1]

'Ah——' I answered, holding my breath while many confused thoughts filled my mind. For the God of whom Alexamenos spoke seemed to be the God whose presence I had felt upon the hillside and of whom the great Clement had spoken to me. So full was my mind of all this that I forgot for the moment the cause for which Alexamenos had come. 'Twas he himself who recalled it to me.

'Thou must go, sweet Nyria,' he said softly. 'I dare not keep thee here longer lest we be seen. Say thou wilt let me come and speak to thee again?'

I looked up startled. 'Oh I know not—I know not,' I answered. ''Tis not fitting we should talk here in this wise. Yet thou hast said things that have awakened thoughts in my mind of which I would like to speak to thee, Alexamenos.'

'But 'tis of Sabinus we ought to think first,' said Alexamenos, 'and if he will not flee thou must urge him. Bid him seek the *Goat and Star* upon the lower Quay—the master of her comes from Phrygia and is a kindly, honest-hearted fellow whom he may trust. Moreover, seeing Sabinus can make it worth his while to hoist anchor at once, he may be well out of the stream by this time to-morrow night if he will. . . .'

I did not stay much longer talking to Alexamenos. But I liked not the task he had put upon me and I knew not how I should obtain private speech with Sabinus. . . . And with this I bethought me of Crispus. . . . Then said I to Alexamenos that I feared it would be more than I could accomplish by myself and would he permit me to tell that which he had said to one of Sabinus's body-servants.

At first he would hear naught of it, 'For,' said he, 'thou knowest not who else might learn the truth, and if that were known, Nyria, I should be charged before the tribunal to-morrow and it would go ill with Alexamenos.'

'Thou dost not know this Crispus,' I said. 'I would trust him as I would trust thee, Alexamenos, or as I would trust myself, and thou must trust me, else can I do naught.'

'Ay, I will trust thee,' he answered, 'else neither can I do aught. But I pray thee, Nyria, use all the caution thou canst command, for Sabinus's life—and more—is at stake. And now, when may I see thee again?'

'Nay, I know not—when thou comest this way. For think not that I can stay about walls and gateways to whisper words with thee, Alexamenos. 'Tis only for Sabinus's sake that I would thus demean myself,' and I drew me away.

'Call it not demeaning,' he answered. 'There is naught demeaning in such feeling as I have for thee: and now, may all the powers of good strengthen thy purpose, Nyria. For, in very truth, if thou dost not succeed thou wilt see me here too soon for thy pleasure or for mine.'

I stayed to hear no more but slipped me through the gate and put up the latch; and with that, I sped across the courtyard. But the lights were

[1] Alexamenos and the Ass's head. See Appendix 39, Bk. II.

showing round the slaves' quarters where some were wont to gossip in their doorways after the evening meal, and as I ran I saw a crowd collected in a corner where Thanna lived with Samu.

Now, as I came near I heard Crispus say, 'I wonder thou art not afeard to have ulcers growing on the tip of that scandalous little tongue of thine, Thanna, for that such an one as Nyria is idly courting in the lane I would not believe.' And then he turned away and as he came towards me, cried, 'Why, here is Nyria to answer for herself.'

'Ay, so she shall,' called Thanna. 'Were Alexamenos's kisses sweet, most simple, saintly Nyria? And dost thou need a messenger to carry the news to Stephanus that thou hast pledged thyself to another? In truth, thou art a pretty deceiver—but grudging too, since thou wouldst not give up claim to Stephanus when I asked thee and offered a goodly price for his favours. And now, perchance, Stephanus may have a word to say!'

I answered not for a minute; and then I sprang forward just as Crispus would have stayed me. 'Thou art a lying hussy, Thanna,' I said; 'if I did not know thy prating tongue I would scorn to answer. But though thou wert prying at the gate on my meeting with Alexamenos I know not why thou shouldst think we were occupied as thou perchance mightest have been.'

'Nay, I think naught . . . I know naught,' said Thanna quite meekly. 'I was passing, having been sent to the gate by Julia to see if a messenger she expected from the Palace were coming. . . . But seeing it was no light talk such as Thanna enjoys, thou wilt tell us, wilt thou not, Nyria, what great matter occupied thee and Alexamenos?'

'Nay, that I will not,' I answered.

'Tease not the maid,' cried Crispus. 'Thou art a jade, Thanna. Hold thy peace.' And then said I to Crispus:

'Come away. I would have a word with thee.'

'Are two lovers not enough for thee, Nyria?' shouted Thanna as Crispus strolled away beside me. 'Must thou have a third freedman at thy feet?' And this was her joke because all knew that Crispus was to be made free.

'What meaneth all this talk, Nyria?' said Crispus rather sternly.

'It meaneth this,' I answered. 'Ill portents shadow the house and divers deeds there be in the wind, worse than such nonsense as Thanna doth accuse me of. Have patience with me, Crispus, and listen. . . . I have learned a great secret this evening, Crispus . . . a deathly secret. . . . Oh, be silent. Listen. Take me where none shall hear.'

'Come this side then,' said Crispus, leading me round to Sabinus's part of the house. 'Art cold, Nyria? Thou art shivering.'

'Nay, 'tis but with apprehension,' I answered. 'I fear me for our master, Crispus. Sabinus's life is in danger. Domitian, for the love of Julia, seeketh to destroy him . . . and more than that—' I raised myself and whispered in his ear—'Domitia will be next. Domitian willeth that Julia shall share his bed and throne. Now, Crispus, what thinkest thou of that?'

'What I have always thought,' retorted Crispus. 'But I thought not it would come so soon. It seemeth Julia grows impatient. Mayhap these megrims of hers were but the outcome of her efforts to hasten Domitian. . . . How hast thou learned this, Nyria?'

'But now . . . thou didst hear . . . or didst thou not understand? It was Alexamenos told me. He is a brave man and true: and he would save Sabinus. Oh, Crispus, thou wilt keep faith with us?'

'Have I done aught to make thee think differently, Nyria? What then wouldst thou have of me?'

'That thou shouldst break this to Sabinus,' I answered, 'and persuade him to depart in hiding. There are vessels in the Tiber by which he may make his escape': and I poured forth all that Alexamenos had told me.

'It is no easy task, Nyria,' quoth Crispus. 'Thou are better fitted for it than I. Sabinus is stubborn, though men think him but a reed. Yet he might listen to a maid. Hast thou courage to divulge this tale of dread thyself, Nyria?"

'Ay, I have courage,' I answered, trembling. 'I will tell him all.'

'I like not to put it upon thee, Nyria,' he said, 'for thy life may be the forfeit if Julia gets the wind of this.'

'My life is naught,' I answered, scarce knowing what I said. 'If 'tis my life or that of Sabinus, why, better mine than his.'

'Thou little fool,' said Crispus kindly. 'Thou must save thine own skin if thou wouldst save Sabinus. But 'tis unmanly to expect a girl to do that which I would shrink from doing. I will see Sabinus myself first, Nyria, and pave the way, and if it seem to me that he will listen better to thy lips, then shalt thou speak to him thyself. But it cannot be to-night. Thou must speak in the morning before he goeth to the Senate. He will not have seen Julia then and, mayhap, thou mayest persuade him. Now must we say no more, and get thee gone to thy slumbers, else Thanna and that crew will be telling ill things of thee and me.'

My heart was in a flutter the next morning as I went about the things for Julia's robing. She was late in rising and seemed somewhat languid, yet, nevertheless, she would be dressed most carefully and there was about her a strange, triumphant look. It was in the middle of her dressing that Euphena came, as she often did now, and brought a potion which she mixed and prepared for Julia, who drank it. And I remember when Julia had swallowed it she rose from her chair with a flush on her cheek, deepening its red, and with that look of triumph in her eyes, and said, 'See, Euphena, thanks to thee for all thy croakings, Julia hath cheated death and disaster.'

'Let Julia not boast,' answered Euphena, 'for death is an ill fellow to cheat and when one thinketh he hath been evaded, lo, death shall be met where least he may be expected.'

To the which Julia retorted, 'I trow that if it be true some of us come from birds and beasts; a raven, Euphena, must have been thy grandfather. Or a frog methinks. Croak now somewhat more cheeringly, if thou canst.'

'How can one be cheering,' said Euphena, 'when the shadow of death lieth already upon the house? Thou thinkest to escape it, Julia, and in truth, thou mayest, for none may reckon the outcome of the gods' frolickings. Yet, mark thou this, none ever cast a net who stood no chance of being himself enveloped in its meshes.'

Julia pouted and turned her away to the mirror. 'Thou canst go now, Euphena. I have no more need of thee.'

'Not as yet, pretty one,' whined Euphena. 'But thou wilt have need of me, mayhap, when the winding-sheet lies ready and the savour of the spices goeth up to heaven. Even now, methinks, the gods do twitch their nostrils for the breath of that savour'; and Euphena went without.

To-day Julia was in a most uncertain mood, and, seeing that her fancy was running riot among the more gaudy of her clothes and that she tried

first one of embroidery and then another of gaily striped silk against her skin and piled on jewels only to take them off, I left her to Thanna who served her best at such times. Thus, I kept me without, waiting for Crispus's signal, and presently a young boy who served Sabinus's rooms ran up the passage to me, saying :

'Crispus calleth thee, canst thou come ? ' To the which I answered at once, though trembling all through me, for I feared to face Sabinus ; and yet if need were I must not shrink.

Now Crispus met me at the outer door leading to Sabinus's rooms and seeing, I suppose, my face whiten and that I shook with fear, he whispered : 'Take heart of grace, Nyria. Sabinus will not harm thee. He could not harm a fly. Hast thou courage to speak to him ? '

I nodded, for I could not find words, and Crispus went on : 'I had to tell Sabinus that there was a tale afloat which rumoured harm to him—the which when he heard he would not at first listen to, but having seen that 'twas of serious import, he bade me fetch the fellow from whom I had gathered the tale.

'In truth, I think, Nyria, if persuasion be needed, Sabinus is liker to be persuaded by thee,' and Crispus pushed me towards the door.

'But thou wilt say that I am here,' I murmured chokingly. 'Else how shall I enter ? '

Crispus smiled and went before me, and I heard him say :

'Sabinus, may it please thee, I have brought with me the one who best can tell thee of that strange report.'

'Let him enter,' answered Sabinus. 'There are yet a few minutes before we need depart. Thou wilt attend me to-day to the Senate, Crispus. Mayhap, it shall be the last time I can command thy services.'

And this he said because Crispus had his freedom promised, and that very day the secretary was to bring the papers for Sabinus's signing.

Now Crispus lifted the curtain and bade me enter.

'I will keep the door,' he murmured softly. 'None shall hear thee speak,' and with that he went without and I made obeisance to Sabinus.

'Why, Nyria, is it thou ? ' he said. 'Come hither. I looked not to see thee. What wild fancy is this thou hast culled ? '

'May it please thee, lord, it is not fancy,' I answered, drawing near shyly and scarce lifting mine eyes from the ground. 'Oh, may it please thee, Sabinus, 'tis true that danger doth threaten thee. Thou knowest death hath been rife in Rome and one hath told me that 'tis my master—thou, oh lord—who hast been singled out for the next victim.'

Sabinus did not answer. The silence seemed so long that at last I lifted my head.

'Is that so ? ' he said slowly, and to me he seemed most strangely calm. 'Ah ! then, death comes but once, and none shall say Sabinus shrank from meeting it.'

I knew not what to say, and fell on my knees and caught his hands, 'But may it please thee, lord,' I cried. . . . 'Oh, forgive me, for Nyria knoweth well it is not thus that she should speak with thee. But thou knowest, lord, that Nyria hath ever told the truth and repeateth no wild tales. 'Tis true—'tis true—alack ! And even now the dogs of death may be upon thy steps. Oh, save thyself, Sabinus, for thine own sake—for Rome's sake——"

He shook his head sadly and his fingers closed over mine in a kind pressure.

'For mine own sake I would not flee, Nyria, seeing that death may give

one greater happiness than life, and for Rome's sake why should I flee? If Rome doth murder her sons—well, then her sons, even in death, must submit unto her will.'

'But, lord,' I cried, my mind full of all Alexamenos had told me, 'there is yet time. There are vessels in the Tiber any one of which would serve thy purpose. But one—the *Goat and Star*—hath a loyal master-mariner on board, who will not see injustice done without putting forth a finger to save the victim. Thou hast but to hasten in disguise down to the Quay. Crispus is thy faithful slave, and I—even such as I am—would aid thee if 'twere possible.'

'Thou hast a loyal little heart, Nyria. But Romans do not flee when danger threatens. See, child, do not weep. I am strong enough to bear whatsoever shall come upon me. . . . But now I must haste me to the Senate. Fear not. None shall know that thou hast spoken unto me.' He looked at me very gravely for a minute or two, then raised me to my feet.

'I am fortunate indeed to whom such faithful service is rendered and 'tis for such as thee and Crispus that Sabinus will be called upon to suffer. For know, Nyria, that the only excuse they can make is to lay upon me the charge of heresy, seeing I have tried to make the laws of Rome more easy for the noblest of her servitors.'

I looked at Sabinus, and verily he seemed to me most noble himself as he stood there, his face grave and unsmiling, and with a kingly look of kindness in his eyes. He was fully dressed—even to his toga—and round his neck and shoulders, falling in the broad purple band to his feet, was the sign of the Senatorship—the laticlave.[1]

But I could say nothing to move him, for to all I said he only shook his head and smiled.

'I ask not who has told thee this, Nyria,' he said, when I set before him that the news I had brought was from a reliable source and should in all reason be heeded—'for whoever did tell thee this, doubtless would not like his name to be known. But tell him, whoe'er he be, that Sabinus thanks him for his warning and takes it in right good part. Nevertheless, that 'twould not be well for Sabinus to avail himself of it. A Senator I am and as a Senator must meet whatever comes upon the Senate. Ill would it be for Rome if those who be set to guide her erring footsteps forsook their task.'

He put his hand kindly round my shoulders and pressed me to him for a moment.

'Weep not, little maid. Mayhap 'twill not be so terrible after all, though, in very truth, I fear me thou hast spoken but half of what may be. Thou art a brave child, but thou must needs be braver still to face the storm-clouds which may yet gather over Rome.'

I hushed me, though I still longed to save him, and then he called, 'Crispus.' The curtain opened in the doorway and Crispus stood there. He glanced from me to Sabinus, and I saw his face change, for Sabinus was adjusting his toga ready to depart.

Then as Sabinus strode from the door and a dozen or so of the slaves congregated about his path, he turned to them and said:

'Take ye heed and be witnesses. From to-day Crispus is free,' and Crispus made obeisance behind him and followed sadly in his steps."

[1] The Laticlave. See Appendix 40, Bk. II.

CHAPTER XIII

A Mandate from Cæsar

Nyria tells of the last banquet given in the House of Julia when a band of Prætorians under the command of Alexamenos, bearing the mandate of Cæsar, take Sabinus to the Tullianum there to await the Emperor's pleasure: and further, of her meeting with Domitilla who offers to take her where she may find, in the Christian faith, comfort for her soul: and of Stephanus's reluctant consent to her accompanying Domitilla.

Nyria: "There was to be a banquet that night. Not a large banquet, but Julia had a dozen or so of guests coming. They did not dine in the great banqueting-hall but in one of the lesser ones, which gave somewhat more to occupy me, for I had to arrange the flowers for the table and to prepare for Julia's apparelling.

I did all the things I had to do, and towards evening Julia made a sumptuous robing. She had a fancy for wearing blue that night . . . a bright, brilliant blue of royal colour, made of a wondrous soft silk embroidered in a deeper shade with large designs of dragon's heads and flowers. Round her neck she wore ropes of coral and pearls. Her under-robe was white . . . of gauze or finest silk, caught in a golden girdle at the waist, and falling in close folds over her ample bust and so to her feet. It was bordered with gold and edged with a heavy golden fringe. She had on wondrous golden sandals gemmed with large blue stones. Her hair was towered very high and upon her forehead, set in a golden fillet, she wore a great ruby Domitian had given her. 'Twas like a blood-red eye: and seemed to me to be terrifying . . . somewhat like to Domitian himself.

I had not heard any more about Sabinus, but I gathered from one of the other slaves that he had come back and Crispus with him. He had been kept very late and I think he could not have had time to perform his apparelling on returning, for when I saw him in the atrium receiving those who had come to dine with him he still wore the purple badge of office.

I do not remember who was there because I was rather confused in my mind that night, but Plinius came without his wife and two or three of the Senate, I think—though I forget their names—and there were some women. but none were of high account.

It was the sort of banquet that Julia loved, where all the men listened to her words and made much of her. Sabinus was very courtly and very quiet: and I waited behind Julia's chair.

'Twas towards the end of the banquet that mine ear caught a sound which filled me with dread. It was the tramp of soldiers. I could not help listening, but the murmur was at once subdued without. And yet it seemed to me that Sabinus had heard it too, for though his face scarcely

changed he turned to Vibius, who stood behind him, and said, 'Go thither and see who cometh.'

Crispus drew close to his other side and I saw him glance at me across the table.

Julia's shoulders moved suddenly and she half-turned her head and then she began to talk and laugh very loudly with him who sat next her. But the guests had gathered that something was happening and the conversation flagged, so that when Vibius returned, silence fell.

He came up the room and bowed before his master.

'May it please thee, Sabinus, Alexamenos waiteth without. He hath brought a mandate from the Emperor.'

Sabinus's hands rested upon the table. He rose, and steadying himself by them—'Bid Alexamenos enter,' was all he said.

I was sore frightened and clung to the back of Julia's chair while Vibius went out in that awful silence and came back presently; and then, behind him, I saw Alexamenos who came up bearing a scroll in one hand and his helmet in the other: and the scroll bore Domitian's seal.

'Greeting, O Sabinus,' he said.

'Greeting, Alexamenos,' answered my master. 'What hath the Emperor's pleasure?'

'Domitian sendeth thee this. Read for thyself,' said Alexamenos: and offered the scroll upon his knee.

Sabinus took the scroll and with his stilus broke the string and unrolled it. He read it through without a change in his face: and then he half-rolled it together again. Julia was watching him with her eyes staring out of her face. This Crispus told me afterwards, for I could not see her. I was watching my master. He looked long and earnestly at Julia and in his gaze there seemed to be much that mine eyes could not read.

'What saith the Emperor?' cried Julia sharply.

For answer Sabinus laid the scroll upon a salver beside him and handed it to Vibius.

'Take that to thy lady. 'Twill perchance interest her,' he said, and then his look went round the table.

'My friends, it is the Emperor's pleasure that I be conveyed hence by four quarternions of soldiers to the Tullianum, there to await his pleasure.'

A murmur ran round the table, partly of indignation, chiefly of curiosity.

'What hast thou done, Sabinus?' cried one man with a harsh laugh.

'I have served my country and her children,' said Sabinus. ''Tis for this Domitian would fain serve me now.'

Then he paused a moment and afterwards put out his hand for his toga which lay across the back of his chair. Crispus gathered it and laid it on his shoulders, stooping to arrange it.

Sabinus looked in a blind sort of way round the room. The slaves, other than the table-servants, were pressing in at the door and he saw their faces which all were sorely troubled. From one to the other he looked and then he said:

'My children' . . . and it seemed to me his voice broke. 'May the gods protect ye all,' he said. 'The gods are good and just, though man be evil': and putting his hand to his waist, he felt the hand of Crispus arranging the folds of his toga and laid his own upon it, looking down as if he would see who touched him.

'Ah! Crispus, my son,' he said: and holding Crispus's hand he drew

him from his feet and looked at him. Then a sudden thought seemed to strike him. 'The papers, Crispus,' he said. 'Let them be fetched.'

'Oh! not now . . . not now, my lord,' cried Crispus.

'Ay, Crispus,' said my master, 'lest it be too late. Are they prepared?'

Crispus nodded: and Sabinus, turning, gave an order to another man, bidding him fetch the chief secretary who was even then standing in the doorway.

The man went out and Sabinus turned.

'Thy grace, Alexamenos,' he said . . . 'thy grace and Domitian's, for a moment, while I secure the freedom of this faithful son of mine.'

Alexamenos only bowed. He had spoken no word since he gave the Emperor's mandate and, to me, he looked most sorrowful—though in a soldier-like way—as he stood there holding his helmet and with his uncovered head bent, waiting Sabinus's pleasure. Just then, there was a stir at the door and the slaves parted to make room for the secretary, who brought the papers and a pen and horn and laid them on the table. Sabinus pushed away his drinking cup to make room for them.

'See, Crispus,' he said kindly. 'Come and read over my shoulder that these letters be without fault and do secure thee that which thou deservest.'

But Crispus did not answer. He could not. Yet he drew near and obeyed as Sabinus told him, while Sabinus added his signature.

'May I crave the kind indulgence of two of my friends,' he said looking round the table, 'that they will put their hand to this paper and witness a traitor's signature for the freedom of an honest man. . . .'

Plinius and one other got up and went round and signed it. I think Plinius felt very sad, for his face was sorrowful, and when he laid down the pen, he put out his hand to Sabinus, who took it in silence and embraced him. When the paper was signed Crispus took it, on his knee, and drew away, holding it within his tunic, and then Sabinus, with Alexamenos following close behind him, went round the table towards Julia.

'Fare thee well,' he said. 'Some day perchance, thou mayst know who loved thee best.'

Julia looked at him in a kind of astonished, startled, frightened way. She had not spoken.

'Cease from thy sentiment,' she cried, bending forward and speaking hurriedly. 'Thou art unnerved, Sabinus. 'Tis but some freak of Domitian's. To-morrow thou wilt be back again.'

'To-morrow,' he answered. 'Ah, who can count upon to-morrow! Yet would I not wish to return, Julia, if thou wouldst not care to welcome me.'

He stood before her for a moment: and then he held out his hands and seemed as if he would have taken hers. But Julia shrank from him.

'Go, go,' she cried. 'Go, if thou must. Thou knowest that I never like scenes, Sabinus—I—I—am not well. This play-acting doth upset me,' and in truth she looked faint: and sank back in her chair. She had half risen.

He still held out his hands, but seeing she made no movement towards him, he dropped them, and said softly, 'Fare thee well, Julia.'

Then seeing that I stood sobbing behind her chair, for I could not help it, he laid his hand upon my head.

'What! Nyria,' he said. 'So soon it hath come, child.' But that was in a low tone only meant for me to hear. 'Take courage, Nyria, for the gods

send no trial without strength to meet it.' . . . 'Yet fain would I pause. . . . I would that I had thought me of thy freedom, Nyria,' and with his hands still upon my head:

'Julia, wilt thou grant me one last request?'

'What is it?' she murmured pettishly behind the folds of her handkerchief which she was stuffing into her mouth. It seemed to me that Julia was on the verge of hysterics. 'Wilt thou grant Nyria her freedom? I ask it of thee.'

Julia looked at him and for a moment she seemed inclined to accede, while my heart trembled high with hope and everybody seemed to be listening, and then she answered sulkily: 'I promise naught, but I will think of it.'

Sabinus looked at her and then at me. 'The gods will protect thee, Nyria, for they are gods not only of the rich and free but of the poor slaves.'

I stopped and kissed the border of his garment, and it seemed while his hand was yet upon my head that he was gone. I heard the tread of Alexamenos's feet behind him; and presently the clang of arms in the atrium, where the four quaternions waited, as the men must have drawn around him.

I went out, and we all stood in the atrium. Many of the slaves were there and the space seemed crowded with soldiers. Sabinus had taken his place in the midst of them.

Being only little, I could not see over the heads of the crowd, but I could see Alexamenos's head because he was so tall and I recognised his voice when I heard him give the word of command. I looked to hear him speak kindly to Sabinus—to say, mayhap, that he grieved to serve him so. But I heard no such word, and, in truth, I scarce knew this Alexamenos, whose jaw was grim and whose eyes were like blue fire.

The men were strong too—well drilled and kept their line, making a goodly block, and the armour about their feet clanged as they ground their short spears when Alexamenos came out.

Some of the slaves were sobbing and many were whispering together, but some were struck to silence, for Sabinus said no word after he had cried farewell as he passed through them, and even to me he turned not again. And I saw his face as he went forth with the men and methought he looked like one who visioned that which we saw not. Alexamenos did not notice me either, though then I was not far from him, for Crispus, who had been before me, put his arm round me and took me in front of him, and all of us had left the table.

But presently the voice of Julia called us back.

'Where went those dogs?' we heard her shout. 'Curious gazers, what would ye see? Hath no mandate from Domitian ever come to this house before?'

But we shuddered, for none like that had come: and as I ran back she struck me over the mouth with her fan and cried:

'A pretty thing truly to grant freedom to such as thou who dost but stare about thee, and look out for some new thing to idle over.' And the blood spurted from my mouth, for the fan was carved ivory and cut me: and the table servants went on waiting, hurriedly pouring the wine and serving the fruit, for it was near the end of the meal.

Julia drank much wine and talked a great deal and laughed too. But her

laugh was not easy, and to me it seemed that Julia was half frightened at what she had done.

But the guests for the most part fell in with her mood and answered her sallies, but none spake of Sabinus. Only Plinius half rose from his end of the table where he was near to Julia. He had seemed in ill plight, not knowing whether to be seated again : and, when for a moment he sat down and his hand played with the pearl and silver knife set for the fruit as though he would break it, he appeared not to know what he was doing : and when Vibius filled his cup he drank it off hurriedly. Then Julia, turning to him, rallied him upon his silence and, setting down the cup, he rose and made her a courtly bow.

'I pray thee have me excused, Julia,' he said, and this without giving a reason for leaving her : and Julia looked at him angrily, for the eyes of Plinius were fixed upon her face as it seemed to me in scorn, so that Julia dropped her own eyes and did not question him : and Plinius threw his toga over his arm and left the room.

Crispus told me afterwards that Plinius saw him in the atrium as he passed, and Crispus asked : 'Art thou going, lord ? Shall I call thy litter ? '

'Of thy courtesy yes, friend,' Plinius answered.

'But wilt thou not await the mimes, for Julia hath entertainers as usual ? ' And Plinius shook his head.

' 'Tis no longer a house for honest men,' he said : 'and seeing sorrow hath befallen the master it ill befits his guests to witness mimes.'

Crispus did naught save to bow his head. But he called the litter.

'Thou art the fellow who hath been freed and wilt be going hence thyself, good friend,' said Plinius ere he stepped into it ? And Crispus answered 'Yes. Nevertheless,' he said, 'I would remain long enough to see whether Sabinus doth return.'

'Sabinus will not return,' said Plinius gravely. 'Thou and I will follow him some day, friend Crispus, and go where he hath gone, but the gods grant it be by another road.' And with that he waved his hand to Crispus, and the bearers bore him off, with the torch-men preceding him, and Crispus came back into the atrium."

. . . . . .

NYRIA (resuming) :

"Crispus told me on the morrow what Plinius had said, and we twain longed the more to know what had happened to Sabinus—and what might yet hap. . . .

But there was naught that we could gather, though Crispus went down into the city and made many enquiries. For such doings were ever veiled in mystery, and naught public was given until notices were read in the Senate that a traitor had met with the due punishment of his offence : and Crispus told me this would be the first we should hear of our master.

I looked to see Alexamenos and even hung about the gates waiting lest he should come, so that Thanna cried scorn upon me and said I could not expect every new lover to be like Stephanus. But I cared not what Thanna said. It did hap that Stephanus came to see me, and I bade him make enquiries, but that was without avail.

Now Domitian came not near the house, for thou knowest that at such a time it would have ill beseemed the Emperor, by whose command the deed was done, that he should visit the victim's wife. . . . Domitian was too

wise for that. . . . And Julia, who seemed better, grew peevish when the Emperor came not and was continually sending missives to the Palace. But to these Domitian gave no answer, until at length he sent a scroll with which Julia was so disappointed that she let it lie upon the floor unrolled and seemingly forgot it . . . or was so angered that she would not again look at it. And Thanna snatched and hid the scroll in her robe, and took it out with her to find out what was therein. Thanna could not read herself, and only one or two of the slaves could read . . . except such as were secretaries. . . . Aemilia could read, but she would not touch the scroll and would have cried shame on Thanna. But Thanna found one to translate for her the Emperor's words, and was too full of them to keep silence, so that by the hints she gave we gathered that Domitian had bade Julia be patient . . . adding that the gods were working for him and her and that she had yet to learn that there were fitting times and seasons for the Emperor's visits, and that this was not one of them.

Many things happened during these few days, but nothing of great import. I did not go out much for I was too eager lest Sabinus should return ; and I went not up to the Coelian. Crispus bore messages for me to Aeola, and once Aeola came to see me. She said Valeria was much better and went out a great deal, but never took her maidens—not even Aeola—with her.

Now I would tell thee that Crispus still remained in the slaves' court. Thou knowest, Sabinus would never have wanted him to go but would always have let him have a room there, though after he was freed he had no right to stay in the court unless by favour. But thechief steward, Vibius, who was responsible, was a friend of Crispus ; and Julia would not concern herself about such matters.

Yet because of what came after, it would be well to note that Crispus had taken away all his goods. This because he was attending the school of gladiators . . . and also that he treasured very closely his papers of freedom. In the ordinary way he would have kept them, I think, in a little bag round his neck. But the gladiators had to strip and at the school one dared not leave things one valued in the dressing-rooms lest they be stolen. So Crispus secreted them somewhere in the place . . . but where he did not tell even me.

Sabinus had a way which few masters had in Rome . . . nay, I know not of any other that did so. But thou knowest it was his will to protect the slaves, and by his command there was a portion reserved in the room where he kept his own valuables—a set of shelves with places, each place marked with the name of the slave in his household : and within this were any things of value belonging to that slave. The whole was under the care of the chief steward and of Sabinus himself who oft-times went over the contents of these cases in the presence of their owners, if he knew that any such ones had papers or property of value. For he was wont to say that unless a poor slave should retain such things with care, he had no means, perhaps, to prove his birth or claim to whatsoever the law might give him.

Thou knowest that much would lie in the power of the chief steward, who if he were not honest could do great harm. But Vibius was a good fellow and Sabinus trusted him, though methinks he loved Crispus best. Likewise, Vibius was a senior type of servant : he had been Sabinus's slave for many years and wore the mark of the family. I would tell thee that though for all the slaves the livery was of the same colours, yet for the upper-servants

there were more bands upon it and if an upper-servant had done anything so to entitle him he would have a small gold badge upon his shoulder. Cæsar's servants would have a gold eagle, and then the eagle would have stripes . . . one, two or three . . . below it. Cæsar had two eagles with open wings. Now Sabinus was of royal blood, but none save those in the direct line were entitled to wear the eagle with open wings. In certain degrees the eagle was represented with closed wings and for lesser branches there would be only the eagle's head. In Sabinus's family, the mark was the eagle with folded wings . . . the one eagle, and the eagle had a thing in its mouth, going across . . . a weapon perhaps. 'Twas the sign of somewhat Sabinus's family had done. These marks made the difference in the family.

It may have been that Crispus left his papers in the care of Vibius. . . . I know not, but I would have thee make note of all this because when the quæstors came down to take charge for Cæsar, they would have taken claim of all these goods and papers, and if it were not that Crispus could have proved his freedom, he had been sold like the rest of us. More especially, some said, seeing that to free him was the last act of Sabinus, and that thereat would Cæsar have been much angered. Moreover, Crispus was a fine body-servant and Cæsar had like to have made claim on him.

Well, that is all about that.

Now, I mind me of going down once to the shop of Stephanus, for he had not come up with such news as I thought he might bring and I was eager to know. 'Twas while I was there with him that the lady Domitilla came . . . not in her litter, but walking unattended save by a handmaiden whom she kept by her side. Stephanus bowed low before her and welcomed her at the door. He gave the handmaiden a seat near the entrance, and Domitilla came within and I stood in her presence and would have withdrawn, but she called me to her and said:

'Is not this the maid of whom thou hast spoken?' And when Stephanus answered 'Tis Nyria, lady,' she answered, 'Yea, I thought I knew her face.' For I had been to her house once with Stephanus and she had received me very kindly. Now she questioned me about my master and seemed sore troubled and spake most feelingly, and she asked me did I love my master?

I told her 'Yea,' and also all that we feared for Sabinus. To the which she listened kindly, and seeing I was sore troubled she said to me, 'Fear not those that can destroy the body, child, but fear those who fain would slay the soul. For though the earthly powers of evil beset poor Sabinus so that his place here may know him no more, yet shall the powers of life uphold him. For Sabinus was a good man and true and would fain have served all goodness and truth, though he called them by false names . . .' meaning, methinks, his gods.

I answered not, for I knew not what to say: and seeing my downcast face she said to me:

'Thou dost stand in need of comfort, child, as do we all in times of darkness and sorrow': and then she bade me go to her, for she could take me, she said, where I should find solace for my soul and light should come upon me.

But I knew not half she said, and, seeing Stephanus shrink somewhat, put my hand in his and said:

'What wilt thou I should do, Stephanus?' and he looked confused and answered me:

'Go to the lady Domitilla, Nyria. Nevertheless, Domina, thou knowest

Nyria is dear to me and these paths that thou and Flavius Clemens do tread are beset with thorns.'

'Ah, friend Stephanus,' she answered, 'the Lord give thee greater faith. Albeit I would not steal the maid from thee.'

Stephanus shook his head and answered:

'Thou art gracious, lady, and I would that Nyria were in all things like to thee . . . save only in this.' And the lady answered not for a minute: and then she said:

'Thou too shalt be one of us some day, Stephanus, though it may not be yet, and haply the hand of this little maid shall lead thee.'

Then rising, she drew her palla about her and folded it crosswise round her throat, and looking closely at me she said: 'Thou art fair, child, and young. 'Tis in thy youth and fairness that thou shouldst give thyself to higher things. For it is the young and the fair that we desire to be the first-fruits of our harvest to the Lord.'

But Stephanus took my hand and clutched me tightly to him. He bowed low as the lady went and did attend her to the door, but he kept me by his side, and when she had gone he looked at me and said: 'Of a truth, Nyria, thou art the first-fruits of my heart and the first-fruits of all that is best and most beautiful in Rome. But if this god of the Christians demandeth such as thee to be sacrificed unto him, then is he no better than the gods of Greece and Rome who open their capacious maws for all that they can obtain.'

Then, after the Domina Domitilla had left the shop, I said to Stephanus: 'Where did the lady wish to take me?' And he answered me, 'Thou art over-curious, Nyria. It ill beseemeth a maid thus to interest herself in the meanings of any chance lady that doth come. Things had like have gone better with thee if thou hadst not paid such attention to Valeria.'

At the which I opened my eyes: and I said, 'But Stephanus, we will let Valeria lie, for thou dost dislike her; but yet thou canst not say aught ill of the lady Domitilla, for thou dost love and serve her.'

He answered:

'Ay . . . that do I . . . none better. But 'tis not for thee to do likewise, Nyria.'

Then I said: ''Tis not of that I would speak. But thou knowest she did address me kindly and would have taken me some-whither, and I would know whereof she spoke when she said she would lead me where I should find comfort for my soul. For in truth one needeth comfort.'

And Stephanus, who was busying himself at the other side of the dresser, turned and came towards me with his arms held out.

'Thou shouldst find comfort here, Nyria; for in my heart there is more of rest and solace for thee than thou wilt find elsewhere.'

I put my hands in his so as to avoid his arm around me, and I said: 'Ay, Stephanus, that I know right well. Nevertheless, it did seem to me that 'twas not of such human comfort that the lady Domitilla spake. Now would I know whether 'tis to the service of some god that she was drawing me. I would follow her, Stephanus, for she seemed so kind.'

But Stephanus's face grew dark. 'I would not have thee listen to aught of this, Nyria,' he made answer. 'There is no comfort in the service of any god, Greek or Roman, or even such as he whom the lady Domitilla doth serve.'

'Ah! indeed then,' I said, 'she hath her own most favoured god?'

Then Stephanus held me closer to him and looked into my face. 'No, I will tell thee the truth,' he said, 'for thou art as my own soul, Nyria.

It ill beseems one who is a faithful servitor to betray his mistress's secrets, but thou art staunch and true and, verily, I feel towards thee as though thou wert my own flesh and blood. Canst keep thy lips closed over such as I would tell thee . . . even as Stephanus himself ? '

To which I nodded. ' Thou dost know me, Stephanus ? Tell me not if thou dost not trust me.'

' Nay, Nyria, there is naught with which I would not trust thee,' he said, kissing me fondly. . . . But I thought not of the kiss just then, for I wanted to hear what he would say. ' The lady Domitilla is a Christian,' he answered.

' One of that strange sect ? ' I asked.

' Yea, verily,' he answered. ' Be satisfied now, Nyria, and ask no more.'

' Nay but . . .' I said, ' if 'tis indeed this which doth bring that great and beautiful peace to her face, how wouldst thou bid me not question, Stephanus, seeing I would fain learn somewhat of it myself ? '

' The creed of the Christians is not for such as thou, Nyria,' he made answer. ' It is beset with too much danger for the poor and lowly-placed. Leave it to those who are stronger to protect themselves.'

Yet I had heard said that it is among the poor and lowly-placed this creed is most spreading, and that I told Stephanus. He was a little angered with me and though I knew that I could almost always persuade him to my wishes, I saw that this time it would be more difficult. So I said, ' I would not go against thee, Stephanus, for well I know thy care for me. But I have long desired to learn more of these people. Lo ! see, I will trust thee, Stephanus, even as thou hast trusted me ' : and then I told him that it had seemed to me that this might be the faith of the great stranger whom I had met upon the hill.

' Thou dost speak of Clement,' he answered—' him they call the bishop. Yea, a goodly man, both in looks and presence and likewise in his soul, as I have heard, for Flavius Clemens and Domitilla think well of him, and would fain he had the upbringing of their sons of whom Cæsar hath taken charge. But Clement saith that their god doth command loyalty to Cæsar, therefore is Domitilla somewhat comforted.'

' I love thy lady, Stephanus,' I said, drawing close to him. ' Wilt thou not take me whither she would have me go ? '

' Thou dost ask too much of me, Nyria. No, I will not lead thee to what may prove thy destruction.'

' But since Domitilla goeth that way herself,' I said, ' why may not Nyria ? '

' Domitilla is a great lady and must do as she will. But thou art but a little slave-girl whom poor Stephanus can only protect by such means as are in his power.'

' Hast thou ever been there thyself, Stephanus ? ' I questioned.

' Nay now, I will have naught of these questions, Nyria,' he said and loosed his hold.

' Now, I see thou dost not care for me, Stephanus,' I answered, drawing away. ' If thou didst, thou wouldst satisfy my mind.'

He made a great growl in his beard and looked at me for a minute as if he were torn in twain. ' Thou knowest that I care for thee, Nyria. Thou art the light of my eyes—the one true goddess of my soul. If the law of Rome or of the old Greek faith bade Stephanus worship Nyria, that would he do right willingly though men say he bends the knee to none. But he

doth it to thee, and thou dost ill requite such service, Nyria, in speaking thus.'

'I meant no harm, Stephanus,' I said. But he put his arms strongly around me and said:

'Wilt be my wife, Nyria? Say "yes" to that one little question of mine, and then will I answer whatsoever thou dost ask of me.'

'Nay, if thou wouldst bargain, Stephanus, I'll go elsewhere with mine enquiries,' I said. 'Thou hast talked enough of marriage.' We were very quiet for a minute and Stephanus went to the door and stood looking out with his back to me while I packed together in my basket the packages he had given me for Euphena. Presently he turned him round and said:

'Thou wouldst beguile even Cerberus. Say, Nyria. If I do favour thy request and take thee to the lady Domitilla and whither she would have thee go, wilt thou then look more kindly on my suit?'

I felt greatly pleased, for, after all, Stephanus was not so difficult to manage if thou wert only a little kind to him. But I could make no pledge, I said, for I might not break my word and I would not bind myself.

'Things of air and sunshine cannot be bound,' he answered: 'and thou art verily some white fairy of the hills—and not a human maid. Nevertheless, I know thy conscience and thy tender heart, Nyria, and I will trust thee, for I am liker to win thy favour by thus serving thee.'

'Then will I come and meet thee to-night by the steps of the Aventine,' I said. . . . 'Thou knowest the flight of steps cut in the rock just below Julia's house that went down to the street. . . .' And Stephanus answered that he would take me if it were the lady Domitilla's pleasure: and with that I was fain to be content."

CHAPTER XIV

The Poisoned Cup

Nyria tells of how Phyllis, Domitian's nurse, visited Julia: of how the maid Lavinia partook of a poisoned cup intended for the Empress: and of how Euphena warned Nyria against going to the house of Bishop Clement with Domitilla.

Nyria: "When I got back to the house, I found that Julia had sent for Phyllis, Domitian's nurse.[1] Now Phyllis, having been Domitian's foster-mother, knew much of what was in his mind, though at times when his mood was ill, he seemed to scorn her. Yet often would Cæsar go and talk with Phyllis, like, 'twas said, the nurseling he once had been.

I wanted to tell thee about Phyllis.

She was an old woman, though not old like Euphena—for she was still comely, and had a gentle, kindly face. She loved Domitian—I should think she was the only person who did—and she had her own rooms in the Palace and was well provided for, but she thought more of a visit from Domitian than of anything else. She had nursed Julia too, and if aught kind could be said of Julia it came from Phyllis. But some there were who said that Phyllis was like many another woman-fool and made excuses that had no truth in them because she loved these two. Yet, I think that Phyllis knew more than she would talk of. She seldom talked to anyone. But after all these things were told about Julia and the slaves gossiped of them, I remember Thanna saying: 'Now, why waste words in idle conjecture. Go question Phyllis if thou wouldst know the truth.' But Phyllis would not have told them, though if indeed Julia was not the Emperor's daughter she must have known it.

I myself saw Phyllis seldom, for she was never in Cæsar's presence when we went to the Palace. That which Phyllis loved most to see was when Domitian went forth in state. Then Phyllis would stand foremost of the crowd and feel herself rewarded if he cast a glance that way. But he seldom did. And Julia was cruel to her. She would call her 'Crone' and laugh her to scorn. Yet Phyllis did not seem to mind. She was far too gentle to belong to either Domitian or Julia. She seemed like a person who had been nurse to two wild creatures.

She hated Domitia, because Domitia had once said to her that she owed her a grudge for not having let Domitian die in infancy.

She seemed to be no great person. Withal, she had her own litter and her bearers and suitable attendance, for the which Domitian paid—it went into the Palace costs.

Now, Aemilia told me that Julia, worrying herself into a fever, had taken to her bed again, and being unable to obtain speech with Domitian

[1] Phyllis, the nurse of Domitian and Julia. See Appendix 41, Bk. II.

had sent messengers in haste to Phyllis bidding her come. Even ere I returned, Phyllis was then having audience.

Whereon, I sat without upon the steps, and talked with Aemilia who seemed to think that Julia was more ill than had appeared.

'But she is strong,' I said. 'Wherefore dost thou think there can be aught wrong with Julia?'

And Aemilia shook her head and said, 'Nay, I know not. None knoweth save Euphena. But I like not the look of her.'

'Mayhap Phyllis will be a better medicine for her than Euphena's potions,' said I.

Aemilia looked round over her shoulder to be sure no one was listening.

'I like not to speak ill of Euphena, but it doth mistrust me that she should give so many potions to Julia.'

'Thou hadst best not speak ill of Euphena,' I said. 'At least, she maketh me suffer when I have so much as thought ill of her. But what can these potions be? Doth she not purchase them of Stephanus, and he is not like to sell her aught that might make mischief.'

'Nay,' said Aemilia, 'she doth concoct these herself, and where she buyeth the drugs none can tell. But methinks they are no bought drugs at all, but stewed berries that she hath gathered herself.'

'None knoweth what Euphena may do,' I answered, 'but it would ill serve her to serve Julia ill.''

'Hush thee,' said Aemilia. 'Here she cometh,' and then we saw Euphena turning round the corner. Her old head was bent forward and she had a searching gaze in her eyes. At first she took no heed of us, but drawing near to the door of Julia's room, she peered within and, hearing voices, came back to where Aemilia and I sat.

'Whom hath Julia with her?' she asked.

''Tis Phyllis,' answered Aemilia. 'Didst thou not see her bearers?'

'Nay, I take no heed of such as carry the bodies of them that are too lazy to walk,' said Euphena. 'The day will come when Phyllis—ay, and Julia herself—would be glad enough to set foot to earth and may not. Why should they be borne in a litter, forsooth! when such as I must needs stagger along as best I may?'

And Euphena sat her down beside us and unfolding her blanket—for the day was chilly and 'twas drawing on towards late afternoon—she laid it across her shoulders.

None of us spoke for a minute, and, presently, Euphena looked round at us over her shoulder, drawing her thin, shrivelled mouth back upon her gums—she had two black-looking teeth that hung down on either side from the upper jaw and gave her a fierce appearance.

'Well, and what pretty thoughts do occupy these my dainty ladies?' said she. 'Truly thou art cheerful company.'

'Nay, we do depend on thee to cheer us, Euphena,' said Aemilia with a little laugh—I think she was half afraid of Euphena.

'Ay, in truth I will cheer thee. I will cheer thee with fine doings, but it may not be yet. Thou shalt see as fine a funeral pageant as thou hast ever set eyes upon—but not to-night—no—nor to-morrow. Yet keep thyself prepared for the majesty of this great one who shall pass into the realms of shades that thou mayst with all right reverence, as beseemeth slaves, bid her farewell and a lucky journey.'

Aemilia shivered. I saw she did not like Euphena's talk.

'A pretty thing indeed,' said Euphena, jerking her head towards Julia's room—'that she who doth depend so much upon Euphena should turn to such as Phyllis. But 'tis ever so. The minds of those that near their final ending do cling to their beginnings.'

Aemilia looked anxiously at her. 'Thou art taking good care of Julia, art thou not, Euphena?' she said.

Euphena laughed. It was a harsh chuckle—something like uncooked peas rattling in a pan. 'Oh, ay—I am the servant of the most high gods and 'tis their righteous pleasure that Julia should be well tended, and as such I obey them. Julia shall lack for naught. Right merrily shall she be clad and sped upon her way.'

'I like not thy talk,' began Aemilia. 'Thou dost speak as though Julia's days were numbered.' She stopped and turned round, for in the doorway behind us Phyllis stood.

Now, this side of Julia's rooms looked to the west, so that the sun shone full upon us as we sat, and Euphena in her orange bodice and brown petticoat with the striped blanket lying beside her, looked a strange old creature.

Phyllis was a small woman, but plump, yet with somewhat of dignity, and she looked at Euphena as though she would have scorned her. But Euphena turned slowly and glared upon her.

'Well, hast thou seen thy nurseling?' she said. 'A lovely creature, is she not? She will make a handsome corpse.'

Now Phyllis would have paid no heed to Euphena, but turning to Aemilia she asked: 'What saidst thou? That the lady Julia's days were numbered? Such words are ill-omened, and might perchance but for the mercy of the gods bring their own doom. Yet by the blessing of Aesculapius, she doth seem more at ease, and, in truth, may live many years among us to wear the robes of her desire and rule over such as should be dirt beneath her feet.'

'A pretty thing indeed . . . a pretty thing!' screamed Euphena, 'that such as I am should be called dirt. . . . And yet who be better born than I? . . . Better born, I say, than thou . . . daughter of a small wool-merchant who hast sprung unto a place for which thou wert not fitted. List—list and know that thou dost address thyself to the grand-daughter of Candace.[1]. . . She who was so far above such as thou that she would not have had thee about her feet.'

'Nay, nay, I meant naught,' said Phyllis rather nervously, 'but such talk is not fitting so near the presence of the divine Julia.'

'The divine scavenger!' screamed Euphena. 'A truce to such false tales, thou life-long deceiver. Who changed the babe and swore to Titus that thou wert putting in his arms the daughter of his own loins?—Ay, and who paid the dirty wretch that stole about the Palace and had naught of this world's goods to serve him save his comely visage, which he had ne'er learned to wash before the Augusta looked on him.'

I was puzzled and frightened and I cannot quite remember what Euphena said, but that was the kind of thing. . . .

We looked to see Phyllis silence Euphena as she should have been able to do.

But Phyllis only shivered and drew back a little. She looked round her in a frightened way and her eyes fell before Euphena's.

[1] Candace was Queen of the Ethiopians of Meroe, who invaded Egypt and was defeated by the Roman governor of Egypt, 22 B.C.

Euphena's screaming voice had called others up. I saw Thanna come first. She ran, twisting up her hair as she came, and seeing there was somewhat going on—for Thanna loved a riot only next best to a pleasurable junketing—she called over her shoulder: 'Hither! hither! who would hear Euphena hold her own? What shall we lay on Euphena? Some may back Phyllis but for myself I stand up for the honour of the household. Thy tongue is sharp, Euphena. Stab her with it. See thou makest marks. Again—again.' And this Thanna said from time to time, while Euphena shrieked at Phyllis.

'Hush . . . hush. . . .' cried Phyllis. 'See, I will not stay to hear thee speak so. Will no one call my bearers?' And she looked at me.

I stood, feet rooted to the ground, not knowing which way to turn, and Aemilia had shrunk against the pillar and a great concourse of the slaves had gathered round and stood, with Thanna in their foremost, picking up the speeches of both and throwing in words of laughter on each side.

All seemed to have forgotten that Julia might hear them. Euphena looked as though fire must leap from the glistening black spot in the middle of her yellow eyes, and her two black fangs seemed to gleam against the red of her tongue while she poured forth her fury in words which came so loud and fast that scarce could I piece them together and naught that Phyllis could say or do would stop her.

'Art proud of thy nurslings, Phyllis?' Euphena screamed and jeered. 'Thou bringer-up of monsters who wreak destruction wherever they pass upon the accursed globe. . . . Know that I too had a nursling. . . . I had a babe who hung upon these breasts and that was flesh and blood of mine own and no spawn of the city's scum. . . . And lo, *thy* nursling . . . grown into a monster, snatched my babe from me . . . since it was by her command I was put to labour so cruel that the milk dried up in these withered breasts and I had none to give my little one who died from starving. . . .'

And as she shrieked, Euphena tore open her bodice and shewed her brown shrivelled breasts while she went on taunting Phyllis.

'Oh! ill could that great monster of thine spare a coin from her plenty to provide milk for my starving babe! . . . Mine,' she cried, '. . . my child of pure blood and royal descent, untainted by foul birth or by sin. . . . And thou . . . thou plotting wheedler that wouldst steal that evil-weighted crown from the head of her who, at least, doth lawfully wear it and wouldst place it on the brow of yon low-born. . . .' Euphena spake a word of which I mind me not, save that it was one of shame. . . . 'Thinkest thou,' she went on, 'that Euphena, princess in Ethiopia, can ever forget how this Julia who doth forsake the lawful embraces not seasoned to her taste, for those which reek of gaudy lust . . . how this scavenger's daughter did first sever me from him who was my own true spouse and then did bid me throw the body of our babe upon the dustman's refuse-cart to be carried without the city walls. . . . A . . . ah!' she shrieked again. 'Soon shall Julia have the burying which she denied to my child! . . .'

Phyllis had shrunk back trembling while Euphena talked, but the last words had scarcely fallen from Euphena's lips when there was a stir and Julia stood in the doorway, in an embroidered wrapper, looking very tall and flushed yet seeming not to be strong, for she clutched at the wall for support.

'What mean these unseemly sounds?' she cried. 'How darest thou, scum of the earth, disturb my rest?'

Phyllis turned towards her and held out her hands which were shaking,

and she could not speak. Julia did not at first take note of her but looked round again as if in a maze.

Euphena had crept whining to her feet. 'This wise Phyllis,' she said, 'who is so devoted to thee, O divine Julia, hath in most strange unwisdom been exclaiming at thy condition, wondering what ill hath chanced upon thee and that the gods should visit thee at one and the same time with so much sorrow, seeing that Sabinus hath left thee and that thou art sick . . . ay, sick unto death . . . methinks Phyllis said. . . . Did she not say sick unto death ?' cried Euphena, looking round and clinging to the border of Julia's robe.

Julia looked down upon her in a sort of horror—trying to draw her skirt away yet seeming half-afraid of Euphena.

'Thou hag,' she said slowly. 'The gods alone know when thou liest. How shall one believe thee ?'

Phyllis was sobbing in silence behind her.

'Nay, nay, I speak but the truth,' said Euphena. 'Sick unto death . . . that was the word . . . or, at least, so meseemed—and if none spoke it some thought it . . . and thou knowest, Julia, the mind of Euphena can read the thoughts of men.'

She looked up at Julia with her yellow eyes and again Julia seemed fascinated before her. The other slaves were drawing back, afraid of being punished if they remained and yet eager to see what might follow.

Julia said nothing.

'The mind of Euphena doth read that thou art sore disturbed and distressed by this talk which thou dost call unseemly . . .' went on Euphena. 'Get thee to thy couch, oh sweet and stately Julia, and Euphena will come and tend thee. . . . Euphena will sit beside thee and charm around thee such spirits of the air as shall best serve thee now.'

Julia turned and half-disappeared into the room : and then the sound of Phyllis's sobs struck on her ear. She came forth again and held up her hand.

'Get thee gone, Phyllis,' she said."

. . . . . .

NYRIA : "Now there was a thing I wanted to tell thee about Phyllis which I would not myself have believed and methinks thou wouldst not either.

It was when Euphena was shouting and did say that Phyllis would fain snatch the crown and the robes off her who had a lawful right to wear them, that she screamed out, 'Who mixed the cup for Domitia last night ? . . . And who was it that drank in her stead and now doth lie in that silence to which Julia will ere long be hastened ? . . .'

This I mind me to tell thee because there was much talk afterwards about that poisoned cup which Domitia ordered the maid Lavinia to drink before her.

Others among the slaves heard the talk also and busied themselves over the matter : and then one among Julia's bearers was full of somewhat he had gathered from Phyllis's bearers, for there had been gossip within the Palace that day—that Domitia had been like to drink poison when she had dined with Domitian on the previous evening.

The story went that when Domitia asked for wine they brought her a tale that the cask of her favourite vintage was empty and that for some reason another could not be opened. And when she exclaimed bitterly—for Domitia liked that wine—one came with a cup that he said he had

drawn with difficulty as 'twas the end of the cask, and he set it before her. Then Domitia, putting it to her lips, had some sudden thought and craved of Domitian to drink with her, saying it was a special vintage that had been sent her from the south.

But when she bade them carry the cup to Domitian, he shook his head and would not drink although she prayed him most courteously as a favour to his empress and his wife : and then a strange white look came over his face . . . or so they say . . . and he hesitated, with his hand yet upon the cup scarce knowing how to deny her seeing she had pledged him thus courteously. Then Domitia, with great unwisdom seeking to press her advantage, cried, half-rising from her seat.

' Now by the shade of Aelius Lamia I pledge thee, Domitian. Drink to his memory and to me . . . to that past from which thou didst debar him . . . and to that future which, then, thou wouldst fain share with me alone.'

And all those who listened heard the ring of scorn in her voice . . . and Domitian pushed the cup away angrily and would have none of it, crying out :

' A pest upon thee . . . who would pledge by the shade of a dead man. Wouldst have me too join the shades ? 'Tis treason ' : and this he muttered into his own glass confusedly.

But Domitia, seeing she had erred, bade them bring the cup back to her, the which, when she did so, Domitian watched her closely, thinking she was about to drink, and Domitia seeing the look of eagerness upon his face did smile, 'twas said, most disagreeably.

' Nay, now, my lord,' she said, ' I have a fancy to share this last sweet cup with someone and seeing thou wilt not drink with me, we will bid Lavinia in hither.'

Now Lavinia was a maiden who lived with Phyllis—whether granddaughter or niece I know not, but Phyllis loved her. . . . And Domitia, turning to her servers, said :

' Bid the maid Lavinia hither. Tell her it is the will of the Empress that she should drink one cup of wine from the royal table.'

Wherefore, they said, Domitia knew the cup was poisoned and Domitian sat watching her, clutching the end of the table, with his eyes starting from his head. He dared not interfere lest they should say he knew the cup was poisoned. Now he cared naught for Lavinia, but he knew it would go ill with Phyllis if harm befell the maid. . . . I tell thee this as the slaves' gossip that they told us. . . . And then Lavinia came—a humble-looking maid who had naught to recommend her save the charm of youth—with brown hair and a pale face that seemed to flush at the honour done her. And she knelt before Domitia, who gave her the cup, saying :

' Drink, pretty one : and then shall the legend follow thee so that all thy descendants may know how Domitia drank after thee.' . . . For this was great honour from an empress.

And Lavinia raised the cup and drank while the slaves stood round and none durst interfere. But having drunk she gave back the cup into Domitia's hand and rose when Domitia bade her. And Domitia looked to see her fall, but she fell not : and at first Domitia seemed surprised and watched her without speaking, whereat Domitian cried harshly from the other end of the table : ' Art satisfied, thou suspicious fool ? '

But Domitia shook her head and said, ' Nay . . . wait . . . wait.' And the maid thought she bade her wait and stood humbly with hands folded on her breast. But even as she stood, she clutched her side and a

change came over her face : and Domitia watched her but said no word : and the maid reeled and would have fallen had not one caught her from behind. . . . Then, for a moment, she struggled while Domitia kept very still and watched her, but none spoke . . . only Domitian rose from his seat and stood and stared, turning very white and then red.

Domitia waited until the maid's death-struggles were over and then she waved her hand. 'Bear the maid out,' she said. 'Tend her with all fitting honour and bear her straight to Phyllis. Say that the cup hath done its work.'

That was why they talked about Phyllis. But I myself would never have thought that Phyllis could have done this thing. Yet afterward, though Phyllis mourned sore, she dared say naught lest suspicion fall upon her for having mixed the cup.

I did tell thee, I think, that Crispus came to and fro, and I had some speech with him that night. There was much talk going on amongst the slaves, and to me it seemed as though the air were full of troubles and terrors. I could not tell what was about to happen next, and my heart longed for something to lean upon . . . something wherewith I might comfort myself and feel secure.

I began to be afraid that Sabinus would never come back, and Crispus was sore distressed because of rumours that he had gathered at the school and in the Forum on his homeward way. Some said that were not Sabinus a noble Roman he would be sent to the Arena. I could not see why, and Crispus said 'twas most unjust. Crispus had been striving to obtain word with him, but without avail. I thought that perhaps Alexamenos might have arranged that for him. But Crispus knew naught of Alexamenos, and Alexamenos was difficult to obtain audience with. . . . Why I know not, but I have thought, since, he may have feared that some who loved Sabinus might ask for speech with him, and that Alexamenos had not the will to grant it. I did not quite understand Alexamenos, because he had been willing before to save my master. But now that Sabinus was taken prisoner, a strong guard had been placed upon him, and Alexamenos did not come nigh me again. Crispus said it was because his duty forced him : and both Crispus and I were heavy at heart seeing how we feared for Sabinus.

'Go, pray the gods, Nyria, that they protect him,' Crispus said to me. But Crispus did not pray to the gods himself : he cared little for them and I think at heart he was wont to laugh at them as some others did.

Thus my heart was very full that night and it turned to the god of whom the great Clement had spoken to me on the hill and, had I dared, I would have prayed to him for Sabinus. . . . And when the time drew on at which Stephanus had said he would fetch me, I grew uneasy, fearing that Julia would retain me about her. So I went in and Aemilia met me on the doorstep and said, 'None be needed to serve Julia to-night save Euphena only.'

'Nevertheless I needs must ask her,' I said, 'else she may enquire about me.'

Then Thanna, who was passing, stopped and said :

'Thou art always a fool, Nyria. Lo, if a lion's jaws were opened before thee thou wouldst walk into them.'

But I shook my head and stepped into my mistress's room.

Julia lay in half darkness upon her couch. There was a lamp lit but it was not near her. She seemed to be moaning and tossing from side to side,

but yet half sleeping, and beside her crouched Euphena on the floor. Euphena's hands were clasped around her knees and her eyes were fixed in that strange way she had, crosswise, as though she were looking only at the end of her nose ; at the which, when I saw it, I paused and would have withdrawn, but at the stir of my foot, the vision forsook her and, seeing me, she signed to me to begone, and that she would speak with me without.

So, when she came softly out after me, she said that Julia needed none to minister unto her save herself alone.

'But if she be not well,' said I, 'thou canst not wait upon her all the night, Euphena. Thou wilt tire and need sleep thyself.'

'The night hath not come yet,' said Euphena. 'When the night cometh upon Julia, she will need even Euphena no more. Go thou, child, and take thy pleasure . . . if it be thy pleasure to walk this path that leads only to the gates of Hades . . . since the gods have decreed that none shall put forth a hand to save thee.'

She laid her skinny claw upon mine arm as she spoke and looked up into my face. 'Thou hast been a good girl, Nyria,' she said more softly than was her wont. 'I would fain accord thee thy due. Mayhap, Euphena hath been over-harsh to thee, but 'twas more than flesh and blood could stand to place a changeling babe in the bosom of a bereaved woman instead of her own flesh and blood. But this was Julia's work, not thine. Thou hast always been gentle and kind to Euphena and thou art of different stuff from that chattering crew who echo every gust of the wind—who will acclaim Cæsar to-day and his successor to-morrow. See, now, I would even at this hour save thee if it be not too late. Go not to-night whither thy heart leads thee and, mayhap, the doom shall be averted.'

I made no answer, but I looked at her in doubt for I could not understand how Euphena knew these things that had never been told her : and I was not willing that she should hinder me. She looked me through and through, so that I would fain have covered my breast and face with my hands, for it seemed as though she read my soul.

'Thou art stiff-necked, Nyria,' she said. 'Were the gods themselves to come down to keep thee from this path, thou wouldst yet follow that stranger-god whom in thy heart thou seekest. Thus be it unto thee, then, for naught shall avert the finger that writeth on the face of the heavens. Thou must have thy will. Go, then, and remember, when the red clouds close round thee and all earth and heaven drip blood, that Euphena would have held thee back if it were possible.'

Then I found my tongue. I shivered a little, for her words always seemed to mean so much.

'I know not what thou wouldst have, Euphena,' I answered. 'I was but going down the hill to . . .' and there I paused, for I might not say where, nor did I truly know.

'Seek not to excuse thyself,' she said, pointing her finger to the door. 'Nor need'st thou to answer Euphena that which she hath not asked of thee. Now, by all the stars on high, dost thou think that one skilled in such a lore as theirs would need to learn the secrets of men's hearts through human lips. Thine is plain to me, Nyria. But it matters not. Go in peace and may the——' it was something about the wings of some great power—'uphold thee so that darkness fall not yet upon thee.'

And I ran but half frightened, yet not daring to ask Euphena again what she meant.

I stayed not to tell Aemilia whither I was going, but hastened through the courtyard and through the lower gate that led down by the flight of steps thou knowest of, out upon the road below the Aventine. Now, at the bottom of the flight of steps, Stephanus met me and I almost ran into his arms.

'Say, Nyria,' he cried, kissing me, 'what hath lent wings to thy feet? Alas! my dear, 'tis no longing for Stephanus, I fear. Thou dost not always hasten thus to me.'

I laughed and slipped my hand in his and he felt that I was trembling. 'Hath anything affrighted thee?' he asked.

But I cared not to explain what Euphena had said, for it would go with Stephanus's own mind and he might have kept me back. So I only told him that Euphena was in one of her ill moods.

'Had Euphena lived in Greece long ago,' he said, 'she would have been stretched upon the ground and left there to see whether or no the gods would feed and save her. In truth, she is a strange evil thing and I like not to have her near thee, Nyria.'

Now I remembered that Euphena had spoken kindly to me and I did not want him to think too ill of her. 'She hath strange ways, but so have all wise people,' I answered. 'Look at yon Ascletario, how strange a life he leadeth.'

'Ay, but he doeth ill to none and is ever courteous.'

'Euphena doeth no ill,' I said. ''Tis but her talk.'

'I know not,' he answered. 'Strange things are said of them that deserve it not, and, mayhap, they who do deserve it are clever enough to keep men silent on their doings.'

I wondered what he was thinking of: and then it came into my mind that ill things were said of the Christians . . . how that they slew and ate babes and had riotous love-feasts and kept no laws. But these things I could not believe, if it were true that Clement were a Christian and the lady Domitilla.

So then I pressed Stephanus's hand and asked him if he thought thus of the Christians.

'Thinkest thou,' he answered harshly, 'that if these things were true, I would take thee amongst them? Nay, Nyria, thou mayst have more faith in Stephanus than that. A set of wild fanatics they may be—but the worst fault that I have heard of with regard to them is that they will not bear arms and fight in their country's need. They pride themselves upon their peaceful ways and think fighting wicked. I am not one with them there, though I grant they do uphold that which they believe. For myself I had rather show a stout pair of fists to one that injured me than sit me meekly down to be chastised, though I go so far as that any sect to which my lady Domitilla doth belong must needs have some measure of friendly feeling from me. . . . But now that thou wouldst go amongst them, Nyria, what shall I say?' And he clasped my hand closer. 'Is every Christian, in future, to be dearer to Stephanus?'

'Nay, I know not,' I said. 'Leave me time to judge of them. But yet, meseems, Stephanus, that, if they be like the lady Domitilla and like the lord Clement who did address me, and if they do bear such peace within their breasts, then would I fain be one of them, for I am in sore need of peace.'

'Now, why?' he answered bending quickly over me, and slipping my hand into his other one, he placed his arm around me and drew me closer to his side as we walked. 'What wouldst thou have of peace, Nyria, that thou canst not find in the arms of Stephanus? Behold, they are open and aching for

thee, child, needing only that thou shouldst rest for ever within them. What peace had like to be so sweet as this ? '

But I would not answer, for I could not make Stephanus understand. And yet I wanted to be kind to him. I turned my face against his toga and kissed a fold of it.

' Thou art very dear to me, Stephanus. But it sometimes seems that 'tis no love like thine I need—but one that shall be greater far and that shall lift me to heights of understanding of the which I now only dimly reckon.'

Stephanus made a sort of angry movement and half drew himself away.

' I know not what to make of thee, Nyria. If thou wert other than thyself, I should say that thou hadst set thine affection upon Cæsar and fain would queen it over Rome.'

But I shuddered. ' 'Tis no love of Cæsar that I would have,' I answered. ' The lowest brute would seem to me more like to love than Cæsar. Thou dost not understand, Stephanus : and how shall I show thee ? '

' In truth I know not,' he answered gruffly. ' I would thou wert more like ordinary maids, Nyria, with but the simple cravings for motherhood and love of home and husband. Then would it be easier for Stephanus to fulfil thy need.'

' I wonder much that thou hast patience to bear with me,' I answered. ' But what can I do, Stephanus ? I made not myself.'

' Thou art a changeling maid as oft-times I have told thee. . . . None knew thy parentage, Nyria,' he said half laughing and wholly tenderly again. ' And sometimes I have thought thou camest from a union of some god with a foreign woman. For half thyself is not of this earth at all and seemeth but to find its joy in things whereof we mortal men are wont only to speak as the pleasures that do come when we are translated and fit to abide with the gods. And verily I have often thought that I would not hail that change with great delight, for to me the lower joys of earth . . . of sun and wine, good food and prosperity and, sweeter far than all, the arms of mine own wife and babes—were dearer joys than such as Olympus can offer me.' "

CHAPTER XV

Across the Styx

Nyria tells of how she visits Bishop Clement and of how that night Julia dreams a strange dream : and of how at sunset of the next day the Shade of Sabinus summons his wife to bear him company in his passage across the Styx.

Nyria : " The road was steep where we were walking, and it was very dark save where a house or two stood far apart, each with torches set in the stone support upon its wall . . . for I have told thee of Domitian's laws for lighting.

Now I would not have Stephanus's arm around me when we reached the streets because I liked not others to see. But he would have kept it there before all Rome and teased me for bidding him take it away.

' Thou art like a little young bird, Nyria, that would strive with its wings because they have just grown. But thou wilt come back to the nest of my arms some day.'

' I know not,' I answered. ' Mayhap 'twill be so. But let me fly now, Stephanus. All things that have wings desire to fly.'

' In truth, it is so,' he said and teased me no more. But he still held my hand, for that was naught, because many a one might hold his maid's hand as they walked.

But when we got down to the lower part of the city, where the streets were poor and narrow, Stephanus held me close to him. We had left the Forum behind us and skirted the lower forum, where the markets were held, by a covered passage : and then, thou knowest, there is a street wider than the rest which leadeth straight down to the Tiber, so that the river floweth across the end of it. 'Tis a respectable street, where many good citizens live, and some shops there be, though none quite close to the river end, for there none would go to shop. The district called the Suburra lay upon one side of it . . . and now I think I remember that it lay also upon the other.

Thou knowest that in most parts, especially the more favoured parts of the Suburra,[1] where the houses facing the river were used by innkeepers, there was a path wide enough to drive a chariot slowly along it, and there were wooden balconies jutting from the path on posts into the river where musicians gathered and street mimes would play. . . . This for the entertainment of those who took their supper at the inns and who liked to sit by the open windows looking out on the river. But where Stephanus took me was a quiet street. Few passed that way save such as lived there and, while we walked along seeing but few people, a veiled figure passed before us attended by a damsel, which made me think that it must be a person of note. Now Stephanus squeezed my hand and quickened his pace.

[1] Nyria, coming down from the shop of Stephanus near by the Via Argentaria, would have crossed or passed along the irregular street of the Suburra. But I cannot trace the Suburra region as facing the river. Perhaps one better acquainted with the topography of ancient Rome can make this point clear. (Ed.)

'Tis the lady Domitilla,' said he. 'We will haste.' And we, following upon her steps, and being close behind her, he said somewhat in a low tone the which I did not understand, and the lady turned and half drew her veil from her face, and then I saw 'twas she.

'A greeting, friends,' she said. 'Thou comest in good time, Stephanus. And this is our little maid?' . . . She put her hand upon my shoulder, and walked upon the other side of me.

Stephanus conversed with her in a low voice, but I did not understand much that he said nor, indeed, did I listen for I was too eager and excited at the thought of whither I was going.

Now when we had nearly reached the end of the street, Domitilla paused before a tall house . . . methinks it was the last but one or two, almost near to the river. And here she struck softly on the door, which was opened from within.

A young slave stood there clad in a tunic, and seeing who it was, drew aside and we entered. The place was dark—a low dim passage—and it seemed to me the house was poor. But yet I was full of wonder for what might come.

Now, turning to one side, we entered a room. 'Twas low and seemed to serve for a parlour and a sleeping-chamber in one, for a great bed covered the corner of the floor. There were a table and some chairs, and another door led beyond.

While I stood there wondering what I should see, Domitilla, signing to the slave to approach her, spoke a few words to him. This, too, in terms I did not understand—though, here and there, I caught a word; and presently bowing low he withdrew. We had not waited long before the door upon the farther side opened and one stood there bearing a lamp, which cast shadows about him. He was tall, or so he seemed, with a grey beard sweeping to his breast, and when I saw the grey beard and the grey cloak I looked at him more closely and knew it was Clement—he who had spoken to me on the hill. I had been sitting as Domitilla bade me, but I rose at once and stood while she went forward and knelt before him, craving his blessing. And this right humbly till it seemed to me amazing that a lady of high repute in Rome and of noble station should stoop so before any man . . . most of all, one who was well known to be her husband's cousin.[1]

Stephanus stood behind me, but as the great Clement glanced towards him, he, too, came forward and made a bow. But he did not stoop very low, for that was not Stephanus's way. Clement spoke to him most kindly.

'Friend, I would welcome thee and the maid that thou dost bring. Nevertheless, I would that thy visit were for the entering in of thine own self into our body.'

Stephanus said something short and gruff, he meant not to be rough, I saw, but he seemed not wholly at ease, and Domitilla said:

'Ah that, too, would I. It hath been mine earnest prayer that Stephanus, faithful friend as he is and one with Flavius and myself in all things save this, should join us too in the grace of the Lord.'

Clement spoke softly.

'Tis but a natural desire. Yet, remember, sister, that the Master said, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold."'

'Yea,' said Domitilla. 'But the Master added, "Them also I must bring

[1] This relationship stated by Nyria, has been put forward by various writers, but has not been fully substantiated.

that they may be one with Me in Thy Kingdom . . .'' ' and all this while Stephanus stood looking shy and awkward, which Clement seeing and pitying, he did salute him in brotherly fashion, saying :

' Whether or no, friend Stephanus, thou art most welcome, since like one of the Master's own shepherds thou hast brought a lamb into the fold.'

And then he came across to where I stood, but Stephanus stepped before him, and seemed then to find his voice.

' May it please thee, Clement,' he said, ' the maid, Nyria, knoweth naught of thee and thy teachings, but the favour of the lady Domitilla hath pleased and flattered the maid so that she gave me no peace till I should bring her as Domitilla had said, therefore are we come. Nevertheless, Nyria is no Christian.'

Stephanus spoke confusedly and quickly, but Clement looked from him to me most kindly.

' Now, methinks, thou art not wholly right, friend,' he said, ' seeing that though Nyria be no Christian as yet, she is most surely one of the Lord's little lambs, for whom a place has been prepared.'

He put out his hand and took both mine in one of his as he stood and turned smiling to Stephanus.

' The maid hath told me,' said Stephanus gruffly, ' that thou didst meet her on the hill and speak to her words of comfort when she was sore troubled over a private sorrow ; for which I thank thee, Clement, though had Nyria come to me I would have striven to ease her pain. Nevertheless, Nyria knoweth naught save such as thou didst tell her then.'

' Methinks Nyria doth,' said Clement kindly. ' For Nyria hath been, meseems, taught by One whom thou and even I scarce know more of than she.'

Stephanus was silent. He walked away and stood with his back towards us, while Clement raised me from my knees and bade me be seated.

He placed himself upon a large wooden chair with arms, and I drew a stool to his feet while the lady Domitilla sat close by.

' Say, Nyria,' he said. ' Wilt thou be a lamb in our little flock ? We use these terms,' he said, ' because the Master used them. . . . He who came down from heaven and entered into flesh for the shepherding of the whole world. Now, dost thou see, little one, how we would call all sheep into the fold ? '

' I will be a lamb, may it please thee, lord,' I said. ' Shew me the door to enter.'

' Yea, verily that will I, Nyria,' he answered. ' The door is by Baptism, wherein all thy sins will be washed away, and thou shalt be pure and clean as the wool of some unstained lamb.' Whereat Stephanus turned upon his heel and came towards us. ' May it please thee, lord,' he answered, ' the maid prateth nonsense. She hath never committed sin.'

' Verily, friend Stephanus,' said Clement gently, ' we are all born in sin—Nyria as well as the vilest sinner.'

Whereat Stephanus made a rough sound but seemed to find no words to speak.

' Nevertheless, Nyria desireth not to sin and, by the merit of Him who died for her, she shall sin no more,' Clement said.

' Lord, who did die for me ? ' I cried.

He looked at me most tenderly and again stroked my head. ' Thou dost not know, but thou shalt learn,' he said. ' 'Twas verily the Son of God

Himself who shed His fine estate and came down to dwell among men, living as the poorest and suffering as the most sorrowful, till He gave his life for thee and me, Nyria. . . . Yea, and for all them that are His.'

Now this seemed to me most strange and wonderful. 'And wherefore did He die?' I asked. 'Did men sacrifice Him? and if He were indeed God could He not save Himself?'

'Thou dost echo the cry that hath rung many a time,' Clement answered. 'He was indeed God, nevertheless He chose to sacrifice Himself at the hands of men so that we might inherit eternal life.'

Now, again, this seemed to me most wonderful. 'Eternal life!' I asked . . . 'life in the sunshine: life without pain, without beatings, without sorrow. Say, lord, dost thou mean such life as this?'

'Yea, Nyria . . . that I do mean. For, though pain and suffering may come to thee, the Lord our Master will help His children bear this, seeing that He hath suffered Himself.

Stephanus came forward and would have interfered, for I saw he liked it not lest I should be led away. But I turned to him.

'Now, peace, Stephanus,' I said, 'I pray thee, for no god of whom thou hast told me hath done this.' And Stephanus was hushed, and I turned again to Clement. 'Tell me more of this god,' I cried. 'For may it please thee, lord, it seemeth to me a stranger, sweeter story than any I have ever heard.'

'Yea, I will tell thee, Nyria, but thou must bear in mind that though the Master died to save His children, He willeth that they serve Him. Wilt thou serve Him, Nyria?'

'Aye, that I will,' I answered. 'Thou knowest, lord, that the service of a little slave is of small account, yet Nyria is faithful and fain would serve Him with all her heart.'

He drew me closer to him and turned to the lady Domitilla. 'Verily, out of the mouths of babes He hath perfected praise,' said Clement. 'Now it seems to me that here we have one who may be received without delay.'

'I will be her sponsor,' said the lady Domitilla. 'Flavius and I will present her, unless, indeed, Clement, thou wert thinking of immediate baptism.'

Now Stephanus seemed as though he could scarce contain himself, for he was treading to and fro in the small room, seeming to fill it with his presence, and at this he turned again. 'May it please thee, Domitilla, and thee also, lord Clement,' he said. 'Give the maid time. She knoweth naught of the ceremony of baptism, and to take an ignorant child and set her up at thy shrine, pledging her to purposes of which she doth know naught, is surely no better than that most savage custom of old-time of sacrificing maids to other gods in other temples.'

'Stephanus speaketh truly,' said Clement. 'And such was not my intention, friend. Nevertheless, I grieve to see in thee this spirit which is ill set against the maid's chances of eternal life.'

'Saving thy presence, lord,' said Stephanus. ''Tis because the maid is dear to me that I like not to see her thus sacrificed. I am a plain fellow and one that hath naught save what he hath worked for, yet the lady Domitilla there, will speak for my faithful service. Now, I have had small dealings with gods of any kind, but it doth seem to me that saving perhaps Hermes, upon whom one doth call by custom, there is none of these—Greek, Roman or Christian—who can aid a man or maid in their way through life.'

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BUST OF THE EMPRESS DOMITIA

Clement put up his hand as though he would have stayed his speech. 'Blaspheme not, friend,' he said, but yet he said it mildly. 'Say what thou willest of the Roman gods, or of the gods of thine own country, but before me, at least, thou mayst not speak ill of the Master whom I serve.'

'Nay, that would I not,' said Stephanus, 'out of courtesy to thee. But truly it seemeth to me that what the maid doth need for her guidance, is a strong arm to shield her and a loving heart that she may shelter in.'

'None is so strong nor yet so loving as He whom we do call Master,' said Clement. 'Thou mayst safely trust Nyria to His keeping.'

But Stephanus shook his head and Clement spoke to him again, holding my hand in his. 'We will give the maid time, friend Stephanus. There is no need for such haste as thou fearest. The maid's heart is wholly the Lord's already, so that it scarce matters when she shall be signed with His sign. Therefore, take the maid home with thee, friend Stephanus, and bring her again if thou wilt, or if thou wilt not, then do not bring her. Yet will she surely come, for the Lord knoweth them that are His, and when His voice doth cry aloud in the wilderness of the world all other voices must needs be silent.'

Stephanus stepped forward and taking me by the shoulder a little roughly he pulled me to him, but I clung to Clement.

'When shall I come, lord? Send me not away from thy presence without bidding me come again.'

'Nay I do not send thee from me, Nyria. 'Twere no avail if I did. For thou wilt surely come again even as Mary followed Him who was her heart's dearest. Come when the spirit moveth thee, child. I may not now say when, but thou shalt hear from me again. Go now, I will talk to the lady Domitilla.'

I knelt and kissed the hem of his robe, but he laid his hands upon my head and blessed me, and to me it seemed as though a great peace came down into my soul. . . . And thus I left them with Stephanus following me.

When we reached the end of the street where Stephanus lived, I would have left him there and speeded up alone. But he would not stay and was angry with me for thus speaking. 'Art thou going to shelve me altogether, Nyria?' he said. 'Wilt thou thrust thy old friend on one side for this new fancy that hath come to thee? Verily, I thought more of thy constancy.'

And this pained me, but I could make no answer save such as pleased him not, so I kept silence: and when we reached the lower gate by the steps that led into the courtyard, I bade him good night. But he caught me in his arms and strained me very tight.

'Am I to lose thee altogether then, Nyria? Say, is this new sect to snatch from me my best treasure?'

I laid my head upon his shoulder for a moment.

'I go not away from thee, Stephanus,' I said . . . 'even though I try to follow Him of whom Clement spake. Mayhap, thou wilt, some day, follow Him too.'

'Nay, nay,' said he. 'I have followed thine every whim, Nyria, until, sometimes, it seems to me I am but a fool for my pains. But I'll not follow thee into this foolish chase——'

So then I let him kiss me, but his kisses were rough and hurt me, and I saw that Stephanus was very angry, and for this I was sorry. Nevertheless, it could not take that wondrous peace out of my mind. Now I did not go to Julia's rooms because Euphena had said she would need me not. Therefore

I went to the hut and, ere I entered, I remember looking across at the house—which shewed very black and white in the shadows—white where the stars' light shone and black where it stood in darkness ; and I looked up to the sky which was full of stars and thought of what Clement had said of how that great god came down from the heavens and left His fine estate to suffer among men, and I wondered if all the heavens were paved with gold or silver and if these glinting stars I saw were but the bits that shewed through from the flooring. And I remembered that Clement had said I should see Him there one day, which seemed a wondrous thought.

Then I went within. But ere I laid me down to rest, it seemed to me that I should try to offer prayer to Him who was to be my God. I had no altar and no flowers and nothing in my hand to bring and I knew not what to say and yet I fain would have prayed to Him.

So, knowing naught, I went out again and stood at the door of the hut looking up to the floor of the sky, and there I lifted my hands and folded them on my breast and I prayed in my heart.

' Lord, teach me how to pray ' : and then I went back and laid me down to sleep."

. . . . . .

NYRIA (continuing) : " Now, very early in the morning, I was awake and up again, and as I went without, Crispus passed me with his blanket folded about his shoulders.

' Thou art early,' said he, and looked so anxious that I asked what was the matter and if he were going to the Gladiators' School.

He answered, ' Not yet. I go to gather news of Sabinus, if that be possible.'

' Hast thou heard aught of him ? ' I asked.

' Nay, nothing, save that he is still in prison and my heart doth tell me that he stands in danger.' Then Crispus took his hand forth from his blanket and I saw his clenched fist knot and the veins stand out.

' Now,' said he, ' by all these gods and goddesses who amuse themselves with the sorrows of mankind and most specially by those who lend themselves to vengeance, I swear that if one hair of Sabinus's head be hurt, I'll be even with his ill-users ! '

And so saying Crispus disappeared.

I went within and washed and dressed myself for I was only in my blanket, and then I hastened to Julia's door. There was silence within and I hoped that she slumbered. So taking off my shoes that I should not disturb her, I crept in. Euphena sat in the outer room alone, her eyes staring and yellow.

' Hast thou not slept all night, Euphena ? ' I asked.

' I shall have time enough to sleep,' she answered, seeming to rub her eyes as though she would dash sight from them.

' And how fareth Julia ? ' I asked.

' Julia slumbereth,' she answered. ' Thou needst not trouble about her, Nyria. Let her sleep as long as she may.'

' Nay, I do not grudge her sleep,' I answered. ' But, hark. . . . It seemeth not to be slumber. Surely she is awake.' For I heard Julia moaning.

' Go and see,' said Euphena. So I went within, and Julia lay beneath her rich coverlet with her eyes closed and seemed to be asleep. But, every now and then, she turned a little and moaned.

' There is somewhat wrong with her,' I answered as I came out. ' She looks not like herself. There hath a change come over her face and I like not the sound of her sleeping.'

'Heed her not,' said Euphena in the same tone. 'She is but dreaming—as men call it, little knowing of what they speak.'

'Is she having bad dreams then, Euphena?' I asked, crouching down beside her. 'Is it only the dreams that seem to distress her?'

'Nay, I know not,' answered Euphena crossly. 'How can I tell what Julia may be seeing in her sleep?'

I shrank away and got myself some food and brought somewhat to Euphena for she would not budge. And then I went without and sat upon the steps of the loggia waiting till the other women should come, for I liked not being alone with Euphena and Julia frightened me. I would have been glad to see Aemilia or even Samu, but I liked not to go and call them.

Now, the morning grew lighter. There were light streaks in the sky and no more glints of gold and silver left, and I looked up at it until the first rose curtain was drawn across the sky. But I could not see the sunrise from where I sat, for that was upon the other side of the house. Yet I saw the rosy shade spread high, and at its edges was a shade of yellow. While I watched there came a sudden burst of light and I knew the sun had risen; and even as I sat there I could hear Julia moaning so that my heart went out to her and I longed to go and fetch her something that should ease her pain. But I liked not to go with Euphena sitting there and, maybe, it was better not to disturb her.

Presently, Aemilia and Samu came and they asked what I did sitting there and if I knew how fared Julia.

So I told them, and while we stood there talking, and day had wholly broken, there came a great cry from within, so that we all threw down our blankets and ran through the antechamber to Julia's door.

Euphena was there before us, but she said no word, only stood with folded arms near the foot of Julia's bed and watched her.

Now, Julia had raised herself and her eyes were large and round and seemed staring from her head with horror at somewhat which she saw that we could not see. And she cried out again words that we could not distinguish, but seeming to be terrified, so that Samu hung back and even Aemilia looked frightened. I rushed up to Julia and took her hands in mine, but she knew me not; and then she clung to me, seeming to crush the bones of my hand and arm in her grip.

'It is Nyria, lady,' I said. 'Dost thou not know Nyria?'

I felt that a great sweat had broken out all over her and the drops stood out on her forehead and her hands were wringing wet. Then suddenly she turned to me, and a curtain seemed to fall from her eyes and she clutched me anew and said:

'Oh, Nyria—is't thou? I have had such a terrible dream.'

'Dreams are naught, lady,' I answered. 'Lay thee down again, and I will bring thee somewhat to sustain thee.'

At first she would not let me lay her lower, but clung to me, nor would she let me go. Then I signed to Samu to bring up more pillows, and I placed them behind her that she lay high and could see us all and know that she was not alone. . . . And I took some milk in a cup that Euphena had warmed outside. But when she saw Euphena hand it to me and I brought it to the the bed, Julia waved it away and would have none of it.

'Nay, I will have naught that hath touched that hell-hag's fingers,' she said. 'Do thou get me fresh milk, Nyria, and warm it for me here where I can see. But bid Euphena begone.'

Now I looked towards Euphena, for I liked not so to command her, and Euphena stood in the doorway watching everything that went on, and I was forced to go without and fetch the milk. So I passed Euphena, who heeded me not for her eyes were fixed upon Julia, and I ran hastily through the courtyard to the sheds where the fresh milk was stored and filled a basin there. On the way I poured out that which Euphena had given me, and there was somewhat white and thick clinging to the bottom of the cup which made me fear Euphena was indeed bent on poisoning Julia, and I feared Euphena.

But when I went back, Euphena met me and smiled when she saw my brimming bowl of fresh milk.

'Thou little fool,' she said. 'Dost think Euphena would risk her own life for the purpose of depriving Julia of hers? I have told thee, Euphena is but a servant of the gods and Julia shall go when the gods call her, but not for Euphena's sending.'

'Thou wilt not come within again?' I said, 'for Julia is affrighted of thee.'

'I have told Julia,' she made answer, 'that I leave her now, seeing she needeth me no more. But the hour will come ere long when thou and I shall perform a welcome service for the great Julia who thought to rule over the realm of Rome but is bidden instead to the court of a more dread king than Domitian.'

I answered not but went within and warmed the milk as Julia bade me in a vessel over the lamp beside her, which, after she had taken it, seemed to make her easier in mind and body. But she would not let Aemilia or Samu nor yet Thanna nor one of her women go, save only Euphena. She tried to sit up again and gave them all orders about the doing of one thing and another—preparing her garments and her jewels and all her false tresses and the ornaments for her head, and her bath. But 'twas impossible she could take her bath, for when she tried to stand she was too weak, and she sank back gratefully into the bed, the which we tried to straighten with her in it, and Thanna and I brought water and sponges and did perform such toilet for her as was possible.

Now, it was after this, when she was again lying quiet, that she began to show terror once more.

'I had such a dreadful dream,' she said, 'but only a dream, was it not, Nyria?' And this she said to me, clinging to my hand again and holding me close to her side. Thanna said afterward that she had like to be glad 'twas not herself, for after Thanna had done her serving she kept her distance and was for making excuses to slip out.

Now, when Julia spake thus to me, I answered her: 'Lady, if thou tellest thy dream 'twill break the charm.' And this I said, desiring to ease her. 'Tell Nyria, lady. . . . What didst thou dream?' And she began a-muttering and gazing before her, and once she raised herself and said:

'Is thy master in the house?' And this was to the group of women who stood frightened about the doorway; and I mind me now 'twas before she spoke again of her dream.

And when they feared to answer but only shook their heads, she pressed again.

'Where is thy master?' and 'twas only Thanna who had courage to speak, for my heart failed me and I feared to pain her. But Thanna stepped forward and said:

'The Most Noble Julia knoweth that by Cæsar's orders Sabinus was taken hence three nights agone.'

Then repeated Julia, 'Three nights agone,' said she, and kept on a-muttering it and turning on her pillow; and now, when the terror seemed to overcome her again:

'Whither did he go?' she kept a-muttering. 'Whither went Sabinus?' and none of us durst answer her. But when I bade her tell me her dream she hung upon my hand and said:

'Ay, will it break the charm? Then will I tell it thee, Nyria. I thought thy master entered at the door and spake to me, and there was a bleeding wound upon his shoulder, nigh to his throat, from which the blood poured, and he spake—Oh, Nyria, he spake——

'"I have not come to say farewell," said he, "for, Julia, I will come again when the sun shall hang above the horizon ere yet the night cometh and day is gone down upon this deed. Then will I fetch thee, Julia, for thou shalt come with me since it be lonely crossing the shadows of the river and the ferryman doth wait——" . . . Ah!' and she shrieked again. . . . 'What meant he? . . . What meant he, Nyria? . . .'

'Lady,' I said, 'twas but a dream. Did he not then leave thee?'

'Ay,' she said, 'but I was terrified and cried out. And as he went away he looked at me again over his bleeding shoulder, and he said, "At sundown I will come, Julia——" Now, whither went thy master?'

'Lady,' I said, 'Sabinus is in Cæsar's keeping.'

Then Thanna drew forward saying, 'Cheer thee, lady; thou wouldst not doubt great Cæsar's care?'

But Julia scarcely heeded her. 'Why doth Domitian not come?' she said. 'I would he came to-day. Send messengers to the Palace, Nyria. Send two or three—one after the other if the first be not enough—and bid them say that Julia would fain have word with Cæsar without delay, and that the matter brooks not waiting.'

Now, there came a stir from without and voices murmuring, and one or two did seem to cry out, and the women in the doorway looked at each other. But Julia raised herself upon her elbow.

'What mean those sounds?' she asked, and grew red in her face.

'Look without, Aemilia, and ask who cometh. Mayhap—mayhap it be a messenger from Cæsar.'

And Aemilia bent low and went without. But when she came back her face was strangely sad, and she gazed pityingly at Julia but did not speak.

'Well, woman——' cried Julia harshly. 'Hast no tongue? Wherefore did I send thee? Hast learned naught? Speak an thou wouldst not wholly madden me.'

Wherefore Aemilia bent low again and said, 'Lady, one stands without who beareth news of Sabinus.'

'Bid him enter,' cried Julia, and her voice went off in a sort of harsh, high note. 'Bid him enter—enter, dost thou hear—without delay. I fain would enquire of Sabinus. Am I not mistress in mine own house? Bid him enter, woman. Why standest thou staring?'

And Aemilia, who I saw thought her not fit to receive the tidings and yet feared to gainsay her, turned to do her bidding. And when she came back a man followed her with his mantle folded crosswise on his head after the manner of mourners: and when he lifted up his face I saw that it was Crispus.

Julia recognised him and stared upon him without speaking.

'Thou art—Crispus?' she said at length, as though the words were slow and painful to her—and Crispus bowed.

'Hast brought news of Sabinus?' asked Julia.

'Ay,' answered Crispus.

'Well, what is't? Whither went he? When doth he return? Is he detained still in custody?' . . .

Crispus shook his head. But even he who hated Julia could not cast her a look of scorn, then——

'Lady,' he answered slowly, 'Sabinus suffered at dawn.'

'What dost thou mean?' cried Julia shrilly, clinging with her hands to either side of the bed and raising herself as though she would fain have struck him. 'What meanest thou? Sabinus suffered at dawn——'

'The death penalty, lady, for the substance of his deeds.'

Whereat Julia shrieked out: 'Thou dost lie. It is not Cæsar's will.'

'That I know not, lady. But 'twas at Cæsar's command.' And Julia fell back upon the bed and answered never a word, at which, when Crispus saw, he bent low again and withdrew.

And, one by one, the women stole out after him, for all were eager, I could see, to hear what he had to tell, and I alone remained with Julia.

But she lay silent, seeming to be in a stupor, which I knew not if 'twere merciful or yet the stupor of death. By and by, one came to the door whispering and brought me food. It was Aemilia, and she bade me come without for a breath of fresher air, saying she would take my place. But I shook my head, for I liked not to leave Julia, and all day long I stayed there.

It was a dark day. There were heavy clouds that covered the sky, so that in Julia's room we had to keep a lamp lit, and, by and by, when Aemilia came again and I was talking with her just without, saying I knew not if Julia slept or were busy with her own thoughts, for she uttered no sound, Aemilia whispered very low:

'Euphena doth say she will depart at sundown, and if this be so, mayhap 'twill be her dream that shall bring it about.'

'No,' said I. 'See, 'tis dark. Can we not let her think the hour of sundown hath passed? She seeth not the sun in here. I will shake out the hour-glass.'

So then I fetched it very noiselessly, but Julia seemed not to see: and I shook out some of the grains, for the time was drawing on. But Aemilia said it was so dark over all the face of the heavens that one could not tell whether 'twas evening or night approaching.

The messengers had not returned from the Palace, for we had sent them as Julia desired, and, afterwards, we heard that Domitian had stayed them there. By and by, having fed Julia with a little milk and seeing that she seemed to doze and lay peacefully again, I stole without and found the women gathered on the steps outside with their mantles around them, for none cared to be about their business.

And lower down in the courtyard were many of the other slaves grouped together and all talking. Only Euphena was not there, but, by and by, as I sat me down beside Aemilia, listening all the while for the least sound from Julia's room, Euphena came round the corner of the court.

'A pretty company,' she said. 'Julia will have a fair off-sending,' and then she glanced round at everyone. 'So, ye fools who did flout Euphena's prophecy, what art waiting for? Do ye now believe?'

And some fell a-muttering, saying that it was senseless to talk of sundown, seeing the sun could not be seen, for the sky was dark; and others that Nyria had emptied the hour-glass and that Julia would not know the time;

and others, again, that if a messenger brought word to Julia from the Palace she would be satisfied and raise her up and make a good evening meal and that should Cæsar himself visit her she would need her dressers and her tirewomen.

But Euphena laughed them all to scorn. 'Nyria was ever a fool,' she said. 'But emptying the hour-glass is not pouring forth the vengeance of the gods, who wait to do this themselves,' and she sat her down in silence amongst us and none spake, while the time drew slowly on.

I have told thee that Julia's rooms faced the west. Now towards the hour of sunset there came a break in the dark curtain of clouds which, parting, showed the sky all crimson and flecked with stripes of deeper red. And lo! in the middle, the sun, like a ball of fire, was dropping slowly . . . so slowly that, meseemed, I scarce could breathe.

Thus, from the steps of Julia's loggia, we watched as often before I had watched from that place for the sun's setting. While lower, lower its rim sank and nearer yet to the line behind which it would disappear.

Then, when the great red ball had reached that line and was sinking down from sight, of a sudden, there came a stir among those by the doorway, and, turning me about, I saw that Julia stood there—she who had seemed too weak to raise herself upon her bed. But when I would have rushed to her support Euphena held me back.

'Touch her not,' she cried. 'These matters of the gods are not for thee or me to meddle with.'

But Julia looked not at the sun. She seemed to be seeing one we saw not, standing among us, and some of the women drew apart, dividing like a herd of sheep on either side and seeming afeard of the glance of her eye. But she greeted them not—only, she moved a step or two forward and I saw her lips move.

'Ay—ay—I come,' she muttered. 'But whither goest thou? Not there —Sabinus—— Oh, not there.'

And then she shrieked. ''Tis dark. I will not go.' And then again fell to muttering and came forward step by step slowly, thrusting her hands before her as one who was half-blind or saw but one thing that guided her.

'Thou wert ever a fool,' I heard her mutter as she passed me. 'Why wilt thou not go alone?' And then she threw up her head in a strange swift movement. 'Peace, peace,' she cried. 'Touch me not, for I will come. Ay—ay—Sabinus—— Ay, I come.'

And swiftly, none of us knowing what would chance, she fell along the ground at our feet.

'Twas as though her head had but just escaped the edge of the steps, but none of us durst go near her, save Euphena and I. Yet, when I would have tried to raise her Euphena stayed me again.

'Let her lie,' she said. And even just as she lay there and the women shivered and moaned and the men-slaves crowded the foot of the steps, there came the sound of lictors and the great gates swung and a litter with the imperial liveries was borne round to the side of the house.

Before it walked one of Cæsar's chamberlains, who, seeing us, strode forward and addressed Aemilia, knowing her to be chief of Julia's women.

'Say unto the Most Noble,' he said, 'that Cæsar sendeth greeting and a litter which waits to bear her to the Palace.'

But none of us answered and when he saw us look from one to the other he repeated:

'Cæsar would have the Most Noble understand that imperial business hath detained him, else would he have been here ere this, for he desires to know how his kinswoman fares, and, if it be well with Julia, bid her come at the Emperor's pleasure.'

Now he saw the form of Julia lying along the steps and strode up one or two quickly and looked down upon her.

'What is this?' he cried.

'Nay,' said Euphena, coming forward and looking full at him and then down at Julia's form. ''Tis but somewhat that the soul of Julia hath left in passing hence. Say unto the divine Augustus that the Most Noble hath not waited to hear his pleasure, for Sabinus called her, and seeing that the passage of the Styx is lonely, Julia went with him.'"

The INSTRUMENT paused:

"That is not quite the right order. . . . I have got confused. . . . Don't speak to me or touch me for a moment, and I will get it directly. . . ."

Then, presently——

"I think it was more like this. . . .

It was when the Chamberlain gave his second message and no one answered that Euphena said—coming forward and bending before him:

'Since none of these who are more highly placed in the household find words to answer thee, that will I. Say unto Cæsar that Euphena—whom he will doubtless remember—sendeth greeting, and word of the Most Noble Julia, who surely would regret that she is not here to obey Cæsar's pleasure. But she hath been called hence.'

'Whither, and by whom?' asked the Chamberlain in surprise.

'By the lord Sabinus, whither he hath but now gone,' Euphena answered.

Whereat the chamberlain started and drew back and turned very pale.

'The passage of the Styx is lonely,' said Euphena, 'and Sabinus did desire his loyal and tender spouse should company him on his way. Wherefore, Cæsar will understand that his behest cannot be obeyed.'

And the chamberlain, seeing that something strange had happened, cast his eyes around the scene until they fell upon the body of Julia. And I stood at her feet with a silken shawl in my hand, desiring to cover her.

'What . . . what is that?' he cried, coming forward. And Euphena glanced down as though 'twere naught.

'Oh, that!' she said. ''Tis but somewhat Julia left in passing.'"[1]

[1] Nyria's account of the death of Julia concurs with historical statements as to its cause. See Appendix 42, Bk. II.

CHAPTER XVI

Decked for the Pyre

Nyria tells of how she helped Euphena to array Julia's body for the burning and of how, out of all Julia's women, Euphena alone followed it to the pyre: also, of Stephanus's mortgage upon his goods that he might obtain money to buy Nyria.

Nyria: "Thou knowest that after the death of a master and mistress, all the property goes to the next of blood who is entitled to it. Unhappily for us—at least we felt it so—we were all to be claimed by Cæsar, and I was sore affrighted and prayed Aemilia to put me out of sight should Cæsar come nigh the house. Now, none knew what might befall; and thus spake Euphena when she commanded me to attend her in the washing and dressing of Julia and chid me seeing that I shrank from such service. Nevertheless, I could not refuse, for none of the other women would go near Julia, save Aemilia who did offer us her help. But Euphena could not command Aemilia as she did me, and soon Aemilia left us. . . .

It seemed to pleasure Euphena to deck the body of Julia in her finest raiment, thinking only to load her with that which was costliest and most colourful and saying that this had been always Julia's taste. But I could not bear that Julia should be made mock of and I fetched the right robings and persuaded Euphena to put them on. We dressed Julia in a robe of rose-coloured silk embroidered in silver and then Euphena wanted to load her with jewellery. 'For,' she said, 'when Cæsar cometh he will like to see that Julia is cherishing his love-gifts.' So she laid ropes of them around her neck; and 'twas a pity, because the last night before they took the body of Julia out to the burning, that jewellery was stolen, and nothing was left except a few rings that fitted on her finger so tightly the thieves could not draw them off.

Now, after Euphena had prepared the body of Julia who was lying in state upon her bed beneath the silken canopy and all the fine draperies, she sent messengers to Cæsar bidding him come, 'for that Julia was ready to receive him.' But he came not.

And at last, the day came on which they bore away the body of Julia.

Euphena, finding that it had been rifled, muttered over it and one minute was for decking it anew, and another deeming it waste, that the jewels would be burned with Julia. But she had not minded that at first.

Now, it was usual, when a Roman lady died who was well beloved among her women, that they followed her to the fire, walking next the body and surrounding it and mourning. But Aemilia, being among the women, gave it as her opinion that none of us should ask permission so to attend. For Aemilia said that we did not mourn our mistress and that 'twere more shame to Julia should we be present than honour to her remains. Nevertheless, Vibius—who was chief amongst the slaves—said that for the

sake of Sabinus he would have desired it and that he for one would go, and he prayed of the men that such as had regard for their master's memory would follow with him. Thus a party of them—perchance fifty in number—agreed to go. But, of the women, Euphena alone went: and when 'twas found that only one of Julia's women would attend unless it were by compulsion, those in charge—so said Vibius afterwards—had much mind to prevent her. But no definite order was given to Euphena, and so it happed that when the body of Julia was borne forth, Euphena took her place behind it. She had put mud, caked, on her head and carried within her arms a bundle that she had made. None knew what the bundle was, but it looked like the form of a child rolled in some of her own undergarments: and Aemilia shuddered when she saw it and said that Euphena meant it for the image of her own dead baby whom she had never forgotten, and by whom she sought to bring vengeance on the soul of Julia.

I knew not how such things went for I remained in the huts, scarce daring to look without, lest Cæsar should perchance come down for the procession. But some said that Cæsar's mind was full of other things. There were rumours of war[1] and there were likewise other State troubles which those who wished to excuse Cæsar put forward as a reason for his not attending Julia's funeral. But afterwards we heard that he, walking on one of the terraces of Palatine and catching sight of the smoke, asked what caused it, and that being told 'twas the burning of Julia's pyre he went hastily within and would not look upon it.

Now, 'twas not until after the removal of Julia's body that aught could be done with us, and the time of such a restriction was always most irksome to the slaves of a household, for they were kept within the precincts of the courtyards and not allowed to issue from the walls upon any excuse whatsoever. I for one was ill-disposed to do so though my heart yearned to be upon the Cœlian and I wondered whether Valeria knew what had chanced. 'Twas certain that she must have heard and I wondered longingly if she would not send down to buy me, seeing that money was of no account, for though she had none of her own, yet Paulinus kept her well supplied.

Then, in due time, an order came from Cæsar and was read publicly in the slaves' quarters—that we were all to be sold in the Forum upon a date fixed . . . I mind not the exact date . . . it might have been four weeks: it might have been two . . . it was not immediately.

And hearing this, I was thankful, for now I knew that Cæsar had either forgotten me or would not command my presence.

I said that we were not allowed to issue from the walls; neither were those upon the farther side permitted to come in to speak to us. And yet I wondered that Stephanus had not come nigh me. For Stephanus could have special grace by excuse that one was ill and needed him, and also because Stephanus was so liked that he went everywhere . . . even where others might be forbidden to go.

I longed to see him and, likewise, that he should perchance take a message for me to the Cœlian. For I thought if one could obtain word with Aeola she might perhaps bring my plight before Valeria who would send to purchase me. But Stephanus came not and, as the days went on, we sat most of us within, seeing that we could not leave our property. Euphena had naught of value, methought—neither had I, but I mounted guard over Aemilia's box when she desired to take the air with her children. For Vibius

[1] The Sarmatian War began about this time.

had been compelled to return to each of us—and this in public before us all —writing the names in a book—each package or box that had been kept for us by Sabinus containing such papers or other articles of value as he had protected for us. Thou knowest, that amongst so many slaves there were some of ill-habit who would take the chance to steal one from another: and seeing that the body of Julia could only have been rifled by those who knew how she had been decked, it made us fearful one of another. Always, when there was to be a public sale of slaves, each slave kept his own belongings with him in a bundle or box ready for the moving.

I had naught save my clothes and my amber beads. There was Cæsar's necklace, and I knew not what to do with that, for I had not buried it properly. I had scraped a hole in a soft part of the ground within the hut, where I had laid it, but I durst not leave it there, and I wanted to take it out and bury it. But I could not leave the walls, and whatsoever I did within them the other slaves might see.

It was thought best that every slave should be clothed as well as he could be at the time of the sale so that he should be more attractive, and for this reason I knew that they would have had me keep out my embroidered robe that Cæsar gave me. But I liked not to wear it for 'twas a handsome dress and if it were talked of might bring me to Cæsar's observation. I doubt not I was foolish to care thus for every trifle, but thou wouldst have been the same hadst thou feared Cæsar as I did.

Well, now Euphena came to me and asked wherefore Stephanus would not come, because she would fain have had word with him, and she seemed to blame me that he came not. But I knew not why it was, and told her so, and, as the days went on, I found Euphena was sore vexed, for she seemed anxious to see Stephanus.

As the time drew near for the sale, some who might be purchasers were permitted to come in and look at us, with certain officers who had charge of the sale: and though we knew not how things were to be done unto us, it filled us with anxiety and dismay when one and another came.

And there came a certain lawyer . . . him whom they called Matho, who desired to examine all the slaves of Julia. For to him had been given the task of completing our sale.[1]

He was not the one who would conduct the sale, thou understandest, but to him had been given the legal portion of it, for that he had been employed by Julia in certain previous matters: and she had made mention of him to Cæsar and of his cleverness.

Now though he had been down in money and repute, he was at that time doing somewhat better and was anxious again to rise into position. Wherefore, as Julia's lawyer, he had, I think, applied for the office concerning the sale of her slaves. I liked not his face as he came around amongst us with certain followers and one who read out the list to him, giving our numbers and descriptions. He paused before me, but did not seem to take much heed of me though he said I should fetch a good price. And at Euphena, he made one or two rude speeches. But she cared not. Euphena was like to scorn everyone who spoke to her of being sold, as though that fate were not one to overtake her, which seemed to us strange, for Euphena, though she might be a sorceress, had yet to be sold like the rest of us."

. . . . . .

[1] Of Matho, the lawyer, his prosperity, downfall and subsequent rehabilitation, Martial and others of the period have written. See Appendix 43, Bk. II.

NYRIA (resuming): "Now it was after many such things had gone by and certain officers of many great houses—chief stewards and chamberlains—had by written permit been allowed to walk round amongst us that one day Alexamenos came. It was thought that he was about to examine the slaves to see if there were any he would wish to purchase, but he sent for me and, by order of Vibius, I was called forward and permitted converse alone with him.

I liked not to see Alexamenos, for he recalled to me the sad fate that had overtaken my master and I wondered whether Alexamenos could not have saved him. I would fain have asked him, too, what manner of doom had fallen upon Sabinus, for this we knew not. But when I did ask he just shook his head and said:

'Enquire not, Nyria. 'Tis better thou shouldst not know.'

So then I cried shame on him for having done as he had in the matter and asked wherefore had he not saved Sabinus?

'Sabinus would not save himself,' he made answer. And then he told me I did not understand and tried to hush my reproaches. 'For while I was yet free of Cæsar's command in the matter,' he said, 'it would have been in my power to save Sabinus had he listened . . . and that I would gladly have done, but when Cæsar's command came upon me, and Sabinus had not made good his escape, there was naught for me to do but to bear out the commands of Cæsar.' . . . 'Even the command of a tyrant!' I answered. 'And when that command meaneth death to a good man——'

'With the nature of the command I have naught to do, I am not placed in mine office to judge Cæsar, but to obey the orders given unto me as officer of my men and not as a private individual,' he made answer.

But I shook my head for I saw not such reasoning.

'I grieve to have hurt thee, Nyria,' he said, 'and the more because it is of thyself that I have come to speak: and this manner of thine is but a poor promise of my success.'

So then I asked him what he could have to say about me: and he spoke quite simply and plainly.

It would be in his power to purchase me, he said, seeing that Cæsar had favoured him with money and reward for certain things which he had done . . . methinks, against an uprising not long before. . . . But that he desired not to buy me as one might buy a slave; and, said he: 'If thou wilt wed me, Nyria, give me thy word, and I will go to Cæsar and claim thee from him. Cæsar will not refuse me.' Now at that, I was sore frighted.

'Cæsar will not take heed of thy request,' I said. 'Cæsar would scarce deem one of Julia's handmaidens a fitting wife for his favoured officer.'

'Give me the chance to reason with Cæsar,' he said. 'Let that rest between him and me. . . . Do thou but say the word. . . .

'Ah, Nyria,' he said, 'these are troublous times in Rome, and sorrow is like to be thy portion if thou dost go with the other slaves before the saleman in the Forum.'

'Sorrow is the portion of slaves,' I said. 'What else can I expect?'

'But thou art no ordinary slave,' he answered. 'I have heard of thy birth and lineage, Nyria: and in truth one had only to look at thee to know that thou wast never born of slave nor freedwoman. Thou art fitted for another life than this, and, as my wife, I could greatly improve thy case. It cannot be as one of the most noble ladies in Rome that thou wouldst

reign, Nyria, nor in state befitting thy birth, for born a princess thou dost far excel even those. Nevertheless thou knowest that the Prætorians are a power in the land . . . perhaps the greatest power of all, seeing that though Cæsar rules Rome, the Prætorians rule Cæsar: and of all the Prætorians, methinks there are few more favoured than Alexamenos. It may be that I shall rise to be Tribune of the Guard. What wouldst thou think of that? It was the office held by Paulinus himself. Say, if I stood where Paulinus stands, wouldst thou not care to wed me?'

And while I waited, not making him any answer, for as he spoke of Paulinus my thoughts flew to Valeria, presently he added: 'Nay, 'tis not for such reason that I would have thee wed me, Nyria. 'Tis because I love thee and would have thee love me in return. Hast thou no love to spare me, Nyria?'

But I shook my head. 'I love thee not,' I said. 'And thou hast just said that the Prætorians rule Cæsar: and if this be so, why didst thou not save Sabinus?'

'That is a woman's reasoning,' he made answer. 'How shall I make thee understand, Nyria? Yet I would fain endeavour so to do. It is this way that the Prætorians rule Cæsar. We are his safeguard: and he doth depend upon us for the upholding of his throne and of himself upon it. He pays us well—but that is Cæsar's way, and men must live. We earn our money, and it is our duty, while Cæsar reigns, to obey his behests. . . .'

And he said more in this fashion, urging me to accede to his request. But thou knowest I did not want to marry and, all the time I listened, my heart was full of but one desire . . . that Valeria should purchase me . . . the which Alexamenos by his very words had strengthened. So, when he pressed me the more, I could only say:

'Nay, I like thee, Alexamenos, but I will not marry thee, for 'tis not fitting: and Nyria hath no desire to wed.' Yet still he urged . . . and then he spake of that night when we had conferred beside the gate . . . 'that heavenly night' he called it, 'when love for thee came down and flooded my soul . . . and as we talked,' he said, 'it seemed to me that thou hadst somewhat in thy heart that would turn thee to the faith which is so dear to me and that thou too mightst become Christian.'

Now, when he said this it had more weight than aught else, and as he put out his hand to me I let my hand lie in his for the while. . . . But as he prated further of tender companying in our faith and of the care he would bestow upon me and of this revealing love he bore me . . . of the which I remember not all his words, my mind being sore distraught . . . I drew my hand away. . . . For in truth it did seem to me that had I love to give to any, it should have been to Stephanus who was my faithful friend since so long a time. . . .

And I said, 'This closer companionship of which thou dost speak, Alexamenos, methinks, 'tis not for Nyria': and when he yet pleaded, I bade him cease. . . . 'Nay, we may not talk more. . . . Go thou, Alexamenos, and leave me to myself. . . . There may come another maid whom thou wilt care for and who will make thee a better wife in all these things wherein Nyria cannot. . . .'

And when he began to answer . . . impatiently yet very earnestly, there came up someone with Vibius who, being chief amongst us, was deputed always to take round any desiring to look over the slaves. . . . So, afterwards, I returned to Euphena's hut and Alexamenos went away very sorrowful.

Now, it must have been past the midday hour of rest when Stephanus came. I was sitting outside Euphena's hut, and saw his face looking at me over the wall. At first he did not speak, and I rose to my feet and went towards him.

'So thou hast come,' I said.

'Ay, I have come,' he answered—'and soon enough, is it not so, Nyria? . . . seeing thou wilt have none of Stephanus's protection in the ills that befall thee.'

'No ills have befallen me,' I said. 'I am safe enough and will not look for ills.'

'Perchance thou wilt say a different thing as soon as the sale be over,' he answered.

'Now do not quarrel with me, Stephanus,' said I. 'How know I but that some kind and worthy mistress may purchase me?'

'There be not many such in Rome,' he said.

'I had a mind to ask thee to intercede for me with the lady Domitilla,' said I. 'Dost think she would buy me, Stephanus?'

'I know not. But she shall not have the chance if Stephanus can prevent it,' he answered. 'Thou mayest walk the road to ruin, Nyria, if thou wilt, but thinkest thou that Stephanus will push thee along it?'

'Thou wert not wont to speak thus of the lady Domitilla,' I answered.

'The lady Domitilla leadeth her own life and Stephanus may not say yea or nay concerning it. He is but her steward. But he is more than that to thee, Nyria, or would be if thou wouldst let him.'

Just then, we heard Euphena's voice behind us from the hut.

'So thou hast come, Stephanus,' she shrieked. 'Hie thee within. I have somewhat to say to thee. Haste thou, and cease there thy silly chattering.'

Stephanus looked vexed, but Euphena called again petulantly:

''Tis worth thy while, Stephanus. I have a bargain for thee. Come.'

Then he said to me, 'I may as well humour her. Wait, Nyria, I will be without again immediately. I too have somewhat to say unto thee.' And with that he stepped within, and Euphena banged the door behind him.

I remained where I was, leaning up against the wall of the hut, not thinking to listen, yet was I fain to hear the buzz of their voices within, when of a sudden, Euphena's tones were raised and likewise those of Stephanus. They seemed to be arguing over something which Stephanus would not agree to.

''Tis not in my power, I tell thee, woman. I have somewhat else to do with the money. What dost thou think Stephanus has been after this week and more?'

Euphena mumbled some retort, and then went on trying to persuade him.

'What matter who purchaseth the goods,' I heard Stephanus say, 'so thou dost sell them and obtain thy value?'

But again Euphena demurred. 'I want no prying eyes here,' I heard her say: and then again I heard her shriek out: ''Tis some nonsense for Nyria. . . . Thou thinkest of naught but that maid who maketh thee her slave. I wonder thou hast not more spirit, Stephanus.'

'My spirit is my own,' he retorted, 'and needeth no comment from thee.'

'But the maid be not,' sneered Euphena.

'She too needeth not thy comment,' said Stephanus.

'Mayhap. But thou art a fool to waste thy substance on that which will never drop within thy mouth, Stephanus. Nyria is for no man: and they who desire her will but find themselves face to face with wrath and bloodshed.'

I shrank back against the wall, for I liked not the sound of Euphena's speech. Moreover, I liked not to hear her speak so to Stephanus, and, almost without thinking, I pushed open the door and stood before them.

'Seeing thou dost talk so loud of me,' I said, 'I have come to warn thee that thy words carry.'

At first, Euphena shrieked, and she stooped as though she would fling a cloth over a glittering pile that lay upon a wooden-legged stool between her and Stephanus. But seeing 'twas only I, she growled at me angrily: and then, 'Come in, Nyria, and shut the door behind thee. As thy word hath such weight with this fool, come and add it unto mine.'

'What wouldst thou have of him?' I said, drawing near.

'Gold,' said Euphena. . . . 'Ay, gold . . . much gold, and I am prepared with gold . . . ay, and gems—to give him in return. Now, Nyria, look.'

She pointed to the pile, which was of jewellery . . . rings, chains, bracelets, set with many gems. I saw amongst them the long gold chain set with emeralds that Julia had given to her, and others again which she and I had placed on Julia's body.

'How camest thou by these?' I asked, pointing to them.

Euphena shrugged her shoulders. 'Gifts: gifts,' she answered, 'gifts for loyal, faithful service. Gifts from Julia living and gifts from Julia dead.'

'So thou wert the thief?' said I, turning upon her.

Euphena made as though she would clutch the jewellery, and glanced upon me. Then she smiled.

'Ay, brand me,' she said. 'Go, spread it forth abroad that Euphena robbed the body. But know, if thou doest this, that my word is as good as thine, Nyria. And if thou dost say I stole them, I shall say Julia gave them unto me, and none can gainsay my word. And thou wilt find if thou dost do despite to Euphena's power by betraying her, that the vengeance of Euphena shall follow thee, and that, methinks, thou wouldst not court.'

'I have no wish to betray thee,' I answered. 'Of what avail would that be?'

'Ah! that is better,' said Euphena. 'Thou art wiser than I thought': and as I looked down at the heap of jewellery, I saw amongst them mine own chain, set with pearls which Cæsar had given to me. Euphena saw my look. ''Tis a pretty chain, is it not?' she said. 'And I found it in a most strange hiding-place.' She pointed to the corner of the hut, where I had hidden it, and I saw the ground had been disturbed. 'Methinks, Nyria, that if the price be good enough without it, I will keep that chain.'

I did not answer, but I saw that Euphena meant to keep it as a means to seal my lips. So I only shrank back and looked from her to Stephanus who was watching us. He would have spoken, but I signed to him to be silent. And then Euphena addressed him again. 'See, it is a fine lot, most worthy goldsmith. Now, give me a good price since Nyria can bear witness to them': and Stephanus looked toward me.

'Euphena desireth that I should purchase these things,' he said. 'Mayhap 'twould be safe enough to do so, since, as she says, there is her word that Julia gave them unto her, to the which she telleth me thou canst bear witness in

the matter, at least, of some of them. But I have told her that I have not the money. There is Onesimus in the Porticus Margaritaria, who hath more money than I, and who will readily conclude such a purchase.'

'But I desire to sell them only to thee,' cried Euphena. 'Thou art a fool, Stephanus, if thou dreamest I would have Onesimus hither to see these. Why, man, he would give me not half their value. Nay, it is thou and thou only who shall buy them, Stephanus.'

'Woman, I tell thee it is impossible. I have not the money, and, if I had, I have other ways of spending it.'

'How willest thou to spend thy money, friend Stephanus?' whined Euphena. 'Shall I tell thee? Is't not to purchase Nyria in the slave-market that thou hast been putting a claim upon all thy goods . . . so that if thou needest to raise more money thou mayest do so?'

'I know not how thou knowest this,' answered Stephanus sulkily, 'but 'tis true.'

'Thou mayest save thy pains,' retorted Euphena. 'For if thou wentest up to three . . . ay, four thousand sestertia, thou wouldst be outbid. 'Tis not to thee that Nyria will fall. But fret not thyself, for the path this maid shall tread will be of her own choosing.'

Stephanus glowered at Euphena from under his pent brows and said half angrily, 'Thou art a veritable hag of Hades, woman—and yet——'

'And yet never have I lied,' she answered. 'Come now, friend Stephanus. Leave the purchase of Nyria to others seeing she desireth not to become thy property, and place in Euphena's power the means of purchasing her own freedom. Do this and thou shalt not suffer for it. For all thy business shall prosper, and for the next three years gold shall roll into thy coffers. Perchance, Stephanus . . .' and Euphena put on her whining tone again, 'a day may come when Nyria will need thy help even more than now, and thus the money that thou wilt have paid to Euphena shall bring in interest that may stand to Nyria's direr need.'

But Stephanus got up and shook himself. 'I will not do this thing,' he said. 'Nyria may be mine or not . . . by her own will or not. . . . But at least, she shall not stand in the slave-market without one friend to bid for her, and if I do as thou willest that cannot be. But give me yon load of gewgaws—thou canst surely trust Stephanus—and I will take them down to the Porticus Margaritaria,[1] and find thee a buyer. One need not know whence they came, for in the trade none would question Stephanus. . . . Say, dost thou agree?'

Euphena sat moodily silent and ill-pleased. But she saw that Stephanus was not to be turned from his word, and at length she uprose and began sulkily wrapping the things up and putting them into the bag from whence she had taken them.

'Ay,' she said sulkily. 'But I hold Nyria as hostage. Bring me back a good price for them . . . ay, over and above what I shall need, and thou canst give a pretty fair guess what that may be, Stephanus, else shall harm come to Nyria.'

'There shall no harm come to Nyria,' he said. 'I will guard the things well, old woman, and I will bring thee the best price to be obtained for them.'

Euphena went on packing the jewels in silence, and presently Stephanus shouldered the bundle she gave him.

[1] Porticus Margaritaria. See Appendix 44, Bk. II.

When he had gone, Euphena pushed me into the inner room, and barring the outer door sat herself down in the outer room to wait till he should return.

'There thou dost stay,' she said. 'And think not that thou shalt escape until Stephanus is back with the price of Euphena's freedom.'

The time seemed long until Stephanus returned. Torches were lit in the courtyard. Euphena had lighted her lamp and crouched on the floor beside it. I, watching her from within, saw the long black shadows dance about her as the wind blew in through cracks by the window stirring the flame of her lamp, and the strangest, evilest thing she looked ; and yet I could not believe that the heart of Euphena was wholly black.

When Stephanus rapped on the door, Euphena hasted to open unto him : and then, calling me, bade me go out.

'Thou art free now,' she said, 'since I know that Stephanus's wallet is full of gold coin.' And said she : 'Wert not afraid to walk up from the city with so much on thy person, Stephanus ? '

But he heeded not her talk. 'Sit thee down and count the gold, old hag,' he cried. 'For I want not to waste more time with thee. 'Tis Nyria I would talk with.' To which Euphena answered strangely :

'The day may come when in order to talk with Nyria thou wouldst claim Euphena's help, for all other help shall fail thy need, and even the advice of the wise woman may not avail thee. . . .' Then said she, 'Go forth, Nyria, and guard the door safe after thee' : and, as I pulled it to behind me, I heard the click of coin and the murmur of their voices in conference together. . . . Now, many minutes passed before Stephanus came out again, and putting his arms around me as I stood against the door, he held me close to his breast. 'Yon hag has secured herself from adverse happenings,' he said. 'Ah, Nyria, would that I could secure thee.' "

CHAPTER XVII

In the Slave-Market

Nyria tells how the slaves of Julia's household were taken to the slave-market and there sold to the highest bidder.

Nyria: "Upon the day that we were to be sold, we were called together quite early in the morning. In rank we stood, and there was an officer of the lawyer and of him that sold us whose duty it was to see that we were fittingly prepared. 'Twas like to be a hard day for some of us. They who were sold off early would get no food till evening and none knew what might befall them. Therefore most of us had made ourselves cakes and taken somewhat in bottles to drink, for this we were allowed to do. Then, each one carrying his bundle or box . . . or if one had a mate, sharing the load between them, and such as had children tying them together, if they were little ones, and binding them with a rope to the waist that they should not run too far among the crowd—we all took our places.

And this in the order of our service . . . the under-slaves first, and then the men in certain rank and the women in theirs. They who had little children might keep them with them, but such as chanced to have a child old enough to sell for service—whether boy or maid—this one would be taken from them and placed in the class to which he would rightfully belong: and husbands and wives—if they be wedded to one that was of another rank—would be separated in like manner. And that made much weeping and trouble.

I kept me close to Aemilia, seeing that I was of the same line of service as she, and by reason of my having been chief tirewoman, I should rank but one grade less than one who had been mistress of the draperies.

Aemilia's husband, also, having been a table servant . . . and having sometimes served Sabinus's person when one of his attendants chanced to be ill or away, was permitted to walk beside Aemilia so that all possible chance might be given to their being sold together. For I think not, as some thought, that such separating of married couples was done of cruelty, but rather that a fitting arrangement might be preserved.

Now, Euphena remained in the rear amongst us women and none knew —save I—that she carried with her enough gold to purchase her freedom. . . . For myself, I scarce dared think what might chance. . . . I hoped only that Cæsar would not pass that way. But some said that he withheld himself from all things which had belonged to Julia and only kept his hold upon them to prove his power above that of Flavius Clemens whom he hated and who, having been Sabinus's brother, should have had some claim to his estate. This we heard afterwards and also, that Sabinus having died as he did, his will, or the terms thereof, were forfeit to Cæsar under the laws of Rome, though had Cæsar chosen he could have apportioned some of Sabinus's effects to any members of the family surviving him.

Now we were driven down in long lines through the streets until we came to the city, certain officers, as I have told thee, walking beside us . . . some in advance and some behind . . . mayhap twenty or thirty or even more. For, thou knowest, Julia's household was a large one and, had the slaves banded together to escape or revolt, there might have been trouble. But they were not like to do it, for Julia's slaves were chiefly those who had been slaves always and had known no other life.

Crispus was in the Forum watching as we entered: and this not for scorn, but that he might minister to the wants of any who lacked food or aught that he could provide. For Crispus was kindly at heart.

Now they placed us around the apportioned space beside the rostrum for the seller and the pedestal adjoining, whereon each slave should stand.[1] The under-slaves were allowed less room for their grouping, but we women and such as were thought of account had each an allotted space whereon we might sit or stand in order that any buyers coming round might examine us.

Thou knowest that the under-slaves were always sold first . . . but the selling did not begin until the sun was fairly high in the heavens, for the reason that many lords in Rome were not early risers and such as were would be engaged with their clients and require their chief stewards in attendance.

Now it was the chief stewards, or chamberlains, who were deputed to purchase the under-slaves. No lord nor lady came to look at such, though frequently they themselves bought upper-slaves that they might need. But 'twas the way with ladies—or such as desired to observe a slave before purchasing—to pay a previous visit to a group of slaves and choose the one they fancied and obtain upon a written paper all details of that one, and then they would send an officer to purchase. Now, a chief steward—though he might be a slave himself—if he were empowered for his master or his lady—could purchase any other slave. But some lords sent legal officers . . . and some again their friends. One never knew whether he who bought one were buying for himself or another. The freedmen, too, bought slaves, and such as were farmers in the Campagna would either come themselves or send a deputy to purchase gangs for work upon the farms.

But slaves sold for labour on the fields or roads . . . or even the under-slaves of great households . . . were more often sold in one of the lesser forums down nearer to the lower streets by the city.

But when a number of slaves such as we of Julia's household were sold together, our purchasers were of the higher ranks in Rome. Nevertheless, seeing that there were many under-slaves in such a great household, they were sold—mayhap, two or three at a time . . . being put up together—for whatever might be the work they had been accustomed to fulfil.

Now the method of purchase was such that one might bid a price and another outbid him and so on . . . till the seller deemed he had reached the fullest sum that could be required. But among those that were of high estate—whether they came themselves or sent a deputy—such an one having fixed upon his slave would approach the seller and say he would give so much, demanding whether that price suited the agents that were acting for the household, and if it did or if the purchaser were one it were not wise to gainsay, the slave would be reserved for him. Most often, the slaves

[1] For corroborative particulars and an illustration of the pedestal upon which slaves stood to be sold, see Roffstevsky's *Economic Life of Rome*.

would be bidden to withdraw and follow the purchaser as soon as the papers had been made out by the legal officer who sat close by at his desk.

But sometimes, if the buyer desired to examine other slaves or had other business to attend to, that purchased slave would be directed to retain his position until he were told to follow his new master.

Now I, being considered one of a special kind who had done close personal service for my mistress, was arranged in a position of note, in order that I might be well seen and observed by such as came to purchase. And being of yellow hair and white skin, I was made to stand near to those who were darker. For this cause, I was not permitted to remain beside Aemilia, which grieved me sore. For Aemilia's hair was brown and her skin was not very dark.

Now Thanna was upon my other side, for Thanna, as thou knowest, was very dark and was allotted the apportioned square next to me, and this the more because Thanna had chosen to dress herself in her best and was gay with her red embroidered veil and a striped petticoat of silk in many colours that Julia had given her. But I had on all white clothes and my hair they made me keep unbound, though I would fain have twisted it up because of the speeches that they made about it. And some would have pulled it as they came to look at me—but that was not allowed, for the upper-slaves might not be touched . . . especially the women—though the under-slaves could be turned about as any one pleased.

Thanna did not at all mind being looked at, and was ready to spring to her feet or turn her round or lie in any posture so that she might be seen in various ways : and, two or three times in the day, she changed her hair-dressing, carrying a little mirror—which, also, she had got from Julia—and affixing it on the stones beside her so that she might see to pile her hair upon her head and fasten it with gay skewers, or to curl and twist it in ropes that hung down her back. For Thanna had plenty of hair, but she would not let it remain like mine unbound lest, she said, it hide her other charms. And as her hair was dark, not yellow like mine, they did not mind and let her do as she would. But a golden wig was thought of great value, and even if a slave were ugly, so she had yellow hair, she might be sold for the value of her hair alone. And for this, they liked to show a yellow-haired maid with all her hair strewed about her.

And when they saw that Euphena was of the party and 'twas described upon the papers that she had been my foster-mother and her countenance being as it was, they placed her close to me.

I did not wish to shrink from the poor old thing, but she threw scornful speeches at the crowd such as brought down much notice upon us, and many among the people laughed and jeered at her which made them note me also so that I had like to have sunk in shame. For 'twas terrible to see the throngs that pressed upon and around the space allotted to us—coming as near as they dared to watch us and talk about us : and these not purchasers but such as sought an amusement for an idle hour. Many of them were the scum of Rome, upon whom, mayhap, a proud well-kept slave had looked in scorn. But when the slaves were offered for purchase, the street rabble—though they might be gangs of lower slave-workers themselves—yet still gat the scorn and laugh on their side, so that few slaves about to to be sold had the spirit to retort upon their scoffers.

But Euphena cared not and gave them back scorn for scorn and word for word, which pleased the rabble and raised many a laugh against all. And

this, thou knowest, was before the time that any of us were offered for sale while we were arranging and placing ourselves and waiting for purchasers to come that way. Afterward, when any slaves were being offered for sale —especially if it were an upper one of note—the rabble dared not shout and thrust themselves forward else those officers who waited there to keep the peace would have thrust them back. But when one was sold and being led away by his new master, some of the throng would follow and cry sharp speeches on him, some envying him if he had chanced to have been bought by a man of note who was known to be a good master and others jeering if his purchaser should be thought a skin-flint or one of lesser grade than his former master.

Now I would that I have described rightly the appearance of the scene: and thou wouldst know that from about the fifth hour the sales of the lower slaves began: and I would explain to thee that there were several people employed in the business of the selling—thou wouldst understand that—and that many of the better ones were bought privately by such as came or sent their stewards, who having chosen the slaves they wished, would arrange the matter with the lawyer's officer who sat at his desk. . . .

It was not usual for a great lawyer to do this himself. But now Matho did it. Some said because he could not at that time afford to keep in his office men of fitting knowledge and strength for the purpose. Others that such a household as that of the great Julia was one worthy for the head of the firm himself to undertake. . . . However that might be, Matho sat at his desk. He had two clerks—slaves—with him, for the sending of messages or the transcribing of any necessary papers. They sat, each on either side upon lower stools below his desk—his seat being raised. Then he who sold us by word of mouth had two or three other officers beneath him. And yet again there were others whose duty it was to walk round amongst us and to see that order was preserved and that none of the better slaves suffered injustice or discomfort from the crowd."

NYRIA (resuming): "We watched many of those whom we knew being sold and led away. Pheidias went to a hard master who was reputed one that sore ill-treated his slaves . . . I know not the name. Bibbi would have been classed with the upper household and being a large man and of great strength, he was like to be in request. But some officers came down from that office near the Carinæ . . . where was kept a public staff of beaters, and examined him: and then his purchase was arranged for by private treaty, and Bibbi himself went away.

But while his purchase was being arranged, he came round among us making jokes and saying that we would miss his lash: and in truth some of us would rather have had the lash we were accustomed to than go beneath a stranger.

'Take heart of grace,' said he, 'for like enough, I shall be sent for to perform mine office upon thee when such an one is in request. Then will Bibbi see that he comes himself to serve Nyria.'

But I gave no heed to him: and 'twas then I saw Stephanus and, behind him, a slave whom he had hired to carry a bag, the which methought from its weight, held gold. For one of Stephanus's station, desiring to purchase a slave, would have been required to lay down at least a certain sum of money as proof that he could pay the whole. And with Stephanus walked two of his fellow goldsmiths from the Porticus Margaritaria. There was

Onesimus to whom he had sold Euphena's thievings and another. These two were required to be witnesses of his word. But he bade them stand back when he came near to me and I saw a smile upon the face of either and they pointed to me and whispered together and laughed.

Said Stephanus, coming towards me, 'So thou art unclaimed yet, Nyria?'

I scarce answered him, nor had I eyes to look at him for I was watching the crowd lest by chance I might see Chabrias. Thou knowest, Aeola had been commissioned by Crispus to tell Valeria of the sale so that she might send to purchase me should she so desire.

'For whom art thou looking?' asked Stephanus. 'Dost suppose that favourite of thine upon the Cœlian will send and purchase thee? . . . Nay, nay, Nyria, thou hast yet to learn that thou mayst serve her with all the powers at thy command, but when she needs thee not, she will not think of thee.' And in truth, his words did seem to me most like to be the case, for none came from Valeria and my heart sank ever lower. Stephanus stayed near me, but I could not talk to him: and by and by there seemed a shifting change in the crowd. A party of soldiers marched past one of the other gates, and some said they were going to meet a general who was arriving. I caught words here and there, and the name of Asiaticus flew from lip to lip: and I heard them say—or so Stephanus repeated to his friends behind me—that Asiaticus had passed with a detachment of soldiery. But I knew not what it was all about and cared little, and, twice or thrice, I had to stand up or come forward to be examined.

Thus Stephanus was forced to wait the bidding, for though he had approached the lawyer and said he was prepared to give a good price for me—fixing it as high as he dared—but this I did not know till afterwards—yet they would not let him purchase me for that sum, seeing I am yellow-haired and considered well-looking. They desired to wait to see if no better price were forthcoming, for Roman ladies would give much, thou knowest, for a yellow-haired slave: and 'twas not likely that Stephanus should need me save as wife or mistress . . . all knowing he was unwed. Then again Matho was no friend of his, for Matho was opposed to Juvenal, and Juvenal and Stephanus were friends.

Juvenal came down into the Forum and strolled round talking to Stephanus who had placed himself upon a stool not far from me . . . as near as he dared come, though of course he would not be allowed to sit in the ring.

But Juvenal approached me and said a few kindly words.

'Had I the money, Nyria, I would purchase thee myself . . . or I would at least join forces with friend Stephanus, so that we might share thee . . . ay, how wouldst thou like that? And how would friend Stephanus like it I wonder. . . .' and Juvenal laughed. But to me 'twas no laughing matter.

Then, when the hour came that the chief women were to be sold, Euphena pushed her way forward and claimed to be heard.

Matho, who was ever hard upon the poor and lowly, called sharply that she should be thrust back, but Euphena would not listen to him and said stoutly . . . that she had the right to be heard for the law was on her side.

After which Matho bade her speak.

I looked to hear Euphena bring forth some of her spiteful speeches, but she bent low before him and said quite civilly, that she but desired the purchase of her own old frame . . . so to have a few years of solitude and leisure in which to serve the gods before they called her hence.

Seeing that she seemed old and was so ugly and weakly too . . . for she leaned upon a stick and had shrunk herself up till there looked to be very little of her . . . Matho asked her sharply how much she could give, and then she told him.

I mind not how much, but 'twas a goodly sum . . . more than thou wouldst think, and Matho looked surprised and asked how she had obtained it . . . to which Euphena answered that that was no part of the law—but she said it in her whining, civil way—and that she was prepared to lay out the sum before him if he would have the papers drawn up for her freedom.

Then Matho turned to those that had been watching the purchasers who came round and examined the slaves, and they reported unto him that none had given more than a glance at Euphena and there would be no bidding for her.

But, said Matho, that he had half a mind to place her on the sale-pillar for the purpose of seeing if the price would not rise. But that was against the law if a slave could produce more than a certain sum : and Euphena had this on her and would give it him. He bade her count it out . . . the which she did upon the desk before him, taking the money from a little bag she carried in her breast and seeming to gloat over each golden piece as she laid it down. Many there were that watched her, for, though 'twas a lawful thing for an old slave thus to purchase herself, yet few could do it, and folks made many comments.[1] I saw Stephanus watching her, but he said naught, for it was best for him to keep away from her just then. 'Verily, thou hast done well for thyself,' said Matho when the sum lay in two golden piles. 'Thy mistress must have been a generous woman.'

'Yea . . . yea . . .' whined Euphena. 'The lady Julia was most generous and never grudged her slaves aught. Here are many who will bear me witness' : and she turned with a flourish of her lean black hand towards us all and none dared gainsay Euphena for Euphena free was more to be feared than Euphena a slave.

But Thanna laughed outright and nodded. Thanna thought it wise to curry favour then. Moreover Thanna knew that she looked well when she laughed, shewing all her white teeth in her dark comely face.

Now one that watched her strode across . . . a great lord he seemed. He wore a tunic that was well made and his toga was bordered with gold.

There were two or three behind him. He came and stood before Thanna.

'Didst thou, too, find thy mistress generous ?' said he.

'My mistress was Julia,' laughed Thanna tossing her head.

'So. . . . And did she give thee this and this ? . . .' he asked, pointing to her gay petticoat and her embroidered veil and some gold pins in her hair.

'I earned them by clever and faithful service,' answered Thanna with another laugh.

'Ho, ho,' said he. 'Thou art clever I'll warrant. But I would not lay much upon thy faithfulness. Few clever women are faithful.'

'It doth depend, my lord,' replied Thanna. 'Give me that which is worth being faithful to, and I will be faithful.'

'I've half a mind to try thee,' he said. 'Say, art tired of serving a mistress ?'

And Thanna's face lightened all over with smiles. She beamed and nodded and sat her down saucily clasping her knees.

[1] Peculium of a slave and the slave's right to purchase with it his freedom. See Appendix 45, Bk. II.

'I tire not myself, lord,' she answered. 'When one is tired one cannot serve as well, and I would give fresh and earnest service. Try me.'

'What would thine office be,' he said. 'I have no lady-wife for thee to deck. Is there aught else thou canst do?'

'Try me,' she answered. 'Thanna is but young yet. Give her time and the chance for which she hath longed: and see what she can do.'

'Thou art a fool, Regulus,'[1] said one standing behind him. 'Come thee hence. Thou needest not to burden thyself with cattle of such kind. Man, take thy pleasures cheaper: the girl will fetch a good price: and when thou hast her thou wilt tire of her in a week.'

At which Thanna hearing, addressed the air.

'Now that would be strange. None ever yet tired of Thanna . . . nor would, if Thanna knew it.'

And he who had been called Regulus lingered. He was handsome, but I liked not his face.

'I've half a mind to try her. I can put her into the next big sale if she suit me not.'

'Oh, ay . . . thou canst . . .' said Thanna mischievously. 'But thou wilt not. See, lord Regulus': and she bent her head before him as he came back and stood looking down upon her. 'Let Thanna look to the preparing of thy clothes if there be naught else for her to do. The gold upon thy tunic is somewhat tarnished and those bracelets want rubbing up. Likewise, there must be a hole in that pouch thou wearest, for I see a paper sticking forth. Now, lords who carry papers in Rome, do carry them more carefully, else who knows what secrets they might betray. Mayhap, lord, Thanna might serve as messenger. A tongue sometimes serves better than a pen' for that which is written all may read, but that which is spoken, none may hear save as the speaker will.'

Now this I saw made some mark upon the mind of Regulus, who stood looking down upon her, and I glanced from him to Aemilia. But Aemilia had turned her back and seemed to wish not to notice Thanna. So I said naught, but waited for the ending of the play . . . though to me it seemed that Thanna would have her will, and I wondered what she saw in this well-looking and yet, methought, . . . unpleasant visaged lord that took her fancy.

'Mayhap,' she said softly, but speaking so low that only I could hear, 'the lord Regulus is like some other noble lords, who come of noble stock, yet scarce can buy such bracelets as befit them. If the lord Regulus would be rich, let him purchase Thanna. 'Twould be a good investment at the price.'

And she looked up at him slyly.

'Verily, I believe it would,' he answered. 'But hark thee, girl, if I buy thee and thou art not worth as much as thou wouldst say, thou shalt go to the first auction held here after I find thee out.'

'I will take the chance,' said Thanna smiling between her teeth.

The lord came nearer and touched her head.

'Is all that hair thine?' he asked, whereat Thanna pulled the pins out and let it fall like a dusky shower over her.

'Stand up,' he said, and she rose to her feet meekly and yet with a certain sauciness in her demeanour and turned her slowly round, her hands

[1] Regulus, an "Informer" and well-known legal social personage of the time. See Appendix 23, Bk. III.

upon her hips to show her shape: and then, parting her hair over her shoulders, she held it out on either side like a black cloud and looked at him with a smile, the while he watched her.

'Art thou satisfied, lord?'

He seemed to shake his head. But Thanna answered for him.

'Nay, 'tis too soon to say thou art wholly satisfied: and, seeing that Thanna in her way is wise, she will take care that thou art never wholly satisfied. Yet will she give thee more and more to satisfy thee. See, lord.' And she held her face near to him, smiling again and with an eager look in her eyes. 'Thanna is young . . . barely twenty. Thou shalt find her date of birth upon the paper. If Thanna be what she is, now, what may she not grow into? Thanna is young, but she is wise beyond her years . . . and she may learn . . . she will learn . . . all that thou desirest.'

'Verily,' said the lord. 'If thou art not wholly satisfying it seems to me one is like to have more amusement out of thee than one may meet in a week of festivals among the highest or the lowest in Rome. Ay, I'll buy thee, girl. What is thy price, dost know?'

'Nay, lord,' said Thanna meekly. 'But it should not be dear to him who holds the private purse-strings of so many.'

Now what she meant by this I did not know, but the lord glanced at her sharply.

'See here,' he said. 'Thy speech is smart and witty, girl, and doth give me some insight into thy cleverness. But take care before whom thou dost prate.'

'When thou hast sealed Thanna's lips, lord, thou only shalt be able to break the seal,' answered Thanna: and she bent again low before him with her hair falling over her like a veil. But as she did so I saw her shoulders shake and knew she laughed. But the lord had turned away and I saw him go up to Matho the lawyer and speak to him.

'Who is thy purchaser, Thanna?' I asked.

Then Thanna answered me, but in a murmur as though she would not have others hear.

''Twas the great Regulus.'

And when I, not knowing, asked who he might be, she answered me . . . that one had like to have insufficient knowledge . . . who knew not Regulus. And then getting herself up she began to put her things together, packing them swiftly, 'for,' said she, 'Matho may be a sharp lawyer, but he will find need for his wits who hath Regulus against him.'

Now to me it had not seemed that this lord looked very sharp or clever . . . the which when I said as much to Thanna, she answered me:

'That they who are truly wise carried not their characters upon their faces. But,' said she, 'thou art right, Nyria, in that he is not so wise, but that Thanna can make him wiser.'

'I had rather have been bought by a lady,' I said.

'Oh, wouldst thou!' retorted Thanna jeering. 'Well, each to his own taste. I have had enough of working for a woman. I would now fain have women to work for me.'

And with that she stood up and smoothed down her garments, having twisted her hair anew and made herself ready, so that when the lord Regulus came up and behind him those other twain who were scoffing, I could see, at his purchase . . . Thanna was ready for them. I saw her look angrily

at the twain in the rear, and, but that it was not fitting in a slave and she dared not . . . I saw she would have spoken.

'Now,' said the lord Regulus. 'Art thou ready, girl?'

'Ay, ready,' she answered. 'Ready to follow whither my lord leads.'

So when he looked at her, he said:

'Thou art right to be civil. But mind, I am not one to like over much sugar in my porridge.'

'Thanna is accounted a good porridge maker, lord, but Thanna doth spice it,' she answered. 'Too much sugar is but meat for babes.'

At which reply I saw that he was pleased.

'Come, come,' he said. 'At least, I see that we shall not be dull. Take thy bundle and follow me.'

Thanna picked up the parcel of her clothes that was lightest, but there was yet again another . . . a box on which she had been sitting. Thanna looked at it and then at the lord Regulus.

'Surely,' she said in her most courteous manner, 'the lord Regulus will supply a slave to carry the baggage of one whom he doth favour? Thanna's arms are not used to such weights.'

The lords at the back laughed loudly. 'See, thou hast thy work cut out for thee,' they cried. 'Thou wilt have to supply a new household of slaves.'

But the lord Regulus turned sharply upon them.

'The girl is right,' he said. 'Who would ask a woman to lift such a weight as that?' and he signed to some of those who were waiting about the Forum ever ready for a task, the which when they saw, half a dozen ran up clamouring to carry Thanna's box.

But she picked out the best herself and with a proud air said, 'Guard it well and follow me': and with that she gave the bundle she carried to another and bade him come too: and the lord Regulus stood and watched her with a smile.

'She will be choosing bearers for thee next, Regulus,' said one of those great lords.

Thanna ran back as she was about to follow her new lord to say good-bye to Aemilia and to me. . . . And that was the last I saw of Thanna, then. . . .

Now Stephanus was getting impatient. For thou knowest he was not easy-tempered and he liked not being kept there all day, when he had the money in hand with which to purchase me. Twice he had approached Matho, whose only answer was: that 'twas not a high enough sum, and that I should fetch more.

Then it hapened that even while Stephanus was talking with Matho and Crispus had come up again to say a word to me and had brought a little fresh milk in an earthen jug for Aemilia's babe and some sweet cakes such as they sold—that there sounded the tramp of soldiers and of music, and presently a great escort of soldiery came down one of the streets from the Quay. I knew not who was thus honoured, but many craned their heads, and Crispus being free to go whither he would, went to see and came back saying it was Asiaticus and with him Paulinus who had returned from his Egyptian campaign and that they were both being borne in litters round the end of the Forum.

Now, just then, it chanced that they had caught sight of the sale, and Paulinus, having just returned from foreign parts and being anxious—so I heard him tell Valeria afterwards—to see all that was going forward, bade the men set him down and Asiaticus with him; and the two walked round

the Forum together looking at the slaves with but a forewalker or two to clear the road.

The escort had been to welcome Paulinus, but by his desire, he was to go back to the villa without it, for he would not have Valeria alarmed by the sound of the soldiery—or so he said. Methinks that he desired to take Valeria by surprise, not knowing that she knew he was coming.

And as he walked round with Asiaticus talking and laughing, they came near us, and a sudden thought filled me! If but Paulinus would buy me! But I dared not speak to him and my heart was full of fear and hope.

I rose then on my feet and looked towards him with such a mighty longing that Crispus saw it, and knowing I had greatly desired that Valeria should buy me, he said teasingly:

'Wouldst have word with Paulinus, Nyria?'

'Ay, that would I,' I answered. 'Oh, I beseech thee, Crispus, wilt thou not draw him this way?'

And Crispus disappeared in the crowd. But I was eager—fearing he might miss the lord Paulinus, and fearing lest means should avail me to proffer my request. So I hasted and passing in front of Matho's desk, I said I craved of the lord Matho permission to wander a few yards that way, pointing with my hand, and before he could stop me I was gone.

Now Matho, they said, had been drinking, for Matho had retired to partake of his midday meal, which was now over, and when he saw me, he cried out, 'What doth the yellow-haired maid want? Speed after her lest she be lost.'

And two or three runners with one of the clerks did follow me. But I ran through the crowd, who, when they saw me coming, did part for me, not knowing what I wanted, yet thinking mayhap 'twas a runaway slave.

And there in the roadway I saw Paulinus and Asiaticus with their litters being drawn behind them and, away at the corner of the street, was a band of soldiery filing off.

Now, when Paulinus came nearer, and I heard him laugh and saw his great red limbs, I felt glad, for Paulinus had ever been kind to me, and I gave myself no time to fear, but hurried on and knelt on the ground before him so that he needs must stumble over me. And he, laughing with Asiaticus, scarce saw me, and the edge of his mantle brushed my head, and his armour clanged loudly.

But I put my hands upon his tunic and prayed him to stop, so when he looked down he exclaimed:

'Whom have we here? By Venus and all her attendant maidens!—here's a pretty welcome back to Rome'; and with that he swung me to my feet, holding me by both shoulders out before him.

''Tis Yellow-hair, I declare!' he cried. 'Why, little wench, didst thou know me?'

'Ay, lord,' I said, but I scarce could speak, for my eyes were full of tears. I was so desirous he should buy me.

'Art in trouble, child?' he said.

'Nay, lord, not now,' I answered, 'since thou hast come.'

'Since I have come! Ho, ho! What wouldst thou of Paulinus?' and he put his arm around me and drew me closer to his side. 'Speak, little maid, I am no——' He did name a sort of conquering monster that went along the—I have lost the words. Said he, 'I have no desire to eat the sacrifices poured forth in my honour; and since thy worship—and very pretty it is

too—is most surely in my honour, what wouldst thou I should render unto thee for it ? '

' Lord, buy me,' I cried.

' Buy thee ! buy thee ! . . . Well, here's a pretty purchase. Art thou for sale ? ' he cried.

I nodded, choking down my sobs. For though I had been brave all day, nor never had a greater need to be, yet now that I seemed to see the road plain before me, I feared lest I might be driven another way.

' Well, hush thee, child,' he said, patting my shoulders, ' or else weep out. Some women are better for a sound lament. Mayhap when thou hast swallowed thy tears thou will be able to explain the matter.'

With that, the lord Asiaticus struck in saying somewhat that I heard not, for I minded him not—but it did not sound kind—and I caught the lord Paulinus's retort.

' I trow thou wouldst not,' he said sharply. ' But since the maid hath appealed to me, she shall surely count upon my succour. Ye gods ! Is it not worth while to spend a few sestertia for such a welcome as this ! '

For I was kissing the hem of his robe.

And then he, looking up, saw Crispus standing close by.

' Who art thou ? ' he said. ' Canst tell me aught about this maid ? ' and Crispus made obeisance.

' May it please thee, lord,' he said, ' the maid is called Nyria, and both she and I were slaves of Julia and Sabinus whom the gods have called hence. Sabinus gave me my freedom ere he departed, but the maid is about to be sold in the market yonder to the highest bidder.'

' So, ho !—Is that the tale ? And thou wouldst that Paulinus bought thee ? Say, little wench, is that thy desire ? '

I nodded, wiping my face.

' And now I mind me,' he continued, looking at me carefully—' thou didst win the favour of Valeria, who is spare in such bestowings. To be sure, I will purchase thee and present thee unto her. Come now, Yellow-hair, and we will see him who hath the selling of thee.'

' But,' he added, shaking back his mantle and striding on with one hand on his sword, and yet glancing kindly on me, ' be sure thou bringest me luck, Nyria.'

And with that I saw him give Asiaticus anudge with his great elbow.

' Some there be, who landing on the ground of their forefathers, would haste to offer sacrifices in the temple. 'Tis no secret, I trow, that there is no goddess to whom I would as soon sacrifice as Valeria. But doves she will have not—nor even jewels. Now will I try if this maid can make a road to her heart.'

Asiaticus laughed loudly and replied :

' The road to a woman's heart is scarce worth searching. 'Tis like that silly game where one follows a clue in a labyrinth only to find that there is naught concealed.'

' Thou knowest not Valeria,' said Paulinus. ' Ye gods ! It may be true of every other woman, but, methinks, 'tis not so of her.'

' Thou thinkest so because thou hast not penetrated far enough,' replied Asiaticus. ' I ought to know and I speak from different experience, having wandered all over that well-ploughed field—the mind and heart of her sister.'

' As well compare a lily with a field daisy,' retorted Paulinus. ' With all

due deference to thee, Asiaticus—and I like Vitellia well—she is made of different stuff.'

But now we had reached Matho's desk, and Paulinus thrust me forward and asked Matho what my price was.

'The reserve is a thousand sestertia,' replied Matho.[1] 'But the maid is to go to the highest bidder.'

'Highest fool!' retorted Paulinus. 'Thou knowest, thou old sneak of a lawyer, that thou darest not gainsay anyone whose word is worth a button on his armour and who would put forth a fair price for her. Come now, what wilt thou take?'

'I have told the Most Noble Lord,' said Matho whiningly. 'The maid is reserved at a thousand sestertia. Nevertheless, with that yellow hair and that face she is well worth three, which is what we hope to obtain for her.'

'By Mercury! Thou hast his own audacity. I wonder thou darest sit there in the sun lest thou be shrivelled up.'

And Paulinus laughed angrily, and then he looked at me and pulled my hair, but not unkindly.

'Dost hear, Nyria? Didst thou mean to break Paulinus's exchequer by putting this obligation upon him? I'll warrant Valeria may think thee worth that much, but what shall I say?'

I looked at him, not knowing whether he meant me to answer, but seeing that he did I only murmured:

'Buy me, lord.'

'Ay, that will I,' he answered. 'But not at this old thief's price. Come, come, a thousand sestertia, Matho, and thou art well paid.'

But just then there came a shoving and a pushing in the crowd that had gathered round and I saw Stephanus standing there with his friends behind him, who seeing that someone had named a price for me, was privileged to put forward another.

'Twelve hundred sestertia,' he cried.

'Twelve!' said Paulinus, while Matho nodded to Stephanus. 'And who art thou that darest bid against me?' and Stephanus made no answer, but looked to see Matho register his price.

'Well, if thou dost say twelve, I suppose I must say fifteen.'

Then it was that Stephanus said two thousand.

'Two thousand five hundred,' said Paulinus quickly, 'and no more nonsense, Matho. Write the maid down to me,' and he strode forward, putting his hand upon the desk. 'I know not who this fellow is, but we are not bidding publicly. The maid is not upon the rostrum, and I demand that thou sellest her to me by the laws of private treaty. I'll pay no more than that. Put her up to auction if thou darest.'

Now, Matho—seeing that Paulinus spoke thus to him—for thou knowest that Paulinus was a man of note in Rome and a friend of Cæsar's—answered hurriedly:

'Yea, lord—this fellow—Stephanus—desired the maid, but being but a freedman and the reserve put upon her thus high—seeing she hath yellow hair and would take any lady's fancy, it was not like that he should have her. But she will suit thy lady well.'

'Prate not of thy betters,' stormed Paulinus. 'Give me a pen and I'll sign for the sum. I have no time to waste here with thee all day.'

And then he made a great mark upon the scroll that Matho handed him

[1] See "Roman Coinage," Appendix 46, Bk. II.

and turned away. 'Come, Yellow-hair,' he said. 'Thou and I are both glad to quit this post, I warrant."

But I had turned me round, for Stephanus stood at the corner looking so white and strange that I grieved for him and ran to his side and clutched his arm. He had held a bag in his hand containing, I suppose, some of the money but had dropped it, and hung upon the desk as though he could not stand.

'Ah, fret not, Stephanus,' I whispered. 'Thou knowest 'tis Paulinus who hath bought me, and I shall live so happy in his household. Thou must not grudge me, Stephanus. Only smile on me again.'

But Stephanus turned round and looked at me as though he scarcely heard what I said, and he made no effort to hold me as he mostly did. His friends were whispering together behind him, and just then, Juvenal came up in his long cloak. He had been standing close by and must have heard all that had passed.

'Come, come, Stephanus,' he cried, laying his hand upon Stephanus's shoulder—'This is but the justice of Rome. Didst think that thou wouldst be listened to—thou who art only one of those that serve the city—not one that ruleth her? Cease mourning. For what maid is worth it?'

Stephanus put out his hand shudderingly and caught mine. He drew a long breath and seemed to come back to himself, but his eyes were still staring in an unseeing way, and having held my hand for a moment, he dropped it again and turning from me, pushed Juvenal and his other friends aside with both his arms spread out, and the crowd made way for him.

'Begone . . . begone . . .' he cried huskily, 'I would be alone. . . .'

Then I made to follow Paulinus and Euphena's voice stayed me.

First, I would tell thee of Euphena that she did not remove herself after she had her papers given to her and when some asked her if she were not going she said 'Nay,' and that she would linger to see what fate should befall us.

Now I knew she had been watching when Paulinus bought me, though from the moment I first saw him I had no thought for anything else. But as I ran from the lawyer's desk, behind him and Asiaticus, she called after me:

'Haste thee, Nyria. Speed upon the road leading thee to that which thou knowest not of and be sure a warm welcome shall be awaiting thee. But truly it shall be in a way thou knowest not. And thou shalt find a bed whereon to lay thy head of a kind that yet thou knowest not.'

But I tarried not to Euphena's warning for I feared to lose sight of Paulinus. Then I saw that his steps were stayed also, for he was met by Plinius who had with him afoot his young wife, whom he led forward.

Now Paulinus had stopped to greet her, and though I heard not what at first was said, when I came up to them Plinius was saying:

'Yea, I am come to purchase a chief tirewoman for this little lady who liketh not the one with which I did provide her. For in truth she seemeth too great a dame herself to serve my wife, who would fain have a woman of simpler ways. Yet I misdoubt me whether one among Julia's dressers would serve, seeing that Julia was a great dame and liked much show, but, haply, we may find among the lesser maids one who will be kind to this little shy mistress of mine.'

And Paulinus looked kindly upon her, then said he, 'I know not . . .' and a sudden thought seemed to strike him. 'But I have but just now purchased a maid who can tell thee,' he said. 'Here, Yellow-hair, where hast thou got? Thou art so small, thou little flea, that if thou dost hide thee thus

beneath the hem of my mantle how should I see thee ? ' and with that he swung him round and pulled me forward.

Now, seeing Plinius and his lady, I made obeisance.

' Dost know if there be a woman among Julia's who can serve Plinius's purpose and that of his lady ? ' asked Paulinus.

' Yea, lord,' I answered, greatly pleased to serve Aemilia, for I thought of her. ' I will take thee to her if it pleaseth thee. . . . But she is wed . . . and much desireth to be sold with her husband.'

Whereat Asiaticus and Paulinus laughed aloud.

' They have their human passions like as we,' said Paulinus in his rough kindly way : ' who desire not to be separated, save now and then when such a separation is an advantage and doth serve as well as Cæsar's divorce law.'

' 'Tis but natural,' said Plinius kindly. ' We should not like to be separated, eh ? ' said he to his wife. ' Come, lead on, little maid, and shew us this one of whom thou dost speak. If we needs must buy her husband, haply I can manage even that, for I can make room for another if he hath aught at his finger ends.'

' May it please thee, lord,' said I. ' Aemilia's husband is a table-steward and hath served Sabinus's person.'

' So much the better,' answered Plinius. ' Shew me where he stands ' : and I turned the way to where Aemilia and her babes and her husband sat round the corner of the platform.

It was but just then that the sellers had sent two men to bring Aemilia to the rostrum and there was a terrible look of anxiety on her face, for none had come to purchase them together and she greatly feared to be put up by herself. But when Plinius saw her, she turned and setting the child down, she stood between them, and answered all the questions that he put to her.

' Well, what sayest thou ? ' he asked his lady.

' I like her, lord,' she murmured shyly. ' Will it please thee to purchase her ? '

' That's done then,' said Plinius, who had been examining her husband.

' Pack thy goods together and be ready to follow. . . . And thou, little maid . . .' and he handed me a gold aureus,[1] ' . . . there, for thy commission.'

And I took it with great pleasure, for 'twas not the gold but his way of giving it that made the gift grateful.

Now when they went back, parting from Paulinus, I ran to Aemilia and kissed her and said :

' Most surely I shall see thee soon since our lords be friends . . . ay, and our ladies too. Fare thee well, Aemilia : and good luck go with thee.'

' And with thee, too,' said Aemilia kissing me with a glad face : and so we parted.

Now when we came to the edge of the Forum where the litters stood, Paulinus was for getting into his when he caught sight of me again and said :

' Those little limbs will scarce bear thee up the Cœlian beside my bearers. Come, Yellow-hair, jump in. There's room for thee I trow.'

' Nay, lord. It is not fitting,' I answered. ' Nyria can run.'

' But Nyria will not have to run,' he answered. ' Thou hast been ill-served in the past if I remember rightly, Yellow-hair, Now, for once, at least, thou shalt ride like a lady ' : and he made me get in before him, and

[1] The Roman aureus, in terms of the sovereign, was worth a little over £1 1s. 1½d.

I sat curled up where he rested his feet: and then the bearers hoisted us and off we went.

I had my bundle with me, but it did not take much room and the litter was a large one. Paulinus rode with the curtains open, so that I could see around me: and 'twas greatly pleasant, and I much enjoyed my ride.

'Hast thou ever ridden in a litter before, Yellow-hair?' said Paulinus. He had been shouting across the men's shoulders to Asiaticus who was carried behind.

'Yea, lord—once,' I answered.

'And when was that?' he said.

So then I told him that Crispus had brought the litter for me and why it was.

'Poor maid,' he cried. 'And that was because thou wouldst serve Valeria? Truly, she should not be so proud—this marble wife of mine, but should extend more gratitude to such as worship at her shrine.'

'May it please thee, lord,' I said. 'Thy lady doth most generously favour Nyria.'

'Ho, ho,' he said laughing riotously, till it seemed he was too glad of mind to be able to do aught else but laugh. 'I see thou wilt hear naught against Valeria . . . and yet, it seems to me, the lady might have sent a messenger herself to purchase thee.'

'Haply, she knew not, lord,' I answered . . . 'that we were to be sold.'

'Haply, not,' he said . . 'seeing that Valeria liveth for the most part in a dream-land of her own where thou and I—and such-like common fleshly folk, Yellow-hair, exist not . . . save to serve her.'

And now we reached the gate below the villa, but instead of entering by the little entrance in the wall, Paulinus bade them bear the litter up the central steps and past the statues and on by the staircase and into the great atrium: and there we were set down. He sprang out hastily seeming to forget me, but as he strode away with Asiaticus . . . No, Asiaticus's litter had not come up then . . . as he strode, he called over his shoulder, 'Follow me, Nyria, but enter not into the lady Valeria's presence. Wait without until I call thee.'

And thus I waited in the antechamber of the sitting-room where methought Valeria would receive him.

There were slaves scurrying to and fro in the passages and through the atrium: and they looked at me, for the most part, crossly—for I think they liked me not: and one or two made disagreeable speeches about Paulinus having borne me in his litter.

Asiaticus's litter was brought up just behind his: and he, too, descended: and as he passed me he stopped, saying:

'So, ho! . . . thou white-faced maid. Hast thou been bidden not to witness the meeting of these long-parted lovers? Their embraces will be sweet, eh?' and he leered at me and laughed.

'I know not, lord,' I said with mine eyes on the ground.

'Ho, ho,' he laughed again. 'Then thou knowest little of Valeria. Come, we'll follow and see somewhat of the fun.'

But I shrank back, I wanted not to spy upon Valeria: and he strode on and, at the outer curtains, paused and drew them aside, peeping within before he entered.

Now for this I liked him not, but I, too, could not help seeing that Valeria

was not alone with her husband. Vitellia stood beside her, the which when Asiaticus saw, he cried to me:

'Come on, thou German waif. Here's no fun after all, since that solid, practical lady-wife of mine doth disperse the romance': and he strode within. But I remained, seeing that Paulinus had not bidden me.

I could hear Valeria speaking. Her voice was very calm and cold, but there was a sort of tremble in it as she asked Paulinus of his journey and his health in a courteous way, seeming to wish to keep him in general converse. For when I heard Vitellia say, 'Thou wilt desire to be alone with thy spouse, Valeria—now, Asiaticus and I will get us hence,' Valeria stayed her with a plea that 'twas nearing sunset and she did greatly desire they should dine, whereat Paulinus laughed loudly and said:

'A good dinner will be welcome . . .' for that he had fed chiefly upon dried meats on board the vessel: and as for Egypt there was naught there but sand with which to season his food.[1] Thus would he welcome a tasty dish or two with a cup of wine in which to pledge Valeria and her sister.

'In truth 'twill be a joy,' said he, 'to dine again with such fair faces to look upon,' and it seemed to me Paulinus was in great good humour.

'But,' he exclaimed, 'I had forgotten. There is yet another with me whom thou must welcome, Valeria. I came not alone. There is a lady with me . . . eh, verily, I think I may say a lady . . . a queenly little lady forsooth. What sayest thou, Asiaticus? Hath she not a queenly bearing? . . . she who rode upon my litter and made even the road that bore me to Valeria seem short.'

I seemed to feel Valeria stiffen in her mood as she answered:

'Who was this?'

'That would I shew thee,' said Paulinus with another laugh. 'Prepare thee to receive her, for she needs thy courteous welcome, Valeria: and in truth, thou, I know, wilt make her welcome.'

'That know I not,' answered Valeria, 'until I shall have seen her. Shew her to me.'

'Ay will I,' answered Paulinus: and I heard his armour ring as he strode across the apartment and flung the curtains wide.

'Enter,' he cried. 'Enter, thou blue-eyed golden-haired nymph of Venus . . . thou messenger of the fairest goddess: and I pray thee bring some fire from her altar to lay upon this marble shrine.'

And I, scarce knowing what he said, did enter and made obeisance.

'Why, 'tis Nyria,' said Valeria.

'Ay, Nyria . . .' answered Paulinus. 'She who it seems hath served thee well and whom thou scarcely didst serve so well in leaving her to be put up on the common rostrum in the Forum . . . eh Valeria? But glad was I thou didst it, seeing it hath given me the chance to bring her unto thee myself.'

And he snatched my hand and led me to Valeria. 'Thou art pleased, eh, wife?' he said.

I saw Valeria's face grow a shade over it: and her lips seemed to twitch as he said 'wife,' but she answered him gently:

'Ay, I am glad to have Nyria for mine own. 'Twas kind of thee, Paulinus.'

[1] As far as I can discover, the only war in Africa in which Rome was engaged at that time was the quelling of a revolt by the Nasamones. (Ed.) See Appendix 47, Bk. II.

APPENDICES TO BOOK II

THE HOUSEHOLD OF JULIA

Appendix 1. Domitian's Appearance

Tacitus, referring to him when he was a young man:

"His deportment was graceful and, his propensities being as yet unknown, his frequent blushes were considered a mark of modesty." Tacitus, *Hist.*, Bk. IV, c. 40, p. 225 (Bohn ed.).

Then Tacitus speaks of him as he was in the latter part of his reign:

"Under Domitian, it was the principal part of our miseries to behold and to be beheld: when our sighs were registered, and that stern countenance with its settled redness, his defence against shame, was employed in noting the pallid horror of so many spectators." Tacitus, *Life of Agricola*, Sec. 45, p. 367 (Bohn).

Philostratus quotes a Stranger confidentially preparing Apollonius of Tyana for his trial before the Emperor Domitian.

"You must be prepared also for the Emperor's voice and the ferocious ill-humour of his expression: he speaks harshly even in a gracious conversation: his frown enhances the expression of his eyes: the complexion of his cheek is flushed with bile—indeed, this is his most striking feature." Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius*, Bk. VII, Sec. 28.

Pliny, in his panegyric on Trajan, says:

"Domitian was terrible even to behold: pride on his brow, anger in his eyes, a feminine paleness in the rest of his body, in his face, shamelessness suffused in a glowing red." Juvenal, in Satire IV (the satire about the turbot), alludes to Domitian's baldness. Also see Suetonius's *Domitian*, XVIII.

Appendix 2. Sulpicia

Sulpicia, a poetess of the time of Domitian. She is described as Greek in her sympathies and of the Stoic order of philosophy. Her love poems were chiefly addressed to her husband Calenus. Portion of a satire written by her on the occasion of the expulsion of the philosophers by Vespasian, is included in the volume (Bohn ed.) which contains the satires of Juvenal and Persius.

Appendix 3

The fashion among Roman ladies of wearing yellow hair.

A paraphrase by Sir John Harrington of Martial's epigram, Bk. VI, Ep. 12, substitutes the name Galla for that of Fabulla, thus: "The golden hair that Galla wears. . . ."

In the Latin writers there are innumerable references to the practice among Roman fashionable women of dyeing their hair. Ovid speaks of certain herbs from Germany which were burned and used as a soap to make the hair blonde, and of their purchase of the yellow tresses shorn from the heads of German maids in order to supplement their own. They wore golden nets. Of gold-dust as a hair-powder there is later mention in connection with the Emperor Gallienus—probably as a mark of effeminacy. *Life of the Greeks and Romans* by Guhl and Koner, Sec. 96, p. 490.

"Blonde hair was much esteemed by the Romans, and the ladies were in the habit of washing the hair with a composition to make it of this colour. This was

called 'spuma caustica'—caustic soap." Ovid, *Amores*, Bk. I, El. 14, p. 296 (Bohn Trans.).

Ovid also alludes to the fashion of wearing "false hair taken from German captives. The German women were famed for the beauty of their hair." See note in El. 14, Ovid's *Amores*, Bk. I.

Also Martial, Bk. V, Ep. 68:

> "Hair from the clime where golden tresses grow
> I sent that Lesbia's locks might brighter glow."

And Martial's epigrams to Galla. See Bk. III, Eps. 41, 64; Bk. IV, Eps. 38, 58.

Appendix 4. Flavius Sabinus, Flavius Clemens and Domitilla

Vespasian (the Emperor) had three children: Titus, Domitian and Domitilla.

Vespasian's brother, Flavius Sabinus,—killed in the Vitellian riots, when Domitian, then a youth, escaped from the Capitol—had a son, Flavius Sabinus, the husband of his cousin Julia, daughter of Titus. Vespasian's daughter Domitilla married, and her daughter Domitilla became the wife of her cousin Flavius Clemens. These are the two mentioned by Nyria as guests at Julia's banquet.

Appendix 5. Imperial Liveries

Suetonius in the *Life of Domitian* says of him:

"Being indignant that his brother's son-in-law (Flavius Sabinus, husband of Julia) should be waited on by servants dressed in white, he exclaimed, '*Too many princes are not good*,' to which there is a footnote, 'The imperial liveries were white and gold.'"

We find no corroboration of Nyria's statement that they were red, white and gold, but it seems not unlikely that she was right.

Appendix 6. The Election of Consuls and the Time of their Entering into Office

"The day on which the consuls entered on their office determined the day of election. . . . When the first of January was fixed upon as the day for entering upon office, the consular comitia were usually held in July or even earlier, at least before the Kalends of Sextilia . . . the day of election depended a great deal upon the discretion of the Senate and consuls, who often delayed it. . . ." Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*.

Appendix 7. Paris the Pantomime and the Lover of Domitia

It is a moot question whether there were two pantomime dancers called Paris—one in the reign of Nero and the other in that of Domitian.

The first Paris (if the two were not identical) was born in Egypt—a dancer and a favourite of Nero, originally a slave of Nero's aunt Domitia. See Tacitus, *Annals*, Bk. XIII, 19, 20, 22, 27.

See also Suetonius, *Nero*, 54:

"And there are some who say that he (Nero) put to death the player Paris as a dangerous rival" (on the stage).

But the translator of Suetonius's *Lives of the Twelve Cæsars*, in "Remarks on the Life and Times of the Emperor Domitian," adds in a criticism of Juvenal:

"One of the first and most constant objects of his satire was the pantomime Paris, the great favourite of the Emperor Nero and afterwards of Domitian."

Assuming that Paris was quite a young man in the reign of Nero, he would, in that of Domitian, have been about thirty-five, as Nyria describes him.

See also Dion Cassius, Bk. LXVII, 43.

But here the dates of Dion Cassius are queried and unreliable.

That there were two dancers of the name of Paris, is stated as a fact in Smith's *Classical Dictionary*, and that Nero had Paris killed.

Domitian divorced Domitia on account of her amour with Paris. This—though the date is uncertain—appears to have been not long before the banquet in Julia's house.

"Soon after his (Domitian's) advancement (to the throne) his wife Domitia, by whom he had a son[1] in his second consulship and whom, the year following, he complimented with the title of Augusta, being desperately in love with Paris the actor, he put her away, but within a short time afterwards, being unable to bear the separation, he took her again under pretence of complying with the people's importunity." Suetonius, *Domitian*, III.

Appendix 8. Domitian's Fear of Astrologers

Suetonius tells that when a young man he (Domitian) had learned from the Chaldeans of the manner and time of his death, and was in perpetual fear and anxiety. Suetonius, *Domitian*, XIV.

Appendix 9. Euphena's Aspersions on Julia's Parentage

History, so far as we can discover, gives no justification for Euphena's allegations concerning Julia's parentage. It is definitely stated that her birth took place on September 8th, A.D. 70, a date memorable as that of the fall of Jerusalem. We are told that upon the return of Titus from Judæa he divorced Marcia Furnillia, his wife, but kept his daughter Julia. It must be remembered that, at that time, he was deeply in love with Berenice, and with great reluctance, for State reasons, parted from her.

Later, when Nyria was asked if she could tell more about the matter, she answered that she knew only of the story through slaves' gossip. The Commentator also, when questioned, said that he had examined the evidence and that he did not believe Euphena's assertions were true.

Appendix 10

Domitian's connivance in her husband's assassination is stated by later historians but not by those contemporaneous with her. See Dio Cassius, LXVI, LXVII.

Appendix 11. Paulinus's Egyptian Expedition

Dion Cassius mentions that about this time—92–93—there was an insurrection of the Massagemones in Africa which was easily quelled.

The tribe of Massagetæ, also mentioned by Dion Cassius, have evidently been confused with the Nasamones.

Appendix 12. The Two Sons of Flavius Clemens and Domitilla

These boys were adopted by Domitian and renamed by him Vespasian and Domitian. But they did not live to be men. Suetonius, *Domitian*, XV.

Appendix 13. Election of Flavius Sabinus to the Office of Consul

"He (Domitian) put to death the younger Helvidius . . . and also Flavius Sabinus, one of his cousins, because, upon his being chosen at the consular election to that office, the public crier had, by a blunder, proclaimed him to the people not Consul, but Emperor." Suetonius, *Domitian*, X.

Appendix 14. Height of the Flavian Coiffure

"Into so many tiers she forms her curls, so many stages high she builds her head: in front, you will look upon an Andromache, behind, she is a dwarf." Juvenal, Satire VI, line 501 *et seq.*, p. 58 (Bohn's Trans.)

[1] This son died in infancy.

Nyria's description corresponds with the high, close-curled crop of hair above the forehead in statues of women of that period—Julia, Domitia and others. Also see Juvenal, Satire VI, p. 56 (Bohn's Trans.)

Appendix 15. Portico of the Danaids

The portico under the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine Hill was adorned with the statues of Danaüs and his forty-nine guilty daughters. It was built by Augustus on a spot adjoining his Palace." Note in Ovid's *Amores*, Bk. II, El. 2 (Bohn).

The portico of the Danaids described by Propertius (II, 31) as part of the Temple of Apollo on the Palatine Hill, was so close to the Imperial Palace as almost to form a portion of it.

" The Temple of Apollo was on Mt. Palatine." Tacitus, *Hist.*, note to p. 178 (Bohn ed.).

In Persius, Satire 2, lines 56–58, there is an allusion to the sending of dreams and a note at foot of page 222 (Bohn ed.) as follows: " It is said that in the Temple porch of the Palatine Apollo were figures of the fifty Danaides and, opposite them, equestrian statues that gave oracles by dreams."

See also Lanciani's *Ruins and Excavations of Ancient Rome*, pp. 141–142. Also (quoted) *Bull. Arch. Comm.*, Vol. II, 1883. Lanciani writes of having seen a part of one of the statues of the Danaides, and says that eighteen or twenty which had fallen down from the portico were described by Flaminio Vacca in the fifteenth century.

Appendix 16. The Empress Domitia

Domitia Longina was the daughter of the great general Domitius Corbulo. She was first married to Aelius Lamia of an ancient and honourable family, but Domitian fell in love with her and took her away from her husband, whom he put to death after his accession to the throne. Later, he divorced her on account of her amour with Paris, but took her back, he said, in deference to the wishes of the people. This was before the date of Julia's banquet, at which time he wished to marry Julia.

Domitia has been praised for her virtues by Josephus and Procopius. The impression her statues give of her is that of a very unhappy woman.

See Suetonius's *Vit. Domitian*, also Dio Cassius.

Appendix 17. The Imperial Salute

We have not so far found in any Latin authority verification of Nyria's description of the actual form of the Salute which she called the Royal Salute. But her remarks upon the soldiers' spears (the Roman pilum) and Domitian's interest in their equipment is borne out by the following quotations from various writers:

" The Pilum of which Polybius (204 B.C.) writes, was a spear having a very large iron head or blade, and this was carried by a socket to receive the shaft—the socket itself about 19 inches—almost one-third of the entire weapon's length—was strengthened towards the base until it became not less than three and a half fingers in thickness." *Roman Arms and Armour*, by M. Lacombe.

Vegetius says " they (the pila) had slender iron heads of unilateral form."

Vegetius speaks of a pilum with a shaft five and a half feet in length, and of a second kind—the trilateral head five inches long, the shaft three and a half feet. (Vegetius lived in the close of the third century.)

The pilum reached its highest point under the Flavians.

Hasta . . . with illustrations. Smith's *Dictionary of Roman Antiquities*.

These seem to bear out more nearly Nyria's description.

" The Roman pilum—most renowned weapon of antiquity—remains enveloped in a cloud of uncertainty." From *Roman Arms and Armour*, by Lacombe, and from Society of Antiquarians, Vol. 42, p. 328.

In Daremberg and Saglio's *Dictionary of Roman Antiquities* one finds:

"Le Javelot, long d'un mètre et demi à deux métrés, état muni d'une courroie au moyen de laquelle on imprimait un mouvement rotatoire."

Gibbon speaks of "the formidable pilum, a ponderous javelin whose utmost length was about six feet and which was terminated by a massy triangular point of steel of eighteen inches." Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, Vol. I, Chap. I.

Domitian's concern as to alterations in the soldiers' equipment, mentioned by Nyria, is borne out by the following extracts:

Suetonius, in his *Life of Domitian*, says in Sec. 10:

"The rest he punished upon very trivial occasions. . . . Sallustius Lucullus, lieutenant in Britain, for suffering some lances of a new invention to be called Lucullean."

In a footnote to page 381 (Bohn ed.) in Tacitus's *Life of Agricola*:

"Agricola's successor appears to have been Sallustius Lucullus, lieutenant in Britain, who was put to death by Domitian because he permitted certain lances of a new construction to be called 'Lucullean.'"

Appendix 18. Martial's Poor Circumstances

Martial makes many complaints of his poverty—probably before he married Marcella, a rich woman who settled some property upon him.

See Bk. I, Ep. 117. To Lupercus, who offers to send a slave to Martial's house. "It is a long journey if he wished to come to the Pirus (pear tree near where Martial lived), and I live up three pairs of stairs and those high ones."

Also Bk. I, Ep. 108, Martial says: "But my garret looks upon the laurels of Agrippa, and in this quarter I have already grown old."

Martial describes a garden and tower, given to him by his wife, adding:

"Marcella gave me this retreat, this little kingdom on my return to my native home, after thirty-five years of absence." Martial, Bk. XII, Ep. 31.

He also speaks of his small farm at Nomentum.

Appendix 19. The Fat Hispulla

Hispulla's corpulence appears to have been notable.

Juvenal comments upon it: "Had I an ample fortune and equal to my wishes, a bull fatter than Hispulla and slow-paced from his very bulk should be led to sacrifice. . . . Satire XII, line 11.

Hispulla was the aunt of Pliny's third wife, Calpurnia, and among his letters there are several addressed to her.

Appendix 20. The Rude Treatment of Pedestrians by Litter-bearers

Litter-bearers=*lecticarii*, and fore-runners=*ante-ambulones*. See Becker's *Gallus*. Excursus: *Slaves*.

Juvenal writes of the knocks and blows dealt on pedestrians by the litter-bearers and fore-runners. Juvenal, Satire III, line 245 *et seq.*

Appendix 21. The Shop of Stephanus

From various indications Nyria has given of the position we have located the shop of Stephanus—freedman, goldsmith and slaves' doctor—as being in a small street out of the Via or Clivus Argentaria, in Region VII, which skirted the Capitoline Hill round the Arx and what was, later, the forum of Trajan.

"The Quirinal and Capitoline Hills had been connected by a steep ridge of tufa rock, crossed by the Clivus Argentaria. Trajan's architect had the whole of this ridge cut and carted away to make a level space for the new Forum." See Henderson's *Five Roman Emperors*, p. 198.

The alteration was made after Nyria's time. In her narrative Stephanus's shop is described as in a small street leading out of the Via Argentaria. (Ed.)

Appendix 22. The Roman Toga

The toga was the peculiar distinction of the Romans. It was originally worn only in Rome itself, and the use of it was forbidden alike to exiles and foreigners. . . . It was worn on ceremonial occasions—in courts of justice, at the theatre and at the Emperor's table. Stephanus as a freedman would have had the right to wear it. See Smith's *Classical Dictionary*; Martial, Bk. XIV, Ep. 124–125.

Appendix 23. The Relations of Stephanus with Flavius Clemens and Domitilla

Nyria is correct in stating that Stephanus was formerly the slave of Domitilla and her husband Flavius Clemens, who gave him his freedom. Stephanus is noted in history as the slayer of Domitian.

"Clemens and his wife Domitilla soon found an instrument of vengeance for their fate. For this Stephanus, who was one of the Emperor's assassins, was the lady's freedman. *But probably private reasons rather than his master's death or his mistress' woes inspired his fact.*" (The italics are mine.)

A footnote, "Despite Philostratus," *Vit. Apoll.*, VIII, 25, is appended to the above. But Philostratus does not appear to throw any light on the matter and, in view of the strange story of Nyria, one wonders what reasons the author had for his conjecture.

The above quotation is from *Five Roman Emperors*, by Professor Henderson.

Appendix 24

Laws and customs governing slave-life in Imperial Rome entirely confirming Nyria. See Gaius . . . Ulpian's *Digest*. *Les Esclaves Chrétiens*, by Paul Allard; Elder Pliny's *Natural History Book*, XXXIII.

Appendix 25. The Bird Ascalaphus

Here is an error on the part of Nyria, or the Recorder, which should be noted.

The suggestion of the name as it leaped to the mind of the Recorder was hastily uttered and was unwise from the investigatory point of view. Also, the comparison was not accurate.

Mythology tells that Ascalaphus was buried under a stone by Demeter in punishment for having betrayed the eating of an apple by Persephone while she was with Pluto in the underworld. Afterwards, Persephone released him and turned him into an owl. Smith's *Classical Dictionary*, Ovid, *Met.*, V, 539.

Presumably Stephanus's bird was a cockatoo or a parrot. The point is interesting as touching the theory of thought-transference. The bird may or may not have been called Ascalaphus. Nyria was probably ignorant of the mythological story. Books of reference were not at hand at the moment and the Recorder, who is not a classical scholar, let the matter pass, and Nyria continued to call Stephanus's bird "Ascalaphus" without further question. (Ed.)

Appendix 26. Clement, Third Bishop of Rome

A footnote in Suetonius's *Domitian* (Bohn ed.) says "Clemens Romanus, second bishop of Rome, was said to have been of the (Flavian) family."

Other writers speak of him as the first bishop. . . . But Linus was the first bishop, Anacletus the second, and Clement the third.

There were legendary features in his history, but it is generally conceded that he was of the family of Flavius Clemens and Domitilla. His so-called first Epistle to the Corinthians is accepted as genuine.

The Church of San Clemente in Rome is dedicated to his memory. . . . See *Life of Clement of Rome*, by Bishop Lightfoot, *Apostolical Fathers*, by Archbishop Wake.

Origen identifies him with the Clement named by St. Paul in Epistle to the Philippians.

Appendix 27. The Saturnalia

Nyria is perfectly correct in the details she gives of the Saturnalia.

Under Domitian the official term of the Saturnalia was seven days, but there were prolongations of the term. Nyria was right in saying that a fortnight was the holiday time, and that another week was granted.

" Elle (Saturnalia) commencait le XIV jour avant les Calendes de Janvier (17th Dec.) . . . englobant les Opalia qui tombait le XII jour et se terminant aux Laurentalis " (23rd of December).

Ces additions successives qui eurent leur raison dans la popularite de la fête, semblaient etre proverbiales—du moins, est-ce par un proverbe que s'explique le mieux l'expression de *extendere Saturnalia* dont Pline fait un emploi plaisant dans une lettre a Tacite—

" I am playing truant and prolonging the Saturnalian holidays." Bk. VIII, Ep. 7.

" C'était la liberté de Decembre, pour parler comme Horace." Darenberg and Saglio, *Classical Dictionary*.

Pliny says, in a letter to Gallus describing his Laurentine villa: " When I retire to this garden summer-house I fancy myself a hundred miles away from my villa and take special pleasure in it at the feast of the Saturnalia when, by the license of that festive season, every other part of my house resounds with my servants' mirth: thus I neither interrupt their amusement nor they my studies." Pliny's *Letters*, II, Ep. 17.

Appendix 28. Treatment of Roman-born Slaves

Nyria is corroborated by a footnote to some remarks by Juvenal upon the reward of freedom and a small piece of land given to slaves who had fought many years for the State. Referring to the children born before the grant of freedom and who are therefore slaves, the note is as follows:

" These home-born slaves, though being more despised from having been born in a state of servitude, were treated with great fondness and indulgence." Juvenal, Satire XIV, note p. 169 (Bohn ed.).

Appendix 29. The Roman Torch

The Torches used by the Romans for out-of-door illumination and for carrying in the hand after sunset were made of wooden staves or sticks bound by bands around them in spiral form, the hollow inside filled with flax, tow, dead vegetable matter, impregnated with wax or pitch or other inflammable substance. Note Ovid, *Amores*, Bk. I, El. 6, line 58 (Bohn).

Appendix 30. To Locate the House of Valeria—Domus Valeriorum

See Lanciani's *Ruins and Excavations of Ancient Rome*. Bk. IV, p. 347, for the following:

" Domus Valeriorum.—There was on the Cœlian, between S. Stefano Rotondo and the Lateran, a palace belonging to the descendants of the Valerii Poplicolæ, namely, to Valerius Severus, Prefect of Rome in A.D. 386, and to his son Pinianus, husband of Melania the younger. The palace was so beautiful and contained so much wealth that when Pinianus and Melania, grieved by the loss of all their children, put it up for sale in A.D. 404, they found none willing to purchase it."

(Lanciani's account of the Valerian Palace continues over the page (347)).

The position of the Valerian Palace can be easily seen in both modern and ancient maps. The Church of S. Stefano Rotondo was, it is said (some think erroneously), built against the remains of the Macellum Magnum—marked on the map. It must be quite near that site. Between the Macellum Magnum and the Domus Lateraniorum would have been the Valerian villa, just where Nyria describes it.

It will be noted that Lanciani's record of the Valerian Palace dates from A.D. 386—a long time after Nyria's date. If Paulinus bought the villa for Valeria in the latter half of the first century, it might well have been occupied by the sons of Paulinus and their descendants and have been enlarged and enriched by them.

Lanciani gives a long list of books on the subject.

Appendix 31

The Lateran Palace on the Cœlian appears to date further back than the Valerian.

It is a current opinion that after the execution of Plautius Lateranus in A.D. 66 for his share in the plot of the Pisones, his magnificent palace on the Cœlian was confiscated by Nero, and the ground added to the Imperial domain of the Domus Aurea.

No classic historian speaks of such a confiscation: on the contrary, we are informed by one of them that T. Sextus Lateranus, Consul in 196, was offered large sums of money by Septimus Severus, by the help of which he restored the paternal estate on the Cœlian. Lanciani, *Ruins and Excavations of Ancient Rome*, p. 341.

Thus it would seem that the palace was in possession of the Lateran family at the time of which Nyria speaks.

There was another important palace—the Domus Vectiliana, mentioned in A.D. 192, which was not far from the Lateran. . . . Also the Domus Tetricorum, but this last was lower down in the valley between the Cœlian and the Esquiline. Lanciani, *Ruins and Excavations of Ancient Rome*, p. 346.

Appendix 32. Legal Punishment of Slaves

"According to the strict principles of the Roman Law it was a consequence of the relation of Master and Slave that the Master could treat the Slave as he pleased: he could sell him, punish him, put him to death. . . . Positive morality however . . . ameliorated the condition of slavery. Still, we read of acts of great cruelty committed by masters in the later Republican and earlier Imperial times, and the Lex Petronia was enacted in order to protect the slave." Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities.*

Theft was an offence severely punishable by law.

Appendix 33. The Whip

The Whip: "The flagellum was chiefly used in the punishment of slaves. It was knotted with bones or heavy indented circles of bronze. . . . The infliction of punishment by it on the naked back of the sufferer was sometimes fatal. . . ."

"During the Saturnalia the scourge was deposited under the seal of the master." Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities.*

This last clause seems somewhat incompatible with Nyria's story. . . . Probably theft was too serious an offence to be covered by the Saturnalia license: or the rule stated may have applied only to the original official term of the festival and did not include the prolongations that were gradually allowed.

Nyria's account of her whipping has its parallel in the following extract from Juvenal:

". . . The tirewomen are stript to be whipped. . . . Some women pay a regular salary to their torturers. . . . While he lashes, she is employed in enamelling her face. . . . Still he lashes." Juvenal, Satire VI, p. 57 (Bohn).

Appendix 34. Valeria's Doctor

"Archigenes, an eminent Greek physician born at Apamea in Syria, practised in Rome in the time of Trajan. A.D. 98–117. He published a treatise on the pulse, on which Galen wrote a Commentary. It seemed to be founded on pre-

conceived theory rather than practical observation. He was the most eminent physician of the sect Eclectici and is mentioned by Juvenal as well as by other writers. Only a few fragments of his work remain. (Juvenal, VI, 236; XIII, 98; XIV, 252). See Smith and Marindin's *Classical Dictionary*.

Lemprière in his *Classical Dictionary* says "Archigenes lived in the reigns of Domitian, Nerva and Trajan and died in the 73rd year of his age. He wrote a treatise on adorning the hair and also ten books on fevers."

When Nyria corrected herself in regard to the name of Valeria's doctor, the Recorder looked through various writings of the period for the doctor Archimenes but could find none of that name. Recently, however, she came upon the following reference in Juvenal to Archigenes.

"She (the wife's mother) . . . though her daughter is in rude health, calls in Archigenes." (Juvenal, Satire VI, line 235.)

"If Ladas be poor, let him not hesitate to pray for gout that waits on wealth, if he does not need treatment at Anticyra or by Archigenes." Juvenal, Satire XIII, line 96.

"Send for Archigenes at once and buy what Mithridates compounded if you would pluck another fig or handle this year's roses." Juvenal, Satire XIV, line 252, p. 175 (Bohn's Translation) and note.

Note: Compound of Mithridates. "This composition is described by Serenus Sammonicus, the physician, and consists of ludicrously simple ingredients."

This all bears out fairly clearly Nyria's estimate of the character of Valeria's doctor. In giving his name, she mistook one letter and for Archimenes should have said Archigenes. The mistake is so evident that in the script, henceforward, the right spelling has been adopted. It must be remembered that Nyria could neither read nor write and it is not surprising that she should have made such an error. (Ed.)

Appendix 35

Of the physicians Celsus and Symmachus spoken of by Nyria, A. Cornelius Celsus "probably lived under the reign of Augustus and Tiberius. He wrote several works of which only one remains entire—his treatise *De Medecina*." Smith's *Classical Dictionary*.

But Ovid opens his Pontic, Epistle IX with the following words: "Thy letter which came to me speaking of the loss of Celsus was immediately moistened with my tears."

He was therefore dead in the reign of Domitian, when there may have been a successor of the same name.

Symmachus . . .

"I was indisposed: and you straightway came to see me, Symmachus, accompanied by a hundred of your pupils. A hundred hands frozen by the northern blast felt my pulse. I had not then an ague, Symmachus, but I have now." (Martial, Bk. V, Ep. 9.)

Appendix 36

"The Vestibulum did not properly form part of the house but was a vacant space before the door forming a court, which was surrounded on three sides by the house and was open on the fourth to the street. The two sides of the house joined the street, but the middle part of it where the door was placed, was at some little distance from the street. . . ." Smith's *Dictionary of Roman Antiquities* (Domus).

Appendix 37. Marriage Customs in Ancient Rome

"When the bridal procession arrived at the house of the bridegroom, the door of which was adorned with garlands and flowers, the bride was carried across the threshold by *pronubi*—men who had only been married to one woman—that she might not knock against it with her foot, which would have been an evil omen." Plutarch, *Quæst. Rom.*, p. 271 . . . Plautus, *Cas.*, IV, 4, 1.

"Before she entered the house, she wound wool round the door-posts of her new residence and anointed them with lard or wolf's fat." Pliny, *H. N.*, XXVIII, 9.

A torch of white thorn (spina) was carried before the bride.

The husband received her with fire and water which the bride had to touch. . . . The bride saluted her husband with the words, "Where thou art Caius, I am Caia."

"A torch of white thorn (spina) or pine was carried before the bride. . . . Lady's thistle had a mysterious signification in the ceremony. . . . The bride herself carried a distaff and spindle with wool. . . . A sheep was sacrificed and the skin spread over two chairs upon which the bride and bridegroom sat and the keys of the house were given to her. . . ." Smith's *Classical Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities.*

I do not find any mention of the "flax" of which—perhaps Nyria meant wool—Stephanus spoke as part of the marriage ceremony. (Ed.)

Appendix 38. Cruelty of Roman Ladies to their Dressers and Tiring-women

Ovid eulogising his mistress: "Your tire-woman always had a whole skin. Many a time was your head dressed before my eyes: never did the bodkin make wounds in her arms." Ovid, *Amores*, Bk. I, El. 14, line 18.

The bodkin was used for parting the hair.

Also, see Martial's *Epigram to Lalage*, Bk. II, Ep. 66; Becker's *Gallus*. Excursus III: *The Slaves.*

One ringlet of hair in the whole circle of Lalage's tresses was out of place, having been badly fixed by an erring pin. This crime was punished with the mirror by means of which she discovered it and Plecusa fell to the ground under her blows. Martial, Bk. II, Ep. 66.

"It was the province of one (maid) to curl the hair with a hot iron called 'calamistrum' which was hollow and was heated in wood ashes by a slave who from 'cinis'—ashes—was called 'ciniflo'." See Note to El. 11, Bk. I, Ovid's *Amores.*

Nyria's account of the scene in Julia's dressing-room tallies with Ovid's remark when he admonished a lady who admits spectators while her hair is being dressed.

"Take care on such occasions not to be cross. . . . Let your tiring-woman be with a whole skin. I detest her who tears the face of her attendant with her nails, who seizing the hairpin pierces her arms." Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*, Bk. III, p. 443 (Bohn).

Appendix 39. Alexamenos

The following extract from Lanciani's *Ancient Rome*, pp. 121–122, certainly suggests the identification of Nyria's Alexamenos with the Alexamenos below-mentioned as something more than a probability.

"When *graffiti* are found in large numbers in one and the same place, they gain the importance of an historical document . . . such are the *graffiti* discovered in the year 1857 in the Domus Gelotiana which introduce us into the intimacy of the life of court servants of the higher class. It appears from them and from the records they contain, that after the murder of Caligula the house became a residence and a training school for court pages who had received their first education in the imperial elementary school. . . . But by far the most interesting and most widely celebrated *graffito* of the whole set is the one discovered at the beginning of the year 1857 in the fourth room on the left of the entrance removed soon after to the Kircherian Museum at the Collegio Romano, where it is still to be seen. . . . This *graffito* contains a blasphemous representation of our Lord Jesus Christ—a caricature designed only a few years after the first preaching of the Gospel in Rome by the Apostles.

Our Lord is represented with the head of a donkey, tied to the cross with the feet resting on a horizontal piece of board. To the left of the cross there is the

figure of the Christian youth Alexamenos with arms raised in adoration of the crucified God and the whole composition is illustrated and explained by the legend (in Greek), 'Alexamenos worships (his) god.'"

Appendix 40. The Laticlave

"The distinguishing badge of the senatorial order. It was a broad purple band extending perpendicularly from the neck down the centre of the tunic." Pliny's *Letters*. Note to Letter 9.

Appendix 41. Phyllis

"His (Domitian's) corpse was carried out upon a common bier by the public bearers and buried by his nurse Phyllis at his suburban villa on the Latin Way. But she afterwards privately conveyed his remains to the temple of the Flavian family and mingled them with the ashes of Julia, daughter of Titus, whom she had also nursed." Suetonius, *Life of Domitian*.

Appendix 42. Death of Julia

Nyria's narrative tells of the love intrigues of Julia, wife of Sabinus, and Domitian, and the very natural jealousy of the Empress Domitia, and points, if perhaps somewhat obscurely, to the cause of Julia's early death. It is well, for the benefit of readers who are not familiar with the details of the history of this reign, to recall the actual facts of the case in so far as they are beyond dispute.

Julia, although she was his niece, was offered in marriage to Domitian, by his brother Titus, then Emperor, when she was quite a young girl. She could not indeed then have been more than ten or eleven years of age. At this time, however, Domitian was enamoured of the woman who shortly after became his wife and declined in very emphatic terms to consider in this sense a girl whose personal attractions had naturally not yet had time to mature. Subsequently, however, after she was married to Sabinus, Domitian came to regret his early decision. His wife, whom he had forced to divorce her husband on his account, was indifferent to him and admittedly unfaithful, while time had served to enhance Julia's charms. Hence arose an intrigue between the two which led to Sabinus, her husband, being made away with on a trumped-up charge, and subsequently to Julia's own death, her relations with Domitian having placed her in a position from which she sought escape by means which proved fatal to mother and child alike. This fact must have been well known for it is referred to by Suetonius, by Pliny, in his letters, and, in an exceptionally coarse allusion, by the satirist Juvenal. The passage in Pliny could not have been more definite. (*Epistles*, Bk. IV, Letter 11.) "Quum ipse fratris filiam incesto non poluisset solum verum etiam occidisset, *nam vidua obortu periit*."

So also Suetonius, who alludes to the fact that the original offer of Julia was strongly pressed by Titus upon Domitian and that he resolutely refused to entertain it. Suetonius, *Life of Domitian*.

There appears, so far as we can gather, from somewhat uncertain historical data, to have been an interval of some months between Sabinus's death and Julia's, though it must be admitted that Nyria's narrative conveys the impression that they followed closely on one another.

Appendix 43. Matho, the Lawyer

Allusions to Matho, who after having been wealthy, fell on lean days, are frequent in the writings of Martial and are found also in the *Satires* of Juvenal.

On sending Matho a sportula (equivalent to a few pence, and in lieu of the meal which at one time poor clients received from their patrons, Martial addresses to him an epigram with the invidious suggestion that the money will pay for a hundred baths. See Martial, Bk. VIII, Ep. 42.

Also, see Martial, Bk. IV, Ep. 29. Also Bk. XI, Ep. 68. And Bk. VII, Ep. 10, and others.

Juvenal bears out the disagreeable impression of this dissipated, unscrupulous Roman lawyer:

"For who can be so tolerant of this iniquitous city. . . . When there comes up the brand-new litter of Matho, the lawyer, and after him he that informed upon his powerful friend and will soon plunder the nobility, already close shorn of the little that remains to them." See Juvenal, Satire I.

Juvenal commenting on the need for outward show in order to succeed as a lawyer, instances Matho.

"Emilius," he says, "will get as much as the law allows although we pleaded better than he. For he has in his courtyard a chariot of bronze with four tall horses yoked to it. . . . So it is that Pedo gets involved, Matho fails. . . . It is the purple robe that gets the lawyer custom—his violet cloak that attracts clients. No one now would give even Cicero himself two hundred sesterces unless a huge ring sparkled on his finger." See Juvenal, Satire VII, line 129, *et seq.*

Appendix 44. Porticus Margaritaria and Tradesmen's Shops

The Porticus Margaritaria was an arcade occupied by jewellers and goldsmiths, opening on the Via Sacra.

There were also *unguenterii* or perfumers, an *auri-vestrix*—weaver of gold cloth: *caelatores*—carvers in repoussé-work: *coronarii*—wreath-makers: *pigmentarii*—makers of cosmetics: *flaturarii*—metal-casters: *tibiarii*—flute-makers, and *negotiatores* in general, who originally exhibited their precious merchandise in booths and desks in the shelter of the portico. . . . Later on, the portico was cut up into regular shops. . . . See Lanciani's *Ruins and Excavations of Ancient Rome*, Bk. III, p. 210.

Appendix 45. Peculium of a Slave and His Right to Purchase Freedom

"Money which a slave acquired by gifts or which was given to him with the knowledge of his master in respect of certain services outside his ordinary employment, was called his *peculium*."

"As a slave could own no property, according to strict law, the peculium was the property of the master, but, according to usage, it was considered the property of the slave. Sometimes it was agreed between master and slave that the slave should purchase his freedom with his peculium when it amounted to a certain sum." Tacitus, *Annals*, XIV, 42.

A case following upon a decree of the Senate adjudging liability to any indirectly concerned in criminal acts is recorded in the history of the time.

"Not long after, Pedanius Secundus, præfect of the city, was murdered by his own slave: either upon his refusing him his liberty for which he had bargained at a certain price, or that he was enraged by jealousy in respect of a pathic and could not bear his master for a rival. . . ." Tacitus, *Annals*, Bk. XIV, c. 42–45.

"The whole household of slaves amounting to four hundred was therefore led with lines of soldiers securing them from release by the protesting crowds, outside the city, where they were executed."

A full description of the ordinances concerning slaves in ancient Rome may be found in Excursus III, Becker's *Gallus*.

"If a slave was manumitted by an owner during his lifetime, the Peculium was considered to be given with *Libertas*, unless it was expressly retained." Smith's *Classical Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* (Servus.)

"A person became a slave by capture in war. Captives in war were sold as belonging to the Aerarium or distributed among the soldiers by lot.

A free person might become a slave in various ways—in consequence of positive law. This was the case with *Incensi* and those who evaded military service. . . .

A freedman who misconducted himself towards his patron was reduced to his former state of slavery. . . .

There were slaves that belonged to the State and were called *servi publici* . . .

but it appears they had a certain privilege and were viewed in a somewhat different light from the slaves of private persons. . . ." Smith's *Dictionary of Antiquities.*

Appendix 46. Roman Coinage.

The value of the sesterce at the end of the first century A.D. was approximately 2d. The sestertium (plural sestertia) was 1000 sesterces, or about £8. One thousand sestertia would thus be equivalent to £8000 of our money, far too high a reserve price for a slave of those days. Evidently Nyria has a very confused recollection of the value of the Roman coinage. Possibly what is intended is 10,000 sesterces (10 sestertia), the equivalent of £80. The purchase price of Nyria would then be equivalent to £200.

Appendix 47. The War with the Nasamones

The only Roman war of that time answering to Paulinus's remark on the sand mingled with his food is that with the Nasamones, a Libyan tribe who revolted against their governor, Flaccus. This is mentioned by Dion Cassius but is dated by him in the years 85–86, considerably before the period indicated in Nyria's story which places Paulinus's return from the Egyptian expedition shortly after the death of Julia in 93–94. But Dion Cassius's dates are queried by several of his translators and his or their chronological order of historical incidents is unreliable.

Early particulars of the Nasamones can be found in Herodotus, II, 32 ; IV, 172, 182, 190.

Nasamones . . . " A powerful but savage Libyan people who dwelt originally on the shores of the great Syrtis . . . *Syrticus Regio.*" " It was for the most part a very narrow strip of sand interspersed with salt marshes between the sea and a range of mountains forming the edge of the Great Desert (Sahara) and was peopled by Libyan tribes, the chief of whom were the Lotophagi, the Nasamones . . . and others. Under the Romans it formed part of the Province of Tripoli." Smith and Marindin's *Classical Dictionary.*

BOOK THE THIRD

IN THE HOUSEHOLD OF VALERIA

CHAPTER I

"By the Bread, the Salt and the Wine!"

Nyria tells of how she entered the service of Valeria: of how Paulinus administered to her the slaves' oath of fealty by the ancient Roman custom of the bread, the salt and the wine: of how Valeria sent her with a letter to Licinius Sura, and of how Paulinus came into his wife's chamber and was rebuffed.

Nyria speaks: "I remained in the corner of the room waiting for Valeria to tell me what I should do. But after Vitellia had said that she and her lord would stay for the evening meal, Valeria seemed to think of naught but her sister, keeping Vitellia very close to her side, whereat Vitellia seemed pleased but somewhat as though she did not understand Valeria's mood.

The lords withdrew to their apartments and Valeria also led the way to hers. For the room where she had received Paulinus was not her own sitting-room but lay somewhat back in the middle of the house and was more, as I learned afterwards, for joint service of herself and Paulinus.

Now I, seeing that Valeria had given me no directions and not knowing what my duty should be, followed at a little distance behind my lady and upon entering Valeria's side of the house I saw Aeola rise up from what she was doing and bend in obeisance. Beholding me, she ran to my side after the ladies had passed, and took my hand, but I liked not yet to speak to her. Then Vitellia, turning round, said to Aeola that she should take me whither I could sleep and set my bundle down and shew me whatever was needful, after which I might return again.

Whereon, Aeola ran with me outside to the slaves' houses, one of which she shared with another woman, and said to me that I could sleep there to-night until Valeria should make different ordering. Then I, desiring to serve Valeria, would not delay and hastened back again, but, upon being about to make entrance to Valeria's dressing-room, I was checked by one of the women, who bade me rather roughly not come that way, and not liking to be kept from Valeria, I made explanation that I had been bought and was come to serve her.

Whereat, this one, who was of a surly temper, said:

'We will see what Corellia saith to that. Seeing that I am not admitted to the robing, wherefore shouldst thou be?'

Thereon, she sat her down outside the door and bade me do the same. I had no mind to obey her and would have passed within, but at that moment Corellia, who was Valeria's head-woman, came to the door, and she who had stayed me began a long tale with angry mutterings which Corellia silenced, saying I should not enter but should abide her pleasure, and when I began to tell what I could for myself she answered:

'If thou art so anxious to serve the lady Valeria there will be plenty for thee to do, but remain that side of the curtain. Valeria never alloweth more than one, or haply two, beside myself, in her room.' So I shrank back, not knowing what to say. 'Thou canst fill the pitchers and the vessels and rub the pans and bowls,' she said. 'There shall be enough work for thee, I promise.'

And I bit my lip angrily, for I liked not such talk. Moreover, in Julia's household, I had long been accustomed to have those things done for me; and here, it seemed, I was to be of less account than there.

But at that moment Valeria called to Corellia to drop the curtain.

'With whom wast thou whispering?' I heard Valeria say. 'I allow no such talk in my presence. Be silent and forbid those girls entrance.'

And Corellia came not out again and my heart sank for I thought if she were to come between me and my Lady, what should I do and how should I serve Valeria? Aeola was within, but Aeola was too shy to speak for me. The lady Vitellia likewise was within and remained with Valeria while she was robing.

Now the door at which I sat was for the slaves' entrance and not the one by which Valeria would pass, and suddenly I bethought me that I would run round and await her at the farther door leading through the sitting-room through which she must go to her dinner. So I rose to my feet and ran, though she of whom I had taken no heed, and who had been scowling at me from the other side of the door, called after me: 'Whither goest thou? Thou hadst best obey Corellia or else it will go harder with thee.' But I heeded her not and ran round to the door I knew of, because by now I was accustomed to these rooms of Valeria's though I did not know well the rest of the house.

By and by, the ladies issued from Valeria's dressing-room, Vitellia preceding her sister. I rose to my feet and then bent low and looked up at them, craving that they should speak to me yet not daring to speak since I was now Valeria's slave.

But Vitellia noticed me and smiling kindly she paused and said: 'Well, dost thou find thyself happy here, Nyria? Thou shouldst know thy way about. Truly my lord Paulinus did a gracious and kindly act in the purchasing of thee.'

Whereat Valeria paused too and said: 'Oh, Nyria, art thou there? I wondered whither thou hadst gone.'

'May it please thee, Domina, I ran round to do thy bidding, but the slaves gave me not entrance seeing thou wert being robed.'

'Methinks thou shouldst have the right of entrance,' said Vitellia kindly, 'none deserves it better.'

'Ay, ay—' said Valeria sharply, and looked at me, but as though she scarcely saw me; and, as they were about to pass on, I made bold to place myself before her.

'May it please thee, Domina, that I remain near thee?'

'Yes, yes, of course,' answered Valeria.

'And do I attend thee to table?' I asked. 'For that was Julia's pleasure.'

Valeria paused and for the first time seemed to think as she looked at me.

'Ay,' she answered of a sudden. 'It is my pleasure, Nyria, that thou remain near me always—unless I order thee otherwise.'

And just then the slave with Corellia came from out the door and stood watching. But I looked not up, only bent again and followed Valeria—for I cared not at all for the slaves, save that I might find my place near her.

Now, when we went towards the room where the repast was spread, Asiaticus and Paulinus met the ladies in the antechamber and walked with them. A stout slave followed Paulinus, and another of his own was behind Asiaticus. But as they issued from the way that I thought led to Paulinus's rooms, I saw the face of Gregorio peering after them, and seeing me, he gnashed with his teeth at me and dropped the curtain, disappearing within Paulinus's rooms.

I followed Valeria and stood behind her at the table as had been my wont with Julia. But soon I saw that Valeria had not been accustomed to keep a female slave behind her chair, for she heeded me not nor ever spoke a word. Neither did she drop anything, nor send me on messages as had been Julia's way: and none noticed me till, towards the end of the banquet, when Paulinus's gaze fell upon me and he made kindly mock of his lady's new attendant.

But there was naught ill-natured in Paulinus's mockery, and though I had like to have sunk into the ground with shame when any noticed me at Julia's, here I could scarce keep from smiling: and I felt happy too now that I was near Valeria, even though she noticed me not.

Paulinus had been talking freely throughout the repast and seemed much to enjoy his dinner. Paulinus sat in a great carved wooden chair and the table was of wood, but polished finely so that the fruit and dishes shone in it and the wine was served in white glass, finely chased, but not coloured such as Julia would have had it.

Afterward I knew that Valeria arranged all such matters and that with her too many colours were not welcome. Valeria was wont to say that wine looked richer when untinged by the colours of the glass.

Valeria took wine herself, but sparingly, and mixed it with water. She was very gracious and talked much, yet it seemed to me not easily, but as though she were anxious not to let silence reign. And, truly, it was not like to do so, for Paulinus and Asiaticus were both full of many deeds that they had done and much that they had gone through. Asiaticus had a coarse wit and I liked not his manner of pledging Valeria, wherein he did couple her name with Paulinus's, saying that he drank to the union of husbands and wives, and that was ever his favourite toast seeing that he knew how sad a thing it was to be separated from one's faithful consort—the which he could not himself endure: and his lady being of like mind, was wont to follow him—even into the thickest of the fight.

Whereat Vitellia smiled, but coldly: and, methought, the sentiment was not to her taste though it was what she ever preached.

Now Asiaticus made every new excuse for another glass, and Paulinus drank freely and laughed at him, saying: 'Thou dost not drink without some pledge, nor dost thou pledge thyself to aught without a drink. Methinks that drinks and pledges are both good in their way, but I need no excuse for a glass, nor yet, with my lady-wife before me, do I need excuse for a

pledge.' That was something of it, I have it not quite. . . . Whereat Valeria seemed to stiffen and smiled, but a very little, as she turned her head.

Valeria was most queenly clad: and that I had observed when she came forth from the robing room. She wore a dress of palest violet silk—so pale that it seemed like grey: and round her waist was a girdle of silver and upon the broidery of the dress there was much silver woven with pearls and silver clasps set with pearls and, likewise, clasps of small green stones upon her shoulders. But her hair was simply dressed, and there was naught but a silver fillet binding it. Her sandals too were of silver with purple thongs.

There was a great deal of show about Julia's household, but here it was not show, yet was there more of beauty and of value in Valeria's home.

The dinner was not so long nor so sumptuous as at Julia's: and yet there were many goodly dishes, and some were of Paulinus's favourites. That I knew because he said so, and he praised Valeria for her remembrance of them. But when he said aught of that nature to his wife, she but turned her head so that I, behind her, could see the little smile that curled her mouth, and once she answered graciously—and still it seemed to me with coldness. ''Tis but a small matter, my lord, to have remembered. The steward—had he been the same that knew thee before—would have remembered just as well.' From which I gathered that the chief steward had been changed in Paulinus's absence.

'Like enough—like enough,' quoth Paulinus. 'Yet the dishes do taste sweeter, Valeria, since they have been thought of by thee'—a speech which I saw was not pleasing to Valeria.

Now 'twas towards the end of the banquet when conversation flagged somewhat that Paulinus bethought him of me.

'So thou hast thy new toy with thee,' he said to Valeria. 'Little Yellow-hair, dost thou know what is the work of a good slave? Lo! thou hast springs all over thy body and when thy mistress toucheth one, that part of thee shall act and none other. A good slave is but a Greek—— I remember not the word—'twas a toy that one touched and made to work—thou knowest the Greeks were skilled in contriving those things. They would make little horses that ran, and dolls that moved their arms and legs if one touched them.'

To all this I answered not, for a slave hath not to speak. Then Paulinus, thinking to amuse himself, said to me across the table: 'Hast eaten aught since thou didst enter the lady Valeria's service?'

To which I shook my head and being obliged, answered, 'Nay, lord.'

'So, ho!—So Valeria hath not yet bound thee over.' Then turning to a slave behind him, Paulinus said: 'Go fetch the flour or meal and thou fellow fill this glass. Nay, not that vintage—'tis too strong for Yellow-hair. Come, give her a cup of this. We need not to bear thee out afterwards, eh, Yellow-hair?'

Whereat I laughed, feeling rather uncomfortable, for I saw Paulinus meant me to go through the ceremony of old custom, whereby slaves were pledged to the faithful service of their owners.[1]

'Twas no harmful ceremony and but seldom dealt in, nowadays, though

[1] Slaves' oath of fealty. I have searched in vain for a record of the slaves' oath of fealty, but have not found it in Gaius, Ulpian or other authorities on slave-law. It would be interesting to learn whether any such record, justifying Nyria's description, does exist. (Ed.)

tales there were of new young slaves who had been had up before a merry party and made mock of in this pledging. But I feared not that from Paulinus. So, when he bade me come round beside him to the table, and put the bowl of flour in my hand and the cup of wine, and then drew to him the great glass salt-cellar and took a goodly ladle to sprinkle my lips, I could not help but laugh and looked me at Valeria, who smiled kindly; and I was glad to see she was not angry as Julia would have been.

Vitellia also smiled, and, said she most generously: 'Nyria will serve her mistress well, I'll warrant, whether or no thou dost anoint her with flour and salt, Paulinus.'

And Asiaticus leaned his arms upon the table and leered at me—'twas not a pleasant look. 'By all the gods,' he cried, 'verily it seems to me my judgment served me well. This maid whom I did purchase as a babe hath proved worth her keep, doubtless, to Julia. May she serve thee equally well, Valeria.'

'Her service will differ somewhat,' answered Valeria rather coldly. 'I need not that which Julia desired: and thus, methinks, the training Nyria hath received should ill befit her for her service with me.'

And I, not wholly understanding her, felt myself grow hot and shamed.

'Come, come, Valeria,' said Paulinus kindly, 'I trow the maid is a good one and will serve thee well. Be not hard upon her.'

'I have not yet been hard on Nyria,' said Valeria coldly.

But I, looking at her, saw a smile in her eyes and seemed to see that she trusted me, whereat I would have bent, but for the flour and wine in my hand.

'Now, Yellow-hair, we'll hear thee take the vow,' said Paulinus. 'By the bread—get on, little maid—dost know the words?'

'Oh, ay, lord,' I whispered, half-shamed and half-laughing.

'By the bread,' he cried again—and I took him. 'By the bread that keepeth life in man, fruit of the earth——'

'And by the salt,' he shouted.

'By the salt that is the savour of all things unto men——'

'And by the wine——'

'And by the wine that maketh glad man's heart. By all these that strengthen life and make service staunch, and most of all by'—and here of a sudden I paused—for I liked not to call on any Roman god, and 'twas wont to be left to the choice of him who took the vow which god he should call upon—but I hesitated.

'Say, who is thy fancy, Yellow-hair? By Venus, I should say—or Artemis—or, if thou wert a year or two older—by that playful god who, they say, hides himself in the form of a child, and who verily hath all the wiles of manhood at his command—say, is't by Eros thou wouldst swear?'

'Nay, lord,' I answered shyly. 'But by the greatest god of all——'

'Thou art not modest,' he replied. 'Here, Jupiter, list to the maid's vow and register it eternally.'

But I had turned to Valeria, seeing she was my mistress.

'By the greatest god of all, I vow to serve thee faithfully. My hands, thy hands—my feet, thy feet—my lips to thine—that I may faithfully do thy bidding and that if my life be demanded of me, that too, I may give, since I am no more mine own, nor any man's, save only thine—I pray thee hear my vow.'

'Well done, Yellow-hair, well done,—drink the wine,' cried Paulinus,

and would have tossed it down my throat himself, had I not raised the cup. But it was part of my duty to take a sup from it and taste a mouthful of the flour: and then he, having laid the salt upon my lips, leaned back in his chair and seemed well satisfied.

'Many a vow is taken in jest,' said Vitellia gently, 'but though to such as these there be not much weight nowadays, yet verily, I trow that Nyria will keep her word—even to the death——'

And Valeria bent forward and laid her hand on mine as I set down the bowl, and said gently:

''Twas well done, Nyria. I'll exact no difficult service from thee,' and with that she signed to me that I might go.

But, as I was leaving the room, she called me back again and said:

'Await me in the antechamber to my sitting-room, I need thee there.'

Therefore went I thither.

Now thou knowest that I had had no food except the sup of wine and was growing hungry; but I liked not to go out and seek any supper until Valeria gave me leave. So I waited there alone, for the other slaves had all gone forth to theirs.

And presently, Valeria came in haste and closed the curtains behind her.

She walked swiftly across the room, her robe shimmering like a silver cloud, and stood before me.

'Nyria,' she said, and I saw her heart beating, as she laid her own hand upon her breast, so that she seemed scarcely able to speak.

'Thou hast pledged thyself to my faithful service. Yet it is not by that alone I trust thee, for I know that thou art faithful. I have somewhat for thee to do to-night. Canst thou be swift and silent?'

I bent at her feet.

'Trust me, lady,' I said.

She thrust her hand again within her gown and seemed to feel something that lay there. Then she said:

'Wait for me while I write,' and she took a tablet and a pen and wrote swiftly, binding it with ribbon and with wax, and she gave to me the packet, saying:

'Veil that head and face of thine. If thou has naught, take some old cloak of mine. Let none know who thou art. Then haste thee—be sure thou art not long. Speed down the hill until thou comest to the house of Licinius Sura. Enter by the smaller gate and speed thee round the house until thou shalt find the door with a trellis over it whereon a jasmine grows. There is a window set in the wall close by, and there thou shalt see a lamp burning. Rap thrice upon the door. A single soft knock—with thy knuckles—and to him that openest give this despatch. Wait then and see what answer there shall be and bring it back to me without fail.'

'Without fail, Domina,' I answered.

'Ay,' she said, rising and looking at me. 'Follow my directions, Nyria, closely, else disaster greater than thou dost dream may fall upon me—and so too on thee.'

'I will not fail, Domina,' I answered.

Then she, turning to her own room, brought out to me a soft grey cloak, which covered me to the feet, and she bade me draw it over my head.

'Be swift and sure,' she said, 'and seek me when thou dost return.'

I bent in obeisance and hastened away.

I had had no food, but all my hunger seemed gone, and I hastened through

the rooms and down the terrace steps and across the courtyard and so to the little gate in the wall, speeding as fast as I was able along the road that led down the Cœlian and past the house of Julia, which was wrapped now in darkness—darker than the night.

Then I reached the house of Licinius Sura,—thou knowest it stood a little higher on the hill than Julia's and on a knoll that overlooked the valley, but the road on either side, close to it, was thickly shadowed with trees. There stood some evergreen oaks and a spiked thorn or two and a pine that thrust forth great shadowy arms. 'Twas a dark night with only a pale light of stars.

There were two doors leading to Licinius Sura's house—one greater than the other. The one whereof Valeria spake was set within the stone wall and opened with a latch. I closed it carefully behind me and found myself upon a path that led straight to the house and then around one end of it.

'Twas all in darkness here and I followed the path, looking for the window that should bear the lamp, which presently I saw upon the farther side, and stopped at a door beneath a porch where, over the trellis, grew a plant that might have been a jasmine.

I rapped with one knuckle softly, as Valeria had bade me, thrice upon the panel, and scarcely had I done so when there came a movement within. A shadow crossed the lamp, and the door was swung open.

I stood upon a raised step and thus seemed taller, and just beyond me stood a man's form. I had not time to distinguish who it was for the lamp was behind him and his face in shadow. But on a sudden, he caught me in his arms and thrust back the cloak that covered my head and there fell kisses over my head and face so that I would have shrieked had I dared. But remembering Valeria and her urgent prayer that I should be silent, I strove to thrust him from me and draw back: and as I pushed him and he held me in his hands, he drew me forward into the lamp, whereat I suppose the light shone on my hair, for he laughed and dropped his arms saying:

'Whom have we here? Verily there's some mistake.'

'Nay, no mistake, lord,' I said, seeing 'twas Licinius Sura, 'but a messenger. I bear this to give to thee.' And I bent and offered him Valeria's tablet, which he took from my hand, yet looked not at it but at me.

'Verily a mistake, little Watch-dog: and yet no mistake,' said he. 'For the gods ordained that those kisses thou didst scorn should become thine someday: in truth thou hast had them in full measure—and with interest. Say, is it not so?'

I made no answer, but bent again.

'Have the gods sealed thy tongue?' he cried. 'By Venus, they shall not seal thy lips.' And with that, he put his hand beneath my chin again and the other on my shoulder and would have drawn me to him. 'The kisses I gave thee but just now were scarce meant for thee, sweet little maid. Now, I pray thee, let me give thee some for thine own.'

But I bent my knees nigh to the ground and seeing that he did not hold me tight, I drew myself away.

'Sir, I am Valeria's messenger,' I said, 'and as such I should be sacred unto one whom Valeria deigns to honour.'

'Well said, Watch-dog,' he answered, dropping his hand from my shoulder.

'Verily, I see thou art a citadel which no common arts of love may win. And thou art right, child. He whom Valeria deigns to honour should bear himself in better guise. Is it not so, Nyria?' And he drew a step away and broke the silk that bound the tablet.

'Thou hast spoken, lord,' I answered, meaning that he spoke the truth. At which he laughed again.

'I'll not come to thee for a character, Watch-dog,' said he half-merrily, even while he scanned Valeria's tablet. 'This is an ill chance indeed,' he went on, turning it over. 'So, Paulinus hath returned. And the great god of destiny hath stretched an arm betwixt his villa and the luckless house of Licinius. Ah, well-a-day!'

And with that he sat him down and seemed to be in thought, while I remained standing by the door.

Of a sudden he seemed aware of me again. 'Seat thyself, child, seat thyself,' he said. 'Licinius may be over hospitable, but none shall say he is not hospitable enough.'

But I answered not, only still I remained standing.

He walked to a writing-table and took up a stilus thoughtfully, flicking it against his mouth, and then sat him down as though he would write: and then again he read Valeria's letter, and afterwards he flung the stilus from him, and, pushing back his chair, he turned him round.

'Tell Valeria, little Watch-dog, that Licinius fears to write. Nay, no offence to thee, child, 'tis Valeria herself who is not over wise: Licinius willeth not that any careless love-words of his should fall within Paulinus's paws. Now list to me. Say unto Valeria that which she doth already know. Licinius's love and loyalty are hers: and there standeth naught between save such as she doth thrust. Nevertheless, while Paulinus is at home, 'tis wiser that Licinius keep his distance, not only in person, but by note of hand. Nevertheless this house is open to Valeria, and she knoweth well the road. Bid her come when she will. The door and Licinius's heart are alike open to her. Wilt thou remember, Yellow-hair?' and he picked up a strand of my curls and pulled it forth. 'Verily, a love-lock,' said he. 'How many of these hast thou given away?'

But I shook myself free of him, for I liked not his change of manner.

'I'll carry thy message to Valeria, lord,' I said.

'Ay, and carry this word more. Tell Valeria to come while the road is clear, for Licinius may not be here long. Be sure thou dost not forget that last word. 'Twill bring her, I'll warrant.'

I answered not at all, save to draw my cloak over my head: and then, with a swift obeisance, I went out at the door.

'Thou mayst tell her too,' called Licinius softly after me, 'that she hath indeed chosen a speedy messenger—one who will not delay whatever the temptation be.' But I ran away, angry with him, angry with myself, and had Valeria been other than herself, perchance I had been angry too with her. I hastened up the hill as swiftly as I might, but even so, I had been long delayed. Still, I trusted to see no one, for though I knew not yet the habits of Valeria's household, 'twas unlikely there would be many slaves about at this hour.

When I had entered at the little gate in the wall, and sped up the terrace to her doors, I met Aeola coming flying from them, and in the light of the swinging lamps I saw that she looked frightened.

'Ah, Nyria,' she cried: and she caught and clung to me. 'I have been searching for thee. Whither hadst thou fled? But tell me not now—only come, come, I know not what to do.'

She seized my hand and ran within with me, scarcely freeing me to remove the cloak I wore, and suddenly on our ear there fell a sound of a voice loudly raised.

'Paulinus is in there,' cried Aeola, pointing with her hand to the door of Valeria's rooms. 'Paulinus—ay——'

'Well, what of that,' I said, for I would not let Aeola see that she had startled me.

'Nay, but Valeria desires him not,' cried Aeola, all a-quiver with dismay. 'The lady Vitellia and her lord have gone: and Paulinus followed Valeria into her rooms, and went not at her word of dismissal—ay, and said that he would not go—and when he saw me, bade me leave her. But Valeria bade me stay.'

'And why didst thou not stay?' I said.

'Why—how could I since Paulinus ordered me hence. Oh, Nyria, hark, what shall we do?'

'Do'—I said, drawing myself up—'go thou to bed, 'tis all thou art fit for. I'll seek my lady.'

And I went across the room and through the antechamber, even though my heart beat loudly: and I entered Valeria's sitting-room, which was brilliantly lighted, and bent myself between the curtains and approached her, making another obeisance at her feet.

Valeria stood, leaning a little back beside a table, whereon were certain carved silver things and some little weapons from foreign parts, and, before her, stood Paulinus scarce a yard from her, with his face all red and angry and the veins swollen up in his forehead and his great arms held out looking knotted and fierce. I liked him not. He looked to me little like the kind Paulinus who had made me drink wine at table and pledge myself to Valeria's service. For this was some strange monster who would have snatched Valeria had he dared and beaten the life out of her—or so it seemed to me—and yet, even while I looked at him, I saw him tremble: and he began to speak again more gently. But Valeria drew back, not seeming to see me. Her hands straying over the table, had fallen on a little silver dagger one had given her as a gift, with the hilt chased and set with gems, but the point was fine and sharp and she snatched it up and held it to her breast.

'Come no nearer,' she cried, 'or I strike.'

'Thou art mad,' he said: and thrust out his hands as though he would have snatched the dagger from her, but she evaded him and swayed against the table, keeping the point of it to her breast.

'Dost think that I would see thee slay thyself, Valeria?' he cried huskily. 'Thou art mad I say. Is my demand a wrong or unnatural one? Comes it not within the rights of a lawful spouse? Drop that weapon and let me still thy fears.'

But Valeria only answered him, keeping her eyes fixed upon his face, 'Come no nearer—come no nearer, or I strike.'

This was all in the space of half a minute or so, which, when seeing, I hastened to her feet and made a second obeisance, and my shadow flitting before her, she cast her eyes upon me. 'Ah, Nyria!' she cried, slipping swiftly to the floor, while she held out her hand to me. 'Nyria,' she said.

'Ay, lady—I am here,' I answered, springing to her and striving to hold her as she fell.

For she sank, half against me, and half against the table, so that I was forced to let her gently to the ground.

But she caught my hand and clung to it.

'Remain, Nyria, remain,' she said, and then she seemed to shiver and her head dropped back and I saw that she had fainted."

CHAPTER II

Archigenes, the Manumittor

Nyria tells of how Paulinus went forth in search of the doctor Archigenes, and how Stephanus, also summoned, shewed a changed attitude towards herself: then of how Archigenes intervened between husband and wife and Paulinus promised not to press his claim upon Valeria.

Nyria continues her tale: "When first I saw my lady like that I was terrified—not so much of Paulinus—for I saw that, now at least, he meant to be kind—but she had been so lately ill, and now she was as one stone-dead.

I had lain her gently on the ground and slipped a cushion beneath her head, keeping her very flat, as I thought was best, and would have striven to unfasten her garments, but that they were all loose, for Valeria was never tightly girt. Her heart scarce seemed to beat; and while I was yet wondering what I should do, Paulinus came and bent over her.

'By all the gods!' he cried, 'a man had better have married a statue. 'Twould have been easier warmed to life.'

With that I looked up at him and said:

'My lady hath but recently been ill. Valeria hath naught of strength as yet, lord. I fear me she will greatly suffer for this.'

He stood still a minute looking down at me in seeming thought. 'I ought to have thought of that, it appears,' quoth he, 'these nervous, tender women are not fit things for men to touch. One should deal only with such as are of stouter stuff.'

And then, as I rose to my feet meaning to call help, he stayed me. 'What wouldst thou, Yellow-hair? Is there aught that I can do?'

'I would call help, my lord, to bear my lady to her chamber. She may not lie here, and then we will apply such restoratives as are possible. But I must call some aid to me.'

'It were not well that I should touch her,' he said, looking down half-fiercely, half-sadly, at Valeria. ''Twould like enough wake her unto horror again, did she feel Paulinus's arms around her. Do as thou wilt, Yellow-hair. 'Tis evident my wife's rooms are no place for me.'

And with that, he strode away. But as he went he picked up the dagger Valeria had let fall and tossed it to the other end of the apartment, where it lay embedded in a carved wooden stool that it had chanced to fall on.

He had not offered to call the slaves for me, and I was fleeing off to do so, when I bethought me of Valeria's whistle. 'Twas a small silver one, which she usually wore on a chain at her wrist or her waist for summoning the slaves. For Valeria was not like most Roman ladies and cared not to keep them always with her.

Aeola had told me about the whistle, and stooping down, I felt amid the folds of my lady's dress and found it. Putting it to my lips, I whistled and

Aeola came running in. She was full of lamentation, but I hushed her sharply and bade her bring me a bowl of water and then to call some who would bear Valeria to her chamber, and this they did. But when she had lain there some time, and we had placed hot bottles to her feet and poured some strong spirit between her teeth—or tried to, for they were clenched and the better part of the draught ran out again—and still she shewed no sign of life, I was terrified and, leaving Aeola beside her, I ran through to the rooms of Paulinus. He was pacing to and fro, talking to Gregorio who seemed to flutter beside him tossing the folds of his tunic and a long feather that he carried in one hand while he prated of many things to his lord—doubtless breathing mischief, I thought. But I hurried in and prostrated myself before Paulinus. 'May it please thee, lord,' I said, 'to send for Archigenes, who is the doctor that hath attended Valeria and will know best how to treat her, for my lady hath not regained consciousness.'

Now did Paulinus pause in his walk and swore many times freely, looking at me as though he knew not whether to slay me or to pray my help. At last he found his tongue for ordinary speech, and asked me many questions: 'Hath this Archigenes served thy lady long? How was she ill? What happed with her?'—and many others.

I told him all I could, for as he said, he knew but little—there having been none to tell him since his arrival, save only Gregorio, who had been absent most of the time.

'This Archigenes is a foolish fad,' said he, 'one who hath many pandering ideas about women. Nevertheless, if, as thou sayest, he hath restored Valeria to health before, he had best see her again. Go thou, Gregorio, and summon hither messengers. Send them where this Archigenes may be found.'

And Gregorio drew back with a half-bow, insolent, methought, in his bearing. For he liked not to take an order and was ever showing that he would not be treated as a slave. His eyes flashed and he said sullenly: 'I will send someone to take thy commands.'

Somewhat in his manner angered Paulinus. 'I'll send myself,' he said —'thou painted jackanapes, if thou doest not my bidding—and that right quickly. Dost think I keep thee for naught except to caterwaul? Hasten.' And Paulinus struck his arm upon a table with such force that Gregorio jumped and bounded away, but his face was black as night.

I was leaving to go back to my lady, but Paulinus called me. 'I'll go myself for the doctor,' quoth he. 'Say, Yellow-hair, whither shall I seek this Archigenes: and if I find him not, who else is there I may command?'

Now, here I hesitated, for I cared not to name Stephanus, and still less did I desire that Symmachus should come, seeing that his treatment of Valeria was not like to prove comforting. But Paulinus, seeing my hesitation, said: 'Go back, child. How should I expect thee to know? Attend to thy duties. I'll find such as will serve Valeria.'

'May it please thee, lord,' I said, 'I do know one, a goodly man and honest though he be not registered, who came to Valeria before, when we were in sore distress and knew not for whom to send—and, please thee, I can send for him.'

'Ay, send for him—send; one of the others can go. I'll seek this Archigenes.'

And Paulinus, not waiting to don his toga, hastened off. I know not who found Archigenes—whether 'twere he or another. Archigenes was found

at last, and the time, though it seemed long, could not really have been so. But now, I was still at Valeria's bedside—having despatched Aeola to seek one who would summon Stephanus, and there, when Archigenes came, he found me.

His presence was goodly and did comfort my soul, for I felt faint with long fasting and sore anxiety,—for, thou knowest, there had been a deal to bear that day—with one thing and another—not knowing what might befall. I had not summoned Corellia, and by happy chance it was not Valeria's custom that her head-woman should attend her at night: and the under-maidens who came for the unrobing—whereof one was Aeola, and the other one that I knew—did my bidding without much trouble. Moreover, thou knowest, they had heard Valeria's command to me and dared not oppose it.

Archigenes looked grave, but he bent most kindly over the bed and, at first, it seemed he scarce could account for Valeria's state. But he did not question me then.

'I like not, as thou knowest, to let blood,' said he, 'nevertheless, at times it be necessary.'

And, with a sharp instrument that he carried, he made a puncture in Valeria's arm and wiped away a few drops. Then again, he bound it quickly, seeing that she stirred, and all the while I turned the fan upon her and stood ready with whatsoever Archigenes might desire.

He wiped her lips with the distilled spirit and chafed her hands, and after a time she opened her eyes and seemed to be more herself.

But a long shuddering sigh shook her and she turned her head away and seemed like to sink from us again.

'Speak to her,' said Archigenes, 'tell her all is well.'

So then I bent over her. 'Lady—dear lady,' I cried, 'here is Nyria. Thou art not alone, Domina. Archigenes is here and doth tend thee. All will be well.'

Valeria opened her eyes, and looked at me: and then closed them again.

'I do but desire to sleep,' she said.

But, meanwhile, Archigenes had mixed a glass of strong cordial and bade me hold it to her lips, the which I did, and it brought a flush to her cheeks and she sank back and slept like a child.

When, seeing this, and that Aeola had come within, Archigenes signed to me to follow him.

Without, in the antechamber stood Stephanus, looking very dark and shadowy with a heavy toga round him and his bag in his hand.

Archigenes greeted him warmly. 'Methinks thou art not needed, friend, for to-night, at least. Sleep will work wonders. Let the lady rest. I desire now to speak with this maiden who, I see, is here again and who will best carry out my directions. Do thou divest thyself of that wrapper, brother, and hear what she hath to say.'

Now I felt somewhat dismayed at having thus to speak, yet, trusting Stephanus, but not liking to speak before them both, I was yet forced to do so. Therefore, I told my tale—not saying Valeria had sent me on an errand but that Aeola had called me and I had found my lady like to faint. I was about to say, after high words with her lord—but this seemed too much of a breach of confidence. Wherefore I hesitated, but Archigenes seemed to understand. He shook his head gravely.

'Thou hast spoken well, maiden. I need not detain thee longer. I go to

see Paulinus. Lead the way, Nyria. Brother Stephanus, methinks I need not keep thee.'

Whereat Stephanus, seeming agreeably content, just nodded.

'I wait here till Nyria returns,' said he; 'like enough, while she hath been tending others, there have been none to tend her.'

And somehow I liked the sound of his voice, for, thou knowest, I had not seen him since he had turned from me without speaking in the slave-market that day.

So then I, running on before, led Archigenes to Paulinus's rooms.

My lord was evidently awaiting him and greeted him as one who must bear news.

'Well, what hast thou to say, Archigenes?'

'Somewhat that thou wilt not care to hear, I fear,' replied the doctor—'at least, if thou be like other husbands long separated and but lately returned.'

But I stayed to hear no more, for Stephanus waited for me. I ran into the ante-room and found him there. He had not taken off his toga though he had set down his bag, and when I approached he laid no finger on me, but only regarded me gravely, and asked, in what seemed to me formal-wise: 'How dost thou bear thyself to-night after the fatigues of the day, Nyria?'

I told him that I bore myself well enough.

'And thou hast doubtless been fed and served well?' he answered. As he spoke, I remembered that I had had no food, and fatigue overcame me, and I swayed and would have fallen had he not caught me and placed me on a chair.

'Sit there,' he said, 'I may not support thee since thou art no longer aught that doth belong to me. Nevertheless, though thou wert some stranger-maid, I would not see thee faint and starve.'

Then going to the door, he called softly to Aeola, who hastened out.

'Bring food and wine,' he said; 'see that Nyria hath what she doth require—I have none with me to give her, and she needeth it sore. I will abide here till thou returnest.'

Aeola ran without, and came back presently with a tray well supplied, though where she had got it I know not.

Meanwhile, I was very faint, and yet, it seemed, only with fatigue, for afterwards, when the food and wine came and they had cut some morsels and fed me, I had like to grow strong again. But before it came, I put out my hand to Stephanus, who stood watching me, yet as though I were but a patient—and said: 'Thou art very kind, Stephanus.' But he answered not.

'Wilt thou have none of me now, Stephanus?' I said.

And he shook his head but answered not.

'Thou sayest I do not belong to thee'—and then I began to weep a little—the which seemed to stir him: and he made a sudden movement toward me, and drew back again, and still he answered not.

'Nevertheless, I am still Nyria,' I said, 'and thou canst not—thou wilt not ever be unkind to Nyria?'

But still he answered not.

And by and by, when I had had the food and wine, he signed to Aeola to take the tray away, and then he stood before me with his toga around him and his bag in his hand, and said he: 'Nyria, thou didst ask me whether I

would serve thee still, and I told thee truly that thou dost no more belong to Stephanus, seeing thou hast chosen thy mistress, and for me there is naught to do for thee. Nevertheless, if thou dost ever need a friend, thou mayest command Stephanus.'

And he said no more, but went without, and I—if I had not had the food and wine—I would have wept—for this Stephanus differed from him I had known always.

But seeing I felt better, I went into Valeria's room and laid me down to sleep.

Two or three days went by, and Valeria still was ill and scarce left her room. Archigenes came every day, but Stephanus not again, and there came a morning when Valeria was better—much better; and yet there seemed a constant dread in her eyes.

Paulinus had not been inside her rooms again, but he had questioned me daily concerning her, and daily, methinks, he had seen Archigenes—but of that I am not sure. He was out a great deal, and some said that Rome was agog with rumours of war and with many other matters of great import.[1]

But of all these I knew naught, for there was none now to bring me talk, and I cared not to chatter with the slaves, save sometimes Aeola.

Thus the only means I had of hearing aught from outside was when Crispus brought some story to Aeola. But Aeola cared more that Crispus should say that she looked pretty than that Rome was in flames. Thus, though she told me bits now and again, it was not as though Stephanus himself or Crispus had told me the news.

And now, upon the morning when Valeria was better, I had myself, with Aeola, robed her in a simple white woollen stola. I had practised on Aeola's head the Greek way of hairdressing, for I wanted to be Valeria's tire-woman, and she, seeing that I was skilled in many ways that I had learned from Aemilia, permitted me to take the chiefest of her dressing—at least now that she was ill—and would tell Corellia she needed her not.

This, methinks, angered Corellia against me, but she could not oppose Valeria, and Corellia was one who would not loudly complain. Therefore, it was her way to scorn me in the slaves' quarter, not to scold.

Now, Valeria being dressed before Archigenes came, she did receive him in her sitting-room, and was better able to greet him like herself—'I scarce need thy services, good doctor,' said she when I gave him entrance.

'In truth,' he answered, making a spreading bow, 'I like to see that look upon thy face, lady, for there is the flush of health again which shews thou dost yet find somewhat sweet in life to live for. Verily I see that my visit is no more needed as a doctor. Yet may I say, Most Noble Valeria, that as a friend I would talk to thee to-day.'

Valeria glanced at him quickly, and there was a hurried, startled look in her eyes. 'I am pleased to count Archigenes as my friend,' she said courteously.

'And to a friend is permitted, perhaps, somewhat that a doctor dare not intrude upon,' he said.

Valeria seemed to grow stiff, though she still spake courteously.

'Frankly, I like not those that intrude,' said she. 'But few care to intrude upon Valeria.'

'Here is one who hath thy health's best good at heart,' said Archigenes,

[1] Doubtless the Dacian War. See Appendix I, Bk. III.

making another bow, and laying his own broad soft hand upon his breast, as he bent before her. 'I pray thee listen to my words, lady, for they be winged with all true kindliness and desire for thy well-being.'

'I grant thou dost thus endow them,' said she with swift courtesy. 'Methinks that Archigenes can say no word which is not kindly meant. Nevertheless, I would tell thee, sir, that such talk as cometh strictly within thy province is best appreciated by me. Methinks that of closer and more private things a woman's own heart can but be the truest judge.'

'Rightly spoken, lady,' he answered. 'Nevertheless, concede such experience, as is the natural fruit of his profession, to one whose dealings during a long and chequered life have chiefly lain with the tender feelings of fair and delicate women.'

'Hath it then been thine experience,' she asked, 'that any two women's hearts are alike? I trow, Archigenes,' and Valeria slowly shook her head, with a little, half-sad smile, 'thou hast not worked among them with thine own eyes widely opened.'

'Ah, lady, it is not for Archigenes to appraise his own perception. Yet deemest thou that I would dare approach the sacred precincts of such a sanctuary as thine heart, if I did not know that upon this altar there burns a different fire from that which lights the hearts of other women, even though its flame goeth up before the same god.'

Valeria scarce seemed to know what to answer. At length she sat upright in her chair.

'A truce to imagery, Archigenes,' said she. 'I tell thee frankly that I know not if in my breast burns a fire to any god at all. I know only that within it is some consuming waste.'

'So, so,' he answered gently. 'Here we have perchance a fire burned out because it was too early lit. In truth, Valeria, there be maidens who are by nature vestals . . . it is they who should be permitted to serve the goddess rather than those who bind themselves by vows they will not—cannot keep—like perchance this unhappy woman of whom all Rome has been talking of late.'[1]

'Thou dost mean Cornelia,' answered Valeria. 'Hapless soul! Yet better be like her—at peace——' and she said no more, and Archigenes spake. 'Ay, for her who is by nature vestal, better the darkness of the tomb than to be bound by law with shackles which may cut deep into the flesh but cannot bind the virginal soul.'

'Thou hast learned somewhat of women,' said Valeria, not looking at him but gazing out as was her wont through the open doorway, where the early spring was blushing in the garden. She took no heed of me though I sat upon the step leading to the court, within her sight, and Archigenes, methinks, though he must have seen me there, seemed not to mind my presence.

I saw Archigenes lean forward and he seemed to be searching her face.

'Wouldst thou that I did strike such bonds from thee?' he said in a low earnest tone.

She started and looked at him, and then drew herself back, once more the frigid Valeria. 'Sir—by what right,' she said, 'what meanest thou?'

'Ah, lady,' he said, and there was a sound half of sorrow—half of sympathy in his voice—'If a woman hath not bared her soul even to her own husband, there be two men in the world to whom she should so discover it—her priest, if she have enough of religion, and her doctor that he may heal

[1] Fate of Cornelia, the Vestal Virgin. See Appendix 2, Bk. III.

the ills of her body—and who, in order that he may do so better, should obtain some knowledge of the ills of her soul.'

Valeria still looked at him strangely, but made no answer.

'Body and soul—the two are so mingled, lady, that in truth the cleverest physician cannot cure one without striking at the roots of disease which exist in the other.'

As she made no answer, he bent low again.

'I would cure thee, for it goeth to my heart to see thee plunged into such an illness as that in which I have saved thee recently, but from which, were it to come upon thee again, Archigenes with all his skill might not be able to rescue thee a second time. . . . Say, Valeria, wouldst thou have thy life unshackled by this bond which doth darken thy soul with so terrible a fear?'

'Ask the slave whether he doth desire his chains to be moved?' replied Valeria, bending forward with clasped hands. 'Oh, Archigenes, if thou canst secure me against that from which I have dreamed death alone could deliver me, then wilt thou have—alas! What can I give thee save the gratitude of a helpless woman!'

She turned aside in her chair, burying her face in its cushions and seemed to weep. I saw her shoulders shake.

Archigenes rose and poured some cordial from a flagon into a glass and gave it her to drink. She took it, answering: 'I am weak.'

'Ay, thou art weak,' he answered gently. 'But thou wilt soon be strong again. Come, here is thy faithful little maiden. Take her out into the sunshine, Nyria. Let her walk a little upon the terrace. Shew her how the buds are bursting and how the crocus-gold is peering through the grass. Tell her that though the night of winter hath been long, the day of spring will shortly dawn again.'

And then he bowed before Valeria, and folding his toga around him he withdrew. Following, to lift the curtains as he passed, I heard him call a slave to take him to Paulinus.

I walked with Valeria in the garden for some time. It was a beautiful morning. The sky was very blue and the marble of the terrace and the fountain shewed very white, having been newly washed in spring rain. The sunshine had brought forth the flowers on the crocus bulbs which thrust their heads through the grass, and a long strip of small white blooms on either side the path shewed thickly. Overhead, there was a soft blush of green, and many a myriad little buds of green pushing themselves forth. There was a soft silence in the air, and I longed that she should feel the beauty of the day. But she felt naught.

Then, by and by, as we turned back along the terrace, one of Paulinus's slaves came and said his lord craved speech with her—at which Valeria, seeing him coming, seemed distressed and stood watching as he approached. Then when he had given his message, she said: 'Tell thy lord, Valeria awaits him,' and a moment or two later, Paulinus came; but she clung to my arm and seemed to tremble so that I could not release her.

He stood upon the steps a few yards away and gazed at her at first without a word. Then he came nearer, giving his toga an impetuous shake as he threw it over his shoulder.

He was, it seemed, about to go forth, for he had on his outdoor toga and his boots were of the kind lords did not wear in the house.

'So, my wife,' he said, 'my lady-wife, to whose presence I must request the favour of admittance like any stranger that calls upon thee, I trust I see thee better of thy nervous illness.'

And at his words Valeria seemed to grow stronger. 'I thank thee,' she said, 'I am better.'

'Ay, better, doubtless,' he broke forth, with a coarse laugh that had little of laughter in it. 'Better, doubtless, since thou knowest thyself free of thy husband's unwelcome attentions!'

Valeria answered, ''Tis scarce meet thus to gibe.'

'Thou knowest of what I am speaking,' he answered. 'Archigenes hath been with me. Thou hast made good thy case to him.'

'If such he said to thee, which I can scarce believe,' she answered, 'Archigenes misstated facts.'

'It is not likely that he would do so,' Paulinus said, and she answered, 'That which Archigenes carried to thee was of his own shewing, and since I know not what it may chance to have been, haply thou wilt tell me. Nyria, go.'

And then she signed me to leave her. But I, fearing for her weakness, put up my hands to my head.

'Will it not please thee to be seated, lady,' I asked. 'Thy strength is not yet great.'

'Thou canst bring me a chair,' she answered. 'I will walk to one myself. If it be thy pleasure, Paulinus, wilt thou follow me?'

And with that they both turned away. But I saw his eyes had fallen upon me as I spoke, and that he was not ill-pleased with my care of her.

I went then and waited on the steps, where I could not overhear what passed but yet was near enough if she should call me.

Their talk was not long. Paulinus bore himself somewhat sulkily, and when once he raised his voice as in anger, she put forth her hand and the gesture seemed to silence him.

Presently she called me up again to bring her a shawl, for the morning was chilly when one sat for long, and as I did so, I heard him say: 'It is my pleasure, and that at least thou'lt not deny me.'

'By no means,' she answered. 'Thou hast but to acquaint me with thy wishes and all such preparations that thou desirest shall be made.'

'Nay, I'd rather leave the arranging of such things to thee. Women know them best.'

'But thou wilt let me hear the names of those thou desirest bidden, seeing they are naturally more thy friends than mine.'

He looked at her again, half angrily, half tenderly. 'Why wilt thou thus persist in holding thyself aloof from my interests?' he said. 'Have I not told thee that if thou wouldst remain my wife in name, thou shalt grant me in the eyes of the world, at least, such favour as a wife should accord. That I may demand.'

''Tis at thy command,' she answered. 'I will welcome thy friends as mine, but let me know whom thou desirest bidden.'

'The usual set,' he answered—and ran over the names of a dozen or more of the lords and generals in Rome, who were his companions. 'I'll have this thing done to prove that though Cæsar orders me hence, I am master in my own house, and no cost shall be spared—mind that, Valeria. But there's one thing I would demand of thee. Thou'lt bid this fellow Licinius Sura hither that I may shew unto Rome thee and him together with my sanction,

and thus stop their lying gossip. Likewise, would I see '—and here Paulinus laughed brutally—' how thou dost bear thyself towards him.'

Valeria hesitated a moment. Then she spoke quickly. ' Methinks thou scarce dost keep to the letter of thy bond. 'Tis needless, this.'

' Needless, no. I've taken thy word, Valeria, hitherto, and I'll prove that I trust thee now. Thus would I shew my friends and thine that I have confidence in thee and silence their lying tongues. I would see this fellow here—ay, see him with thee, and since there be naught but common friendship betwixt thee and him, shew me as I shall shew the rest that thou art my wife in very truth—ah ! there's naught in that that can offend thee if he be naught to thee. . . .'

Valeria half rose. I saw her hand tremble. She had not signed me to leave her again and therefore I stood beside her. ' I'll bid him hither as thou desirest,' she said, ' but I know not whether he will come.'

' Thou'lt have no underhand communication with him,' cried Paulinus hotly. ' Understand me this, Valeria, if he doth not come, I'll suspect thee, and though I be marching forth with Cæsar's legions, I'll set scouts upon thy path, and if they bring me tales in which there's aught to question, thou shalt suffer for it—thou and that half-blooded deceiver of thine.'

Valeria rose here. ' Taunt me not,' she said. " I repeat 'tis needless. Thou mayst leave the matter to me.'

' Ay, I leave my name to thee, and the honour of my house. Lucky is it for thee that thou hast given me sons to make that name worth preserving. Else, notwithstanding the plea of that mealy-mouthed physician of thine, thou hadst like to have gone forth beggared. Bear this in mind, Valeria. I relinquish such claim to thy service as he advised so long as thou dost hold thyself fittingly before the world as the wife of Valerius Paulinus and the mother of his sons. But let me hear a whisper that another is that to thee which thou hast scorned to let thy husband be, and not the vengeance of Cæsar himself shall equal mine.'

He turned and threw his toga over his shoulders and half strode away, but came back.

' I'm going now,' he said. ' I shall not enter these rooms again. For in a man's own house he cares not to be heralded like an ordinary visitor by a slave. When I seek word with thee, thou shalt come and meet me in the public rooms—these—these—are sacred to thee and to the name thou dost bear. See thou keepest them so.'

And with that, he went away."

CHAPTER III

The Departure of the Generals

Here Nyria tells of the Farewell Entertainment which was given at the Valerian villa when Paulinus and Asiaticus went forth to the Sarmatian War.

Nyria : " Now, it was nearing the time of the great reception that Paulinus had desired to hold upon his departure. But a few days had yet to pass and Valeria kept entirely to her own apartments, occupying herself with certain small matters, though, methinks, she had a difficulty in holding her mind to a single object.

Nevertheless, she did somewhat concern herself about me, questioning how I was circumstanced in the slave-court.

Now, thou knowest that none of the slaves, save only Aeola, liked me, and Aeola had already a house-fellow, who looked not upon me with favour. Therefore, it was not pleasant for me to intrude much in the slaves' quarter.

Moreover, I had had to deprive Aeola of a share of her bed and comforts, for there was not provision for more than two. Then the other one, desiring me not to be present, did address Chabrias as to what arrangement he would make for me. Chabrias answered somewhat scornfully, that seeing I was his lady's favourite, doubtless she would make her own arrangements for my accommodation. Therefore, he would not concern himself in the case without direct command from the Domina.

Methought this was like to make matters very uncomfortable for me, seeing there was none to favour me and none that wanted me, save only Valeria, wherefore I slept most nights outside her bedroom door as I had been accustomed to do for Julia.

But Valeria was not used to having a maid there, and one night, being restless, she arose and was walking out to the sitting-room, when she came upon me and asked wherefore did I lie there as she was not now ill ?

I told her that Julia had desired it of me and that although I had received no directions, I knew not where else to sleep, seeing that no preparation had been made for me.

At which Valeria seemed vexed in mind, and did assure me I should be better done by.

' But,' said she, ' why hath my steward not attended to the matter ? 'Tis his concern.' And thereupon, fearing to be brought before the notice of Chabrias and made to suffer harder things, I dissuaded Valeria from upbraiding him upon the matter.

' For,' said I, ' he likes me not : and thinks I am an interloper.' But though I wished not to tell tales, yet still it seemed to me that 'twas best to let her know something of the disfavour in which they held me, lest at any time I be prevented being at her service. For thou knowest that when slaves

are ill-natured, they think little of harming another so that she can do naught for herself.

Now, hearing this, Valeria said I was to bring a lamp and come with her, and with that she took me through the rooms to one of the lesser dressing-rooms where Aeola told me she had been permitted to keep a change of robes and other matters she might need if 'twere not convenient for her to be allowed to go out to the huts.

'This room is thine, Nyria. Provide it as thou wilt,' said she: 'and let the cost be sent in to Chabrias. He will at least not refuse to pay my tradesmen's bills.'

Now the room was generously furnished and it seemed to me that there was like to be naught lacking. So I thanked Valeria for her kindness, and said 'twould satisfy me, surely: and that 'twas much to bestow upon a slave.

'But,' said she, 'thou needst not consider thyself one of the common herd, Nyria. Thou hast been of use to me, and I prefer to have thee near me. If thou goest out to the court where these selfish folk be, 'twill be thine own fault, for thou needst not go thither for aught.'

Now, this little room was placed in a corner of the building, with a window that looked out upon a side of the house, whereof one road led round to Paulinus's rooms and the other to my lady's. There were two window-entrances, with the wall built out in a point between them, and a step upon the one where I might sun myself, which was joy to me.

The bed was a good one, and there were cupboards that I knew of, where Aeola kept her things, and there would be room for mine. So I thanked my lady, who said,

'See thou art always at hand, Nyria, and serve me well. 'Tis all that I desire.' "

. . . . . .

"Now the preparations for the big reception were going on apace.

Thou knowest it was the work of the secretaries to bid the guests, but Valeria was fevered concerning the coming of Licinius Sura, not knowing whether he would do so or no. The mandate had not been from her and she feared lest Licinius should refuse yet feared more that he should come: and she was for writing to him yet feared that too, lest Paulinus should discover it. And I saw in her signs of impatience, for she knew that he would soon be gone. Thus, she said to me:

'Find out if thou canst whether Licinius hath received Paulinus's invitation and what is his will in the matter.'

And it chanced that one morning not long afterwards, I met Licinius strolling in the road. He had that woman Salome with him and the child. Her litter was being borne behind them as they walked. Then, seeing me, Licinius did excuse himself to his companion and came close up to me. But while her gaze was upon us, his manner remained courteous and distant though his eyes did shew much of what he thought.

'Well met, little Watch-dog,' said he. This was half beneath his breath, for Salome stood in the road some half-dozen yards beyond. I knew not her name then, thou knowest, nor what position she held to Licinius, though it seemed to me the child must be theirs. But that was of little account, for many lords had such children by slaves and freedwomen.

'Say, little Watch-dog,' said he, 'what means this sound of gay doings in mine ears? Wherefore am I bidden in state to the villa of Paulinus?'

'Paulinus giveth a great reception, lord,' I answered, making my obeisance very low, for Salome's eyes were upon me. 'Paulinus hath been ordered to the war; and 'tis his will that his friends should see him depart.'

'Oh, then, 'tis naught to do with Valeria?' he asked. 'And yet the mandate was in her name likewise.'

'May it please thee, lord, the most noble Valeria will receive her friends, also, at the same day and hour and 'tis her desire that thou shouldst be present.'

This I said deeming she would have it so, and fearing that there might be trouble did Licinius not present himself.

Licinius seemed to take counsel with his own mind, then turning his back roundly on Salome, he said, 'There's no scurvy trick behind this, Watch-dog, eh?'

'My lord,' I answered, 'Paulinus is not that kind of man. He doth desire a fitting send-off both from his wife and her friends.'

'So—ay——' said Licinius. 'If this be Valeria's will, I'll come. Thou mayst tell her so. . . .'

And thus I told Valeria.

On the day of the great departure, Vitellia arrived early. She seemed sad and anxious at heart for, 'twas said, Asiaticus would not take her upon this journey. Wherefore, she was to be left behind in Rome and she liked it not.

To-day, Valeria was most sumptuously attired. I myself had had the dressing of her though Corellia likewise was present. For Corellia wisely said I knew naught of draperies. But she let me tire Valeria's head. Valeria's gown was of pale mauve embroidered in large purple flowers raised like velvet in a thick border some two feet wide round the foot and lesser trimming for the bodice-broidery. She wore purple shoes set with green stones and her palla was thick with silver, having upon its edge a narrow deep purple border that likewise looked like velvet. Around her neck and on her arms she wore a set of sumptuous green stones which Paulinus had sent her that morning with a written slip of paper on which he said:

'I do not pray thee to accept these: it is my command that thou dost wear them. Afterwards, thou canst throw them in the gutter if thou wilt.'

'Wear them to-day,' he meant. And the inner lining of her palla was likewise pale green.

Valeria put on the stones and greatly they became her, though she seemed to take no heed of their beauty or their value. But when she was dressed, her manner changed, and to me it seemed as though she were bent upon playing a part fittingly.

She went without beside Vitellia who was dressed in robes of dull rose with a quaint Eastern girdle set with pink stones and some gold openwork.

Vitellia looked sad and a good deal older than Valeria who, methought, was like one seen in a dream. When we came out, I followed in a new robe of white silk embroidered with white which Valeria had given to me; and Aeola, too, came and wore one like mine, the only difference between us being that Aeola's head was bound with a red fillet and mine with a white one because I liked it best.

Aeola and I stationed ourselves behind Valeria as was fitting, and Paulinus came forward from his rooms looking very goodly in his armour. He had

not yet donned his short cloak or his helmet, and the plates of his armour shone like burnished gold so that Aeola and I could see ourselves in them.

Two or three slaves attended him, and also Gregorio, though Gregorio would not have had it thought that he was in attendance.

He wore the dress permitted to a minstrel—an embroidered tunic with a coloured scarf, and bracelets that had been given to him, and coloured shoe-thongs winding up his leg.

And his hair was thickly curled. Upon it, he wore a small round cap with a long feather of green and gold. This he thought well-looking, but to my mind it made him somewhat of a game-stock.

Paulinus approached with due order and saluted Vitellia, and likewise Valeria. Bending on one knee before her and taking her hand as she held it out to him, he said :

' Verily, the gems become thee well. My choice hath pleased thee this time, Valeria ? '

Meseemed she knew not what to answer and scarcely understood his mood. She looked confused. ' I wear them at thy pleasure, lord,' she said.

And now the guests began to arrive and Paulinus stood beside his wife and received them as if they were her guests : and during much of the time he held Valeria's hand, as was the custom with a newly-wedded pair who received their friends, or a lord and lady who had met after long separation, or such as desired to shew their unity of heart and mind. And this I saw irked Valeria sorely. But she did not rebel. She bore herself with dignity and never once turned round to give any orders to us as Julia would have done—a thousand in a minute —and have kept us flying hither and thither as the fancy took her.

But Valeria had naught for us to do, so that we could look about us and see the goodly show.

Thou knowest—for I have told thee—that the atrium was very fine and the pillars had all been wreathed with white flowers, and, here and there, broad bands of mauve and green ribbon. Great pots of plants were placed about and blossoming orange trees in marble jars, so that the scent was sweet. And in two farther rooms beyond, on either side, were refreshments, laid for such as might desire them, with an army of stewards serving. Some were in Valeria's personal livery of white and violet, and others with the cross-bar of two shades of crimson and the narrow lines of gold crossed between them like a sword, which was Paulinus's sign as former Tribune of the Guard.

But the guests for the most part came not to eat and drink as they would have done at Julia's house, save some who did go in groups and drink much wine together and laugh riotously. But with these Paulinus did not ally himself. He remained close beside Valeria.

Vitellia stood a little to one side talking to such as came her way, but Asiaticus went about amongst the guests and laughed his fill likewise. He too seemed eager to be gone. There was a look in his eyes and upon the muscles of his face, every now and then, as though he cared most for the signs of war, and some said to him in joke that the old lion was roused from his lair, and would go forth again.

Whereat Asiaticus answered :

' Ay, prowling beasts are feared and scorned in time of peace, but when the sounds of war ring out they will be put to take the foremost place.' Likewise, he said, Cæsar liked him better out of Rome.

Now Licinius Sura came in and, methinks, Valeria had feared lest he

should not come at all. But when his name was called she heard it, and I saw her seem to stiffen and she held herself higher and drew a little away from Paulinus who was talking to a lady beyond him in seeming right good humour and joking her upon her looks—saying that soon there would be no men in Rome for pretty women to apparel themselves for.

But as Licinius came up the hall, he turned to him, saying:

'I pray thee excuse me, for here comes one of my wife's friends whom I would fain honour': and, with that, he put out his hand and took Valeria's fingers, holding them closely while he extended his other hand to Licinius.

'Greatly do I regret,' said he, 'that ere this, for long past, I have been unable to welcome Licinius Sura. And now, alack! 'tis but for an hour only, seeing that Paulinus is called to the wars: and Valeria must needs mourn in seclusion at home as becomes one made, for a time at least, a widow.'

Whereat Licinius, ne'er casting his eyes upon Valeria, bent low, and said:

'Rome suffers from the absence of her best men: and such as there be left in Rome must suffer too.'

And then again he bowed to Valeria, who answered him by a stately bow and spake not.

'Nevertheless, the time shall not seem long when we do return again,' said Paulinus jovially: 'and then, haply, we shall all meet once more—the better friends. There's no union like the union of hearts that have been disruptured—whether by distance or by difference. Eh, Licinius?'

Licinius seemed scarce to know how to answer.

'But,' said he at last, 'Paulinus should know better than I, seeing that near to him is that tenderest heart which should be his dearest possession—Licinius, alas! is alone.'

'Ho-ho, alone!' cried Paulinus, and, forgetting himself for a moment, he dropped Valeria's hand and clapped his own to his side, laughing heartily. 'What then hath become of Salome?'

Licinius looked at him. 'Salome!' said he. 'Of whom speakest thou?'

'Some slave, perchance. Haply, she was a slave once—but gossip says Licinius hath been hers,' said Paulinus.

'Like enough,' answered Licinius. 'Gossip says much in Rome. I listen not': and he drew aside as someone came up to speak to them.

But I saw Valeria gaze at him with a questioning look and whiten somewhat as she drew back but said naught.

Now, in the shifting crowd many came and went. Among them Plinius and Antaeia who, while they were talking to Valeria, said to her that they did greatly desire that she should come and visit them at Laurentum where Plinius had a villa.

'Not just yet, maybe. The season is scarcely enough advanced,' said Plinius, 'for one to care to leave Rome. But when the thorn-boughs are thick with bloom, then thou must come, Valeria. 'Twill be a joy to Antaeia to shew thee her home.'

And Valeria was forced to smile kindly on Antaeia, and, while she yet spake to her, Plinius's eyes fell on me.

'And thou too, little maid,' he said. 'There will be one to welcome thee. Thy friend Aemilia doth set store on thee, I find—or so she hath told her new mistress: and I would have thee come and see how well she and Antaeia suit each other. Verily, thy choice has been a wise one for this little lady—wife of mine.'

I made a deep obeisance and said my lord honoured me too much.

'I joy to see thee in such good keeping,' he said kindly. ''Twill be some time before thou art in danger of being placed upon the rostrum again.' And with that he turned to Valeria.

'Thou knowest I have much to concern me at present,' he said. 'There are several pleadings that will keep me in Rome, but thou must not forget thy word, Valeria. We'll spend a happy month together later on. As yet, the things I have to do are less pleasurable.'

I did not catch Valeria's reply and Plinius spake again. 'Cæsar is sore distressed in mind, for some there be who tell him that if this insurrection in Sarmatia is not quelled, others may spring up in Rome : and thou knowest' —Plinius dropped his voice—'Cæsar is never over-courageous where prognostications have been given him. He greatly fears some rising from a source he knows not. But there is none with whom he can as yet connect it : and had it not been for the name of Nerva there would be none with whom he might link the thought. And yet it seems to me from what I have known of Nerva, that the foretellers are somewhat out in their calculations.[1] He is not the man to thrust himself forward, and if he be thrust forward by others, they have to bolster him up.'

Now, whilst they were talking I saw Licinius Sura standing a little aside watching them intently, and he seemed to follow that which Plinius was saying with close attention : and while the subject was yet upon their lips Paulinus, who had moved away—the guests having now all arrived, and he being compelled to walk among them round the rooms—came up, and placing his hand suddenly upon Licinius's shoulder, he said :

'How's this, my friend ? Report has it that thou, too, art about to deprive Rome of the light of thy presence.'

'Ay, verily,' answered Licinius. 'For once, report spoke truly.'

Valeria had heard the question and the answer and, forgetting what Plinius was saying to her, she turned aside and, almost it seemed as though the words broke from her lips, she said, 'Whither art thou going ?'

Licinius dropped his eyes and folded his arms before him, saying, with a courtly bow, 'I go, lady, to Judæa.'

'To Judæa !' Valeria echoed. 'Ah !' and she seemed to fall back so that Plinius, ever courteous, thrust out his arms to support her.

'Thou art tired, Valeria,' he said. 'Wilt thou not be seated ?'

'Nay, nay,' she answered.

'Let me bring thee a cup of wine,' he said.

'Nay, nay, 'tis naught,' she answered. 'Heed me not, I pray' : and her tone was so low and distressful that Plinius who was the only one that could have heard it, save I, close behind her, moved back.

Paulinus was still talking with Licinius, and I heard him say jovially, ''Tis but natural, man ; make no excuses. All do desire to see the land of their birth and blood.'

Whereat it seemed to me that Paulinus was sneering. For thou knowest that Judæan blood was of small account in Rome. But Licinius retained his calm demeanour.

'It is no sentiment that calls me thither,' said he, 'but certain private matters of adjustment that must needs be done.'

[1] "Domitian was afraid of him (Nerva) because certain soothsayers had predicted that he should be one day Emperor." See *The Roman Empresses*, Vol. I, Walpole Press, p. 459.

'Ah! In these uncertain times,' cried Paulinus, 'a man does wisely to prepare the road for those that come after him. And thou, too, Licinius, if I remember rightly, hast a son, whom, like enough, thou wilt legitimise if he takes after thee and, thus, doth make it worth thy while.'

Whereat, Licinius seemed disturbed in mind, but turned it off with a laugh. 'Though the laws of Rome do make it worth while to count one's lawful progeny, mine need not thus be thought of. And were every man, Paulinus, to count the numbers of such little evidences as he doth leave behind him, he, haply, might inconvenience himself and render the division of his goods no easy task.'

And he said all this in a laugh, as though he turned it into jest. Whereat, Paulinus laughed again.

'Ah man, man,' he said, 'such ill-timed jests do deal with the glad, foolish days of youth. But when thou hast taken thee a lady-wife'—and seeming to remember himself he turned back towards Valeria—'thou thinkest no more of such others.'

And then Paulinus, coming up towards Valeria and seeing that she looked not over-well, said to her, loud enough for others to hear:

'Hearten thee! The time is coming for our parting cup. . . .'

At which Valeria feebly smiled and, even as Paulinus spoke, one could hear the sound of trumpets and the long, rolling tread of many feet; and 'twas the legionaries coming.

Paulinus delayed until two of the soldiers came and told him that the troops lined the portico. Those would have been two of the under-officers.

'Well said,' replied Paulinus. 'When Rome calls her sons to arms, they needs must leave behind them . . . and that not unwillingly . . . those fairer ones who would fain detain them.'

And with this he made a courtly bow to Valeria: and there broke forth much applause from many gathered round.

Paulinus walked around the circle, for the company had come in from the side-rooms and made a close-packed crowd.

'Good luck go with thee to Judæa: and better luck, mayhap, will keep thee there,' which seemed a joke, that puzzled some and made some laugh.

Then, as he moved around, Paulinus had given an order to a steward: and his eyes falling on me, he had stepped behind Valeria.

'See thou serve thy lady well,' he said. 'I trust her to thee, Yellow-hair.'

And at that I bent and said no word.

He nodded to Aeola, for 'twas in Paulinus's mood to forget no one: and then he turned to Valeria.

'The last, but not the least,' he cried. 'Of smallest account, mayhap, when Paulinus doth entertain his friends, and yet the sweetest far. Come drink with me a cup wherein loyal and faithful wives of Rome from ancient times have been wont to pledge their lords departing for the war.'

And Valeria trembled a little. She clasped and unclasped her hands and glanced quickly at Paulinus and dropped her eyes, and then looked towards a steward who brought the bowl, and said no word.

'Thy heart is like too full for speech,' said Paulinus loudly. 'Quench not thy emotion, Valeria. For the tears shed upon the footsteps of a forthgoing lord shall surely keep the path prepared for his return.'

And, with that, he took the cup from the steward's hand. It had two handles twined with serpents, and doves sat upon the brim just above. 'Twas chased in gold. He handed it to her and held it while she slowly put

her lips to it. 'Twas not the custom she should handle it. But the mouthful that she took seemed to choke her and she turned her head away and put her fan up to her face.

Paulinus held the cup high and kissed the place whereon her lips had rested; then, waving it round his head, he lowered it again and, holding it before his breast, he bowed to her, and said:

'By this cup I pledge thee, Valeria. None other lips shall come betwixt thine and mine until we drink together again.' And with that he quaffed it off, and handed back the cup.

And the moment afterwards, all seemed confusion. Valeria stood back looking very white and, beside her, Vitellia, who had been embracing her lord, though he seemed to like it not: and just beyond them stood Licinius, his eyes upon the ground and his arms folded on his toga. And Paulinus walked down between the throng with Asiaticus behind him, and many of the lords crowded after them to the portico, where they mounted their steeds and rode away.

There are two things that I forgot to tell thee. . . . One was that the lord Regulus was there near by. I had not seen him closely, and I liked not to speak to him, else would I have asked him about Thanna. But I could not: and then again I lost sight of him.

But when Paulinus went round saying good-bye to everybody, he paused before the lord Regulus, and I heard him say:

'And thou, Regulus, how wilt thou occupy thyself while so many of thy clients will be out of Rome.' He paused for a minute and then seemed to answer himself. 'I trow a brain like thine will never lack occupation, Regulus, even though Paulinus doth not afford it thee.'

And that was all. . . .

One other thing. . . .

Him they called Martial . . . he was there, and, greatly to my surprise, I saw him in a corner talking to Gregorio. Not that that was any great matter, for Plinius spoke to me, but it was the manner of his talking—and Gregorio, who was an impudent fellow, as thou knowest, was leaning against the wall flicking the feather in his cap and seeming to speak as though it were to one of his own kind. Yet, I thought he was not wholly at ease. For the glance that he gave this lord now and again seemed sheepish. But Martial heeded it not for he was joking freely and made Gregorio drink wine with him.

. . . . . .

I would tell thee that I myself saw nothing of Paulinus's departure, seeing that Aeola and I remained near to Valeria. It was not Valeria's will that we should always be close behind her as Julia would have had me, but so that we were within sound to summon. Thus, we stood a little apart and talked, and I noted the face of Gregorio watching his master as he went. But it did puzzle me, for I knew not what it meant. There was no great grief for the going of Paulinus—and yet Paulinus was always very good to him—but rather a keen interest in Gregorio's manner: and he looked from his master to Valeria and back again twice or thrice, and looked, too, at Licinius Sura as though he would fain have spied upon him.

But Licinius stood a little distance apart and did not look at Valeria. Likewise, his gaze seemed chiefly fixed upon friends he was talking to . . . the whom I knew not: and he did not pay much heed to the departure of Paulinus. Only once—quite towards the end when the sounds of the saluting

had almost died away and the tramping feet were getting fainter in the distance—Licinius turned him about and looked a long minute at Valeria. But she looked not at him.

He whom they called Martial stood near by Gregorio with his thumb and fingers spread apart on his chin which was bent down over his chest, and his eyes, that were dark and piercing, lingered long upon Licinius. His eyes were as of one who had some secret amusement and, when he had satisfied himself, he laid his hand on Gregorio's shoulder with a low laugh and drew the boy away, whispering to him as though he were his friend. At the which, I saw Gregorio flush with pleasure, one minute looking upon the ground and the next towards my mistress who observed him not.

For Valeria stood as if she saw not what went on about her ; and as, one by one, the guests filed before her bowing their farewells, she did return to each a graceful courtesy, but her smile was stiff and she scarcely spoke.

Many a lord had followed Paulinus to the door and shouted cheerily after him. The last I saw of my master was as he stood upon the top step leading down under the portico from the atrium . . . a goodly figure amid the crowd which pressed not very close upon him—for that would not have been seemly. Paulinus raised his arm and waved it cheerily to them all and then disappeared after Asiaticus who had strolled before him, his hand upon his sword and a look upon his face as though he thought of naught but war. Methinks Asiaticus was gladder to go than Paulinus, for as Stephanus had told me once before, when Asiaticus had the smell of war in his nostrils, he scented naught else but followed it as a hound follows his quarry.

To-day there was no music, for that Paulinus would not have suffered. It would have partaken too much to him of the festival-keeping of women and courtiers, and 'twas Paulinus's way to think small of such things. But there were many trumpeters which blew loudly while he went down amongst them. These, too, lined the portico, and went before the generals as they departed."[1]

[1] For the War in Moesia see Appendix 3, Bk. III.

CHAPTER IV

"Demeter! Comfort Me!"

Nyria tells of the farewells between Valeria and Licinius Sura and of the despairing supplication of Valeria before the shrine of the goddess Demeter: Then of the days of sadness which followed and of the visit of the poet Martial to the Valerian villa.

Nyria: "And then, the atrium, where had been so great and goodly a company, was not long of clearing. . . . I saw not which way the lords went, nor much of the guests' departure, for 'twas my duty to attend my lady: and when the greater number had passed her in farewell she stayed not for such as had delayed upon the steps, but led the way to her own rooms, Aeola and I following. Something told me that my lady would rather be alone, therefore I stayed Aeola in the slaves' antechamber where others of the women were congregated eager to hear how all had gone, and, for the most part, full of jealousy against Aeola and me. But Aeola never saw such things and chattered to them freely, and I, standing at the door, waited till my lady should call me.

But there came a rustle of skirts from the other way and Vitellia passed alone. Seeing me, she asked where was Valeria; so then I told her and preceded her to Valeria's sitting-room, where my lady stood in the middle of the apartment as one who had been struck to stone. No motion stirred her. There was no look, whether of suffering or of joy, upon her face and, at first, she heard us not, until Vitellia cried softly:

'Lucia,' and again 'Lucia.'

Valeria turned her round, then, and a sort of tremor seized her from her neck unto her feet—one long shiver—very slight; but I, seeing it, fancied she might be cold and stepped forward to arrange her green and silver palla, which had fallen low upon her shoulders.

'Ah, it is thou,' she said: and putting up her hands, she began slowly to remove the chains of glittering green stones.

'What doest thou, Lucia?' asked Vitellia advancing.

'What do I?' said Valeria slowly. 'I am taking off my chains': and with a sudden gesture, she threw the necklace from her.

'Oh, prisoners of Hades!' she cried—'hopeless souls bound for ever in realms of darkness, which of ye do fare worse than I? Take off my chains, I said. Alas! that may not be.'

I caught the necklace as she flung it from her and laid it on the table.

'Thou art sad and disturbed in mind, Lucia,' said Vitellia tenderly. 'And, in very truth, well thou mayst be. My heart beats with thine, little sister. But Paulinus made a brave show as he went, and he has gone to fight for his country. Art thou not proud of him?'

'Proud—proud——' said Valeria, turning round. 'Proud of what? Oh—ay—Paulinus made a brave show.'

'But thy heart is sad,' said Vitellia again.

'Nay—nay,' said Valeria, turning sharply and facing the room with one hand clutching her throat as though she would have choked herself. 'My heart is not sad. My heart is proud, as thou sayest, Vitellia. What, what can sadness and Valeria have to say to each other, when Valeria's spouse goes forth thus richly prepared to overcome the enemies of his country?'

'I understand thee not,' said Vitellia, calmly yet in an injured tone, glancing at her sister and then averting her eyes. 'Trouble should not thus derange thee, Lucia. Thy heart may be sad, yet not like this. Nevertheless, it should be sad. Is not mine sad, too?' And she followed in Valeria's steps, who paced even more rapidly as though to escape her. 'Hath not my lord gone forth likewise? and alack! who knoweth that he hath a better chance to return.'

'The gods have not been thus far good to thee, Vitellia, that they should check his coming back,' answered Valeria, stopping suddenly in her walk. 'Oh, the gods would be good to thee, Vitellia, if they slew him nobly on some battlefield.'

'Nay, nay, oh, speak not so,' cried Vitellia covering her face with her hands. 'He is my lord.'

'Am I hard to thee?' said Valeria more gently. . . .

'Am I indeed too hard, Vitellia, because I speak the truth. Why should we hide from each other that to-day—at least—we are blest in so far as that they have gone from us.'

Vitellia thrust out her hand as though she would have stayed Valeria's speech.

'Peace, peace,' she said. 'Speak for thyself, Lucia. If thou darest thus blaspheme the sanctity of marriage vows, for myself I will neither listen nor agree. Asiaticus is my husband, and since I may not be with him, it will be my duty and my sole joy to plead with the gods daily for his protection.'

Valeria laughed a low scornful laugh and pointed to the door, saying, 'Go, then, Vitellia. Plead with thy gods. I would not retain thee. Haply, they will hear thee. Indeed, my heart tells me that those whom the gods do favour and keep nearest to the women of their choice be those from whom the women shrink.'

Vitellia dropped her hands and looked fully at her sister. Her face was sore troubled. She seemed not to understand Valeria: and, in truth, I, crouching on a stool at a little distance, since they had not sent me hence, did think the face of Vitellia was fairer and softer than that of Valeria.

'I may not go till I have said somewhat unto thee,' she said. 'Thou knowest, Lucia, when lords be absent, gossip is ever more rife in Rome about those they leave behind. Paulinus hath chosen of his noble favour to extend confiding courtesy to him whom perchance some would say he had done better not to receive here. Do thou reward his faith in thee, Valeria, by loyalty in his absence.'

Valeria did not answer. Only, she looked at Vitellia with her eyes flashing in her strained, white face.

'Thou knowest,' persisted Vitellia, seeming somewhat confused—'he who was here to-day—with whom some in Rome have coupled thy name. Oh, Lucia, thou wilt not bid him welcome in thy husband's absence?'

'Of whom dost thou speak?' asked Valeria.

At that moment there was a sound at the curtains and Chabrias lifted them with his arm.

'The Honourable Licinius Sura,' said he, and behind him we saw Sura's face.

'I crave thy courtesy a moment, lord,' said Valeria suddenly in clear, ringing tones. 'Will it please thee to wait without. I am engaged just now.'

Chabrias dropped the curtain and Licinius withdrew, but I had seen a look upon the steward's face and knew it was of malice that he had thus announced Licinius without warning.

I moved nearer to the door to make sure that none listened without. Valeria turned to her sister, who, still seeming startled and confused, was drawing her palla round her shoulders as if about to depart.

'Explain thyself, Vitellia,' she said. 'No one—not even my own sister—shall speak as thou hast spoken to me without substantiating their words. Of what dost thou accuse me?'

'Nay, I accuse thee of naught—of naught,' cried Vitellia: and then she suddenly changed her tone. 'Nevertheless, Lucia'—drawing nearer and holding her palla together with one hand, she held out her other pleadingly and bent towards her sister—'nevertheless, thou knowest—oh, thou must know that there be some grounds for that of which others have accused thee.'

'Explain thyself,' replied Valeria with white lips, standing very slim and tall as Vitellia bent before her.

'Dear, I say naught of this which others say. They misjudge thee. Oh, it must be so. Yet how shall I discredit that which mine own ears have heard?'

Valeria flushed a little and her face changed.

'Speak,' she said more gently. 'What didst thou hear?' And Vitellia made answer.

'When thou wast lying on yonder bed of sickness—not knowing what thou saidst—thou didst cry aloud for one—Marcus—who, it seemed to me, must be, in very truth, this Marcus Licinius Sura.'

For a minute, Valeria seemed at a loss what to say. Then she answered, speaking quickly and with more lightness in her manner:

'It doth please the gods sometimes to send madness on sick people. Haply, it was my case then. But the madness hath passed, Vitellia.'

Vitellia searched her face with tender, anxious eyes.

'Is that so?' she said. 'Oh, Valeria, I ask it of thee as thy sister. Tell me that this man is naught to thee save as thy husband's friend.'

A slight smile curled Valeria's lips. 'Nay, not my husband's friend. Methinks he is scarcely a friend to Paulinus notwithstanding his greeting of him to-day. I know not the purport of it, for Paulinus's moods have long been past my comprehension. But, that thou mayst know that he is naught to me, remain, Vitellia, whilst I receive him. Then thou canst go forth satisfied.'

Valeria struck the silver gong upon the table and instantly Chabrias answered it.

'Bid Licinius Sura enter,' she said. Then, as the curtain dropped again, Vitellia caught her hand and pressed it.

'Oh, thou hast made me happy,' she said. 'Little didst thou think, Lucia, how the thought of this hath rankled in my breast. But thou hast swept it now away. Ah! I am happy,' she murmured again.

'In truth,' replied Valeria, 'it takes not much to make thee so—even though Asiaticus be gone.'

And her tone was sneering. But Vitellia heeded it not. She had sunk into a chair, drawing the folds of her palla about her as though she had been chilled, and now, she sat with her hands loosely clasped in her lap and her eyes fixed upon the door.

Valeria had drawn a little apart and stood cold and calm and very dignified. Suddenly, she made a movement to my side and picking up the necklace she had thrown off, hurriedly fastened it again round her neck.

Just then Licinius Sura[1] entered.

'I crave thy pardon, lord,' said Valeria greeting him with courtesy, 'for having prayed thy grace this moment past. My sister and I had much to talk over and arrange, seeing we both are left, for the time, widowed.'

Licinius glanced at her sharply. Then with his arms folded before him he bowed very low.

'Nay, it is I, most noble Valeria, who should crave thy courtesy in the matter and thy pardon, for my intrusion,' he said. 'Nevertheless, seeing that I had not the chance just now to bid thee farewell and, as urgent matters call me upon a long journey, I liked not to leave Rome without a word from one who hath extended me so much favour.'

And with that, he glanced very sharply at Valeria, seeming to watch whether his words went home.

Valeria drew back a shade and returned his look, in which I seemed to see the pain and yet with it the outward coldness. She bent her head, but said naught.

'To-morrow,' he added, 'I start hence for Judæa.'

Now, it seemed as though this were a sword to pierce Valeria's breast, and I looked to see her tremble and cry out. But she did neither.

Again she bent her head. 'A long journey, in truth. And do thy wife and son go with thee?'

Licinius seemed confounded. He answered not for a moment. Then he returned her speech with a half-smile.

'The Domina is pleased to jest,' he said. 'Such journeys are not fit for women or for babes.'

'And yet my sister here,' rejoined Valeria, 'thinks naught of wandering twice as far in the wake of her devoted lord. Vitellia hath made many a journey with Asiaticus.'

Licinius bowed as courtesy demanded and Vitellia rose. She seemed eager to be gone, for now she was sure and satisfied—and perchance she may have felt the interview an awkward one. Yet she would fain have had another word with Valeria and, as she bade her farewell, she drew her with her to the door.

'Why didst thou not tell me he was wed?' she murmured as Valeria kissed her farewell.

Valeria returned her embrace and then turned towards Licinius, smiling, but her look was hard.

'In truth, I do not know,' she said and added as Vitellia passed without, 'Methinks, because to me it hath never seemed that marriage is such a bar to disloyalty and unfaithfulness as thou dost deem it, Vitellia.'

'Of what speakest thou?' asked Licinius as the curtains closed behind Vitellia.

Valeria sat her down and signed him to a seat. I looked towards my

[1] Concerning Marcus Licinius Sura, see Appendix 4, Bk. III.

mistress not knowing if it were her pleasure to dismiss me, but she made a little motion of her head that I should remain where I stood within the doorway: and then she answered Licinius.

'My sister was expressing surprise that I had not ere this thought to mention to her that thou wast wedded.'

'Hadst thou done so,' said Licinius firmly, crossing one leg over the other, 'thou wouldst have told an untruth.'

And then he threw his formal manner aside and bent forward.

'What means this, Valeria? To-morrow I leave thee. The gods alone know when I shall return. Wherefore art thou cold to me?'

'Cold—wherefore am I cold?' said Valeria, gazing at him and drawing a little back in her chair. 'How can I be aught but cold? What of—Salome?'

'So thou didst hear,' cried Licinius. 'A pest on that loose tongue of Paulinus. His untimely banter is like to raise a whirlwind if it had been of any account. But it was not. Thine own heart might have told thee that, Valeria. Why hast thou judged me thus unheard?'

'Why hast thou remained unheard?' she said. 'Why didst thou not tell me thyself of this Salome, and of thy son?'

Licinius rose and shrugged his shoulders vexedly. He took two turns around the room and then coming back stood before Valeria, one foot thrust out, his arms folded, a frown upon his handsome face, and yet a look of tenderness round his lips.

'Why should I have told thee?' he asked. 'Is it to such as thee, Valeria, that a man would bring his stories of the foolish passions of his youth? Come, then, I should be like Paulinus himself who pollutes the ears of his latest love with vile tales of those that have preceded her. This Salome—shall I tell thee who she is and what she hath been to me?'

Valeria slowly nodded. Her eyes were cast down and she said no word.

'A freedwoman with a tinge of Jewish blood like myself, who took my fancy when I was a young, impetuous boy—scarce more; a woman older than I and with wiles enough to captivate a dozen such fools. I bought and freed her—wherein I was as unwise as many another. The child—well, yes—there is a child—she calls him my son, and so I suppose he is. But he—well, he's a nice little fellow—— Why need we talk of him? The woman alone—Valeria, dost think she has been aught to me since I have known thee?'

'Verily, my vanity would say no,' she answered. 'And even now I'd fain believe thee. Yet how may I? Did I not tell thee in those early days—' she paused and a sweet flush came over her face—'Did I not tell thee that Paulinus himself had spoken of this woman and her boy—and thou, to me, didst deny their very existence?'

'Like enough,' replied Licinius smiling as he kneeled at her feet. 'Thou wouldst not have me remember, Sweet, wouldst thou—every lie I have uttered to cover my folly?'

But Valeria drew back. 'I would have thee truthful,' she said—'at least in thy dealings with me.'

'And so I have been,' he replied, 'since I have desired naught but thee. And if I had ever lied about Salome it was no great matter save to thrust her out of my sight and out of thy thought. But I spoke truly, Valeria, when I said that she was naught to me. 'Tis long since she hath been—and, Sweet, since first thou didst agree, even when thou didst lie

in mine arms here, that thou wouldst, in heart at least, be mine—that night I bade Salome leave my house. She hath not been there since, save on trivial matters dealing with the child. The woman is naught to me. Believe it, oh, Valeria. She was never my wife. Dost think, thou dear, unwise lady, that Licinius would link his fate with such as she ? '

' I think naught—' replied Valeria. ' I know naught—save that all the world is against me : and that thou, too, Marcus, dost not give me much support to lean upon.'

' Nay, now—have I not said that mine arm and my heart wait for thee ? ' he said.

' Ay—ay,' cried Valeria, rising and pushing him from her. ' Thou wouldst silence me with kisses, Licinius, but when hast thou offered to play the part of a noble lover and take me from the protection of Paulinus so that the law may make me justly thine ? '

Licinius rose, too, from his position and a vexed look crossed again his dark, handsome face.

' It is impossible,' he said. ' Valeria, thou knowest not what thou dost demand. Blame not my love, Sweet, for that is altogether thine. But, for the rest of me, Licinius is not wholly his own. Licinius belongs to such as are bound up with him—their interests his—their aspirations and ambitions his—their hopes, their fears his—inextricably mingled. How can Licinius desert those who thus rely upon him ? '

' 'Tis not the first time thou hast talked in this way, Marcus,' she said ; ' and I would fain understand thee. What is this in thy life in which I may not share ? What are thy ambitions and thy projects ? Who are these with whom thou art thus bound ? Doth not Valeria stand closer than they ? '

' Valeria stands closest of all,' he said, drawing her passionately to him till her head rested upon his shoulder. ' Valeria is to Licinius dearest of all. She rests within the very centre of his heart as he would fain rest in hers. Let Valeria be to Licinius that haven from all these worldly projects and plots whereof he may not now speak. But let her not demand to know more of them, for that, alas ! Licinius may not yet tell.'

' I would not ask it of thee,' she answered, clinging to him. ' But am I not prepared to give up all for thee, Marcus ? Thou hast complained '—and she dropped her face and half-hid it on his breast—' that I will not give thee that which thou dost demand—love's dearest, last, best pledge of all. Yet have I told thee that I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest and will become wholly thine if thou wilt but pledge thyself in like manner unto me.'

He stooped over her and his lips seemed lost in the waving tresses of her hair, which, half-loosened, lay against his shoulder.

' Tempt me not, Valeria,' he said. ' If this be the price of thy favour, how shall I accept it—seeing, as I have told thee, that my word is not mine to pledge ? I am bound, Valeria, by ties of honour which I may not even name, to give my first services to those who now demand them. These be evil days wherein to fail in obligations which are farther reaching than the embraces of love. None can tell what ill may chance by the breaking of a bond, by the failure to be in readiness when the time is ripe. Valeria, I may not listen to thee—'tis no idle matter, this. Believe, my dear, how great is my pain when thou dost force me thus from thee. Give thyself to me ungrudgingly and thou shalt not regret it.'

' But thou wouldst leave me, Marcus.'

'To-morrow, duty calls me hence. But to-night is our own,' he answered, bending his head again on hers.

She trembled sorely as she lay in his arms, and then slowly, with a movement of infinite regret, she withdrew herself from him.

'Nay,' she answered, brushing back her hair with hands that shook, and looking piteously in his face. 'Thou hast said it is impossible to take me hence as the law doth permit. And I. . . . But think not that I could accept any lesser seal of thy love. Haply, I am not as other Roman matrons, Marcus. Some there be that do still regard the sanctity of marriage ties—as doth Vitellia, who left me but now, rejoicing in my fealty to Paulinus. But I, though I think not with her and deem unholy all ties that be not bound with love, yet am I not as other Roman women in that I would pledge myself to one who scorns to grant me such action as were seemly on his part.'

'Speak not so, beloved,' he answered. 'We are at cross purposes, Valeria, when our love should make us one. Give thyself to me. Be wholly mine to-night, in pledge of that which thou hast given—for thy heart I know is mine—and of that which thou shalt give, and I'll vow myself to thee eternally. And perchance, when these matters, with which I must now concern myself, be favourably settled so that brighter days shine upon my fortune and upon Rome itself, then may I make thee mine in the eyes of the world.'

Valeria answered not at first. Then she shook her head, and then held out her hand.

'Come back to me, Marcus, when those days have dawned,' she said. 'Take me then, and Valeria will give herself utterly unto thee.'

He caught her to him almost fiercely and kissed her face over and over again, folding his arms round her and snatching her to his breast.

'Thou dost ask too much of a man, Valeria,' he said. 'Thy sweetness would madden a saint. Wherefore should I wait. Why shouldst thou thus keep me on the brink of bliss for long months—we know not how long. We are alone here together to-night. What stands between us? What shall prevent me now from making this farewell of thine, which we may not forego, the sweetest that ever yet has been?'

'Why not,' she said. 'What is it that stands between us? Wouldst thou know, Marcus?' and she withdrew herself and glanced sadly around the chamber. 'It is this. Until thou takest me hence, I am Paulinus's wife—not thine. And, while I do here remain, his last words as he left these rooms spring in mine ears. "They shall be sacred to thine honour and to my name."'

Licinius listened to her, eagerly at first, and then as she ended with that strange, fixed look upon her face, he turned from her angrily.

'Choose thou, then,' he said. 'Paulinus and thine honour, or thy love and me.'

'I have chosen,' she answered mournfully. 'Thou canst say naught to move Valeria. Alack! I dare not even desire that thou couldst. My love thou hast, as thou knowest, Marcus: and whether thou comest again or comest not ever, Valeria will be true to thee. Paulinus is my lawful spouse—in name, and in name only. In heart and mind I am wholly thine. But if thou wouldst ratify that pledge by the ordinary means of marriage, it must rest with thee to do so as beseemeth one of thy *gens* to one of mine.'

She stood back, her hands held out, but, as he took no heed of them she

dropped them to her side. Licinius angrily slipped his toga over one shoulder and strode towards the door and there he paused and turned.

'Prate not of thy *gens*,' he cried. ''Tis the pride of thy *gens* that stands between us—not this nonsense of Paulinus's honour. I had been wiser not to seek warm blood in such as thee. Thou art graven in stone, Valeria, whilst I have poured out all that man might give before thy feet. Remain thus cold and proud if thou wilt. Thou'lt have time enough to think whether thou wouldst not have done better to warm thyself at my love. I go now: and, as I said, the gods alone know when I may return. If ever thou shouldst cast a thought my way, let it not I pray thee be thus coldly lest I feel the ice-shaft even on the sun-baked plains of Judæa. I have my duty to do there, and much to fulfil before Rome shall see me again. Do thou as fate willeth. Fulfil thine.'

There was a sneer in his voice as he turned away. Valeria stared after him with wide-open eyes, seeming not to believe that he was going. She held out her arms and cried softly, scarce above her breath:

'Marcus—oh Marcus, leave me not thus.'

He paused upon the threshold and turned and took three steps back to her side.

'Nay,' said he, 'if I leave thee at all to-night, I needs must leave thee thus. I am of flesh and blood, Valeria, though thou art of stone. Nay, nay, touch me not. Stand back. Thou hast bid me go and I had best begone.'

Again he swung his toga round him and strode to the door. This time he disappeared.

For a minute or two, Valeria stood where he had left her, while I scarce dared breathe. Methought she had not known that I was there. Presently, she lifted one hand and brushed it across her face, pushing back her loosened hair. Then with slow steps she turned and went towards her bedchamber.

I dared not follow her. I waited till the minutes grew too long and the silence was more than I could bear. Then again, I took my courage in my hands and went after her.

A light was in the bedchamber and, as I approached, I saw that she had lit a swinging lamp above the alcove. The voilet silk curtains with their silver fringe were drawn apart and Valeria stood at the side within them, one hand holding back a curtain. But I thought not of her, for I saw, above the low altar beyond, a marble image of a loveliness surpassing any such that I had known. 'Twas the head of some female divinity, her head of stately poise yet with an appearance of a very gracious simplicity. The hair was parted at the middle height of the forehead, and waved on either side down over the ears. The lips were as though shaped to a smile, grave but mother-sweet, and the whole face was of an exceeding tenderness and seemed to bend upon Valeria a look of love in most wondrous human-wise.

And as I watched, I saw Valeria cast herself in abasement before the image,[1] all her loosened hair about her shoulders and her green and silver palla spreading behind her.

'Mother,' she cried. 'Mother Divine! Thou, who by the anguish of thine own tender heart, dost know the pangs which assail the souls of women, look down upon this suffering soul of mine. Thou, who didst search all the world for thy young daughter snatched from thee by the lawless passion of him who stole her into slavery—Thou, who hast learned how bitter can be the bondage where love is not, yet who, in thy supreme wisdom, dost

[1] Statue of Demeter. See Appendix 5, Bk. III.

comprehend the more bitter thraldom of love itself. Oh hear! and in pity soothe this heart which bleedeth at thy feet. Demeter, hear and comfort me.'

Then, being sore distressed at the sight of my lady in such case, and yet there being naught I could do, for I dared not show myself, I turned me away without sound and waited in the antechamber till she should summon me.

This she did after a long time—or so it seemed—and I found her in the bedchamber, she, herself, having begun the unrobing.

The curtains before the alcove were drawn and the lamp above them extinguished and my lady spoke calmly, giving me command that none others of her women should attend her that night, and bidding me fetch her food and drink. Of this, when I had brought a tray, fair-set, she partook sparingly but in sufficient quantity to sustain her strength, and when the unrobing was ended and she lay in bed, her face turned to the wall, a great sigh escaped her.

And then I bent me down and kissed her feet as they lay beneath the coverlet and Valeria put forth her hand.

'Thou art a good child, Nyria,' she said. 'Thou at least art faithful.'

And I said naught, for my heart was full, but went to mine own little chamber."

. . . . . .

NYRIA: "Now, for a time after the departure of Paulinus and likewise of Licinius Sura, all was quiet at the villa and I suffered naught save from the wrath of the slaves against me, in that Valeria would admit few but myself to her close attendance, which caused great jealousy seeing that I was regarded as an interloper. But for this I cared little, so only that I might serve my mistress.

In those days, Valeria scarce left her apartment and no news came to me from without but for what Crispus sometimes brought to Aeola.

Oft my mind dwelt upon those with whom I had been in the service of Julia and I did promise myself to visit Aemilia in the house of Plinius at such time as I could be spared. But that time came not. Concerning Stephanus, I was ill at ease, for I could not understand his harshness and it seemed that he had forsaken me. Yet my chiefest thought beyond Valeria was of the lord Clement and his promise that he would see me again, and I wondered that the Domina Domitilla seemed also to have forgotten me and that, seeing she must have heard of the sale of Julia's slaves, she had made no sign to buy me.

For, I knew not then that there had been talk between her and her husband, Flavius Clemens, on the matter and that they had decided it were not wise to rouse, mayhap, the anger of Domitian, since all that had belonged to Julia was now in the possession of Cæsar though, by right, it should have come into that of Sabinus's brother.

Yet methought that sometime I should see Domitilla at the house of Valeria, for I had watched them in converse together in Julia's house and in the houses of others and I knew that Domitilla doth favour my domina. . . . Of Valeria, at first, I was not sure. . . . 'Tis curious to note toward whom my domina hath favour and whom she doth not favour. Thou must not think she is untrue. But she hath a way. . . . She is very courteous, very gracious, as beseemeth her state; but there is a little smile behind—somewhat of her self held back all the while. It doth amuse me sometimes

for I seem to know what she is thinking and mayhap afterward she doth tell me of it. But I knew that Domitilla did touch something at the bottom of her that is real. . . . Yet, though my domina hath a certain interest in the Christians—she hath read the Letters of Peter and Paul, treating all such things as new and like to be amusing—she would but smile if Domitilla said aught to her of that faith which is all to Domitilla. . . .

Now, Domitilla and Clemens like best to visit my domina when she is alone. They are not clever—either of them. They care not for Greek learning or philosophy. . . .

But, thou knowest, I am the last to speak of such matters. . . . I know naught of learning. . . . I can but tell thee what I think and I would not have thee regard my impressions as being quite true unless thou wert sure thyself. . . . I cannot bear to say things about persons which may not be really true. It is a matter I am particular about. Now, most of the slaves are not so, and in answering questions they often make people out as not quite what they really are.

Thou knowest, my heart did yearn to comfort my domina, who—well I knew, though she spake not his name nor did I dare to utter it—grieved most sore for the loss of Licinius Sura. Silent she would sit brooding heavily, refusing to see her friends and having no taste for her former occupations nor even for the studies in which she had been wont to interest herself. She was ever dreaming, and when, as did sometimes hap, I saw her writing I knew it was to relieve her bursting heart by thus communing in thought with Licinius. Alas! a useless commune, to ease herself alone. For, of a truth, she knew not how to send the letters or where in Judæa they might have found him or might perchance have fallen into other hands than his.

Once or twice did the secretary present himself for orders—a middle-aged man, a Greek, by name Phileros. But she would shake her head and once I heard her say that he might finish the tragedy himself if he were so minded. And that she who was living tragedy had not time nor thought to write it. 'Twas her belief, she added, that could anyone among the great characters in those Greek plays which she loved, step down from the page in human guise and be bidden to write his story, verily he would shrink from so doing if he were indeed true flesh and blood. For that only one made of parchment and with no real blood in his veins would consent to make himself a show for the world.

And the secretary bowed and answered it should be as she might please: and he went away muttering to himself and with a sad look upon his face.

Yet I mind me that one day, to my surprise, the poet Martial obtained admittance. At first, she had bade him nay. But Chabrias bore her a scroll which Martial had bidden him place in her hand and which was sealed with Paulinus's signet.

I saw her face change as she read it and laid the scroll down beside her. With her brows drawn together, she seemed to be considering the matter, then bade Chabrias give the poet entrance.

Martial came forward and made a bow, exceeding courteous yet, meseemed, savouring of servility.

'I will not crave thy pardon for my intrusion, Most Noble Valeria,' he said, 'since I have Paulinus's permit to visit thee. Thine illustrious husband, whom it hath been my privilege to call friend and who doth honour me by recalling that I am in somewhat distant connection his cousin,[1] upon that

[1] The poet's name was Marcus Valerius Martialis.

last day when he took of thee so tender a farewell, did commend thee to my care—inasmuch as one so lowly placed may venture to offer a measure of friendly service to the Most Noble Valeria.'

My lady signed him coldly to a seat.

'I also am indeed honoured,' she said, 'to have been at once the subject of interest to two such minds as those of my noble spouse and the poet Martial. Since thou art here, sir, I pray thee wile away somewhat of these long hours whereof my husband speaks, by amusing me as he says thou wilt.'

''Tis that for which I have come, lady,' replied Martial, whose wit, meseemed, was truly the ready wit of one not over-scrupulous in his means. 'I have here one or two little poems which perhaps thou wilt allow me to recite to thee later on. Now amongst thy household I have discovered a goodly youth with a wondrous gift of music who, like myself, hath no desire but to serve thee. It hath occurred to me that it would be a pleasing occupation for the youth Gregorio if he should sing to some tunes of his own these lines which I have composed in thine honour.'

Valeria smiled a little sneeringly but spoke courteous-wise as was her wont.

'Thou art very good,' she said. 'The boy Gregorio hath, as thou sayest, a fine gift of music. If thou wilt, Martial, he shall sing me some of thy songs.'

Whereat, Gregorio was summoned and bidden to string his lyre and to pick among such melodies as he had conceived within his brain any that might fit the songs of Martial.

And, as I watched the two and perceived the ill-concealed pride and satisfaction of Gregorio, it seemed to me that of a certainty the boy had well practised with Martial upon those self-same songs and now found small difficulty in fitting them to their several tunes.

Thou knowest that I had no liking for Gregorio nor he for me. He was jealous of Valeria's favour towards me and oft had it entered my mind that the boy might work mischief were he ever to guess the truth concerning my domina and Licinius Sura."

CHAPTER V

The Intellectuals in Rome

Here, the Commentator upon super-physical levels discourses chiefly upon the political and social situation in Rome A.D. 93–94, *and upon the attitude towards them of Nyria and of other persons in Nyria's story.*

Recorder: Next day, when the Instrument passed into the Roman personality and had begun to speak, I noticed with her first words a change in her voice and style—now seeming modern in comparison with Nyria's quaint old-world diction—which marked the intervention of the Commentator who, from a level above the physical, had spoken to me before through the lips of the Instrument.

The substitution was not altogether startling to me. For, in this Nyria-development, I had become aware of supervision, selection, guidance emanating from a Body of Control, of the nature of which—though I could not doubt the fact—I had then but a glimmering comprehension. Moreover, I recognised the balanced, impersonal style of the Commentator who, at an earlier stage, had in the same manner, given me advice as to the treatment of the Instrument.

Commentator (speaking through the lips of the Instrument): "I should like to sweep quickly over the general aspects of that summer and the winter following it, and to make a few remarks which may throw a clearer light upon the situation, inasmuch as it concerns Nyria's story of her life. For, naturally, the slave-girl's outlook was limited by her lack of education and by the restrictions placed upon her class.

Now, Nyria's estimate of Gregorio's character—as far as it goes—is perfectly correct. The lad's disposition was crooked like his undersized body, of which the limbs were disproportioned and one shoulder higher than the other, while the head was over-large for the rest of his warped frame.

As regards looks, however, his head was the best part of him. It was covered with thick dark curls, made glossy by unguents, and his face, with its flashing dark eyes and well-cast features, would have had a sort of beauty but for its frequent scowl and for something, at once furtive and arrogant, in its expression. He was inordinately vain of what he considered his attractive appearance, but his only real charm lay in his music. This had a certain curious rhythmic quality, and Valeria, when in her unquiet moods, liked Gregorio to bring his lyre and soothe her vexed soul with its harmonies. . . .

The trouble was that he had conceived a morbid passion for his mistress and that he nursed jealous enmity against anyone to whom she shewed regard. He hated the girl Nyria, and this Nyria felt though she did not realise the nature and full extent of his animosity.

And, as you know, love affairs between highly-placed ladies and their

inferiors—gladiators and even low-class slaves if they were handsome enough—were no uncommon occurrences in Rome, and it was not such an out-of-the-way thing that a Greek slave-musician should aspire to his mistress's favour, though, of course, to Valeria, such an idea in connection with herself was unthinkable.

Just at this time, Gregorio was in a particularly morose and malevolent mood. . . . For his music of heretofore had lost its spell upon Valeria and the slave-boy was deeply hurt at being called so seldom to perform before her. Moreover, his habit of prying and eavesdropping had led him to suspect more than vaguely the cause of her preoccupation. Not long ago, he had treated his mistress to an exhibition of ill-temper and she, very angry, had bidden him not show his sulky face again in her ante-room unless he should be summoned thither.

Then, while the boy was at a loose end, Martial had got hold of him, had encouraged him to air his grievances and to gossip about the Valerian household, and, in short, was using him for his—Martial's—own purposes.

These were rather complicated, as you will see.

You understand that Martial, for all his literary talent and reputation as a writer, was in reality a bit of an adventurer without much fortune, a sycophant and a hanger-on to the skirts of the great. In fact, he had made his way into Roman high society by his wit rather than by his worth. Nyria has given you a fairly good picture of the man as she studied him from behind Julia's chair. But, in the process of pushing himself through patrician doorways,[1] he had sometimes met with rebuffs, intentional or otherwise, and he, too, was the kind of man who stores up his grudges and repays them with interest when opportunity offers.

Such an opportunity he now saw, and one also of serving his own advantage.

He bore a grudge against Valeria for her ordinarily cold treatment of him and he had more than one against Paulinus to whom, by nature, Martial was not exactly congenial and who in his bluff outspokenness had wounded the poet's vanity, no doubt without being aware of so doing. Paulinus had conciliated Martial by welcoming him with more than his usual cordiality at the entertainment in the Valerian villa to speed the departing generals, and on that occasion had brought him specially before Valeria's notice. At the time, she had rather wondered why Paulinus, for all his outward bonhomie, had been grim of humour that day.

Martial was gifted with much shrewd worldliness and was anxious to appear on intimate terms with persons of so much importance. Likewise, he wished to turn Paulinus's friendship to account for the replenishment of his own not too well-filled money chest. He had ingratiated himself with Paulinus by representing that were he—Martial—a frequent visitor at the Valerian house he would be able to keep Paulinus informed as to Valeria's health and interests during her husband's absence. Martial was clever enough to assume that the two were in affectionate accord and that his own friendly offices would be of benefit to both during their separation.

Thus he had obtained Paulinus's note of recommendation which was, actually, a command—'*Thou hast received one man for thy pleasure. Now receive another for mine.*'

Valeria did not understand Paulinus's attitude and assuming, merely, that he wished to assert his control, felt it prudent not to oppose his wishes. And

[1] The character of Martial. See Appendix 6, Bk. III.

she was too indifferent to Martial, personally, for her to suppose that there could be a malign motive underlying his almost cringing adulation. . . .

Thus Martial was received, not only this time but many times afterwards.

It did not occur to Valeria that there was collusion between Martial and Gregorio. She was not observant. Somewhat against her will, she was interested in the witty verses and by the poet's visits. Being a woman, she could not help being flattered by his desire to please her and even responded to friendly overtures which he was extremely careful should not go beyond the verge of that which was fitting from one whom Paulinus had, in a measure, made his deputy.

A sense of convention caused Valeria, on the occasions of Martial's visits, to command the presence of some of her women. Therefore, when Chabrias announced his coming, she would bid Nyria summon Corellia and others, so that Martial always found her surrounded by a suitable train—a restraint which for the present did not irk him, and he trusted to his ingenuity for getting rid of the attendants when he should so desire.

Here, I may remark that Paulinus's letters during his absence, which lasted nearly two years, were a continual reminder to Valeria of what she owed to her position as his wife.

Despatches by Government-runners arrived periodically in Rome, with reports of military operations to be laid before the Senate, even though Cæsar himself were at the seat of war; and private correspondence of the generals and various high officers was also carried in the official post-bag.

Paulinus and Asiaticus made due use of these opportunities. Asiaticus did not write as often as he might to Vitellia, who was waiting in Rome for permission to go nearer her husband, but Paulinus regularly sent scrolls to his wife, which in view of their falling by chance into other hands, he was careful to couch in terms[1]—perhaps slightly formal—of marital affection.

But Paulinus had a trick with his letters when he wished to impart some secret information, and to this he now resorted. You understand that every scroll would be sealed with a very large signet upon a still larger circular piece of wax—the sign manual of the writer. Now it only needed a little dexterous manipulation to insert a small bit of parchment—or of the inside of bark—beneath the seal so that the wax covered it, and, when that was picked off, the message would be found. To indicate its presence he used the further device of catching in the wax, as if by accident, and with a short end sticking out, a hair from his own head.

In the early days of their marriage, knowing that suspicion was rife in Rome and thinking he might at some future time wish to inform his wife of news not to be made public, Paulinus had shewn Valeria this contrivance of his. Therefore, now, when she saw the hair she would break up the seal carefully and would discover the morsel of parchment on which some words, usually to the following effect, were inscribed:

'I trust thou art comporting thyself honourably. I have the more reason to believe this possible since my scouts inform me that Licinius is yet in Judæa.'

This was insulting and, naturally, infuriated Valeria. But she could not imagine who were the spies watching and reporting upon her movements. At this time, however, she did not care, because then she had nothing to

[1] As the ancients had no establishment corresponding to our post-office, they employed special messengers called "tabellarii" for the conveyance of their letters. Note Ovid's *Amores*, Bk. II, El. 18.

conceal. Later on, her reckless passion made her forget the warning—of which Nyria, of course, knew nothing.

In return, Valeria wrote to Paulinus with sufficient regularity, the runners taking back her letters, which like his own were expressed in polite but formal conjugal fashion. She evaded allusion to Licinius and to purely personal matters, but told him of her ordinary doings, and in particular of the literary receptions she was holding, submitting to him a list of the persons who attended them. He was pleased to reply that he favoured her plan, since he knew there was safety in numbers.

The interest of these literary receptions—they took place once a fortnight and went on for two winters—tided Valeria over the first winter of her desolation. Tacitus delivered the inaugural address, Sulpicia recited her latest poem : discussions on art and literature made part of the proceedings and orations by noted philosophers were a principal feature."

. . . . . .

COMMENTATOR : "There was in Roman society at this time a section of intellectuals—a kind of club, the members of which met in each other's houses for the discussion of philosophy, art and letters. Thus, when Valeria became enrolled as one of them, the rest felt it a distinct advantage to have the run of so fine a villa as that one upon the Coelian hill. Tacitus was of course a member, but the discussions seldom took place at his house. For one reason, because it was not large, and, for another, his wife had no taste for literary entertainments.

Tacitus was a great help to Valeria in the organisation of her literary receptions. Valeria had always had an attraction for Tacitus, but he was a silent, reserved man who poured forth his powers of expression chiefly in his writings. Now, however, when Valeria spoke of her admiration of his works he was encouraged to talk to her about them. Tacitus was great on oratory,[1] and in reference to the speakers at her parties, he would discourse at some length on that subject, pointing out to her that quite as important a part as the matter of the lecture was the manner of its delivery. He found in her a sympathetic listener, and that he had always badly wanted. He was fond of his wife, who had been quite a young girl when he married her but who was dull and commonplace compared with Valeria.

Under his influence, Valeria turned again to her essays in literary composition. Whether or no she ever finished her tragedy, the secretary was once more given occupation. At one of her assemblies, she herself read a paper in the preparation of which Tacitus had advised her.

All this summer, Tacitus was in trouble over the illness and death of his father-in-law. Agricola had been recalled from Britain because of the jealous hatred of Domitian who could not endure that any general should be popular with the Army except himself. And Agricola was idolised by the soldiery and had been extremely successful not only in his conquest of Britain but in his management of the barbarians who, under him, were rapidly becoming amenable to Roman discipline. . . . Agricola was dismayed at the check to his hopes and to his career. It was the case of a strong, clever, capable man—he was not over fifty when he died—literally broken by bitterness and disappointment at having his plans frustrated, his work taken from him, and at receiving neither recognition nor reward for his immense services. He was heart-broken at having been given no command

[1] The character and writings of Tacitus. See Appendix 7, Bk. III.

in the Sarmatian expedition, and now that reinforcements were called for, he might confidently have expected that he would be placed at the head of the second army to be sent forth.

But Domitian was determined that Agricola should reap no more laurels abroad. Those, he intended, should adorn his own brow. Agricola must sink into obscurity at home, and the only way to manage that—for the Legions would not be satisfied with any paltry excuse—was to make it appear that after his prolonged and arduous service in the conquest of Britain, the General was not in physical condition to undertake a new and perhaps equally trying campaign. And, indeed, the obvious effect upon Agricola, not only of his former strenuous labours but of his recent chagrin, reacting upon an enfeebled body, gave sufficient warrant for the assumption of his incapacity.

Thereupon, Domitian affected deep concern over the ill-health of his 'most valued general,' and insisted that his own physician, Celsus, should attend him.

But that was not enough. Perhaps Celsus did not see the thing quite from Cæsar's point of view. Therefore Phyllis, the old nurse of Domitian and of Julia, must be set to work on a poisoned cup such as—it was said—had been prepared for the Empress Domitia and had failed of its mark. . . . Well, Julia was dead and—except for the Paris intrigue and the scandal involved—there seemed no particular reason to get rid of Domitia.

Domitian was too clever to kill Agricola right off. It would have been unwise to condemn him upon the customary trumped up allegation of treason against the State. Besides, the Prætorians—let alone the outside legions—would not stand an order to Agricola to open his veins. In this case, the poison must act slowly and thus be administered in frequent small doses, and it required some manœuvring on the part of Cæsar to introduce Phyllis into Agricola's household.

Domitian's way was to caress just before he slew. Out of extreme solicitude for the beloved General, he offered to lend his own trusted nurse. But Agricola's relatives made excuse to refuse the proffered honour. Agricola's daughter, the wife of Tacitus, could not bear, they said, the thought of anyone but herself nursing her father. They had arranged to take him for change into the high air of the Alban hills which it was expected would aid his recovery.

Now, Domitian had a palace at Albanum and Phyllis a cottage on the border of the Nemi wood, where Tacitus had hired a villa for his father-in-law, so the excuse was not altogether a fortunate one. What more natural than that Phyllis should make friends with some of Agricola's retinue—she—or Domitian—may have bribed his slaves. Anyway, Agricola gradually grew worse under Phyllis's surreptitious and deadly ministrations.[1]

It was at the end of this summer that Tacitus, being with his father-in-law at Albanum, succeeded in persuading Valeria to leave Rome, which hitherto she had been reluctant to do; and she spent a week or two in a villa she hired at Nemi. Though Tacitus had come ostensibly to join his family, he really spent a good deal of that time in the society of Valeria. They used to take long walks by the lake and talk of books and of Greek art. Tacitus was very much imbued with the Greek spirit . . . had read all the Greek writers whose works were procurable and now taught Valeria much that she had not known before. In fact, he helped her more than anyone else to tide

[1] Death of Agricola. See Appendix 8, Bk. III.

over that period of almost despairing loneliness after Licinius Sura's desertion.

During that year, there was a good deal of underground intrigue going on in Rome and of simmering revolt abroad, all of which greatly perturbed Cæsar and was partly the reason of his delay in, at least, making a feint of joining the forces in Germany. As a matter of fact, he never really got to the seat of war and became an object of covert derision in Rome by his mock triumph and bluff of having in person given battle to the enemy.[1]

All this is related in history; and history duly records the suspicion of poison as causing the death of Agricola, which took place that August or September.

But history does not give all particulars of the Paris-Domitia drama of passion and revenge with which Domitian and Phyllis were also concerning themselves. How the poison cup was again employed, this time not upon the rightful offender but upon a cleverly substituted pupil of Paris so closely resembling his master that in the dim cellar of a tenement house in the Suburra where they had incarcerated him, even Phyllis was deceived, and did not recognise her victim until she was laying out the dead body for burial.[2]

Domitian was a canny beast. He had succeeded in getting rid of Agricola, and he knew that suspicion was afloat and wanted to take the taste of it out of the minds of his people. He wished it to be believed that he considered only the good of the State. Consequently, he caused an edict to be read out publicly to this effect—that while deep sorrow has fallen upon himself and upon the nation in the loss of their beloved General, he, Cæsar, has his own private sorrow—the necessity to divorce the Empress. He does not wish, he says, at such a time, and out of regard for her whom he has always held dear, to enter into full explanations concerning the cause of his action. . . . But everyone supposes the cause to be Domitia's scandalous relations with Paris.

It is not, however, Domitian's intention to connect Paris publicly with his scheme. He lays his plans that Paris shall be done away with while he himself is out of Rome; and, for this purpose, he arranges with Phyllis, his arch-poisoner, to carry out the business in which, as has been seen, Paris escaped.

But all this is a story by itself, and Nyria was only on the fringe of the tragedy which, as far as Domitia's love affair went, ended with the murder of Paris in a prearranged street skirmish. That happened later, and Domitian, under pretext of yielding to the wishes of his people, recalled Domitia from Gabii and reinstated her as Empress.

It was about midwinter—I think early in January—that Domitian returned. Some said he was tired of the expedition: others that he had heard reports of disaffection in Judæa—which last was perfectly true.

Now, Valeria's social-literary experiment came to his ears and, his curiosity being aroused, he made known, in roundabout fashion, his desire to attend the lectures. This was communicated to Valeria who, with sublime audacity, ignored the suggestion. Thereby, she might have endangered her own safety,

[1] For Domitian's mock triumph in celebration of a pretended victory over the Germans see Appendix 9, Bk. III.

[2] For an account of this transaction and for the death of Paris the dancer see Appendix 10, Bk. III.

but she was fortified by the knowledge that Paulinus would not have wished her to receive Cæsar thus intimately.

Fortunately, Domitian's attention became attracted elsewhere and the matter dropped. But evilly-disposed persons whispered about it, though Martial was the only one who had the temerity to tell Valeria that none but she would have dared to flout such an intimation from Cæsar. This was the kind of speech she found it difficult to parry and cared not to resent, for she knew the affair would be reported to Paulinus and found it easier to tolerate Martial's familiarity than to incur her husband's displeasure.

. . . . . .

You will see that in my sketch of public and private affairs in Rome from the spring of 93 to about the late summer of 94 I have considerably overpassed the point at which Nyria left you, and I will now withdraw and allow her to continue her own story in her own fashion."

CHAPTER VI

The Vision Glorious

Nyria relates how she received instruction at the house of Bishop Clement in preparation for her baptism and is taken to the Chapel of the Christians in the disused quarries beneath the Aventine. Then, the Commentator, speaking by the mouth of the Instrument, tells of the ceremony of her baptism and of the glorified Vision Euphena shewed Stephanus—the eternal Soul of Nyria.

Nyria (taking up her narrative): "I would tell thee of how, one evening not long after the visit of Martial, when I was taking the air by the small gate in the wall of Valeria's garden, I saw, of a sudden, the gate open a space and the head and shoulders of a boy-slave appear from behind it. Methought, but felt not sure, that I had seen the boy's face before, and supposing he was here on some errand, I went nearer to have speech with him.

Seeing me, he came within, taking care to close the door carefully behind him. Then, bending himself, he made on the ground at my feet, with the point of a stick he carried, a certain sign the which at that time, meant to me naught. This I told him. 'What wouldst thou?' I said. And looking more closely at the boy, I asked, 'Art thou not he who opened the door to me when I went with the Domina Domitilla and Stephanus to a house by the river to see the lord Clement?'

He nodded, but first he turned his eyes over his shoulder that he might be sure none listened.

'I am Lucius,' he said. 'I bear thee a message from the Domina Domitilla and the lord Clement. The Bishop willeth that thou shalt come to the same house this evening about an hour after sunset, when he would talk with thee.'

'I will come,' I answered, 'if my lady will permit me.'

'Thou wilt not tell thy lady upon what errand thou art bidden, nor whither thou goest,' he said. 'That is not allowed to such as serve the Lord. We may not speak to others of our purpose, for 'tis not safe to utter it.'

I liked not that he should doubt Valeria and answered him:

'Thou dost not know my lady. She would never enquire of me. But should she ask, there is nothing with which I would not trust her.'

'Nay,' said the boy and came close and laid earnestly his hand upon my arm—brown it looked, I mind me, upon my white robe. 'Nay. Thou must not do this—dost hear? Thou must not. There are many lives at stake. It is not wise in Rome even to whisper of that which doth concern the Christians. Be silent upon the matter.'

'Is that thy lord's message?' I asked him.

He shook his head. 'The Bishop did not himself bid me tell thee, seeing that he trusteth thee. Nevertheless, I know what would be his will.'

'His trust shall not fail him,' I answered. 'Go in peace and tell thy lord that Nyria will be there, at the hour he doth appoint, to await his pleasure.'

Lucius nodded his head again and left me and I went within to seek my mistress.

I had left Valeria sleeping, but now she was awake and lay upon her couch reading from a scroll she held. She looked up when she heard me and put out her hand. Thou knowest that none other of the slaves received from her such mark of favour and, methinks, 'twas for that her head-women were ill-pleased at me. Nevertheless, so changeful were my lady's moods—for oft she seemed cold to me and aloof in her ways—that I was ever timorous in my approach. Therefore I made my obeisance humbly. 'Craving thy permission, Domina,' I said, 'there hath been one here to bid me go into the city this evening to see a friend if it be thy pleasure to spare me.'

My mistress looked at me for a minute vexedly and said: 'Art thou too going to be a gad-about, Nyria? I thought thou wast not like the rest of these slaves of mine who desire continually to be about their own business and serve only because they must.'

Now, her words falling quick and sharp did cut me to the heart. But it was but for a moment, since I was glad to think that she had need of me, and I kneeled by her couch saying, 'Nay, Domina: if it be thy will that Nyria goeth not, then do I stay at thy pleasure. Yet, though I have not long been with thee it hath been my first desire to serve thee, and that have I sought to do fully and faithfully.'

'Ay, it is true thou art better than the others,' she answered more gently. 'Go then, if thou wilt. But see thou be not over-long else shall I suffer at the hands of Aeola for my unrobing.'

I know not why my lady cared not for Corellia who was head-woman and keeper of the robes and draperies. But it had seemed of late that she somewhat favoured Aeola who had not long been promoted to the dressing-rooms. Wherefore did I venture to plead for Aeola. 'May it please thee, Domina, Aeola desireth greatly to learn. If the Domina would permit that she assist more when Nyria is serving——'

But Valeria cut me short. 'Nay: nay. I like not to be a dummy for the tuition of babes,' she said in pettish humour as of one sick and sore of heart. 'Thou mayst have a wax model on which Aeola shall practise her clumsy fingers: but I would rather that none touched me but thine, Nyria.'

I said no more. Nevertheless was I glad, when the time came for me to leave her, that 'twas Aeola Valeria summoned to be in call in the antechamber. So I wrapped me in the grey cloak my domina had given me on the night when I took her letter to Licinius Sura and sped me down the hill by the short cut that I knew.

Dusk had fallen and the torches were not yet lighted. The villa of Licinius looked strangely empty and dark and shadowy beneath the budding trees surrounding it. There was no sign of life about the place and, in my fancy, I likened it to the desolate heart of Valeria. And when I passed the steps at the side of Julia's house I could not help remembering how oft had Stephanus met and left me there, and sore did I miss to-night the comfort of his protection which seemed now altogether denied me. I looked in longing down the street wherein he hath his shop, as I passed the end of it on my way toward the Forum, and I wondered if Stephanus were there and how he bore himself.

Then, crossing the Forum at its lower end, I saw a crowd gathered round a company of street mimes—good performers they seemed to be, for the crowd did greatly applaud them—and, on its outskirts, I noticed a litter borne upon the shoulders of four stalwart bearers handsomely garbed in liveries of dull red with narrow bands of white upon them. In the litter was a lady who caused it to stop the while she watched the show, and I questioned in myself what manner of person she might be, for it is not customary that a Roman lady should comport herself in such fashion. Then, drawing nearer I beheld, through the opening of the curtain, a handsome head, with eyes that peered out upon the people, right gaily decked in scarlet cap and long gossamer veil held by certain gilded ornaments hanging down upon the forehead, and lo! I beheld that it was Thanna. Before I had recovered from my astonishment she had seen me and called my name, and I ran to the side of the litter, then for a moment stayed myself for something told me 'twas scarce seemly for one who served the person of the Most Noble Valeria to be seen in conversation with a woman in Thanna's guise.

But Thanna beamed on me and cried: 'Verily, I am overjoyed to see thee again, Nyria,' and she bade the bearers set her litter down that I might enter it and talk in comfort with her.

But this I would not do. 'I am glad to see thee, Thanna,' I said. 'But I may not stay, seeing that I am sent upon an errand yet further on and I may not delay.'

Thanna pouted crossly. 'Thou wert ever like that, Nyria,' said she. 'Why dost thou concern thyself so much over other persons' business? Lo! I too am sent for certain purposes, yet do I retain to myself the privilege of enjoying whatsoever may seem to me attractive on the road. Be advised. Do thou likewise, else thou wilt find life dull indeed.'

I scarce understood her, so amazed was I at what she told me. 'Thou art sent—by thy lord,' I cried—'thou! in a litter like that and with these bearers who have the air of being thine own!'

'Ay, verily, they are mine,' Thanna answered. 'And the litter is mine. Said I not that I would do well for myself? Ay—and I have done well for myself, Nyria. There be none to scold Thanna now—none to order her about.'

'But thy master?' I asked still in amaze. 'Doth not he command thee?'

'Oh, ay. . . . He doth command me upon occasions—or thinketh he doth. But it is more often that I command him.'

I stared at her, agape, for I believed her not. 'Of what use to tell me that, Thanna?' I said. 'Do I not know better? Thou wert ever a wheedler with thy tales to others. But I understood thee well. Thou canst not deceive me.'

'Verily I think thou dost not know me at all, Nyria, if thou deemest I am not mine own mistress. 'Tis true indeed. And if, at times, my lord doth demand from me certain offices, they are such as a lady-wife might render, though I would remark there are few lady-wives in Rome who have the wits of Thanna. But such things as the lord Regulus doth require of me, come ever into my humour seeing that they are of more interest than the tiring of dull women and the draping of waxen images in dressing-rooms.'

I knew not how to answer her. 'At least, thou art looking well, Thanna,'

I said. 'I am glad to see that thou hast fallen on such easy footing though it doth puzzle me how thou hast accomplished it. But I may not delay and therefore must bid thee farewell.'

'Suppose thou dost come and see me, Nyria,' she said. 'I would welcome thee and thou shouldst be well served in my household.'

Again I scarce could answer, for I knew that my domina would not like me to visit Thanna. Moreover, I had gathered that Valeria held no good opinion of the lord Regulus. 'Wilt thou not come to see me?' I said. 'I have a nice room of my own where I could receive thee, Thanna.'

'And how should I be required to enter? Thanna goes by no slaves' gates,' she said.

'Then I know not,' I answered. 'Methinks that slaves' gates are meant for such as me and thee, Thanna.'

'Thou canst speak for thyself,' said Thanna. 'If thou art so content not to better thy state, do not expect me to be of like mind. Haply, some day we shall contrive to meet.'

And, with that, she drew her veil around her and signed to the bearers to lift her on their shoulders.

I hastened on, fearing lest I cause the lord Clement to wait, and I thought not again of Thanna so great was my desire to learn more of the Christian god. Daily had I said my little prayer as the Bishop bade me and I had listened for the Voice to speak in my heart and give me guidance. Yet it seemed to me that the Voice spake less oft now that I was happy with Valeria. Thus, sometimes a pressing doubt assailed me and I longed to be led as Clement had said Christ led the little lambs of His flock.

Now, I knew not well this part of the Suburra and could not at first find that house whither Stephanus had taken me. Alack! methought, there was never need to search where I should put my feet when Stephanus was by to show me.

At last I found the door, whereon I knocked and Lucius opened it and admitted me into the presence of Clement, who received me in the same room as before and did so very kindly.

The lady Domitilla was sitting with him and spoke to me in friendly fashion of my change of condition. But she said not much on that score, seeing that other matters pressed. 'I will see thee again, Nyria,' said she as she departed.

Then I sat me on a stool at the feet of Clement and he instructed me in the service of the god Christ to whom I would fain pledge myself. And when he had ended his discourse and I had answered the questions he put, he told me it would be needful I should come yet several times for instruction before he could seal me to that service by baptism. And this I promised, saying that I thought not my lady would forbid me.

At that, the Bishop seemed to consider gravely and he asked whether my lady knew aught of the Christians or would be like to tolerate them. 'For,' said he, 'by repute the Domina Valeria is a lady who doth not concern herself with matters outside her own household.'

I answered that 'twas true, 'and that to my knowledge Valeria had never had any dealings with the Christians, but that mayhap she might now show indulgence towards them.' This I said because it seemed to me that in my domina's mind and heart there was a great reaching out towards the truth. For never could I forget how I had seen her prostrate before the Grecian goddess Demeter: and, methought, would she not surely find a

Photo: Brogi *Rome*

JULIA, DAUGHTER OF TITUS

deeper consolation for her wounded soul in the kind god, Christ, who had died for men ?

Somewhat of this I said to Clement, though I was careful to reveal naught of Valeria's secret grief.

The Bishop answered me, ' If it be thy happy portion, Nyria, to lead Valeria into Christ's fold when thou art thyself assured therein, then, indeed, shalt thou be blest. For the Lord hath promised rich reward to such as save souls for Him. Yet I would have thee understand that if Valeria be not thus disposed, thou must preserve strictest secrecy in these matters so that harm come not to the community. Thou shouldst know that each one enrolled within our body taketh this responsibility upon himself, so that he should think not only of his own loss or danger but of danger to the company to which he doth belong.'

Faithfully did I promise that I would guard my tongue. ' Nevertheless, lord,' I said, ' the Domina Valeria is high-minded and though she might not care about these things yet never would she betray us.'

' Heaven grant that thou be right, little maid,' he answered. ' Yet is it necessary to observe seemly caution at all times, seeing that, verily, we scarce know what ills do now beset this poor struggling Church, and none of her children dare risk to plunge her in deeper woe.'

He held some further talk with me on the matter and, meseemed, that he regarded me with favour in the manner of my understanding of those things which he had taught me.

' Were it not for our custom, Nyria,' he said, ' that none be baptised save such as are fittingly prepared, I would have had thee received sooner. Nevertheless, in thy case, methinks, thou shouldst not be long before receiving this grace, for, truly, the spirit of the Lord hath descended upon thee.'

And, after this, he arranged with me that twice more should I come to him and that then he would acquaint me with the date and hour on which my baptism should take place in the chapel among the catacombs whither he would himself conduct me.

Then I went forth from his presence and hasted on my way to reach my domina in time for her unrobing.

The street was a quiet one, with but few people passing to and fro, and 'twas after I had left it that I heard footsteps following me and, glancing round, saw the figure of a man, heavily draped, walking some little distance behind me. He paused as I paused and seemed wishful to avoid notice. But when I looked again as I went among the small streets and squares at the foot of the lower forum and on past the end of the Via Margaritaria, I saw by the lights of the shops that the same figure still followed me. It was closely wrapped in a dark cloak with a hood drawn over the head and I began to feel affrighted, for I remembered certain snatches of talk I had heard in the shop of Stephanus between him and Juvenal whereby I knew that at night-time in Rome there did go about certain evil men bent on mischief which would not bear the light of day. So I hasted me yet faster and heard not the steps again till I had reached the stretch of road by the Aventine. I have told thee that in the poorer streets the houses are badly lighted, but where the big villas stand there are torches upon the gates and also torches along the road. It had been settled by Domitian that of such great houses so many should pay, the torches set between and that was good for Rome. But the Aventine was not so well lit, because after Julia's

house there are not many of note save only the temple[1] upon the hill, and Domitian said the priests could look after themselves. 'Twas in that dark bend which mounts the Coelian that I heard again the tread behind me and beheld the same man on my tracks and, as I ran, he took to running also. Then, indeed, was I like to drop in terror. Yet it seemed that fear lent me speed and strength, for I paused not till I saw the lights of Paulinus's villa shining on the big portico and, lengthening not my course to the gate in the wall beyond, I rushed up the great steps and through the atrium, nor stopped to draw breath till I had reached my lady's apartments.

But on the second time that I visited the Bishop for instruction, so full was I of joy and thankfulness in being made a child of Christ that when I went forth into the dusky street I had forgot my fears and had walked even beyond the Licinian villa without having given thought to the man who had before followed me, when lo! again, I heard the steps on my track and again I escaped my pursuer by speedy flight. The same happened likewise upon the third time, yet never once had I been overtaken.

Upon the fourth occasion—that upon which my baptism was to take place—when I craved of my mistress two or three hours' grace, Valeria turned sharply upon me and said: 'Whither goest thou these evening hours, Nyria? It is not seemly that thou shouldst wander the streets alone.'

At first, I hesitated to reply. Then, advancing humbly with folded hands, I answered:

'Domina, there is naught in my heart that I would screen from thee. But this matter is one which concerns many others. Wilt thou have patience with Nyria and hold her secret faithfully if Nyria tells thee all?'

Valeria made a small proud movement as if to convey that she held no secrets with slaves: and then perchance her heart was touched, for she said:

'Come hither, child, and tell me what is this great and wonderful secret. It is a strange thing to demand pledge of thy mistress. Nevertheless, thou mayst know that Valeria breaks faith with none.'

'I knew it! Oh, I knew it, Domina. I was but bidden to ask it of thee,' I said: and then, kneeling by her couch, I told her of that great and wondrous god Christ to whose service I was about to pledge myself, and as I spoke it seemed to me that she listened with ever increasing interest. But when I ceased, she drew back her head and gave a little laugh that nevertheless, methought, was indulgent rather than mocking.

'And dost thou think, poor foolish child, that because thou art going to step down into a tank of water, thou wilt be made henceforth holy?'

'Nay, Domina—that is impossible. Nyria may never be holy. But Nyria may be clean and pure as Christ would have her be. And Christ will do the rest.'

'I trow this Christ-god knoweth he hath found a faithful slave in thee,' she said, and again she seemed part amused and part stirred of heart. 'Thou art a strange child, Nyria, made of different stuff from the others. I know not whence thou comest or whither thou wilt be driven by these wild fancies which seem so real to thee.'

'But verily, they are real, Domina,' I said. 'If only thou didst know——'

'Ay! If I did know—what?'

'If thou didst know the comfort it doth bring to feel that naught can hurt me since Christ careth for me.'

[1] The temple of Diana on the Aventine. See Martial, Bk. VI, Ep. 64.

'How knowest thou he doth so care?' Valeria questioned, and she thrust her face a little forward and her eyes looked long and close into mine. 'Methinks, Nyria, that if thy god be accountable for the many stripes that have been dealt thee in thy past, then truly hath he used thee hardly,' she said.

'Not so, Domina,' I assured her, 'of a surety, not so. Thereby, He did but chide me for my faults as a loving father might chide his child. For my suffering hath been as naught compared with that of many another. And, in truth, I would it had been greater seeing that Christ hath borne so much for me. Moreover, hath He not blessed me most exceedingly in bringing me to thee?' And I bent me lower and kissed the hem of Valeria's robe.

'Thou art a strange child as I told thee,' Valeria said again. 'But I warn thee no great joy can come from over-estimating us poor human beings. It is not wise to place a creature of flesh and blood upon a pedestal and worship such as though 'twere godlike. Of a surety, the day will come when thou shalt find out thy mistake.'

And I heard her sigh deeply and knew that she was thinking of Licinius Sura. But I answered only, 'Nay, Domina. 'Tis God alone whom I would worship thus. Nevertheless, Christ hath laid it upon us to love all our fellow-creatures, and so I fain would do. But thee, Domina, do I love the most of all.'

At this, Valeria laughed gently. 'If that be so, Nyria,' she said, 'then I may not prevent thee from going where thou wilt. Be baptised since thou dost so desire. But, in truth, while the evenings are still chilly, I myself should like not to be plunged in cold water,' and thus saying, she turned again to the scroll she had been reading.

So I left her and went to make me ready in the manner of Domitilla's advising. First, after I had changed my under-garment, I put on a white linen robe in which I should enter the tank of baptism and over that an upper one which I could remove and, likewise, I took a third of wool for warmth and dryness when the ceremony should be ended, and over all I folded my grey cloak around me.

Now, when I came into that chamber where the lord Clement was wont to receive me, I saw that the great bed which had been in one corner was moved to a further space and that at this end of the room was assembled a small company—some half-dozen catechumens clad as I was and certain persons already baptised who should stand as sponsors to the others. The lady Domitilla was there also and took me by the hand and presented me to her husband Flavius Clemens who saluted me kindly.

Then, while the little company stood in rows before him, the Bishop Clement recited a prayer for our guidance along the road to Christ that we had chosen. Afterwards, at a sign from him, the boy Lucius raised a square block of wood that was a part of the flooring, thus showing an aperture large enough for one person at a time to descend through it. Lucius went first, bearing a torch, while two other slaves stood by ready to close the opening after all had passed down. The lady Domitilla bade me follow and keep close to her, and when we had gone down, it might be twenty or thirty wooden steps, we entered upon a few feet of low-roofed passage and then again went down many steps which were of stone. These ended at another passage, long and likewise low and dim, wherein shining black moisture oozed through cracks on one side of the rock wall and the pavement in places was slimy and

seemed to slip beneath my feet, and the torch of Lucius cast strange shadows in the dimness, so that I had been like to tremble for fear. But the lady Domitilla took my hand. 'Be not affrighted, Nyria,' she said. 'This is the secret road by which we pass from the house we have left to the chapel so that we be safe in our going. We are now almost beneath the Tiber, for the path winds at the edge of the river for some distance. But ere long thou'lt find we shall come out into the air again. . . .'

Yet, was I afraid and yet I know not why. . . . But I have thought—I have feared that were some great and terrible choice to be put before me the strength might fail me. . . . But then it seemed to me that I being so little and of no account great things would not be required of one so small. . . .

Now, I mind me that I was telling thee of the house which had the secret way. . . . It belonged to Lucius's parents, and certain Christians lodged in it. 'Twas very old—that passage was made on purpose. I cannot tell who made it. . . . Now, thou knowest, none might have that house who could not be trusted with the secret. Thinkest thou there could be chance in this matter seeing that through betrayal the lives of thousands would be in jeopardy!

That passage leadeth by the Quarries which now are in disuse and runneth 'neath the rocks, all underground. . . . It hath four openings and one of them goeth to where we hold the services. . . . Canst thou hold me a little more closely. . . . Methinks I am confused. . . ."

RECORDER: I had been trying mentally to identify the spot and my thoughts must have wandered from the Instrument. Now, I endeavoured to concentrate them more intently upon her.

NYRIA (continuing): "It is so strange. Now, I remember the passage that went partly under the river . . . and the passage that had recesses where they kept things. . . . And there were inscriptions about people on the stones. . . . I remember it quite well. But it seems to have been a very long time ago. . . . It seems as if it belonged to something else altogether. It comes to me in pictures . . . that is so strange—pictures of something that happened long, long ago. . . . I see myself in the passage. Yes, 'tis a girl in Roman dress with long fair hair. . . . How do I know that? I know it is myself." . . . Then dejectedly, "No, I cannot do it now. . . . I am trying, but I cannot. . . ."

After a minute——

"I am somewhere quite different. . . . This place is very quiet. . . . It is lonely because ordinary people may not come here. . . . Dost thou hear that sound—like a bell? . . . 'Tis like silver striking on ice? Yes, I can give thee the message. It is to help thee to understand what I cannot make clear. . . ."

. . . . . .

COMMENTATOR (speaking from a super-physical level through the lips of the Instrument): "It appears advisable that I should pick up the threads of Nyria's account of the baptismal ceremony—telling you of it from her point of view but adding some slight general remarks and touching upon details which at the time, in her highly-strung condition, she was scarcely capable of appreciating.

You will doubtless have located the, then, steeper rise and wild outlying

spaces at the back of the Aventine, a region specially frequented by the early Christians because of the underground galleries of deserted quarries and the natural cavities honeycombing the hill which offered a conveniently secluded place for the practice of their religion.

Nyria has accurately described the secret passage which issued upon a small, comparatively open valley sheltered between steep overhanging knolls and further protected from observation by an outcrop of various-sized boulders of red tufa.

Nyria discovered afterwards that this space, though hidden from above by the projecting cliffs, was just below that outlying spur where she used to sit and look over the edge of rock at the people passing by. There was another path to the meeting-place, she found later—one more generally used by the Christians—which wound round the shelving side of the hill until it descended by a steep slope into the further end of the little valley.

Now, the small company crossed this space among the red boulders until they reached a narrow tortuous opening in the opposite cliff, into which Lucius passed holding the torch. Here, Nyria, walking beside Domitilla, slipped behind whilst Domitilla went through.

Inside, the path widened and became a moss-strewn alley with large tablets let in here and there upon the rocky walls. These tablets were monuments to dead Christians and bore upon them legends which, by and by, Nyria got to know by heart.

One, in memory of a little boy, ran thus :

> '*Oh Christ! who dost suffer little children, we have sent our son to Thee.*'

And again, on the stone to a young girl of fifteen :

> '*Here, Lord, we lay a lily on Thy Shrine.*'

Then there was one to an old woman :

> '*Full of faith and years Dulcinea gave herself to God.*'

And again :

> '*Our mother Marcia hath gone home and beckons us thither.*'

Yet another :

> '*Sweet Hermione was about to be led to the marriage altar but Christ called her and she followed Him.*'

And there was one which always seemed to Nyria the most beautiful :

> '*Behold, Flavia was weary, and then did Christ Himself prepare her bed.*' "

. . . . . .

COMMENTATOR (resuming) : " Well, the procession wound on through a labyrinth of passages in the old Quarries until it turned into what looked like an underground temple.

This place of worship was fashioned out of several good-sized caves which had once been divided into separate cavities by natural walls of rock projecting in some places and, in others, broken away and showing apertures between the caves. It had been the idea of the early presbyters to widen the apertures and enlarge some of the cavities by hewing the dividing rock into the semblance of huge, rough pillars, thus giving somewhat the effect

of a nave in a modern church. These pillars supported, as it were, the roof, and benches had been quarried from the rock walls upon which the aged and infirm might sit. At the upper end of the chapel, there had been built up, by arranging blocks of stone one upon another, what Nyria would call the rostrum, from which Clement and others of the Elders delivered their prayers and discourses. At this end was also a great sunken tank of water entered by two or three steps on either side, and, beyond the tank, a curtained archway into another cave where the candidates for baptism might change their garments after immersion.

As many of the Christians belonged to the working class, with stone-cutters and artificers amongst them, the presbyters' idea had been carried out fairly successfully, and the place had a rude resemblance to a cathedral crypt.

The pillars bore upon their sides curious designs and carvings, a first effort of the community to memorialise its martyrs. The Church had not then any system of sainthood beyond veneration of the Apostles and disciples of Jesus. But families, of whom some member had suffered for Christ's sake, were permitted to commemorate the event by frescoes and inscriptions placed on these pillars in spaces allotted for the purpose.

You will understand that the spirit of the early Christians was essentially a martyr-spirit chiefly arising, no doubt, from the condemnations under Nero. The bulk of Christians looked forward—in theory at all events—to a martyr's death. Nevertheless, as will be seen, when martyrdom actually faced them, these very people who had been wont to speak of such culmination as the highest fulfilment of their dreams—the most blessed sacrifice that could be demanded of them by their Master—yet flinched pitiably when the supreme moment arrived. That has always struck me as a most pathetic illustration of the weakness of human flesh being stronger than the spirit it clothes ; and, if we are to present a truthful picture, this failing must be made plain.

To newly-received Christian enthusiasts, baptism meant literally being signed and sealed with their Saviour's blood. From the sealing of His mark upon them they might be called at any time to suffer for Him and it was their duty to themselves and to those in training under them to hold this prospect ever in view. Continually, they were climbing the steps to Calvary. But when Calvary was reached, poor creatures !—though no doubt the system of preparation stood to some in good stead—it would be difficult to overrate the wild terror and shrinking in which the greater number met their doom.

As I have said, the ceremony of baptism being inaugural, was considered by all ardent Christians as of the greatest import, and an exceeding and somewhat morbid interest was taken in the catechumens presented for it. These were regarded as, in a sense, already on the Cross. It was as though the sacrifice were prepared and the sacrificial fire about to be lighted. There was even felt an unnatural and almost gloating satisfaction in the youth and beauty of certain dedicants.

Thus, Nyria drew much notice from the crowd in the Chapel. More so, because she was a stranger to most of the people present. For, in their daily life, the Christians formed a community apart from the ordinary life of Rome, no matter to what social class they might belong. The unfortunates among them were the slaves in Pagan families. There were a certain number of these, but the generality of Christians were tradesfolk and small farmers with a few employed in lawyers' and other offices. Now and again, though

rarely, there might be a soldier amongst them. The slaves were chiefly those under Christian masters, and, Christianity being, fundamentally, a religion of the free, these were almost invariably freed, although, as in the case of Clemens and Domitilla, it was usually considered impolitic to let the fact be known.

The dread of being suspected had become intensified by reason of Jewish disaffection, particularly in the reign of Domitian, and pastors and teachers impressed upon their flock that the direst deed of shame a Christian could commit, next to betraying his master Christ by denying his faith, was the betrayal—careless or otherwise—of his fellow members of the Church.

Now, to describe the baptismal scene. . . . As the candidates and their sponsors ranged themselves by the tank at the upper end of the Chapel, the good folk, crowding the body of it, were observing them with childlike curiosity and commenting and whispering together as might a modern crowd witnessing a show.

Indeed, the whole pack of them seemed more or less like children taking an excited and very mundane interest in the novelty of the proceedings.

It should, however, be remembered that they were debarred by their religion from the amusements enjoyed by citizens of Rome. They might not attend the Games ; they might not enter a theatre. Even such sports as racing and wrestling were denied them because of the company with which they were brought in contact and the language heard in the Gladiatorial Schools. In fact, the pleasures available to the early Christians in Rome were extremely limited and, apart from the excitement of their religious ceremonies, they lived at an uncommonly dead level.

Among the crowd towards the back of the Chapel, partly screened by a pillar, round which he, nevertheless, contrived to get a good view of what was going forward, crouched a man in a dark cloak. His eyes never left the form of Nyria as she stood, in her linen robe with her hair all unbound, by the side of Domitilla.

The girl was nervous and was shivering, partly from cold, for the night was a little chilly, partly from apprehension.

And as she looked down into the black-green depths of the tank before her, she shrank perceptibly. Whereat, the watcher behind the pillar gnashed his teeth, but he was powerless to interfere.

Nyria clung to Domitilla's hand and, as the service proceeded, she glanced timidly, now and then, up at her protectress. Domitilla tried to soothe her—pressing her hand and whispering, ' Be not frightened, Nyria.'

' 'Tis deep, Domina,' the girl said.

' It will not cover thy head,' Domitilla replied, and this somewhat reassured her.

' Be not afraid,' whispered Domitilla again. ' 'Tis but a little thing to do for Him who died for thee.'

The first to enter the tank was an old man with longish grey hair, and Nyria watched him breathlessly as he passed down the steps at one end and up at the other, the water rising to his shoulders and then to his head and lowering again as he issued forth. Two servers, specially selected for the purpose, stood on either side of the tank and guided the passage of each catechumen. In the case of one or two who were taller, they would dip the convert by the shoulders so that the head might be entirely covered, and in the case of young children, these were lifted across in a sort of arrangement

of ropes and just dipped below the water in the middle. But there were no young children to-night: Nyria was one of the youngest present.

The girl looked with interest at the long hair of a woman preceding her and, seeing that she bound her hair upon her head and slipped over it a white linen cap before she passed down the steps, Nyria craved permission of Domitilla to do the same. She had come unprovided with a cap, but she bound her hair tightly round her head and Domitilla lent her a kerchief to knot over it; then, with an almost piteous glance at Domitilla, Nyria took her place in the rank of those about to descend. They followed each other with fair quickness, the Bishop reciting prayers meanwhile.

The principal part of the service was gone through before any catechumen was dipped, it having been found that after that process few were fit to take any further conscious part in the ceremony. Therefore, the prayer, which was repeated over and over again as each fresh candidate went down, was of the simplest form, commending him or her to the care of the new Master.

Nyria caught Clement's eyes fixed upon her as, trembling, she took the first downward step. It was curious perhaps that she should flinch thus. But though Nyria could bravely endure pain, to which she was accustomed, there was something in the dark shadowy appearance of the tank and in the whole strangeness of the ceremony which unnerved her. Nevertheless, she put her foot upon the edge of the tank and presently felt the cold water round her shoulders as she bravely advanced.

The next thing she was aware of was the strong grasp which guided her forward when she emerged dripping and, then, shielding her face with her hands, rushed half-ashamed through the passage left for her among the bystanders to the room where the women and girls were permitted to dry themselves and change their robes.

The excitement of the actual immersion being over, Nyria felt anxious to take her place again among the rest. Now she was thankful indeed that she had twisted up her hair, which having been protected and scarcely five seconds under water, was not as wet as might have been expected.

Shaking it loose over her shoulders, when she had put on her robe, Nyria went forth, back to Domitilla, and remained kneeling with the others during the singing of the final hymn. Then the Bishop gave his blessing in a few simple but impressive words, and the long-looked-for ceremony was over.

It took some time to clear the Chapel, for many had friends or relatives among those who had been baptised, and wished to speak to them, while others waited to have a word with the Bishop who, with the air of a tender father, walked about among his congregation.

Nyria was perhaps the one most in haste to depart, for she was anxious not to be late for attendance on Valeria. Domitilla, seeing this, walked back with her to the house by the river, the boy Lucius accompanying them.

On the way, Domitilla spoke much to Nyria of the responsibilities her new profession of faith imposed upon her, bidding her remember that she was no longer her own but a child of Christ her Lord to whom service must be rendered before that given to woman or man. It would have been impossible for Nyria to be false to her pledge, but as yet it had never occurred to her that these duties might clash. Valeria, she thought, if not disposed to become herself a Christian would never interfere with her slave's practice of her new religion.

When they had reached the house and ascended by the stairs and gone through the trap-door which Lucius by some peculiar arrangement again

opened for them, Nyria bade Domitilla good night, her heart too full for her to utter all the gratitude that she felt. Domitilla was sweetly comprehending. She kissed the girl and bade her now look upon her as her best friend. But Nyria's thoughts turned to Valeria. It was strange that, apart from the desire to possess a personal god whom she might worship, Nyria had no particular desire for any earthly friend save Valeria. Except, indeed, Stephanus, of whom she thought with lingering affection. He came to her mind now when again she went forth into the street. It was later than usual and she hoped that her unknown follower might have gone home. Strengthened by her belief in the Divine Power whose protection had lately been invoked for her, she walked on, uplifted by that remembrance, passed the lower forum at the end of the Via Margaritaria and had reached the long shadowed stretch of road before the certainty that she was being again pursued frightened her once more into a run.

But the striding steps overtook her and as she struggled for higher speed she felt a hand upon her shoulder and heard a voice she recognised saying in her ear:

'Haste thee not, Nyria; dost thou not know me, child?'

She turned with a gasp of relief and by the pale light of the stars which, as the two had come out into a clearer space, shone overhead, she saw the kind eyes of the goldsmith.

'Oh, Stephanus, is it thou!' she cried, and, exhausted and relieved, sank back against him.

He put his arm round her to support her and with a spasmodic gesture drew her close to his side. Then, he would have released her at once but the girl clung to him. 'Oh, Stephanus, I am so glad, so glad. But wherefore hast thou frightened me so these three or four nights?'

'Nay, 'tis thou who hast affrighted thyself, Nyria,' he answered. 'Thinkest thou I'd let thee go night after night down into that den of iniquity where wild beasts of men verily do rage and might capture a hapless maid who had none to protect her? Nay, child, nay. I told thee that if ever thou didst need a friend thou mightst command Stephanus. Wherefore didst thou not claim him?'

'I was afeard,' she said. 'Thou wast so harsh to me, Stephanus. How could I come near thee?'

'Ay, was I harsh to thee?' he said, supporting her steps as they went slowly on. 'Mayhap. A man is but a man, Nyria, and hath the weakness of men.'

'I care not now,' she said, 'so that thou art kind to me again.'

He looked at her with the old tenderness in his face but with less of that passion which the sight of her had been wont to arouse.

'Ascalaphus hath been calling thee,' he said. 'The bird wondereth why thou hast not been near the shop windows these many weeks past. Ah, Nyria, 'tis chill there when thou dost not show thy face.'

'I'll come. . . . I'll come to-morrow. Haply, Valeria will let me.'

Stephanus grew glum at the mention of Valeria's name but it was evident that he would try to overcome his antipathy towards her.

'So that thou art happy, Nyria, Stephanus must needs be happy too,' he said. 'Long ago, sweet child, I told thee that Stephanus desired only thy happiness. Say, is she good to thee, Nyria?'

'Oh, ay,' cried Nyria. 'I have a room to myself and much favour shewn me.' But she told him not of how the rest of the slaves hated her. 'And

what hast thou been doing these four nights past, Stephanus? How didst thou know that I went forth and at what hour to follow me?'

'That is my secret,' he rejoined with a touch of merriment. 'I too, Nyria, have means whereby to inform myself.'

'I saw thee not,' she said. 'Haply, thou didst wait in some secluded corner of the street near Clement's house?'

'Nay, to-night I have been farther than that,' he answered. 'Thou didst not see me, Nyria, but I saw thee go down into that cursed water with all thy curls bound up as though thou wert the hapless Cornelia herself buried for her sins in the earth. But for thee—thou, who knowest not sin, who art as pure as the purest spirit of the air—methinks such ways are but foolishness.'

They had reached the Valerian villa by now and stood near the little gate in the wall, each so absorbed in the other that they had not noticed a small, bent, black figure passing that way.

As they stood thus, the man's arms round the girl and the girl's face lifted in all its childlike faith to his, there came, it seemed out of the shadows of Rome behind them, a low evil chuckle which caused them to start apart.

'Nay, let me not disturb these pretty lovers,' cried a voice which both remembered. 'Such moments are doubtless precious. Enjoy them while ye may, my friends. Who knows what fate may thrust between ye?'

They had both turned and, there, in the light of the stars they saw the dusky, evil shape of old Euphena leaning on her stick, her shoulders bent, her leering face pushed forward, looking, veritably, like some hag from Hades.

'So, ho! Stephanus,' she said. 'Thou art courting still, and still shall Nyria flout thee. What did I tell thee, eh, man? He who would pour forth passion upon an altar where it may only be burned up to naught is a fool for his pains. Nyria is not for thee, Stephanus,' and Euphena chuckled again. 'Ho! Ho! It seems that still thou thinkest that Nyria would make a sweet and docile wife to sit by thy decent, honest hearth. Wouldst see in truth what the maid is, whom thou dost worship. . . . Shall I show thee, Stephanus?'

Euphena went nearer to them and, with the point of her stick, rapidly drew a circle round Nyria upon the piece of ground where the girl stood.

'Stay there; stir not, Nyria. Remain, with the wall close behind thee, while I shew to friend Stephanus the real maiden whom he would fain snatch to his bosom and turn into a simple Roman matron. . . . Now, good goldsmith, come hither.'

Stephanus was standing, as if spellbound, a little pace from Nyria. Neither of the pair had spoken. Astonishment at the sight of Euphena had at first kept them silent, and now it seemed as though some strange power held their lips.

'Hither, hither, goldsmith,' commanded Euphena, and she motioned him to a little mound on which he might stand a few feet from Nyria.

'Thou art a worthy fellow no doubt, Stephanus,' continued Euphena, 'but somewhat dense of understanding and dull of vision. I would fain open thine eyes that thou mayst see. . . . Look now, look now upon the maid thou lovest and behold Nyria as she is.'

While the hag was speaking she had dipped her hand into a small bag she carried at her side and brought forth handfuls of something that might have been sand. She threw this close into Stephanus's face, murmuring, as she did so, some unintelligible gibberish. Then, suddenly going up to him,

she placed one of her hands over his eyes and with the other made certain curious signs in the air around his head.

'Behold!' she said, and drew herself away behind him.

Stephanus, stooping, half-dazed, lifted his head and looked. He saw Nyria standing in a simple attitude against the wall as he had left her, except that the bundle she had been carrying had fallen and rolled a little way down the incline. The light of the stars shone down upon her. But a more mysterious light, soft, yet of dazzling radiance, lit up the girl's form. It arose round her in luminous clouds of silvery whiteness, melting into palest blue which, where the glory crowned her head, was tinged with exquisitely delicate violet. Transfigured thus, she remained motionless for several seconds, and Stephanus, gazing, realised that this was no mere mortal maid but, verily, the eternal soul of Nyria.

Then, when the vision had slowly faded, it was as though a dark curtain had fallen before him. He put his arms out in a bewildered way, rubbed his eyes and shook himself to recall his senses.

Now, the curtain lifted. Nyria stood there smiling, as he had often seen her smile, and held out her hands.

'What is it, Stephanus?' she said. 'Why dost thou look so strange?' And the man approached her, but, remembering what he had seen, fell dumbly at her feet and caught the border of her robe.

'Oh, Nyria! Oh, Nyria!' at last he said. 'What have mine eyes gazed upon? 'Twas Nyria. . . . And yet, 'twas not Nyria.'

He rose, and while they stood near, but he not touching the maid, Euphena who had watched, unheeded, passed down on her way. And as she went, her evil chuckle came up to them from the road below."

CHAPTER VII

Apollonius, the Wonder-Worker

Nyria tells of the Domina's friendship with Pliny, Tacitus and other men of mind and repute, and of the discourse of Juvenal at the shop of Stephanus upon the manners, morals and gods of Rome: likewise, of the marvels wrought by the Wonder-worker, Apollonius of Tyana, which were the talk of the city: and of the doings of Ascletario the Astrologer who was feared by Domitian.

Nyria: "I believe that in this summer and winter, after the departure of Paulinus for the war and of Licinius Sura for Judæa, there were certain happenings of import both in Rome and abroad. But of this I cannot tell with certainty, seeing that Valeria held herself apart from the life of the city, of which, in truth, I heard naught save by snatches if I chanced to stand by in Stephanus's shop when he and Juvenal were talking.

I went now, sometimes, to the shop of Stephanus. For, since his following and overtaking of me in my terror upon that night of my baptism and of our strange meeting with Euphena upon the Cœlian hill, Stephanus seemed to have become once more the kind friend who had watched over me when I was in Julia's service. Yet, with this difference, that he no longer pressed upon me the thought of marrying. Mayhap, he knew it was of no avail, for that, assuredly, I would not leave Valeria.

Now, as spring advanced, my domina began to turn somewhat toward those occupations which formerly had been her pleasure. Methinks 'twas the reciting of Martial's verses and their setting to music upon Gregorio's tunes, by which the young man was greatly puffed up, that had first aroused her interest.

I know not if Martial did ever make mention to my domina of Licinius Sura. I heard a rumour that came through Gregorio—but I said naught to him on the matter—of Licinius's reported doings in Judæa: and my domina, though she spake not Licinius's name, let fall some words by which the thought came to me that she had heard the rumour and I know not from whom, save it had been Martial. . . . But thou knowest—my domina hath great pride, and even though I had been her messenger to Licinius and she knew that I understood how matters lay between them, yet, all this time, she never said aught to me touching Licinius Sura. . . .

Yet, there was Plinius who often visited her, and I have heard him give her gossip of her friends; and likewise Tacitus. But neither of them would have spoken to her of Licinius Sura. Of that I feel certain.

Methinks, Plinius may have guessed truly that Valeria's heart was sore for Licinius and he would have shrunk from hurting her. Moreover, he was a loyal man and he had a very real friendship with Paulinus. Nevertheless, was he a true friend to my domina and oft have I thought it strange that he should stand so well with the two. None but Plinius could have carried

faithfully such double friendship. For Plinius, though he seemed all open and like glass outside, had yet a great reserve beneath. I think Plinius understood my domina and she understood him and trusted in his sincerity.

Thus it happened that in the late spring, my domina being somewhat occupied with Plinius and Tacitus in planning for orations at her house by certain philosophers who, fearing the anger of Domitian, dared not speak from the public rostra, I was sometimes permitted an hour to myself. And then would I hie me down to the shop of Stephanus and if, perchance, Juvenal were there I would wait while the two discoursed together.

Now all men were friends with Stephanus, and Stephanus liked a gossip. For though Stephanus did seem hard when he was angry, I never knew one who better loved his fellows. Whereas Juvenal was hard and bitter against everyone so that it seemed strange they two should get pleasure from each other's company. But Stephanus would find humour in Juvenal's sharp sayings and he would laugh at Juvenal as I believe none else dared to do. Yet each seemed to see a different side from the other, and when they talked together about the evil doings of Roman lords and ladies, Stephanus would say to Juvenal:

'My friend, if thou wert one of them thou wouldst take delight in that which now seemeth to thee so contemptible.'

And Juvenal would reply that he had liker fancy himself one of the lowest beasts of the field than a so-called cultured Roman. Now, 'twas reported of Juvenal that most of all was he bitter against women, yet, methinks, he had softness in him, for to me he was ever kind and courteous.

Some among the slaves and tradesfolk said he dared not be otherwise before Stephanus, for, human-loving as was Stephanus, he had a fierce temper when aroused. But I never knew of him and Juvenal quarrelling.

Thou wouldst that I should tell thee somewhat of these philosophers, of whom it was Juvenal that I knew best, though Juvenal was not one of those who made oration at the house of my domina.

He seemed of middle age; not tall, but broad and slow of movement. His hair was lightish brown and his beard reddish and he had an earnest face, cast somewhat heavily. Stephanus said he did take too seriously the evil doings of the great and thought ill of all men and women who were placed higher than himself. Nevertheless, was he happily married. A good husband and father, though severe, and, methinks, he found pleasure in his home life.

Now Juvenal[1] was the son of a freedman who had a small farm in the country—I know not where but I have heard he was born at a place called Aquinum. Mayhap, because he was a Roman citizen they called him less in question for his writings and orations than others who were of foreign birth.

For there came a time when the philosophers were sent out of Rome and Juvenal but escaped banishment by remaining very quiet. He had some means of sustenance of his own and needed not to work to keep himself in comfort, but, seeing that he thought it not well for any to be idle, he employed himself as tutor to the sons of some of the better tradespeople, who were glad to secure his services. . . .

'Twas said that Juvenal might have tutored sons of greater men, but he was wont to despise the nobility, and often said it was not from her princes but from her people that Rome should recruit her rulers: and that if she

[1] Concerning Juvenal. See Appendix II, Bk. III.

looked more to the raising of her people's minds, she would make better governors for the State.

Oft, when he walked, he took his class of young lads with him, and as they came up the street in a body, they would call at the house of Stephanus and the boys would crowd the doorway, teasing the bird while Juvenal discoursed with Stephanus within.

I did hear that Juvenal studied oratory under one of the chief orators, who likewise gave lessons. I know not that orator's name, nor did Juvenal himself wish it known. Methinks he liked it to be thought that he was a good natural orator. But Stephanus knew and would joke Juvenal about his lessons.

And I have heard that in his beginnings, he spoke down in the lower forum where are the lesser merchants and the small food-shops and the fish-market. It was a poor place for an orator, yet much trade was done there and the populace thronged to listen to him.

Thou knowest, there are finer shops round the chief Forum and at the corners of streets which lead to it—booksellers in especial, and here the higher folk of Rome do congregate. But by law no food-sellers may deal in the chief Forum save such as carry their wares on trays—sweetmeats, fruits and the like: and even they dare not remain, for the quaestors[1]—of which always there are stationed one or two who are changed by the hour—would send on such loiterers lest they block the way to better men.

And round that chief Forum are the offices of those who have to do with the State and of certain great providers from whom one may obtain whatsoever he desire, whether it be a poor noble to fill a vacant place at dinner or a slave for service.

Then, not far from that Forum is what they call the Carinæ. It is there that Matho the lawyer had his office until his fortune failed and he was forced to depart. Matho waxed fat when he was rich: but when he became poor the skin grew loose upon him and he was of a yellow countenance, with small squeamy eyes that seemed to be ever looking sideways.

Matho was reckoned a sharp lawyer and people wondered that with so many clients and such clever ways of working he should have lost his money. But some said he was too sharp and over-reached himself, and I think not that Matho was employed for very clean work. So saith Juvenal, who doth greatly scorn him. But Stephanus would laugh at Juvenal's tales of his encounters with Matho. For when Matho took up his abode by the lower forum at the corner of that street which is called—I remember not its name—a narrow street abutting on the Forum—he did hear Juvenal speak, and Juvenal's orations being cast against the highest, Matho said it was not well that such sedition should be talked in Rome and he betrayed Juvenal to those in authority. Thus, for a time, Juvenal had to be silent. For though men despised Matho—even those who went to him for help—yet his word was taken, as always is that of an informer.

I think Juvenal was very quiet in his speech. He did not speak loudly, but yet he spoke with great force: and he did not use many gestures unless he were speaking in the Forum.

Afterward, thou must know, he went up to the chief Forum and spoke there; and though tales of what he said must have reached the Palace yet he was not condemned for it. I know not why. Perchance it might have been that all he said was interesting and amusing, too—or so thought the Romans

[1] Offices of Quaestor and Aedile and the policing of Rome. See Appendix 12, Bk. III.

who came to listen. A great many did come—even of the chiefest of the nobles. 'The fellow with the edged sword for tongue'—they called Juvenal. For he spoke really well. And it was his joy to mount that rostrum.

Now, there were two rostra in the Forum—one close by the Senate House—it was very high and finely built of marble and engraved with men and beasts, and this was only used when one very special made a proclamation; and there was a lesser rostrum at the farther corner, nearer to the shops, where orations were often delivered, and it was this one Juvenal did use.

Yet, I would have thee understand that though Juvenal did evade the banishment of the philosophers on the first edict,[1] nevertheless, when the second came, excuse was found to send him into Egypt, not by banishment but that he might take up some civil office there. I know not what it was but I think that Domitian either feared or liked him, for Juvenal would go to the edge of Cæsar's wrath, yet Cæsar took no vengeance: and when Stephanus said to Juvenal, 'Thou dost endanger thy head,' Juvenal would laugh and answer that Domitian, fool though he might be, well knew the value of brains and would not pick out the best from Rome to destroy them.

For Juvenal, as thou knowest, thought very well of himself. Or it might have been that Domitian did not forget how Juvenal had spoken of him when first he ascended the throne. It was said—though that was long before my remembrance—that Juvenal was one of the first to sing his praises. Because Domitian was a prince of goodly countenance and pleasing manners when he began to rule, having only such faults as many a young man hath . . . I speak of Juvenal's sayings of him for I know naught of this myself. And Juvenal hoped that he would prove a worthy patron of literature and the arts—the which neither Titus nor Vespasian had been. For Domitian was learned in many things.[2] He could himself compose and was well versed in the dialects of other nations: moreover he was of a manly yet modest way. But all that changed. By indulging himself he became more and more vicious and less acceptable to such as were good and true men. And especially he shewed the fault of arrogance, in that he thought himself of more account than his father or his brother or any other Cæsar. Juvenal was wont to say that in this he resembled Nero and that brains were but a bondage to a man because they led him into all sorts of harm and wickedness, the which, had he been a fool, he would not have dealt in.

Oft have I thought that the chief of Juvenal's bitterness against Domitian lay in that the hope he once had of him had been so sore disappointed.

And thus, Juvenal being strong both in his love and hatred, would now speak freely in blame as he had spoken in praise. For he was a staunch friend but a bad enemy—that was Juvenal. But at all this, Stephanus smiled and said that, in truth, Domitian made life difficult in Rome, but 'twere wisest to earn an honest livelihood if that was possible, and not concern oneself with the doings of the great. For his own part, he said, his time was fully occupied without meddling in questions of State.

And Juvenal would answer that State questions should first concern the sons of the State, whereof he and Stephanus were two. And that to remain silent and uncaring, while the State herself went to ruin, was conduct unbefitting dutiful sons.

[1] The second edict of Domitian against the philosophers must have been issued before Nyria's death in A.D. 95.

[2] Domitian's early intellectual tendencies. See Appendix 13, Bk. III.

And Stephanus would say, 'Mayhap,' and shrug. He had no mind to deal with such things.

Yet, thou knowest, Stephanus did much good himself, and this Juvenal would tell him, saying, 'Thou dost make thyself out a lazy dog, Stephanus, who careth for naught but his bone and to bask in the sunshine. Luckily, thy deeds speak better for thee than thy words.'

Whereat Stephanus would say that 'The gods had given him flesh and blood, and that flesh and blood must needs be stirred when other blood and flesh suffered. He could understand the pangs of the body,' he said, 'and a man would not be a man—were he Greek or Roman—if he would not lift a finger to help alleviate them. But these matters of the mind he would leave to men of mind to deal with, and none better fitted for that,' he would say with a laugh, 'than Juvenal.'

Thereon, Juvenal was well pleased, for he thought much of his own writings and would often bring a scroll of parchment and read Stephanus some fine witticism he had composed against the nobles or the priests or the women of Rome. The soldiery he did not so much condemn. For, he said, 'they had been taught nothing but soldiering and 'twas not likely they would understand aught else, and, seeing that as soldiers they did their duty, he would not condemn them.'

But upon priests—ay, and even philosophers, of which he counted himself one—Juvenal was sore. Their learning, he said, they wrought to folly, making boast of such things as they should hold as jewels in their breasts and, though knowing better, leading lives in truth as beasts.

For it was well known that few lived as they taught. And when the priests condemned sinners for small faults and they themselves spent carefully screened days indulging in the dearest of their vices, Juvenal would say:

'Lo! what are the gods who keep such slaves as these? Thou and I, Stephanus, would sell or punish such as served us so. But the gods are no wiser than men and if they see these things they either care nothing or they trouble not themselves in the matter.'

Whereat, Stephanus would laugh loudly, and say:

'Oh ay, the gods of Rome are a goodly crew and keep high revel, methinks, somewhere amid the clouds. Olympus must be a pleasanter place than Rome and that is why they stop there and come not down to put things straight.'

Well, thou dost know the names of many men of different kinds who spoke well and wrote well, such as Tacitus, Statius,[1] and of course Martial, who was chief among the poets. I have seen Statius. He was a great, broad, fleshy man, not very tall, and with no hair upon his face save that he grew a little down on either cheek after a manner of his own. His hair was dark and curly and he had an open, strong kind of face. He went sometimes to feasts. I have seen him when he dined at Julia's. Martial did often come to Julia's house. Methinks Martial was to Julia's liking. 'Twas thought he had a marvellous clever way in shewing forth the witty side of things. And I have heard even Juvenal, who doth despise the man, speak in right good praise of his verse. Thus, there was no need Martial should be poor, but it was known that much of his substance went to waste on women. He hath a lodging, very high up, near the Tiber. It is a lowly part of Rome where

[1] Statius, the poet. See Appendix 14, Bk. III.

many people do hire out portions of their houses. But Martial minds not how he fawns and cringes for favour nor cares who may look down upon him so that he gain what he doth want.

So saith Stephanus, who himself is stiff-backed, and he saith that Juvenal is worth ten of Martial . . . and so methinks likewise, though Martial be well-dressed and in looks handsome, and Juvenal hath the plebeian air. Yet Martial is no very fine figure of a man, being thin and spare and without dignity of presence. He hath dark eyebrows, which run up sharp, and piercing eyes, and his nose is well-shaped, which giveth character to his face.

Tacitus is better born than any of these and Tacitus is juster in his views than the other two. He is truer about life, looking at both sides, and is a good man and a wise one. Methinks he did not care for Julia but he came sometimes to her feasts. All did that because of her position.

Thou knowest, Juvenal did not go to parties like Martial and other men of note who spoke or wrote : and though he said he did not want to attend such shameless entertainments, yet, methinks, had Juvenal been bidden in state he would have gone if 'twere only to see how they were conducted. And I have heard Stephanus say to him :

' Thou pratest freely of these doings, but seeing thou hast not witnessed them, thine information may not be correct.'

Now Juvenal got most of his talk from the slaves, since there are always plenty who will tell aught for pay. And he paid them well and thought no scorn of it. ' For the poor things,' he said, ' like a coin as well as do their masters : and since they are not paid for the services they render unto these, 'tis right that I should pay them, seeing they serve me well.'

And Juvenal was for ever preaching that slavery should be done away with : but often, methought, that were all slaves set free, then would there be none to serve, seeing that most of them only served because they were obliged.

Methinks Juvenal felt that by reason of his own cleverness, he was as good and better than most of these poets and philosophers, and he thought scorn of those habits and customs which kept him outside and yet admitted men such as Martial and Flavius Archippus.[1] For among the philosophers there was one in especial—this Flavius Archippus whom Juvenal scorned and would prate against roundly when he spoke to Stephanus. For this Archippus was well received in many noble houses in Rome, though I never heard good spoken of him, and 'twas said that only by favour of Cæsar was it that he did escape the due reward of his deeds, and at one time even Cæsar banished him. But by appeal he obtained a cancelling of that order and back again he came to Rome, where he lived a life of much indulgence, though, all the time, he preached the Stoic doctrine and loved, with much state, to lecture. And this did anger Juvenal, who said that Domitian would only retain those of evil life about him.

And one—Euphrates,[2] whom I have heard and seen, for he did afterward make an oration in the house of Valeria—he was not banished, for at the time he was on a visit with his noble wife and retinue to some other country, and when they returned none said him nay, seeing that his wife was the greater one of the two. Methinks that Julia interceded for him with Domitian, for, though she cared naught for philosophers, she was wont to say that 'twas well there should be some since they took away certain dull persons

[1] Flavius Archippus. See Appendix 15, Bk. III.

[2] Euphrates, a Stoic philosopher, described more fully by Nyria, later.

who were unpleasing to her and left more space in which the others might enjoy themselves.

Greatly did Juvenal scorn Martial, who, likewise, thought scorn of him. But Martial was more clever than Juvenal, in a certain fashion, and what made Juvenal most cross was when Stephanus said to him :

' Friend, thou shouldst take lessons from Martial. For this great Jupiter whom ye do both serve hath endowed him with the wisdom of the gods themselves, seeing that Martial knoweth well the distinctions of place and payeth reverence to each according to his due, which is what the gods like. And thou wouldst do better, Juvenal, wert thou likewise to pay in that kind.'

Then would Juvenal swear in his beard, and say :

' By Mercury himself, who stood sponsor for Martial, I would serve no god again, if that were their desire.'

And oftentimes he would say :

' But it matters not what gods rule in Rome while the Romans are rotten at the core. For, serve they gods of Greece or Egypt, or such as they have named themselves, their service would be false or hollow. But it maketh a man wonder,' he would add in more thoughtful mood, ' if indeed these gods who sport in higher heaven are worthy of men's faith and confidence, seeing they cannot control them better or do not choose to do so.'

And Stephanus, with a twinkle in his eye, would go on with whatever he might be doing, and thus reply :

' The gods are too busy, friend, for, be they gods of Greece or Rome, yet must we remember that they have their own affairs—their loves and espousals, their quarrels and their enjoyments—and, methinks, we are too hard upon them when we expect them to trouble themselves over our little lustings, likewise. Look at Denarmid ! So that he doeth that which I tell him, and proveth honest and trustworthy, doth not steal my jewels, keepeth the place clean and lies not to me upon the errands on which I send him, I care not at all though he spend his overtime in rioting and jousting. Thus, mayhap, it be with Jupiter himself and, in very truth, were I Father Jove, as the Romans call him, I would think my time well occupied with a lusty lady-wife like his, and such a family who were busy roystering, themselves—without troubling myself about the grasshoppers that play on hills beneath me.'

But Juvenal did not come much into my life save through Stephanus, and methought, that when Stephanus said a wise or witty thing, it had been dropped into his ear by Juvenal. So that I, who knew him well, did call him Juvenal's mouthpiece when he quoted some opinion to me of men or things the which I knew he did not himself hold. Oft have I said to him, ' Speak for thyself, Stephanus. I need not to know what that growling dog doth say.'

I did not understand Juvenal or his way of looking at things. He was away from me. And it seemed to me that seeing Juvenal was so busy despising everyone, he must likewise despise me. Nevertheless, he was ever kindly to me, and sometimes he said things which made me feel that he did not think me like the other people. But I saw that Stephanus liked not I should hear Juvenal talk, for oft, when I was there, he would try to hush him and to turn his speech. And this Juvenal knew quite well and would smile, but in ill-pleased fashion, and oftentimes he would say to me :

' Friend Stephanus thinketh such matters not fit for a lady's ear,' and

this, specially when I put to him a question or two. But often he would follow this saying with another, 'I warrant thou hast heard stranger things within the sacred dressing-rooms of Julia or Valeria—' or wheresoever I happened to have been. I minded not what he said of Julia, but I liked not his talk of Valeria and that the less because Stephanus, by his manner, would seem to agree with him. And thou knowest that afterwards, if there were one person whom Stephanus did mislike, it was Valeria. Yet for this he had no cause save that never would I neglect her wishes for his.

And once was I greatly wroth with Juvenal for the evil that he said of Valeria. That was after she had been ill when, for many weeks, I went not to the house of Stephanus and saw nought of Juvenal. But afterward he said that sometimes the gods sent suffering and hardnesses upon one who was a fool in order to keep such an one from crime and worse folly: and that, seeing Valeria was not, so far, following the road whereon all Roman ladies walked, her sickness might have been sent, as it were, to bar to her that gate. But his words angered me and I spoke sharply, whereat he smiled in scorn and said I was a loyal champion and that I had not been myself had I spoken other than I did. Then Stephanus smiled on me, and gently he said:

'Though she be of the sex of Roman ladies, Nyria knoweth naught of these things, and a maid can gain no good, friend Juvenal, by listening to thy talk concerning them.'

Nevertheless, thou shouldst know that 'twas but now and then during the time I have been telling thee of—most, mayhap, in the beginning—that I heard the talk of Juvenal. I never saw him anywhere save at the shop of Stephanus. And now I mind me that of the greatest one of whom Juvenal spoke I have told thee naught. I did hear his talk of him that was called Apollonius—from Tyana, they said. He was the subject of much thoughtful discourse between Juvenal and Stephanus, and I have heard others also tell of that wondrous man.

Some said that he came as a god in disguise, and some would question which god he was. And Juvenal himself somewhat favoured this belief. But Stephanus shook his head and said, the gods were too busy and that if indeed they were wise they would know better than to take a human form.

But this Apollonius did many things which were spoken of, though he would not have them widely known, and hushed all talk about himself when it reached his ears. He was kind to the sick and to the poor, and I heard that when once he walked through the Suburra there was a following round him of those whom he had healed and helped, and many ran before and cried, 'The great Apollonius cometh.'[1] That was when he was on his way to preach on the banks of the Tiber, and where the road was muddy they laid their garments before him that he might tread upon them, and some ran shouting with branches in their hands and wreaths of laurel. But he liked it not; and after he had spoken to the people while they pressed around him, some urging him to come within their houses and take refreshment, he was gone, even while they looked, and none knew whither.

But he was seen afterwards on the other side of Rome talking to a company of slaves who worked chained in the Quarries and who were sore and sorrowful, being beaten with the lashes of the overseers. Now, one of these overmen raised his arm to beat a poor slave who was struggling with a block of stone—for they had to drag the stones up the hill with ropes. And

[1] The Wonder-worker, Apollonius of Tyana. See Appendix 16, Bk. III.

Apollonius lifted his finger, and lo! the arm shrank shrivelled at the overseer's side and the rope fell off the slave's shoulders so that he sat upon the stone and rested till his strength came back to him. Then from a spring near, Apollonius filled a vessel that he had brought, and gave it to the slaves to drink. And lo! when they tasted, it was wine. 'Twas rich Falernian, that made their blood flow like young men's blood. And he made them cakes on a little fire of sticks laid crosswise. He gathered the sand upon platters of wood and kneaded the cakes with a few drops from the vessel. And lo! they were like rich wheaten cakes and cheese that he gave them. 'Twas said that such as secreted those cakes and carried them away in their tunics never found them stale though they kept them a long time, and some there were who, when they broke off a portion and ate it, found the cake whole again: and this they said was because the great Apollonius would not have that any man should starve. It was well known that this company belonged to the great quarry-master—I have lost his name—who both starved and ill-served his slaves.

But these were some of the stories that were told about him. None of them I ever knew myself, for I never saw Apollonius—at least I think not—and, afterwards, he went away from Rome, for he told the people that he had places to visit and much work to do. And some there were, he said, of good intent who, though he worked not with them and to whom his presence would only bring pain, were men of much merit. But yet, he said, his own work was good and they would know it by his deeds. Only, he would go where men had no helper, since in Rome there were several who perchance could do better than he. But I knew not of whom he spake.

. . . . . .

Now yet there is one other of whom I would thou shouldst know—who was likewise a friend of Juvenal, by name Ascletario.[1] Of him I saw and heard most when I dwelt with Euphena in the household of Julia.

This man was an astrologer, and wondrous skilled. He had his abode out on the wildest part of one of the hills. Oft, when I wandered, did I pass his hut in the distance but, save once, I never saw him there. For, in the daytime, he slept, they said, unless he were engaged upon some special undertaking.

I have seen him in Stephanus's shop with Juvenal, but this not often, for he came not to gossip. In truth, to look at him, thou wouldst not think he could gossip. He was a thin man who always dressed in dark raiment and always wore a pointed cap of curious fashion. His hair was dark, turning grey in places, and his beard dark also and tipped with grey. He had large dark brown eyes that seemed to see a great way, yet in the daylight he usually kept them shaded. Men said that he gazed so much at the stars that he could not bear the light of day. He had a thin face, very hollow in the cheeks, and his nose was high and thin.

He knew Euphena. Methinks he taught her much of her lore. But this I know not of myself, for Euphena never would have me present if by chance he were practising what he shewed her or if—as sometimes but very seldom happened—he came to visit her in the slaves' court.

Then afterward, Euphena would gather up her garments and such things as she needed and betake herself to his hut upon the hill, and once I did see him with her there when I was out late with Stephanus.

[1] Ascletario. See Appendix 17, Bk. III.

We had been gathering herbs afar and night had fallen when we crossed the hill and the stars like silver spangles covered the sky.

And when we drew near the hut I grew afraid, knowing not why, and clung to Stephanus's arm. He held me comfortingly and, as our path led near by, we saw two dusky figures crouched outside the hut. These, as we drew close, rose up and held their faces to the sky, remaining motionless. But the taller had something in his hand which flashed and, as he stooped again and moved about, I saw the starlight shine upon it. 'Twas some kind of instrument, and other things, shaped oddly, lay about the ground. There was a bowl of something that looked like liquid and a heap of sand, and there were markings on the ground such as Euphena made in her divining, and I guessed the other lesser one was she. But that was not until I reached home and found that Euphena was absent.

'Twas said that Domitian greatly feared this Ascletario. I know not how that was known but I heard Juvenal and Stephanus say the same. . . . He was a strange man—Ascletario—shadowy, always courteous, but seeming to like best to hide himself and seldom known to walk abroad or talk with others in the Forum.

I heard Juvenal say that Domitian was afeard of astrologers for the reason that a company of Chaldeans had foretold at his birth that violence should bring about his latter end. . . . I ought to have told thee this before, but to me it had seemed that Domitian scorned—or tried to scorn—all such foolish matters."[1]

[1] He (Domitian) had long entertained a suspicion of the year and day when he should die, and even of the very hour and manner of his death : all of which he had learned from the Chaldeans when he was a very young man. Suet., *Domitian*, XIV.

CHAPTER VIII

The Return of Licinius Sura

Nyria tells of how, by chance, the Domina encounters Salome—so-called wife of Licinius Sura—and their son: how Valeria visits the shop of Stephanus and how, when walking on the hill-side, she meets her old tutor, now Clement, Bishop of Rome: of how Euphena gave Valeria a last warning and of how Licinius Sura came forth from the shadow of his house and drew Valeria within the gate.

Nyria: "And now I will tell thee of a certain happening which, seeming in itself of no great present import, yet held seed to bring forth fruit of sorrow ere many months should pass.

'Twas upon a day when my domina took me with her to visit Plinius and Antaeia at their villa at Laurentum: and the fierce heats of summer being close upon us, Valeria did command litters, with changes of bearers, that we might accomplish the jaunt to and fro before nightfall.[1]

My domina doth ever prefer the progress by litter save when the passage be long and arduous such as to the further estate of Plinius in Tuscany, whither we went later, a matter of several days.[2]

And that journey we took not till the summer following when Antaeia had been dead nigh a year, and Plinius, torn with grief, sought comfort in travel and lent his Tuscan villa to Valeria who was then aweary of Rome.

Notwithstanding, toward the end of her term, he did go back to Tuscany bringing with him that fat and noble dame Hispulla and her young niece Calpurnia whom he had chanced to meet at Baiæ, and after that, there was talk in Rome that Plinius might marry Calpurnia.

But I mind not when that marriage came to pass though I know within myself that it was so: and on this day of our jaunt to Laurentum we dreamed not of Antaeia's death nor of Plinius' second mating.[3]

The day we went to Laurentum was very fair, and when we had left the walls of Rome some way behind us, Valeria willed to go upon her feet for a space and bade her retinue to follow her. Our path wound within the borders of a wood, and, while we walked along—I lagging somewhat and Valeria lost in thought and scarce speaking—lo! a child darted from among the bushes, chasing hotly a great butterfly: and, as he ran across the path, he stumbled against an uprising root and fell almost at the feet of my lady, where he lay roaring lustily.

[1] Laurentum was about sixteen miles from Rome, and though apparently not so beautiful or fashionable a place as Baiæ, it still had powerful attractions for the wealthy Roman nobles. It chiefly consisted of the villas of such men and thus resembled some of the more distant suburbs of London. Note to Letter X, Bk. I, Pliny's Letters. See also Pliny's Letters, Bk. II, Ep. 17.

[2] For a description of Pliny's Tuscan estate see his Letters, Bk. V, Ep. 6.

[3] *Pliny and his Wives.* Appendix 18.

Now, I knew that Valeria cared not much for children, her own two sons being kept, as thou knowest, for their health, with their governor and his wife on their father's estate at Forum Julii in Gaul. So methought she would have called a bearer to lift and tend the child. But somewhat to my wonder, and though her steward did come forward, she stooped herself and raised the boy to his feet and asked him kindly if he were hurt.

'Twas a sturdy little fellow, maybe of five years old, with clustering curls and with eyes of a clear grey-blue, dark-lashed and wondrous soft and winning. Still, he wept loudly and, standing there, stared up at my lady, and then seemed turned to awe by her beauty and her noble mien ; for, while he gazed, he ceased from crying and of a sudden smiled and held forth his hand. Now, the eyes and the smile of the boy did fleetingly resemble the eyes and smile of his father. For then, coming nearer, I knew him to be the child of Licinius Sura and of the woman Salome, whom I had seen all together on the road that day when I had spoken to Licinius concerning Paulinus's invitation to the farewell festival before my master departed for the war.

And, as I ran to my lady, I saw that she stood dumb-struck while her eyes seemed to search the child's face. And then she turned with a little shake of her head as though she would banish a foolish fancy and signed to the steward close by. Whereat, he gave her a silver coin which she put into the boy's hand bidding him buy something with it for consolation.

And behold, at that moment, Salome herself came out from the edge of the wood and rudely snatched the child from before my domina, saying wrathfully, ' Have I not told thee, oft, that thou shouldst not talk with strangers ? '

Then, angrily, she bade him give back the money or throw it from him, and, with that, she shook the child roughly so that the coin dropped to the ground and he, struggling and screaming again—for he liked not to lose the gift—resisted her as she bore him off, still chiding him loudly.

' Remember, Marcus, whom thou art,' said she. ' Thou canst not learn too early what is due to the son of Marcus Licinius Sura and, as such, thou'lt take no alms from any persons, no matter of what grade they be.'

And by the woman's flashing, backward look, I knew it was said through insolence so that my domina should hear and learn the truth. And I saw my domina draw herself up sharp as though some noxious thing had stung her. Nor gave she other sign that the woman's words concerned her, but, never turning her head, walked on, cold and proud as if the matter were beneath her observation.

But, after a minute, she paused to pluck a branch of sweet-smelling brier and held it to her nostrils—methought to shield her face: and, presently, she signed to her bearers to lower the litters and, entering them again, we continued on our way. Being behind her, I saw not her face till a bend in the road shewed it to me, as she sat erect and still like a figure of marble, her eyes fixed straight before her and seeming to see naught.

Yet, afterward, when I stood in attendance behind her chair and watched her while she held converse with Plinius and Antaeia, methought she seemed more like the Valeria I had known in the beginning than her of these later days.

But my domina was wont to say that she could better talk with Plinius than with any other and that should there hap aught not to her liking, Plinius knew how to cover it or, at least, to straighten the matter."

. . . . . .

NYRIA: "I saw not Salome nor the child again and 'twas told me some time later—I am not sure by whom: methinks Gregorio may have spat it out in some fit of jealous rage—that she had gone away from Rome. Perchance, her going had to do with Licinius—I know not.

And still, to Valeria, there came no word from him and, as the weeks and the months went on, it seemed that, for very lack of love to feed her heart, she was fain to snatch at such sustenance as might feed her mind."

. . . . . .

NYRIA: "Thou knowest that Valeria was very fond of walking. Now, during that time that Licinius was away, Valeria did some happy things such as she had not thought of doing before. We had many wanderings, she and I—in so far as was fitting for a Roman matron. Sometimes, she would walk down with me into the town and once she paid a visit to the shop of Stephanus. But for that I gave him warning, for Stephanus is but a trader and is not qualified to receive the great patrician ladies of Rome unless they come but to purchase goods for coin across his counter.

At first, when I told him, he seemed loth that she should come and, thou knowest, Stephanus can be rude if the humour take him. He stood very big within the shop door so that he almost filled it. Ascalaphus hung without in the sun and cried at me as I came:

'Hath the lady a mind to make a bargain? Hie thee, Stephanus, look out the best of thy goods.' Then when the bird heard me speak he did seem most glad to see me and cried again:

'Pretty maids be wise bargains . . . wise bargains. . . . Stephanus, bring the necklet for the maid.'

''Tis no simple maid that cometh,' shouted Stephanus. 'Hold thy cursed tongue.' And then Stephanus did make kindly mock of me, saying, 'For here, verily, is a lady who hath half the gallants in Rome at her feet, and who visits whither she will. And she would fain turn thee and me, old bird, out of house and home and plant us in the gutter while she doth cast her queenly eye over such things as she may fancy within.'

Whereat, I laughed out—for I saw that Stephanus had regained his humour.

'Verily,' said I, 'when thou dost sit in the gutter, Stephanus, Nyria will come sit beside thee, but be sure thou hast all things ready for the lady Valeria, for it is her pleasure to visit thee this afternoon.'

And with that, I ran away down the street with Ascalaphus screeching after me.

'Haste thee! Nyria—haste—"The Furies catch thy heels"'—which made me laugh and I was glad to hear the bird's unseemly prating again, for it minded me of the days when I used to steal down from Julia's for half an hour's comfort. But now I was rich, for I lacked not aught, and many a coin, too, came my way with which I might buy, if I chose, from the trays as I passed. Yet, seeing that I needed naught, I spent my coins among the Christian poor—for there were many who lacked much of this world's goods.

. . . . . .

Now, that very afternoon, Valeria was borne in her litter down the Via Argentaria: and it was at such times her pleasure that I had my little litter behind her, for she liked not that I should be pushed in the crowd—the sight made her sick, she said, when by chance she saw another slave-girl

thus ill-served. 'And, truly,' said she, 'though I cannot regret the day when thou didst shed thy blood for me'—meaning when the African had struck me—' yet I would not that thou shouldst ever thus shed they blood again.'

So to-day I rode like a princess in state and had mine own litter and my bearers who must needs obey my behests. But, as thou wouldst know, I kept my place behind Valeria's: and when we reached the door of Stephanus and he came forth and gave his shoulder to Valeria to dismount I saw him cast a sidelong glance at me, for he had not seen my litter before, and, methought, he was appraising it and questioning whether he could have supplied one as good. But Denarmid, who was in attendance, came forward to assist me to alight. Whereat, I smiled at Denarmid, he and I being good friends. For, not long since, Denarmid had become a Christian and but lately, I had seen him at a meeting for the first time. And that night, walking home, he had confided to me how sore afraid he was of Stephanus—who himself did sometimes attend the meetings but was not like to become a Christian and was hard on such. 'Twas for my sake that Stephanus came and would fetch me thence, for he liked not that I should walk that long dark road alone. Wherefore, when Denarmid did tell me of his fear, I took upon me to acquaint Stephanus seeing that he would not be wroth with me—and, if he were, he must recover his mood as best he might. But I knew that Stephanus would not discharge Denarmid from his apprenticeship as the boy feared he might do.

Now, though Stephanus swore much, he did do naught. And he kept Denarmid in favour, for the boy was a good salesman and shrewd. Likewise, he was honest, as all Christians were: and for such to be in guard of Stephanus's jewels was an important thing as thou wouldst understand. And now Denarmid said to me:

'Thou art verily a fine lady, Nyria. Haply, thou hast come to make purchase.'

But I laughed him to scorn. Yet I felt proud when I did enter the shop and saw Valeria looking over all the things Stephanus displayed and making choice of one thing and another that she fancied and bidding him obtain for her a silver effigy of the Demeter she adored—which he said he could do, but that it would take long to procure. And I, looking over a tray of goods, did espy some British pearls that pleased me much, and, while I was fingering them, Valeria glanced my way. 'Dost fancy them, Nyria?' she said. 'Put them round thy neck.' And then she laughed.

'I trow thy skin is not so fair as once it was in Julia's time,' she said 'Thou sportest too boldly with the sun. But thou canst keep the pearls. Verily, thou art worth more than they.'

Whereat Stephanus blushed and looked angered. 'Once,' he said half-rudely, 'it had been Stephanus's lot to offer Nyria the best his shop contained, but that day, meseems, is long dead.'

Valeria glanced from him to me and smiled amusedly. 'The love of a maiden is not bought with ropes of pearls,' she said, 'though thou mayst chain prisoners with them.'

But for me, I was glad to get my pearls. Yet, when it came to the paying of the goods, Valeria did but ask the total sum and said she would send her steward with the amount. But, meanwhile, if Stephanus so willed, she would sign for it.

Whereat, he wrote for her the sum, but he had deducted the price of the

pearls : and, though Valeria was not over-quick in such matters, yet was she surprised to find the goods so cheap. For she had chosen a ruby corslet and some golden images for her room and a chain of pink topazes that became her well. And, glancing at the price, she said :

'I see, friend, thou hast no mind to make thy fortune.'

'Verily, lady,' Stephanus answered. 'A man looks for sweeter fortune than his goods can give him. And, if that be not his portion, he cares little. For of what use to build a cage if the song-bird be not there.'

'A pretty simile,' she said. 'But bring thy mind from poesy and tell me what thou dost charge for these goods——'

He ran them over to her, at which she nodded.

'Thou hast forgot the pearls,' she said—whereat Stephanus drew back.

'Thy pardon, lady, but, when first thou didst command me concerning Nyria, I told thee then that I took no payment for my service to the maid. That have I not ever done : and while Nyria lives, Stephanus lives to serve her. But he takes no payment—save such as she may herself choose to bestow.'

Valeria glanced at me. 'Verily, Nyria,' she said, 'thou mayest be in two minds. Wilt lay thy pearls back upon the counter—or keep them ? They can be no gift of mine, it seems.'

'I'll keep them, lady,' I said. For I liked not to hurt Stephanus.

'Then thou art the better for his gift,' she replied.

'Ay, lady,' I answered, 'and always have been through Stephanus, seeing such debts as I do owe him may never be repaid, though I gave him all I were worth.'

'He hath a different mind on that, it seems,' laughed Valeria, drawing up her palla. 'Good day to thee, good goldsmith. Some one is the richer, and the gods grant it may be thou.'

And with that we went back to our litters.

But Stephanus, having to attend Valeria to hers, had not time for a word with me.

Nevertheless, Ascalaphus, who was watching from his perch, did call out lustily :

'Hast done well, Stephanus—hast done well !—Drive not a dame too hard.'

I saw Valeria look round over her shoulder and wonder at the bird who spake many words of sense which Juvenal's boy pupils had taught him. But he had a wondrous wit of his own in the matter of applying them—or so it seemed.

I had not seen Juvenal for a long time—nor did I see him again until one day when I ran down to the shop whilst Valeria was with Licinius Sura. . . . Of that I will tell thee when the time comes. . . ."

. . . . . .

NYRIA (resuming her narrative): "First, thou wouldst that I tell thee of the return of Licinius Sura. . . . 'Twas on this wise. . . .

Now, on that day, Valeria had a mind to see some of the lesser streets of Rome. Nevertheless, it was not fitting for a dame of her estate to penetrate to the poorer quarters of the city : therefore, when we had gone by the offices in the Carinæ and round into the lower forum, we went towards the Suburra, and on our way we passed where Matho had his office.

The talk went that Matho had now fallen into disrepute and was become

poor. Folks said it was since Julia died, for that she had kept him by the work she gave him to do. . . . And Valeria, nodding towards Matho's room, said :

'A scurvy knave and one with whom I'd have no dealings.'

Thou knowest, Valeria was not wont to express herself so freely. But there were times when she was out with me alone in which she talked more as I myself might have spoken.

I had told her about that street which led down to the river whence one did enter the house, kept, as I knew, by a worthy Christian for the use of the lord Clement and for the passage of such as did desire the way to the Christian place of meeting. And Valeria would fain have gone down that passage. Not, methinks, that she sought to be a Christian but that, verily, her mind was full with the desire to see many things.

And so we did explore as far as might be. But, as thou wilt understand, certain roads, where such as I might have run unheeded, were barred to a lady like Valeria. And our walks and litter-rides on these occasions were always taken, through the winter, in the afternoon—that would be between the hour of the mid-meal and the sunset.

Often, we would be borne to one of the gates of the city, and there we would leave the litters and walk out upon the hill-sides. And sometimes, Valeria would take that walk with me up to the hill-point thou knowest of. She liked that knoll, and while I gathered late blossoms and coloured leaves and berries for her rooms, she would sit herself upon the edge of it and look out across the country and she would say it seemed to her that one who dwelt on that spot might verily gain freedom. For, she could picture, she said, the soul, distraught from over-much commune with man, coming there and finding comfort in commune with the gods and such spirits as might be their messengers.

Then would I kneel beside her and tell her of that great and wonderful god—as it seemed to me—and of how He had spoken in my own heart and the promise He had given me that some day I should see His face. Yet the which, I, knowing now the truth of the Gospel tidings, looked not to see upon this earth, but knew it would surely image before me when I crossed the death-border.

And she would listen—Valeria always listened—and sometimes she would laugh and tease me and sometimes she would say, 'Meseems, Nyria, thou art nearer the truth than such as do philosophise at our fortnightly meetings. Alack! little maid, that so many amongst the great and wise should be concerning themselves with these problems of life and death and thou—a simple slave—darest to say thou dost bear the truth in thy breast.'

Wherefore, I desired to answer her as Clement had answered others in my hearing, that, even from the lips of the young and simple, God never fails to listen unto words of praise. Yet I liked not so to speak.

But I told her all I could—and all about our services—whereof she said she would take heed and Phileros should form notes of them for her that so she might turn them to account in the papers she was producing.

And when first I heard her say this, I was filled with horror, and prayed her of her grace to bear in mind that she had pledged her word to me before my baptism that she would maintain such things secret. . . . To the which she answered laughingly :

'Then thou wouldst deprive me of a profitable means of information, Nyria. Thou hast not sufficient thought of the importance of literature.

Tacitus now would tell thee that a man should not regard the private details of his life save to turn them to account in the books that it be in his power to make. But thou art no historian, Nyria. Thou art no writer of romance. Yet, verily, meseems, when I look at thee, that there is a story written in thine eyes. But it is in a language which even I cannot interpret.'

At which I smiled and blushed for I knew not what she meant. And she, leaning forward, said of a sudden : 'One I know would fain read that tale. Hath he not desired it of thee, Nyria ? '

'I know not of whom thou speakest, Domina,' said I.

'Nay,' she said. 'Christians tell no lying tales : and thou dost lie, Nyria. But thy cheeks do tell the truth. Say, doth the worthy goldsmith hold the key to that language in which thy life's story is written ? '

I drew away and said, 'Nay, lady, nay. Stephanus is my friend. What meanest thou ? '

'He would be more than friend to thee,' said Valeria, pointing, laughingly, to my necklace. 'And thou—thou hast stolen his British pearls for which I would have paid him had he let me, but thou dost reward him not.'

Her words grieved me, for I liked not to think that Stephanus was deprived because of me. 'Wherein can I reward Stephanus, lady ? ' I said. 'Nyria is but a slave, she hath naught with which to pay him.'

'Nyria can give him that which silver and gold cannot buy,' said Valeria earnestly, bending forward and looking closely at me. 'Ah, Nyria, thou art now a maiden grown and yet, methinks, at heart thou art but a child. Still, knowest thou not that thou dost bear within thy breast, alongside that priceless gem of truth of which we were speaking, one as fair and priceless of the kind that men would steal from thee ? For men be robbers, Nyria. Avoid them—avoid them lest they rob thee of thy treasure.'

'Stephanus is no robber, lady,' I made answer. 'Stephanus would scorn to rob a maid.'

'Then is Stephanus nobler than the noblest,' she made answer. 'Since no lord in Rome would deny himself the joy of rifling from a maid that which not even repentance on his part might restore to her.'

I scarce knew of what she spake : and I made no answer.

'Avoid such robbers,' Valeria repeated. 'Avoid all that come to thee—whether they be in guise of brute beasts wandering at nightfall to slake their thirsty passions, or whether, haply, they come in some meek and humble guise, suing as a beggar at thy gates for that which thou mightst in charity bestow. Princes or beggars, brutes or men—they're all alike. Hold not forth thy hand to them lest thou be rifled beyond hope of restoration——'

Now this seemed to me most strange talk. But seeing that Valeria did seem to cast a slight upon Stephanus, I answered her as I thought was for his sake. 'Stephanus hath sued to me oft, Domina, in befitting manner as becometh his station and mine. Nevertheless, seeing I had no mind to wed, it hath not been on my lips to let him come and ask me of thee.'

'Oh, Nyria,' she said. 'It would go hardly with me if he did, for whether or nay I refused him—so thy heart went out to him, thou wouldst follow it ; and of what value would that be which was left to serve thy poor mistress, seeing that the best part of thee would dwell within the goldsmith's breast. Ask it not of me, Nyria—ask it not—for thine own sake, child. For men may sue many times, but a maid gives herself but once. And this truth remains—that though, as some ravening wolf, ill-fate may snatch thy maid-

hood away, leaving thee as some despoiled flower to be flaunted on the breast of one unworthy, yet when love does come—whether, as I say, in the guise of prince or beggar, thou wilt have given thyself but once—and then—oh, ye gods! What then is left!'

And as Valeria stood upon the hill-side and spake this, and it seemed as though she addressed herself not to me, I answered not.

Thou knowest, 'twas a wild and secluded spot whither we had come from the road, winding round uprising rocks, behind which I had been wont to watch the Christians passing to their meeting-place. From there, I had shewn Valeria the twisting path by which they went.

Then, climbing the goat-track along which I was accustomed to mount the hill, we had reached the knoll I have told thee of, and on the brow of this she now stood while she talked to me, though in truth it seemed that she addressed the sky.

And when she made as if she would descend the knoll on its further side, I caught sight of a man who, with head bent in meditation, walked along that path leading to the road by which the Christians went.

Methought it must be one of these, seeing that none others knew that way, and I had uneasiness lest he like not Valeria's notice of the path. Therefore, I made excuse that the sun was fast lowering so that I might hasten her away.

But, as I glanced beyond Valeria in wonder who this man might be, she caught my eye and turned herself about, thus observing his approach.

'Ah! A stranger!' she said. 'Fear not, Nyria, none can rob us, seeing we have naught of value with us. Haply, this is one of those Christian folk.'

And gathering her palla and her robe about her so to step easily down the knoll, Valeria did glance once more swiftly, over her shoulder. But, with that look, she stayed on a sudden and gazed most earnestly on him who drew yet nearer.

Then I, seeing his face which was now upturned, as a side-beam of the sun going down into the west did fall upon it, knew surely that this was the lord Clement. But Valeria, standing with her back to the light and the hood drawn over her head, must have appeared to him as some veiled figure whom, haply, he knew not, for he advanced, though, as he did so, his glance fell on me and he smiled.

And I, loving him greatly, made as though I would go forward, for 'twas our custom to crave the bishop's blessing when one should meet him and the chance favoured. But Valeria said to me in surprise:

'Nyria, who cometh? Who is this?'

'It is the lord Clement, Domina,' I made answer—'him they call the bishop, chief priest and father in charge of our infant church.' For thus we were wont to style him, and thus I knew Valeria—to whom I had often spoken of him—would know who he were.

But Valeria stood upon the hill-side, like one carved in stone, and, as the lord Clement came close, she loosed the robe and palla from her hand, and throwing back her head so that the hood of her cloak dropped down upon her shoulders, she advanced with hands outheld.

'I cannot be mistaken,' she said—and, again, gazed at him most earnestly. At first I think he scarcely saw her, for his glance had gone past her to me, and he was about, methought, to put forth his hand for the blessing I desired. But seeing my lady thus, he stayed his motion and gazed at her.

'Florus,' she said, 'knowest thou me not?'

'Who haileth me?' he asked. And then again gazing at her, he cried, 'Lucia—'tis thou!'

'Ay, ay,' she said, with a ring half of laughter, half of tears in her voice. 'Oh, faithful, noble creature—whither camest thou? Where hast thou been these many years?'

He spoke not at first, then, as she put her hands on his, he took them and answered slowly:

'Ay, many years—since they have changed the maid to wife and the child to woman, and Lucia is no more, save as Valeria—wife of Paulinus.'

Valeria made a petulant movement and half-drew herself away.

'Remind me not,' she cried: ''tis needless. But I forgot—thou knowest naught of my fortunes—and I, naught of thine.'

'Enough that, at least, thou hast not forgotten me, Lucia,' and he looked at her again most fixedly, seeming to see naught else.

'Where hast thou been?' she repeated. 'Is it thou of whom men have spoken as the leader of this new, seditious sect?'

He scarcely answered save by a movement of his head—it might have been assent or refusal: and still he looked at her but gently put her hands from him.

'I see thee well, Valeria?' he asked.

'Well—oh, ay, I am well,' she answered, 'though, methinks, I have not the rude health that Lucia had—who wast ever the most troublesome of thy pupils.'

'Dost remember the summer-house in the garden?' he said—'thy mother's garden in the villa on the Aventine!—Poor shabby, desolate villa. 'Twas sold, thou knowest, to some rising Pleb—and then again he left it and found no purchaser, and now it has fallen into disrepute and is sore neglected. I wandered there not long since.'[1]

'Into disrepute,' repeated Valeria. 'And why, thinkest thou?—Why, Florus—save that Vitellius's children were nurtured there! Ah! . . . But those were happy days, Florus. Hast thou the same Greek books from which thou didst instruct me? Dost thou remember the little scroll of blue and gold that I tried to imitate—for the which thou used to guide my hand?'

Valeria paused and laughed. Methought the laugh had somewhat in it that I did not understand. But on she went, prating of days when it seemed she had been half a babe, and he—my lord—her teacher. 'Twas strange, methought, and, scarce liking to overhear, I drew a little apart, wondering how these things had been. For Valeria had never spoken aught to me of her knowledge of Clement.

Just below my feet was the little dell wherein grew the brier bush where I had mourned for Valeria when Clement first came and comforted me, and I knelt down to see how the plant fared. The dead half had worn away and scarce a shrivelled leaf lay thereon. But, on the other side there had broken forth new shoots: and this I was amazed at, and yet glad to see. . . . And while I wondered, the two drew near to me and I heard Clement say, 'Thy way and mine, Valeria, lie different roads. When thou didst wed Paulinus, thine led thee to the hill-tops of life whereon the sun should shine and where the gaze of all men must needs follow thee. My path is hidden in the valleys. There, I work in darkness among the burdened souls of men, striving to

[1] The Villa on Mount Aventine and the early association of Vitellius's family with Clement of Rome. See Appendix 19, Bk. III.

bring some light into that passage of theirs which, haply, is darker than the darkest night that thou hast known.'

'Ah!' she cried, 'thou knowest not what I have gone through. Ah! Florus, marriage is not all that modern Roman mothers would have us believe. Thou, who wert the sole confidant of my childish griefs and pains—thou—if thou hast any feeling left for the child whom thou didst once love and tutor—to thee perchance I might, if I dared, tell much.'

'There is only one,' he said, 'to whom thou shouldst betray thy heart's closest secrets. Paulinus established his claim to them on the day that he took thee from thy mother's hearth.'

'And forfeited that claim long since,' she cried. 'Ah! prate not thus, Florus—thou art Vitellia all again! But thou—oh, it is good to see thee after these years. Why hast thou not been near me? I have lived—thank the gods—alone this many a month past in my villa on the Coelian. But had Paulinus been at home he would have welcomed thee.'

'I repeat, Domina,' said the bishop, 'my road leads me not to such houses as that of the Illustrious Paulinus, no matter how friendly may be my feeling for him.'

'Why callest thou me Domina?' she cried; 'I like it not—from thee.'

'Valeria, then,' he answered soothingly.

'Nay—nay—'tis Lucia—little Lucia,' she answered, putting her hand against his and looking as I had ne'er thought to see my domina look—with so glad a smile upon her face and such frank, sweet uplifting of her eyes to his.

He met her look with one of tender kindliness and yet, methought, of sorrow. 'Lady,' he said gently, 'Lucia died long ago: and only liveth again in the wife of Paulinus. As such, it is not fitting that I should forget her state.'

'Forget it all,' cried Valeria. 'Forget everything—but that I have sore need of thee.' Now, again, I saw a change come over the bishop's face. He seemed like one greatly harassed. He frowned and his face darkened and he half-turned from her, while still he held her hand and she gazed up at him anxiously.

'Think not,' he said, 'that I should ever forget the child whom, as thou sayest, I did love and tutor. Lucia's name hath ever been the first upon my lips in the prayers that I have offered to God who granteth all good things. But, with Valeria—what have I to do?'

Valeria pressed closer to him and seemed about to speak, but he went on slowly and solemnly:

'Thou didst ask me how I, for my part, have filled the long years. Ay, Valeria! If Lucia died upon her wedding-day, Florus too died when he gave himself to Christ. Now,' and he turned round, 'it needs that I should tell thee who I am. Men call me Clement. 'Twas my second name, as thou dost know. And, too, they call me Bishop of the new-dawning Roman Church.'

'I know not this Church of which thou dost speak,' she answered. And it seemed to me that she shrank from letting him go, though he drew a little apart. 'But, methinks, it hath wondrous power if it calls so many into its fold.'

'Thou art not a Christian, I know,' he said. 'But, tell me, wouldst thou be one? If that were so—then might Clement come——'

'Come and teach me,' she cried.

He half-smiled and half-shook his head.

'Clement might send thee a teacher.'

'Nay, nay, I want no teacher—and no Clement,' she said. 'I know thee not by this strange new styling and I'll have naught to do with a Church that hath taken my best friend from me. 'Tis Florus whom I want—— 'Tis thou—who wert so much to me in olden days and didst implant into my girlish breast the seeds of love for Greece. Wouldst thou not come and see how I have nurtured them?'

Now, the bishop seemed as though he scarce knew how to answer.

'Come,' she persisted, and then half-laughing, said, 'My house is now known as the meeting-ground of some of the most cultured minds in Rome. Tacitus hath lectured there—and Plinius hath given a discourse upon the refinements common to both sexes, and amusing he made it. One and another have spoken—even Apollonius. See, I can boast men of note. Come thou and hear them, Florus. In former days, thou wouldst have loved to do so.'

'My time is too fully occupied,' he said. 'If it would pleasure thee I had almost said that I would it were not so—for Valeria.'

'I'll not let thee go till thou dost promise,' she cried, holding him back by his cloak and seeming more childlike than I had ever seen Valeria.

But as she did so, his glance fell upon me. I had uprisen beside the brier bush.

'Ah, Nyria,' he exclaimed kindly: and I knelt, but saw that his mind was too full of other matters to give me, as I had hoped, a blessing. . . . 'What doest thou here?' he cried, glancing down to the half-dead bush. 'Why, 'tis the very spot whereon I did first encounter thee, Nyria.'

Then, turning to Valeria, he said: 'Here, upon this hillside, two years and more ago, I met this little maid in sore grief because thou wert ill, and, here, we prayed for thee—did not we, Nyria? And thy prayer was answered, child?'

'Yes, lord,' I answered, meekly making an obeisance.

'So thou wast the diviner!' cried Valeria. 'And I knew it not.'

But at the thought her face changed, and I saw that she was thinking of Marcus Licinius Sura.

'Didst concern thyself with my illness, Florus?' she asked. 'Or with aught that did concern me in those long years of thy silence?'

He looked down upon her. 'Yes, verily——' he said: and methought his voice was grave. 'It grows late,' he said. 'Again—thy way and mine lie different roads, else would I accompany thee': and he made as though he would bow and pass on, at which I was surprised, for had I been alone, methought, the lord Clement would have borne me company adown the hill upon the other side. But he seemed unwilling.

'I'll not let thee go,' cried Valeria playfully barring his way, 'till thou dost tell me when we shall meet again. Flavius Archippus is lecturing at my house within nine days. Wilt come and hear him—though I would in truth that thou didst not wait till then.'

But he seemed unwilling, and I, not liking to seem to listen, strolled away, so that I heard not the last few words of their discourse. But then Valeria called me: and he was just bidding her farewell.

'Go, thou,' he said, 'and may thy path be light.'

'Alas!' she cried, 'there is no more light to shine upon it. Methinks, sometimes, that my heaven hath been darkened.'

'Haply, thou dost not look above to the light which is beyond the clouds,'

he said. And with that he seemed to bless her, holding both her hands in his, and then turned along his own path. But my heart was sore, for Clement had heeded me not.

. . . . . .

Then, presently, spake Valeria, as we passed on together down the hill: 'Verily, Domitilla can keep her own counsel,' said she. 'Who could tell that this unknown cousin of hers of whom she did prate at times—to which prating I paid small heed—was in truth mine old friend? Though I was dead indeed not to remember that connection of which he himself had told me in former times.'

But I said naught, for Valeria often talked like that to me in a way that scarce called for any word.

Now it was getting dark, and as we went down the hill-side there were many shadows among the boulders and the bushes that began to thrust forth green: and here, upon the side of our path, was one bigger than the rest, which as we came nearer, seemed to move: and Valeria, who was gazing down the path before her, was a little frightened and drew closer to me.

'Yonder is someone crouching,' she said: and I, too, was frightened. But, as we came yet nearer, the shadow uprose, and I saw it was a little figure, scarce higher than a child, supporting itself upon a stick, and behold! while I yet wondered what it could be, there came a laugh, and I knew Euphena's voice.

'Step warily, pretty ladies,' she cried. 'Step warily, for verily there be pitfalls spread for the unseeing. And they that do hasten too rapidly upon a downward road be apt to land themselves whither they would not.' And with that, she drew some rapid signs upon the ground with the point of her stick: and I, not wanting Valeria to be touched by the craft of her magic, did draw her aside out of the path.

But Euphena had no mind to let us go by till she had said her say.

'Never fear, pretty Nyria,' she cried. 'Yon proud dame is safe from Euphena's magic. Euphena willeth her naught that is ill. Heed not Nyria's fear, lady, for Euphena is but an aged crone who hath no power left in her to work ill.'

And as Valeria stopped, surprised, to listen, Euphena finished malignantly with a chuckle. 'Nay, verily, seeing that enough ill hath been wrought already,' she cried.

Valeria clutched my hand and gazed at her.

'Who art thou?' she said. 'Where have I seen thee before?'

'So thou knowest me, lady!' cried Euphena. 'Tis well. 'Tis well. . . . For Euphena, once known, is not readily forgotten. But fear not, I say, for time is slow and there be yet many hours before the tale shall be accomplished, of the which Euphena did tell thee at Julia's banquet. Nevertheless——' and Euphena drew closer to her, 'though time be slow and the wheel of life large—for therefore is it long of turning—yet it doth turn surely, though its speed be not as quick as, haply, some might desire. And for thee, thou proud and lovely dame, thou scorner of human passions who dost yet deal in them thyself seeing thou too art human—verily, I say to thee, the wheel is turning—turning slowly—but 'tis above thy head. Then, Valeria, wait—wait—wait—for, ere it turneth round again, that which Euphena hath prophesied shall have come and gone, and Valeria too shall have gone with those that love—and those that scorned her . . . Whither?'

Euphena threw out her arms as though she seemed to ask a question that

none might answer: and Valeria stared at her. 'Thou art a strange old crone,' she said. 'Haply, thou art one of these fortune-telling beggars that do infest the streets. 'Tis far for thee to wander. Dost desire the price of a night's lodging?' And Valeria fumbled in her pouch, but she carried little coin with her.

'Nay—nay,' cried Euphena. 'I desire no coin—not I. Once, I desired coin, but now, there is naught that money can buy for Euphena. Pay me not. I am but the voice of the wind—but the voice of the great spirit that goeth abroad over the earth telling men that to which they will not listen. Heed me, or heed me not—it matters naught. For thou and I, alike, fulfil our portion and go hence.'

And Euphena, again spreading her arms out, seemed to vanish into the night.

But Valeria was surprised and a little frightened. I could not see her face for the dusk had been gathering. But, by the words she spoke as we went down the path, I saw that she remembered Julia's banquet. She talked a little of it and then fell into silence: and so we reached the road that wound up the Cœlian.

I would have thee understand that we had come up, as thou knowest, on to the hill-side above the house of Licinius, so that we had to descend past it and then to wind round the road that led towards Valeria's house.

Valeria's mind, I could see, was bent much upon Euphena. So I told her I knew naught of what Euphena did nor where she dwelt; but I had thought she might have made herself a home among the hills, seeing 'twas always up there that I met her.

Now, as we came down towards the house of Licinius Sura, a man came out of the little gate under the plane-trees and did advance swiftly. He was wrapped in a long dark cloak that fell below his knees, with a hood over his head. But there was somewhat in his gait that seemed familiar and I saw that Valeria saw it too, for, of a sudden she started, and I felt her press my hand closely against her side.

Thou knowest, there should have been torches lit, had Licinius been known to be at home, for the road was darkened by the overhanging trees though the dusk had not quite fallen, and a few bright stars had begun to shine out in the sky which was still of a pale, pearly blue.

The man, as he came out of the gate, had seemed to hesitate and stood there a moment watching us as though he had half a mind to go the other way; but, seeing us closer, he delayed and drew back into the shadow of the plane-trees. I felt Valeria's heart flutter and she hastened her steps, glancing towards the gate as though surprised and frightened: and, as we passed, the figure came out and stood for a moment in our path: and then, of a sudden, the man threw back his cloak: and I saw that it was Licinius Sura.

Valeria knew him too. He said no word, but held out his arms. At which she stood silent in the roadway and lifted her face to his, clutching her cloak together beneath her chin and having dropped my hand.

'Thou seest,' he said, with the laugh I did remember, 'I have returned. Am I welcome, Valeria?'

She made no answer but a sort of shudder passed over her: and then he drew closer with his arms held out.

'Verily, a surprise,' he said. 'A joyous surprise. Earnest of a happy future. . . . Hast no word for me, Valeria?'

She answered him, then, seeming to try to speak like herself.

'Fate has had many surprises for me to-day: And this——'

'And this, the best I trust,' he said, and caught her to him.

Now I, standing a little apart, saw a group of figures come round the end of the road, a little higher up, and halt and look towards Licinius's house. Two, there were, or three, and as I looked, they seemed to step into the shadows and were gone, but I feared for Valeria and drew closer to her and to Licinius.

'May it please thee, Domina,' I said, 'someone cometh.'

'Ha!' Licinius cried. 'Watch-dog, it is thou!' Then, drawing Valeria quickly behind the plane-tree, he said: 'Hide thyself, child, and follow me.'

The next moment the gate had opened and we were within. Valeria clung to his arm and seemed as if she could not let him go, and with his arm around her, he half-led, half-carried her round the end of the house to where was the little door that I knew of. And, seeing that he had bidden me hide and that I liked not to be caught there, I, too, drew into the shadow of the bushes and waited for her to come forth again."

CHAPTER IX

What of Salome!

Nyria tells of the renewed love between Valeria and Licinius Sura and of Valeria's visits to the house of Licinius. Also, of certain talk she overheard at the shop of Stephanus concerning the marvellous disappearance of Apollonius the Wonder-worker from before the Tribunal held by Cæsar. Likewise, of the intrusion of Salome into the villa of Licinius Sura.

Nyria: "Now, after that evening when I waited long in the inner court for Valeria to come forth from the meeting with Licinius Sura, we went on the next day and on many other days to the Licinian villa. We would go at different hours, but usually in the afternoon, and then the visit would often last till dusk.

Nevertheless, the front of Licinius's house was still all closed and the place remained, as before, wrapped in silence and shadow. For, save one or two trusted slaves, Licinius had brought none to serve him and I heard him tell my domina that his business in Rome was secret, and that he desired none should know of his presence in the city.

Thus, in the daytime, he would remain within his own garden walls, showing himself not in the streets nor even walking along quiet roads until dusk had fallen and then would he go with his cloak drawn closely about his neck so as somewhat to conceal his face.

Methinks, he never told my domina what that secret business might be. Nor was she one to question him, seeing that she cared for naught but to have him back and to know that now—as verily it did seem—he was all her own.

As I have told thee, it had become Valeria's custom to ramble much afoot, though at starting she would take her litter, since it would not be well for her to go forth from her own house in broad daylight without any retinue. Verily, 'tis a little hard—for, when she goeth thus to her lover, she must dress poorly. . . . She hath a pale brown cloak—half-palla, which she can drape about her head, but she doth wear a lovely stola underneath. . . . Then, after we have proceeded a little distance in a different direction, she will alight at some secluded spot, making it appear that she seeketh wild flowers, and, presently, she will dismiss the bearers, saying it is her pleasure to go home on foot. Or she will appoint the litters to meet us at some further place and at a certain hour, later.

When we are out of sight, she will draw the palla over her head and wind one fold of it round the lower part of her face, or she will shroud herself in a veil. She hath a thick staff and oft doth pretend to be lame, and, mayhap, she will take my arm and bid me put mine around her and we will be as two slave-women, one aiding the other who would appear to be infirm or sick. . . .

Yes, I will take thee with my domina to the house of Licinius. . . . To-day

we are walking from the Cœlian. It is not very far going down this way, her house, as thou knowest, being not quite at the top of the hill. The road doth wind round to it and one can see the open country and the Aqueducts and the great hill Soracte afar. I can see the sun shining on it and the snow which yet lingers. Not yet are there poppies abloom in the Campagna—that little red flower with the cup—Stephanus doth make much medicine from the poppies. I am ever glad to be with Stephanus when he goeth to pluck poppies.

There are no houses just near my domina's villa, which hath round it a good deal of garden. Other houses lie beyond hers but I know not who doth live in them. None who are poor dwell on the Cœlian. . . . Thou knowest, as one passes down the Cœlian by the Aventine, the road between the hills becomes more level. We might go round along the back of the hill, but the shortest way is by Julia's house, now standing empty upon its plateau, which spreads over the lower part of the hill.

Then we wind up past other houses. The villa of Licinius is on a small knoll which juts out beyond Julia's house and seems below the road. . . .

We go not into Licinius's house by the chief door and through the atrium, but enter by the gate at the side, through which he drew in my domina on that first evening. Then, round by the court and garden to that portico which hath, growing over it, jasmine creepers—that one with little yellow blossoms now covering the pillars, and, later, in summer, the leafy kind with thick, white, scented flowers which hangeth over the lintel and maketh a pleasant shade.

Well have I grown to know the place—the portico with the yellow bloom and the stone steps which lead down into the room where he doth await her coming.

I can see him as he standeth just inside the door, with the sunlight through the trellis falling on him. He is a little taller than she, and yet she is tall for a woman.

He hath no toga on—only his tunic. The colour? Nay, I know not . . . (hesitating). It is so odd . . . when I have to tell thee anything thou dost specially want to know I can see it exactly, but sometimes thou dost seem to slip away and the picture shifts.[1] . . . I have seen him in many different tunics. At first, methought, this was a purple one, and then it seemed to be of a reddish brown. . . . Now, I see that it is the warm light purple which she doth prefer. . . . It is fastened on the shoulders with strong-looking gold buckles. The tunic cometh just below the knees: the legs are bare. . . . Thou knowest, they have different kinds of shoes. Some are laced with broad flat thongs and go half-way up the legs—he is wearing those now; and his tunic is very full from the waist to the knees and is draped up over the waist-line to the shoulders, where the folds come closer together, smooth and narrow. . . . Licinius is not fat, but well-covered. His face is rather thin, he has dark hair, very curly, and a clear and pale complexion. The nose is thin and well-shaped, a little high, but it is short—not like the Jewish nose. He has no hair on his face—she did not like it—and there is a little cleft upon his bare chin. The eyebrows are dark and set close together but they shoot up sharply into wide bows. His eyes are grey-blue with a dark rim: they seem the pair to her eyes and, when they look at her,

[1] This might suggest mind-control on the part of the Recorder, who, in fact, was quite unconscious of exercising it and had no picture of Licinius in her mind.

they are lovely eyes. But sometimes there is a look in them that I do not like. . . .

He throweth his arms out from the shoulders—it is a gesture of his—opening them wide to welcome her, his head is held back and the eyes are shining. . . .

She goeth in very quietly—she hath a stately walk. . . . Then she flingeth her wrapper back and I take it from her. . . . To-day, her stola is pale green with a broad band of purple and gold embroidery and she is wearing a slender gold chain with a little cross of pearls that Licinius gave her—when she cometh here, she weareth only some jewel that he hath given her. . . . But he hath not given her much. . . . And then, I must look out through the window . . . thou knowest . . . and I fold up her palla and go forth and wait. . . .

'Tis a private room to himself, this one in which they sit. In most houses it would answer to the tablinum where the master doth receive his clients. But in Licinius's villa, the tablinum, in the middle of the central passage, is dark and he doth not greatly use it. This room that looketh on the portico is small but bright and made for comfort. . . . The floor is of marble: there are stools scattered about, and a couch on which he resteth, and a table whereon he writes. . . . And there are flowers—he doth always have fresh flowers when my domina is coming . . . and on a stand there is a statue which she did give him . . . I know not its meaning . . . perchance thou wilt know—'Tis as a couch of marble with a cushion rolled, and the form of a winged boy doth lie asleep upon the couch, with one arm thrown up and one hand uncurled, and a bow and a box of arrows lie near to his hand. And, leaning over him, is a woman who hath a lamp in her hand and she doth gaze upon him with a tender, worshipping look upon her face. Methinks, my domina did mean that she loves Licinius in the way of that woman. He is very fond of this statue and doth have it close within his view.

For the rest, Licinius's villa is like other good Roman villas, save that it is smaller than the best of them. The house hath in it some nice things but it is not grand. The room in which he sleepeth doth open from that one wherein they are sitting, and the villa hath a garden closed in by many trees, and that doth make it easy for my domina to come and go unobserved.

Licinius had brought from Judæa that cross of pearls he gave her and had told her it was a sign which certain Jews held sacred, in memory of One who had died upon the Cross. . . . And he spake of that strange sacrifice of which 'twas plain to me, he had no true understanding. . . . For I had learned the meaning of that sacrifice and I longed to hear more of the land where the Master Christ had lived and suffered. But they two took no heed of me and I would sit me down upon the ground, spreading my cloak beneath me, for here be no flagged court but only one of gravel which is sometimes moist with early rain. And often, as I sat, I would get snatches of their talk, and when it seemed to be of matters beyond themselves I thought me that I might hear it. But when it grew to closer love-talk, then would I move away, for they never heeded me and I scarce liked to listen.

Oh! oft, they do talk together of stories that are written in those Greek scrolls of the which some are known to me, seeing that my domina hath told me many things of Greece. For I have spoken to thee of that strange belief my domina hath that once she did live in Greece and I have heard Licinius

say to her that he holdeth the same belief, and that he and she did live and love in Greece as now they live and love in Rome. Mayhap, it be his true belief and yet . . . I know not.

Now, oft, meseems, that Licinius hath in him a curious falseness and that, yet, he knoweth it not as falseness. This doth come out in little ways wherein he will deceive my domina. . . . But the little things do show what the greater things would be.

For, if he doth want to put her off or doth not come when she hath expected him, he maketh false excuse. . . . Perchance, because he doth fear to pain her, or, perhaps, he giveth not the real reason lest she should bear that reason down. . . .

Dost thou think that were he married to another he should owe more duty to his wife than to my domina? Nay, methinks, he should not. . . . Yet from his words, 'tis ever in his mind that he doth give my domina as much as she giveth him, and assuredly that is not so. . . . Never doth he take the burden of their love upon him, the which lieth heavy on her. Were it not that, through Archigenes, the promise of Paulinus doth secure her from her husband, I know not how she would save herself. Methinks, that, had she been thus forced, she would have told Paulinus everything.

Sure am I that Licinius doth never truly satisfy her. . . . He could not, for 'tis not in him. . . . Ever, there seemeth that restless craving in her life which she doth hide beneath her outward coldness. Oh, not to him. . . . Never was she cold to him, though sometimes, methought, she did upbraid him for those things in which he failed her. Then, would he tell her she was just like other women, and that would cut her more than all. . . .

Ay, ever at first he is very tender. Yet it doth hap, when I have left them thus and, after a time, return, that a cloud hath come between them. Thou knowest how hard it is to watch the hurt to one thou lovest, when yet there be naught that thou canst do to ease the pain. And sometimes, she doth seem so unhappy when we leave his house, or when he hath been with her and goeth away. . . .

I cannot bear that one I hold so high should be in such case, as that others might point the finger at her. . . . For myself, I see no sin in love like hers. She loveth because she must . . . as a flower doth open to the sun. 'Tis marvellous the change, when that which, before, to others, hath seemed a lovely shape of marble doth now, to him, breathe life and love. . . . Methinks he cannot truly know the like of woman that she be.

It doth seem to me that men in Rome love only because there is a need in them which must be satisfied and that the love doth never truly last. And yet . . . Stephanus is not like that. . . . I would that I could understand these matters. . . . Methinks, that when love doth come, thou canst not fight against it and that, when thou dost desire to love, thou canst not make it come. . . .

Now, sometimes, if she did chance to notice me as I sat without, my domina would let me go away, bidding me return at such an hour when she would be ready to depart. At that time, there was not in my mind the thought of being spied upon and I feared not to leave Valeria, seeing that oft she would take her noonday meal with Licinius and remain with him till the sun went down.

Yet 'twas not well to wander too great a distance and thus I would betake me to the temple[1] which standeth further back upon the hill and nearer

[1] The temple of Diana on the Aventine.

to its crown, not far from the house of Sura, and I would sit me on the steps up into the round court on which the sun doth shine.

I can lead thee to the outside of the temple but until I have been myself I cannot take thee in. Never yet have I been inside. I believe that within the shrine there is a statue to that goddess which is most beautiful. . . .

The roof is round on the top—no, the temple is not round, but there is a dome and there are square pillars in front and steps that go up to it, wide and shallow. . . . And there are marble figures of dogs outside the temple, in different position as if ready for the hunt. . . . Why are there dogs, I wonder! And there is a male figure . . . I am trying to get it. . . . I cannot tell thee who it is. . . . He hath a spear in his hand as if he too were going to hunt. He is a beautiful young man. . . . Oh! Stop! Everything is moving. . . . It doth seem as though the dogs were pulling him down. . . . There are several dogs amongst the pillars. . . . Then, as I look, come many dogs with their mouths wide open and their heads raised up and they seem to be tearing the youth. One dog hath its teeth in his knee and he is lifting his spear to strike it.[1] This is at the inner entrance to the temple . . . all the single dogs are outside. . . . I cannot go any further within. . . .

. . . . . .

'Twas on one of those days which my domina did spend at the villa with Licinius that she gave me permission to absent myself for several hours and, seeing that the two were in happy mood that day, methought I would visit the shop of Stephanus.

Now, I had seen but little of Stephanus in this autumn and the past summer. I mind me that we made a jaunt again to the villa at Laurentum and that the lady Hispulla and her niece Calpurnia were of the company and that my domina did confer with Plinius upon the choice of certain persons renowned in art and letters who should be invited to hold discourse at her winter meetings.

And when these had begun and I was sometimes free, yet sought I not Stephanus. For the mind of him—as thou knowest and as I well knew—was still turned toward me, and this although he spoke not now of love or marriage. In truth, he seemed less inclined to render me his protection when, on my way back from the meeting-place of the Christians, I had needs traverse that long dim piece of road where once I had been wont to tremble at his following tread. But the evenings were lighter now and, methinks, he had bidden Denarmid watch my steps, for the boy did often company me in returning from the Christians' meetings.

But, thou knowest, Stephanus was my friend and Stephanus could never be aught but kind: and when once he said to me, 'And art thou so well cared for, Nyria, that now thou hast no need of friend Stephanus?' methought there was sadness in his voice, and my heart did turn toward Stephanus. So, on that day of which I speak, I went down past the Forum to the street where is the shop of Stephanus, and when I approached the door I knew by the several lads who were making sport with Ascalaphus, as the bird put forth its head in the sun and screeched out wicked words and laughter, that Juvenal must be within.

Now, Juvenal was gossiping with Stephanus, and both seemed so full of their talk that they scarce observed my entrance.

[1] Clearly, Nyria had not heard the story of Actæon. (Ed.)

Stephanus gave me a kindly smile and Juvenal did just say, 'Ah! Here is Nyria!' and, with that, he went on, 'What thinkest thou, Stephanus? Hath this man the power of a god seeing he did remove himself without sign of going from the midst of the tribunal?'[1]

But Stephanus shook his head. 'Such things are not for a low order of mind to deal with,' he said. 'I know naught of witchcraft, whereof this savoureth. . . . Haply, Ascletario could inform thee. Methinks the man must have had a body of disciples around him who did cover his departure.'

'Ay, but he was in bonds,' cried Juvenal, 'and the jailers stood on either side.'

Again Stephanus shook his head.

'He hath got away, it seems. Verily, many a luckless prisoner in Rome would be glad to know the trick.'

'Of whom speakest thou?' I asked, putting my hand on Stephanus's arm.

''Tis of Apollonius the wonder-worker who was arraigned before Cæsar for judgment in this Judæan scare,' said Stephanus.

Now, seeing that Licinius had lately returned from Judæa and that this, by its repute, was the land that I most loved, I would fain have questioned him, for I had caught some talk, so I told thee, from Licinius to Valeria of his having been concerned in some matter there. But I held my peace.

'Now,' said Juvenal, 'those others have got off, it seems, since Apollonius did plead for them so well. But Nerva will not be allowed to enter Rome.'

'Rome hath indeed turned milk-faced,' said Stephanus, 'if she feareth such as Nerva.'

''Tis an amiable old fellow but one who could not wield the sword—the which savours of the Christians,' cried Juvenal with scorn of that sect.

Whereat, Stephanus pursed his lips and nodded, but he would not speak of the Christians before me; and yet I now knew that Stephanus doth favour certain among the Christians who are friends of Domitilla, and that he hath attended some few services—though that, methinks, was most for me. For at heart Stephanus was no Christian.

'Religion doth make a fine excuse,' quoth Juvenal. 'Religion and politics have ever gone together—the State and the temple-service forsooth! They both are hollow now. . . . But these Christians are in no way strong enough to crush such as Cæsar, though 'tis said that he fears the Jews.'

'Domitian is at heart a coward,' returned Stephanus. 'One who wrought the evil he hath done had like to fear every man's hand, since, surely, some day there shall arise a man who doth not, like all the rest, brook injury, and will raise the dagger against him and thus fulfil the Chaldæan prophecy.'

Now, much of this was new to me, and I hated Cæsar and feared him still, though I never saw him now. And, as I stood there listening, Juvenal did make comment on my round eyes and a white face, and said:

''Tis unseemly talk for such as thee, Nyria, who livest now—so they say—in the lap of luxury. If thou wouldst retain thy comforts, pretty maid, beware thee of the Christians.'

But, to me, it seemed that I could not deny my faith; so I made answer that I was a Christian, whereat Stephanus growled and Juvenal did look at me with surprise. Then he made a rough kind of bow, seeming to show mock of me.

'In truth, I thought that Nyria had done better for herself,' he said.

[1] For the reported magical disappearance of Apollonius from the tribunal of Domitian, see Appendix 16, Bk. III.

But I was flushed and hurt and like to cry, and I said naught.

'Nyria hath not been well advised: nevertheless, she meaneth no harm,' said Stephanus.

Then I went forth and spoke to Ascalaphus and gave the bird some sweetmeats that I had bought from a tray-seller. For now I had always money, and thus 'twas nothing to spend a sesterce upon some sweets. Thereon, Ascalaphus chuckled and did kiss me through the bars of his cage and, as he did so, I saw Stephanus look without and watch me. But he said no word, and I hied me away again.

And as I walked along the hill-side where it was more shady and green, —I had not got my litter that day for we never took the litters to Licinius's house—and as I was drawing near the villa, but not within its sight, I saw a lady's litter going up the road before me, and, down the road, coming towards me, walked Gregorio who seemed well-pleased with himself and yet was scowling. He always hath a jaunty, swinging walk, tossing his mantle as he goeth, and wearing in his cap a feather that doth flutter in the breeze.

Then as he met the lady's litter, still a few yards before me, it stopped and so did he and drew to its side. He doffed his cap most gallantly and leaned upon the litter, while the bearers rested the poles upon their shoulders, the while he chatted familiarly with her who was within.

Now I, not knowing whom it might be, glanced as I went by, and saw that Thanna sat therein. I was surprised to see that Gregorio should know her thus well, for Thanna never visited me, though we were still friends and I met her sometimes. She smiled and waved her hand, but Gregorio looked at me angrily—never did he cast me aught but a surly look—and I went on and met another litter descending. . . . And Thanna, haply, thinking she would overtake me, had dismissed Gregorio and came on upon my heels. . . .

Now the person in the other litter was that woman Salome whom we had seen with the child on the way to Laurentum many months agone. This I saw when the litter came near; and I saw that she looked black and angry. . . . To-day, the child was not with her. . . . Afterwards, I heard that she had been refused admittance to the Licinian villa and was wroth thereat. She was biting her lips in anger and her hands were held stretched out on each side of the litter. The curtains were open, for women like Thanna and Salome do usually ride with their curtains open. 'Tis only a noble lady who doth draw her curtains. . . .

And, as Salome's litter aproached that of Thanna, Thanna called out a salutation, the which, thinking it was for me, I stopped and turned to answer. . . . But soon I saw that Thanna and Salome were acquainted, and Thanna, forgetting me, bade her bearers turn her litter round and the two went down the hill together. But I heard Salome angrily complaining in her shrill persistent voice, which Thanna met with laughing retorts—though I could not catch the words—and seemed to make light of Salome's trouble.

I went on to the villa and round to the portico entrance and found Licinius soothing my domina who, likewise, seemed sore vexed about something, though then I knew not what it was. I soon guessed, however, from words let drop, that it was because of Salome who had sent a message to Licinius, the delivery of which Valeria had heard. . . .

But she became somewhat pacified, seeing that Licinius had denied the

woman entrance, and swore by everything he held dear, that she was naught to him save as his child's mother. . . .

And he held Valeria in his arms and kissed her many times, and, half-laughing, bade her compare herself with Salome and question wherein she had cause for jealousy. At which, Valeria, through tears and smiles, did become satisfied.

And we cloaked and went upon our way. . . .

Now I told my domina somewhat of the sayings of Juvenal and Stephanus concerning Apollonius and his strange disappearance from before the tribunal of Cæsar, of which it seemed she had heard tell but did not wholly believe the tale. For, she said, it pleased not Apollonius to be called the Wonder-worker.

Nevertheless, afterward, I did hear others say that it was no idle gossip, and they told how he had been there in the court in the midst of them all . . . and lo! he was gone. . . . And that he did other marvels, of the which I have spoken to thee—and did cure many of the people's ills by his wondrous power.

And then I did wonder in myself whence cometh the power and if, mayhap, it be from the devil. . . . For Christ hath said:

'He that is not with Me is against Me'; and Apollonius worketh not in the name of the Master. . . .

My domina sayeth that Apollonius is really good. . . . Yet have I thought . . . How can she tell? My domina is so strange. She will speak of the letters of Peter and Paul and say they must have been clever and good men and that—as she sayeth of Apollonius—they must have been very interesting. But she doth not seem to understand. She taketh only the clever side of things. . . . I am afraid she might not be able to tell about Apollonius. . . ."

CHAPTER X

THE LIE WHICH NYRIA TOLD

Nyria tells of the lecture given by Euphrates at the Valerian villa: of the return of Paulinus to Rome and of the lie she told him which weighed upon her soul. Likewise of the plottings of Regulus and Martial, and of the fever which took her, so that Stephanus arranged for her removal to the hills.

NYRIA: "Now, all through that second winter, the lectures went on and came not to an end until Licinius had been some little while in Rome. Valeria did ask him at the beginning to attend them, but he refused for the reason he had given—that his business in the city was secret and he would not that her friends should question him upon it. Moreover, he said, 'twere no joy for either of them to meet under the eyes of a gaping crowd.

Therefore, she pressed him no further for, methinks, she too was fearful lest news of their meetings should reach the ear of Paulinus. Nor might she, for her own pleasure's sake, break the order of these receptions, seeing that she was pledged alike to the company of friends and to certain orators engaged to give discourses before them.

Wouldst thou that I take thee to the oration of one who speaketh to-day? 'Tis a friend of the great Apollonius—a philosopher of the sect called Stoics, Euphrates by name. . . .[1]

I believe that he is himself from Asia Minor—or, perchance, Greece . . . I know not. But he is well spoken of in Rome and known to the Emperor, and moreover his wife is a rich Roman lady. . . . He hath a clever face. His hair is rather grey in places, very thick over the temples and sweeping back from off his forehead. The eyes are keen and dark: the nose thin and high. He is wearing—no, I think it is not the toga, but a cloak . . . yes, the cloak of a Greek philosopher. . . . Thou dost understand that I see the thing like a picture, but when it comes to the thoughts about it, I am sometimes puzzled. . . .

The room is that which is used for banquets. At the side, near the end, there is a platform and, just beyond, a large open window, and the air which enters through it is soft and pleasant. . . .

Many people have come, but 'tis not the fashionable set. These are persons who care for things to do with the mind, not with the body. . . . Sulpicia is there, sitting opposite the platform. Her dress? (laughing). Thou dost always ask about the women's attire! What doth it matter? . . . I never care. . . .

Well, she hath on a brown stola with a border of embroidery and it is caught upon the shoulders with brooches of yellow stones. Her hair is simply dressed, yet, less simply than my domina's. It is curled in front,

[1] For an interesting point in regard to the name Euphrates, wherein Nyria was right and the Recorder wrong, see Appendix 20, Bk. III.

but not in the manner of Julia's head-tiring. She hath her tablets and her stilus and is taking notes. There is a man leaning over the back of her chair, trying to talk to her, but she wants him not.

The chairs are not exactly in rows: they are just placed about, facing the platform. Plinius is between the platform and the window. He is standing with his arms folded and he carries a scroll in his hand and is wearing a purple toga. He looks well. There is always something to admire in Plinius. He is fresh and clean and hath a manly air. He was talking to my domina just now and hath moved up there.

My domina is sitting in a chair with broad arms and her hands are thrown loosely over them. She hath a troubled look. She is not taking notes, and this she doeth usually, even in her own house. Tacitus is beside her. . . . Methought I had described him to thee. Well, that is strange. . . . He hath a rather thin face—one seems to see the man's quality in his face; thou knowest, Tacitus is one of the men in Rome who, they say, is really good. His eyes are soft and kind but they have a look of distance as though he wished not to be close to people. . . .

I have sometimes thought that he doth care for my domina. He is always very courteous and oft gazes at her and yet he seemeth to put up something between him and her. I would that my domina had loved him instead of Licinius. . . . But how could she do that? Thou canst not *make* thyself love. . . .

She is not listening to the orator. . . . I can see her thoughts and the way they go. 'Tis to the house of Licinius—to the trellis-covered portico where spreads the yellow jasmine. She is troubled about Licinius. In truth, I have seen that, since he returned to Rome, she hath greatly changed. The calm that, with time, did come upon her, hath now departed, and from fevered joy and expectation she turneth again to brooding sadness until the hour approaches when she may go to him or that he may come to her. Now, she is troubled by the fear which doth ever assail her that, some day, something may happen to make all open and known. . . . She doth not shrink for herself—she would go through more than that for him. But she is wondering how it would be if his love should fail her. 'Tis true she must doubt him, else she could not think like that. Oh, I am afraid; I am afraid. . . . He doth love her but he doth not sustain her. And he is all that she hath. . . . And that is what she is thinking. . . .

Now, there are refreshments being handed round—fruit and cakes and cold drinks, wine and water and that bubbling white stuff—what is it called?—with snow. . . .

Thou wouldst learn the names of other persons, here, but it is difficult for me to know who all the guests are, for I do not announce them. . . . At Julia's I got to know them. But the people who come here are often quite different from those who went to Julia's house.

No, the Vestals are not here. . . . It is curious about the Vestals. Of course they could come to a lecture like this if they were invited. But I know not if my domina doth favour them. Methinks she feels that they ought to be better than they are. And yet, to hear her talk, it might seem that she did not mind if people were good or not. . . . It is strange that the Vestals should care so greatly for the Races and Shows and Games. But I suppose they have so much teaching at home that they need something different for amusement. . . .

I would that I could tell thee more of the Vestals. 'Twas in the house of Julia that I heard most about them, and in truth I know but little.

I would try to tell thee what the lecture is about. . . . It is hard for me to get through. . . . I understand not the half of it and I listen not. . . . I just come in and out. . . .

Oft, it all seemeth to me great foolishness and that most of those who listen do only come that they may talk afterwards—saying 'this orator is wrong,' or 'that other may be more right.' Thou knowest about the two sides of philosophers. Now, this one taketh the side of hardness and of standing aloof from all joy that may hap.

''Tis not wholly well,' he saith, 'to cut thyself away from all that pertaineth to the world, but, if the things which be pleasing fail thee, thou shouldst be indifferent and take good and ill fortune with equal satisfaction.' . . . But, methinks, 'tis not in nature that pleasure and hardship should be equal. And, moreover, it seemeth to me that this philosopher prateth not wisely of the virtue of living poorly, when all do know that he hath many slaves and doth himself live richly. . . . This, 'tis said, because of his wife who hath much money and must have her litter and her bearers and her women. . . . And, how knoweth he what it would be like to give up his fortune seeing that he hath never done so? . . . And yet, meseems, there be more real good in him than, perchance, he himself knoweth, seeing that he could not be a friend of the great Apollonius if there were not in him some measure of greatness.

Now, at the last, he doth talk with more excitement and waveth the roll of parchment in his hand while he doth mightily urge them all to be plain of living and to eschew pomp and luxury, telling them that it matters naught whether we have hard times or pleasant times, since all cometh alike in the end. Nevertheless, methinks, it doth matter much to us whether we live in pain or at our ease: and so it seemed to me his words did carry a false-sounding ring. . . .

I can get no more. . . . My head feels confused. . . . There are so many flowers in the room. No, that is not the reason. I understand it not. My domina hath always many flowers. . . . There are sheaves of daffodils amid their green . . . and violets and myrtles . . . and small orange trees are placed around the platform.

Now Euphrates stroketh his beard[1] with one hand and still he waveth the scroll with the other. Methinks, he doth believe that he meaneth it all. . . .

. . . . . .

'Twas toward the late spring that my master Paulinus[2] came back to Rome. The war was almost over, though not wholly, and the great Generals were permitted to return.

Methinks that, at first, Paulinus was glad to be at home. Yet was his greeting of Valeria very different from that which I remembered when he had come back from Egypt and on his way to the villa had bought me in the slave-market and brought me as a gift to my domina. Now, he was courteous to her in his behaviour, but somewhat rough and distant, and never did he pass by that side of the house where were her apartments nor cross the threshold of her room.

[1] Euphrates and his beard. See Appendix 20, Bk. III.
[2] April or early May, A.D. 95.

Methought that, at times, he did regard her with a certain suspicion though outwardly he paid her all due honour. Meseemed, also, that, for the first time, Valeria did fail somewhat in her demeanour to him, for now, this lacked its former cold ease and oft, methought, a certain fear was hidden beneath that dignity which still upheld her.

Yet, to appearance, they stood together and once Paulinus did show himself at a lecture—methinks, so that all might know his approval of these new, learned pursuits. 'Twas at the last of those receptions; but soon he did quit the circle, making jest that the sword and the State were nigher to his understanding than this mighty philosophy which interested his wife so deeply.

Thou knowest, Paulinus held high office under Cæsar and after his return was often away at Albanum. For Domitian did spend much time in his palace by the lake and when the Emperor was absent from Rome certain high persons of the State must needs be within call. Paulinus had no villa there, though, had Valeria been willing, he would then have hired one for her comfort and pleasure. But she refused, pleading that she was over-much occupied with her studies in Rome, and he pressed not the matter. Mayhap, he cared not that she should be with him, for Paulinus, it seemed to me, had also greatly changed and the talk went—methinks Aeola caught it from Crispus—that he preferred the riotous company gathered round Cæsar in his palace at Albanum, and that, among other ladies, 'twas Galla to whom Paulinus now took his gifts of jewels—which, methinks, vexed Martial, for he had been wont to boast of the favours of Galla to himself.[1]

Nevertheless am I sure that 'twas greatly to my master's satisfaction thus finding Valeria concerned with these learned matters and hearing that they had been her chief occupation during his absence.

Methinks, he did not gain knowledge of Licinius's secret habitation of the Sura villa till several weeks later. Methinks, also, that he was half-loth to believe ill against Valeria, and yet half-eager to learn whatsoever might be told him. But he would fain have proved her above reproach because she was his wife, the upholder of his name and the mother of his two sons who should follow in the State after him. Wherefore, when he saw that she mixed chiefly with learned persons and interested herself in affairs of the mind, that was the answer he gave to those who brought hints of wrong against her.

Now, seeing that Paulinus did doubt Valeria, I questioned within me who in Rome had fathomed the secret purpose of Licinius in hiding his return, and who had gained knowledge of his goings in to the Cœlian villa.

For when Licinius doth go to my domina's house, 'tis after the sun hath set, and he entereth by the side door, of which he hath the key and which leadeth only into the garden of her apartments. Then, am I on the watch for his coming, having given out to Corellia that my lady, being weary, would be denied to any who might seek her company, and that till she doth summon her women, Nyria alone shall be in attendance in the ante-room. For Valeria feareth—and Licinius, likewise—lest Chabrias or some other slave should betray his presence.

But at this time I knew not that when Paulinus with Asiaticus came back from Egypt, 'twas Gregorio who maliciously let fall to his master certain information concerning the visits of Licinius in his absence. . . These had been in those weeks after the death of Julia, when I might not go forth to

[1] The expensive favours of Galla. See Appendix 21, Bk. III.

the Cœlian or any whither, before we were all sold in the slave-market and Paulinus bought me and gave me to Valeria. . . .

Now 'twas the fancy—of which I could not be quite certain—that one evening I had seen Gregorio prying near the garden door, and, also, something sly and curious in the manner of the boy, which set my thoughts towards him. Likewise, a certain thing he did, concerning the garden of Licinius, the manner of which had puzzled me.

That garden had been laid out in little terraces which fall away below the jasmine portico somewhat in the fashion of my domina's garden, but it is smaller and the ground ill-tended. And, noting this, my domina did wish that the young Greek Gregorio should arrange Licinius's garden, he being clever in such devisings, and skilful in the matter of flowers. There was no harm in thus lending her slave. She might well have done it with her husband's knowledge as a friendly act and a compliment to the boy's taste in gardening. . . . But Gregorio sulked and made wry looks, and said words deserving of punishment. . . . Methinks the boy hath somewhat in his brain. That *he* should give trouble to the domina! She could have sold him and sent him right away for speaking thus displeasingly. But she careth not to rouse herself for such as that. . . . Then, some while afterward, he did come to her, cringing to obey her wishes, saying that he knew he was her slave and did but ask her commands. . . . I liked not that he should offer thus. The boy hath been strange-behaved of late. . . . Now he doth put himself forward to gain the notice of Paulinus and to serve his master in little ways which are not his business. And, methinks Paulinus doth favour the boy. . . . I understand it not. . . ."

RECORDER: The Instrument's voice weakened—a sign that she needed a night's rest. . . . Upon the following day, she went back to ancient Rome and again became the slave-girl of the first century.

NYRIA: "Thou dost ask me concerning the woman Salome and the place she held in the house of Licinius Sura. . . . I know not if there be much that I can tell thee. . . . That was a strange woman—a Jewess—of the same race as that of Licinius Sura's mother. For I know that he hath Jewish blood in him, though in manner and feature, he appeareth more Roman than Jew. I have heard that he was the son of the elder Licinius Sura and, by adoption, his heir.

Thou mayst remember the words of Paulinus when at the farewell party he did jest with Licinius upon the bond with Salome, and it seemed to me that 'twas his wish to try Valeria in the matter. The common talk went that Salome had long lived with Licinius and that he was the father of her child. Yet by law she was not his wife.

Thou knowest there are different kinds of marriage in Rome. There is the religious ceremony and there is the marriage by which a woman becomes a man's wife if she hath lived with him and hath not been away from him for a whole year. If the man doth not wish her for his legal wife he will send her away from his house for three nights and then she hath no lawful hold upon him.[1]

Salome was the wife of Licinius in such fashion. I think that, for a long while after he knew my domina, he still kept Salome with him. But afterward, when my domina became as his wife, then he gave up the other. He hath never had her since but hath always driven her away—or so he sayeth. . . . I have heard him so tell my domina, and, likewise, that it was but an

[1] Roman laws of marriage. See Appendix 22, Bk. III.

arrangement such as is common with many a patrician Roman. . . . She was lower in rank than Licinius, and much, much lower than my domina. I believe that she was of the higher class of slave and that he did free her.

When she left him she took the child away with her. Now methinks that Licinius had cared very much for the boy and had looked towards bringing him up to be a man. Yet, after the woman and the child had been sent away, it was as though they had never been. . . . And that was strange and, meseemed, that it was not just. . . . But it showed me that he did very greatly love my domina. Oft have I thought of that. . . .

But, after he had sent her away, the woman would come back to his house to see him and would make trouble about herself and the child. . . . 'Tis true that he held her unwelcome, nevertheless she came.

I mind me of another day when I had gone forth and returned. Not that day on which Salome and Thanna met each other near to the house of Licinius, but one when I found my domina in yet deeper sorrow and vexation, and Licinius at his wits' end, and, methought, like enough to lie so that he might soothe her troubled spirit. . . . And he tried to make out that he knew not whether the child were verily his, and in that, it seemed to me, he was not fair nor just . . . . Methinks, that he was afeard of Salome, and that there was somewhat more which gave her power over him.

However that might have been, he said naught of it to Valeria. It seemed that on this day my domina guessed, or knew, that he had conferred lengthily with the woman, not sending her away at once as was agreed. . . . I know not exactly how the matter stood for 'twas on an afternoon when I had gone again to visit Stephanus. Though she said naught, sure am I that the thought of the boy pricked my domina. For she knew that although she was dearest the other woman was mother to Licinius's child and had a right which none might touch. My domina doth not care for children, but she did wish to give Licinius everything, and that is the greatest thing a woman can give to the man she loves. But she was affrighted. Though she loved him so much and would have left all for him had he thus willed, it hath come to me that she might not have had the strength. . . . I am sure there were times when she felt that she could not give up her position and her house and, though she cared not for Paulinus, the protection of his name. She knew how it would gall her to be outside all that. . .

Much lay in Licinius's power. He could have made things different had he thus willed. . . . But he had not courage. He thought of his name. . . . There were many of his family,[1] and some were persons of importance, and Licinius thought much of that. . . . Palfurius Sura . . . Yes, he was one, but I know not how near a relation. Methinks, it was partly the feeling for his family that made Licinius act as he did about my domina. Moreover, he was not very rich, and he feared poverty with her. He had land in Rome : his money lay there. Had he incurred the wrath of Cæsar and put himself in the power of Paulinus, who is Domitian's friend, his property might have been confiscated. He was afraid of that. . . . Thou seest, in some ways Licinius was weak. He could not bear to be ill thought of—to lose status—is that the word thou dost use ?

It was all right about that other woman. . . . She was not his legal wife. He could have got rid of her and nobody would have thought of him the worse. . . .

[1] For particulars of the family of Marcus Licinius Sura and of the other two members of it here mentioned by Nyria, see Appendix 4, Bk. III.

And there was more. . . . There was plotting, of which I knew not then—the which, if it had succeeded, would have made him great and powerful. Methinks the time was not yet ripe. . . . But my mind is greatly confused. . . . There are many things of which I knew naught . . . and others which rise out of strange blackness, and I can scarce tell if they be true or not. . . .

There is one thing which doth stand out quite clear and which hath caused me great grief. 'Twas the lie I had told Paulinus. . . . For I did lie to him. . . . And I knew that to lie is a great sin and my heart was sore concerning Paulinus. . . . And I knew, also, that Paulinus trusted me . . . and he had ever been a good friend to Nyria.

'Twas on this wise. Once, my domina was very nearly discovered. Somebody must have seen her at Licinius's house—I know not how—and then straightway have told her husband. . . . We had left the litters and she had bidden them meet us at a certain place, and we had gone to Licinius's villa, and afterward had found the litters again. . . . And then I had to leave my domina—I mind not now what the errand was upon which I went—and, as I walked down, I met Paulinus. . . . We knew not that he was returned from Albanum. . . . He stopped me. . . . I seemed to know within me that some one had betrayed us. He was black with fury. He took me by the shoulder. And then he questioned me. Had I been with the Domina that afternoon? Whither had we gone? What had we done? He said he would not ask his wife unless he knew that what he had heard were true, and that he questioned me because I never lied.

But I did lie then. . . . I told him that we had been to shops and that we had left the litters and had gone to walk in some meadows and had wandered far and that we had met the litters again. And I told him wherefore I had left my domina to go back without me. And when I had told him he seemed more satisfied. . . . I knew what I was doing. . . . I knew it was a dreadful sin, but I would rather have sinned and borne the punishment than betray my domina. . . . Thou wouldst have done the same! Of that am I glad. . . . But I was very unhappy. . . ."

. . . . . .

NYRIA: "I will tell thee what I can about the plottings of Regulus and Martial, but thou wilt understand that I heard of them only in snatches and that my thoughts were troubled concerning Valeria. And also, it is best for the power of me that I go not after those discoverings which bear not upon myself.

Now, thou dost remember that I told thee of two men who were loitering outside the house of Licinius on that dusky evening when he did declare to Valeria his secret presence in Rome: and, methinks, those men may have seen him embrace her and draw her within his gate. . . . Also, that they had been set to spy upon him but, desiring to make certain, were waiting to fall upon him until the time should be ripe. . . . I did know afterwards—though, in the strange darkness that came upon me, I cannot tell whence I gat the knowledge—that there were two sets of spies following after Licinius. . . .

Firstly, there were the spies of the lord Regulus whose business it was to discover wherein Licinius was concerned in the Judæan plot against Cæsar of which I heard talk between Juvenal and Stephanus. But, seeing that those of whom then they spake had not been condemned, I know not if Licinius had to do with that plot or with another. And, secondly, there were the spies of Martial upon the love-meetings of Licinius with Valeria, so that

mischief should be wrought through Paulinus becoming privy to the matter. And these two sets of spies, of which the chief were Thanna and Gregorio, did meet as thou knowest—mayhap, at first, by chance—around the villa of Licinius, and, though of differing purpose, did each guess at the other's aim.

For I would have thee understand that the lord Regulus,[1] being one of those to whom the State gave reward for bringing witness against traitors, he did hire certain men for such common work as was needed at the outset, not greatly troubling himself save where the matter were of good profit or urgent moment, and then did Thanna bestow her wits upon his service.

Whereas Martial, not being a State Informer, did act from private grudge and, maybe, the hope of secret gain, seeing that Paulinus had, friendly-wise, charged him to keep a watch upon Valeria, and 'twas well reported of Paulinus that he was ever ready to reward a friend and to pay alike for vengeance upon an enemy.

But, at that time, I did not rightly understand what things were going on, though I guessed that Gregorio was always trying to watch upon my domina, yet, methought, that was just his jealous way. Thou dost remember, he had threatened to betray Valeria long before, but seeing he had done naught—for thus I then believed—I thought he would not dare to do it now. I knew not that he had gained his master's ear, when Paulinus came back from Egypt, and had set his suspicion upon Licinius : and that, at first, Paulinus would not listen, and when he did listen, he would not wholly believe. . . . And, thou knowest, Valeria was taken ill that night and afterwards, Archigenes did speak to Paulinus, who gave his pledge.

I have told thee of that darkness which came upon me, and, verily, the confusion of my mind is great concerning that time : scarce do I know how the summer went. . . . I knew that I had lied to Paulinus, and the lie did sorely irk my soul. . . .

Yet, I minded me how Stephanus had been wont to say that 'tis sometimes a man's duty to lie : and that when it were a matter of saving a friend, no wrong should come from it to his soul. . . . And then, methought, that if I had thus satisfied Paulinus and saved Valeria from his wrath, neither would there come harm from this sin that I had done. . . . For long after that day I saw not Paulinus again. When I went in, I told my domina that he had met me and had questioned me concerning her and that I had put him off—I said not in what manner. She just answered shortly, seeming to be full of her own thought, and my domina is so proud that though she knew I understood the matter, I could not speak to her freely concerning Licinius . . . and so I went away.

But I felt sick. . . . And the cloud came over me and I think I must have fainted. I remember not what happened. . . . Aeola was with me and she was frightened—Aeola was ever easily affrighted—and she contrived to let the domina know. . . .

The domina only said that I was to be tended and did not further concern herself. For there was naught to make trouble about, save that I could not work.

But that night I was light-headed and did not talk nonsense. And Aeola was yet more frightened and sent word to Stephanus. And when Stephanus came, he gave me potions and said that I must be carefully tended. And,

[1] Regulus—Advocate, Informer. See Appendix 23, Bk. III.

fearing lest in my fever I should speak of that which was best left untold, he directed that Aeola alone should watch beside me.

Now this did not please my domina, for Aeola, having become a good serving-maid, she depended, in my absence, most upon her. Therefore, she gave command that one of the other women, and not Aeola, should tend me.

Then Stephanus sent a message to the Domina—for he could not see her—that he would not answer for my life were I placed under unskilled care, or that of one with whom I was not friends, as with Aeola. But, hearing, on entering the house next day, that Valeria had nevertheless sent for Aeola and, being about to demand admittance that he might lay the case before her, he met Paulinus, who was just departing for Albanum, and made bold to speak to him about me.

Now Paulinus was ever kindly to his slaves and never denied us if a matter were brought justly before him. Whereon, Stephanus told him the difficulty. But Paulinus said that he could not interfere between women, and that if the Domina needed her maiden she must have her, but that Stephanus could procure a skilled nurse and the steward would pay him for her service. This, thou understandest, I knew not then, but was told afterwards.

But that was not to Stephanus's way of thinking, for he would trust no stranger. 'Twas then that he bethought him of Aemilia's father's farm, knowing they were my friends and that Aemilia favoured the Christians, wherefore, if they should learn that I was a Christian, they would not betray me.

So then Stephanus asked that I might be removed to the house of a friend in the country, and to this Paulinus gave ready consent. Wherefore, Aeola did prepare me and Stephanus obtained a litter and bore me out, going with me himself, and Aeola remained in her service of Valeria.

I was not then always unknowing of everything, but only at times when the fever ran high. . . . But I did not see my domina before I went to the farm.

I liked not to go away. I had liefer have been at home and I wished greatly to be in Rome when the Blessed Apostle John should visit there, it being rumoured that he would come. And to miss hearing him would have been a matter more grievous than I could contemplate, my whole mind being set upon it. Yet, I feared to say much of that to Stephanus, for he would tell me that if I had thought more of myself I would not be ill: and when I spoke of desiring to come back for my meetings he answered that the meetings would wait and that, were I not wise, I would never come back at all. Therefore, I did not argue with Stephanus but determined to get me well.

And now I remember not much about the journey. The litter was cool, for there were thick curtains, and Stephanus kept by me, though he had a mule led behind to ride if he should get over-fatigued. But, most of the way, he walked beside my litter. It was, haply, some fourteen or fifteen miles—I know not. But we did halt, half-way, beside a stream under some trees, and there Stephanus fed me. . . . The change of air had seemed to do me good. I felt better already. But he would not give me wine—only milk. . . . I was very tired when we got in and that is all I can remember. . . .

They gave me kindly welcome. Aemilia was there. And now, I mind me that Plinius could not yet have remarried or Aemilia would have been with Calpurnia. She was spending the summer at the farm with her husband and her babes, one of these being ill. Aemilia tended me and it seemed that I

got quickly better. . . . And yet, I know that it was longer than I thought before I was well.

Thou knowest that it was quite an old couple—Aemilia's parents—at the farm. Aemilia had a younger brother who helped to work it. Aemilia's elder brother was married and had a farm of his own. Now Aemilia's husband, Rusticus, did also work a little on the farm to help for his keep, though, methinks, Plinius, having now no great need of him and Aemilia, was generous in paying for their disposal. But Aemilia was proud and would have her husband aid her father. Therefore he did all such errands as were needed by Aemilia's father about the country and in Rome, and was often in the city. And thus 'twas he who brought me news of the Christians and of the Apostle's coming. . . . And I, being set upon returning for to hear him, did consult with Aemilia, who was desirous to attend herself but could not leave her sick babe.

But I dared not say aught to Stephanus, for he would have forbidden me. He came out three or four times to see me and, each time, said I had best remain where I was. For though, methinks, he knew naught of any danger to the Christians, he liked me to be secure where I was well tended, and he feared that, if I should overstrain myself, the fever might return.

'Twas very pleasant up there but I was not happy. I missed my domina —I missed her sorely. I used to think that perhaps she might come out and see me, but she never came. She might have done so without much trouble, but I knew it was not likely she would come. Stephanus's coming did not quite satisfy me and he *would* keep on again about wanting me to marry him. I said 'No,' I could not leave my domina, and he answered that he needed me far more than she did. . . . But again I told him 'No,'—because I knew that she could not have got on without me. She could not manage for herself. . . . And I wondered how she had been doing all that time in Rome. . . . My domina had not gone away, at all: I knew that it was because she did not like to go far from Licinius: and I wondered how she arranged about that, now; for 'twas I that had helped to make it easy for her and him. . . . I hoped she would trust no one else, seeing there was nobody fit to be trusted. . . . I could not say much to Stephanus—it was her secret, not mine. But I bade him go and find out how she was and to tell me when he came again if all were going well and there was no trouble in the house. And then he said that he had been on the Cœlian before he came, and had called to ask if there were any message or aught else for me, but that Valeria would not see him, and that it was not likely she should trouble herself on such a matter. He felt angrily about her and he misjudged her. But he need not have said it so unkindly. Yet I knew 'twas because of his love for me. . . .

I was still feeling ill, but I thought I should be better down there. . . . I wanted so to get back to her: there seemed a sense of trouble in the air. And I was wondering all the time about so many things. . . . And about Stephanus too. . . . I tried to put him away from my mind, but he would make himself thought of, sometimes. I could not see what was to be done. . . . I was very fond of Stephanus, thou knowest, and I supposed I would have to marry some day. But I did not know what I should feel afterwards, and I was always afraid of what I could not understand—that is—things down there amongst people—thou knowest—hard things . . . of that kind.

Therefore, I told no one but Aemilia and her people that I was going

back to Rome, and I hired me a litter, for which they lent me the money. . . . Oh, I know not if 'twere ever paid them again. . . .

And now I would say to thee that I know not whether at that time I did understand aught of the truth about the spying on Licinius and of the Judæan plot. And yet, methinks, there had come to me somewhat of it. Mayhap, Stephanus had spoken of certain whisperings in Rome. . . . Yet naught had I said to Stephanus of Licinius having returned, knowing that 'twas secret business that had brought him and being afeard within me that 'twas somewhat against the State. But I knew not of myself and methought Licinius would have told my domina and that she would have prevailed with him for his safety's sake. Methinks, Licinius intended that none should know until all was ready and that then he would carry his purpose through in the teeth of everything. Oh, that was the great and terrible mistake. . . . If she had known . . . if he had told her, she would never have done that thing which brought about his ruin. She would have protected him at any cost. . . . Why am I saying that? I am not there. . . . My mind is not clear. . . . It all seems outside me. . . . Something presses on me . . . something dreadful about my domina. . . . I shall get it. . . . But I cannot give it to thee now. . . . When thou dost want me to find out any special thing, put thy mind upon it before and then I know what I am to do. It is as it would be down there. . . . If thou didst go forth without motive thou wouldst pick up only that which thou didst happen to see. . . . If thou dost know what thou art going for, then wilt thou hunt for it. I cannot always get things at the time. . . . Those things which I myself have done I know and I can do. But when I have not been there I must go and find out. . . ."

CHAPTER XI

Doubt made Certainty

Nyria, not wholly recovered from her illness, returns unexpectedly to the Valerian villa and, of a sudden, comes upon an interview between Salome, the so-called wife of Licinius Sura, and the Domina Valeria. She gives her bewildered impressions of the scene.

Nyria: "I started very early in the morning when the air was fresh and cool and the sun scarce risen. But, towards noon, the heat grew fierce and the sun beat upon my head, and I was glad to reach the shelter of the villa.

I went in by the entrance nearest to the slaves' houses and, thence, to a court—not Valeria's court but one less private—where in summer she doth oft receive persons whom she seeth not in her own sitting-room.

I would show thee. . . . There are two or three doors leading from this court. The principal door giveth, at one end, to my domina's apartments and, at the other end, to a wide passage from which open my master's and other rooms, and, beyond these, are the banqueting-hall and greater reception rooms.

I had come through the slaves' antechamber—where, to-day, I found none in waiting—into a smaller chamber which hath a window let into the wall to give light and air from the court. A curtain but half-drawn hung before the window and I could see into the court, which looked to me most cool and pleasant, with a fountain splashing in the middle and the marble floor set with rugs and cushioned chairs and couches, and, here and there, a marble table or gilded tripod.

Along the sides of the court there runneth a marble fretwork between carved pillars, with wide openings above. It is very quiet here in the midday. There are none working without. I can see the white grapes upon a trellis outside and, away in the distance, the heat-mist rising over the Campagna.

All is green shadow, within. Creepers push their way up through the fretwork and twine round the pillars and hang from the trellis overhead: and some are planted inside and grow up against the wall by the window near which I stand—one a creeper with mauve flowers, and one with great yellow blooms. There are flowering shrubs, also, and little orange-trees in big pots.

And when I went closer to the window I saw my domina. 'Tis as a picture that it all doth come back to me.

She is sitting by a wide opening in a cushioned armchair of inlaid marble. Her back is partly towards me but I can see her face and form. The opening hath a deep marble sill and her elbow is upon it, and she leaneth a little forward with her cheek against her hand. Her look is very cold and proud. She weareth a cool dress of creamy stuff with a green shade through it

and there is a broad band of embroidery upon its edge. Her arms and neck are bare. I can tell that she hath been fretting. There are dark rims round her eyes. Her hair seemeth darker than it was before.

Her left hand is held out over the arm of her chair—it looketh lovely—so soft and cool. Gold bands clasp her arms below the shoulder and at the wrist, and, sometimes, she doth move her left hand fretfully. . . .

I knew not if I should go and approach her by the slaves' door. Then, hearing the sound of a woman's voice and seeing that she had not any of her own women behind her, methought to remain within call as had been my wont when she received any but familiar friends.

And as I moved to the edge of the curtain, I saw that she who spake before my domina was the woman Salome and that the child was there with her.

I understood not how Salome had obtained entrance. That should have been on the part of Chabrias which seemed strange to me, unless it had been otherwise, by Paulinus's command. I knew not then that Paulinus was absent from Rome for a night or two. . . . But I scarce thought of Paulinus : I thought only of my domina.

The woman Salome had made urgent excuse—or so I guessed. Now, I mind me that, later on, Aeola told me she had come more than once, had tried to throw herself in my domina's way and that, until to-day, Valeria had denied her admittance.

Later I heard that 'twas by means of a letter which she brought that Salome had reached my domina's presence. Methinks the Greek boy Gregorio took the letter and that Salome followed after him. My mind is not clear. . . . I was not there at the beginning. . . .

And yet I know that I must be there. . . . I see it all as a picture clear before me.

That woman standeth before Valeria—a few paces off, nearer to the fountain. Between the two, and beside my domina, there is a marble table and upon it a basket of fruit, a jug of wine and glasses and a dish of snow. One of the glasses is but half-filled. My domina hath offered it to the woman —that is usual : I had thought my domina would have asked her to sit down ; mayhap, the woman would not. . . . She standeth with her arms folded. She too is proud, but there is no dignity in her pride. . . .

Thou knowest, she is a handsome woman—shorter than my domina and plumper, her skin darker, a flush upon her cheeks. Her eyes are dark and bright—very pretty, long-shaped eyes with a look in them that I like not, and they have thick brown lashes which almost hide the eyes when they droop.

She is wearing a red robe—not dark red, 'tis geranium colour : her shoe-thongs are red and she hath a gossamer veil with a narrow gold border fastened by gold pins to her hair and twisted round her neck. . . . Now, in talking, she doth turn her head from side to side, as if to free her throat, and shaketh the veil back over her shoulder. . . .

I listened not at first to what she said. . . . I waited, seeing 'twere not fitting I should put myself forward, and I watched, thinking that the Domina would see me and call me when she knew I was there : and I wondered why the woman had come and if there were mischief about Licinius.

The child was running gently about—he was a quiet little fellow—pulling, mayhap, a blossom down and smelling it and, sometimes, running

towards his mother and away again. And then, again, he crept round the wall, playing with the creepers and would look from his mother to the domina, seeming attracted and yet half-frighted—more frightened at the domina than of his mother. And now he hath come near. . . . He is touching the fruit, pulling at the grapes. A pretty little boy, dressed simply in a white tunic. Meseems that, in the picture, he is all there is of innocence and pure, sweet beauty. He doth greatly resemble Licinius. In both, the hair groweth after the same fashion upon the forehead. . . . I see my domina look at him—she bendeth a little. And now—it is so strange . . . I see her not as a picture. I can feel the living heart-beats of her. . . . I can read the living mind. . . . She doth compare the boy with her own sons. . . . She would have liked to see that look upon the face of a child of hers who had for father Licinius Sura. . . .

The little boy doth lift his eyes to her and smile and then turn away afeard. . . . And now with her right arm she maketh a quick movement . . . 'tis half to send him from her . . . and yet methinks that had his mother not been there she might have drawn the child within her arms and have kissed him for that look of his father in the smile.

But now with the sweep of her arm, backward, she doth overturn the half-filled glass, and the glass is broken on the marble, and the red wine spills and leaves a deep stain, like unto blood adown the side of her robe and upon her embroidered shoe, and lieth on the marble floor in a little pool as of blood.

She doth take no heed of that but sitteth still and straight again, and so far do her thoughts travel that she appeareth scarce to hear what the woman is saying. I can see the thoughts as they rise and change and float away, and all are of doubt and pain and bitterness. I can feel that the woman's letter hath wrought upon Valeria, and that she doth suspect Licinius of hiding somewhat from her. She is thinking that there hath been strangeness in his manner of late ; that he sheweth not the same pressing desire to be at her side as when first their love renewed itself. She feareth that he may fail her once more, and she is resolved that to-night she will learn the truth. To-night she is free to have his company and had urged him to pass to her, after dark this evening, through the private door in the wall, as hath been his wont.

But, then, he did try to put her off, and when she questioned him, he told her no more than that the secret mission on which he had come to Rome doth oblige him to be beyond the Aventine by nightfall. Then, when, in sore displeasure, she had combated the excuse, he yielded and said that he would come later if he could. She feareth, yet dare not fear, that he is wearying of the perils and restrictions of her love—wearying even of its very ardour. But 'tis hard for her to believe that the woman, Salome, may have drawn him back again. For she knoweth, with a woman's knowledge, that never could Licinius Sura love the lowborn freedwoman as he hath loved the highly-placed Valeria. Notwithstanding, she knoweth, likewise, that the bonds of nature and custom are strong, and, for long, Salome had been as Licinius's wife. . . . And, Salome is the mother of Licinius's son.

I am certain that ever, beneath her scorn, my domina hath felt deep jealousy of that woman. Though the feeling slept when naught disturbed the love of Licinius for herself, always hath that woman stood between them : always hath there remained the sting. . . . This, I discern with that strange

sure vision which doth sometimes come to me. And I read in the other woman's thoughts—which rise, likewise, and seem writ in clear dark signs on the face of the picture—that she doth know of this jealous feeling and that, thereby, she findeth her own strength. She is clever, that woman . . . and she hath no true pride. There is nothing she would stop at doing to secure her end.

Now, my domina doth seem to draw within herself and, sitting up stiff and cold as though she had scarce heard or understood the woman's prating, she doth ask the purport of this visit. For, saith she, hitherto she hath refused an interview because it had seemed to her that, between those two, there could be nothing of like interest, but that since, from the letter she hath read, there appeareth to be somewhat of urgency which might concern her friends, she is prepared to consider whatsoever the matter may portend.

Whereon, the woman answereth that, verily, the matter doth concern one who was the friend of Valeria. . . . And then she doth mutter something about knowing not if the friendship be like to continue. . . .

The woman hath a rude and angry air as of claiming for herself certain dues. 'Tis then that she doth rear her head and shake the scarf from about her neck ; and there is deeper redness in her cheeks and a curious light in the corners of her eyes—I did tell thee they were long and narrow eyes. . . .

Now, standing bold and upright, she sayeth that she hath not come to plead, and that the Domina will be no more troubled by such pleadings. For, she saith, her pleadings to Licinius have prevailed and, once more, her husband is all her own as in those earlier days when their son Marcus was born to them. She knoweth not, she saith—and, meseemed, her words held insolence poorly veiled—whether this renewed union be partly due to the Domina's relinquishment of him whom she hath not the power to retain, or whether it be that Licinius hath, of himself, turned away from those passing love-pleasurings which did amuse him for a time. But, be that as it may, she hath come in courtesy to inform the Domina of the fact. . . . And full claim hath she—or so she saith—to uphold the rights of herself and of their child. For not only hath she been the wife of Licinius during so many past years, the boy—and she pointeth to him—being more than four years old, but in Judæa, recently, Licinius hath taken her back to wife, and there is another child coming to them.

'Tis a bold and clever game and the sword doth pierce Valeria. Oh, had I but been with her ! . . . Never, could I have reached her, would she have let that woman speak.

I know not if it be true—that which the woman said. I am telling thee the *feel* of the picture and of the woman. She doth feel to be fleshly and false. . . . And yet, meseems, she hath a certain justice to her cause. Licinius would have been less to blame had he openly repudiated Salome and taken away my domina. He hath not acted fairly by either woman.

But oh ! it is dreadful that Salome should be standing there watching my lady suffer. . . . Yet I feel that, surely, my domina's natural dignity will uphold her now.

If she would but pause to think ! . . . If she would but give herself a chance ! . . . I can see that something brave and loyal is rising up within her—something which doth tell her that she is unworthy in thus lending ear to such a tale of the man she loves. . . . If only she would let that speak ! . . . And, then, she doth remind herself—I can read the thought—that he hath deceived her in small things, and why not in great ones ? . . . And

that were she to ask him for the truth, he would not give it her. Hath he not kept from her his secrets? Those secrets which he hath shared with Salome! And she remembereth the cloud that hath lain between them these last days. . . .

Perhaps it seemeth to thee strange and not fitting that I should thus read the heart of my mistress; and sometimes, indeed, have I wondered if it were right. But always have I felt that she is mine own, in the spiritual sense, and that I, of all others, know her the best. . . .

Moreover, she had been less like to believe the woman's tale, had it not been spoke in straight and simple fashion. Salome hath told that which covereth all. She hath been with Licinius in Judæa . . . she is to bear him another child. . . . Oh, is it true, that which the woman hath said? I fear me that it may be true. . . . Wait. . . . Mine eyes do turn away. . . . They may not read in my domina's heart the agony of that thought. . . .

Wouldst thou have me find out if the woman hath spoken truth? I cannot now. . . . I can only see the picture as from beyond. . . . Of myself, down here, I know naught. If I did know I should understand better. . . .

And still the woman faceth my domina, arms folded, staring impudently at my lady. . . . Now she doth unfold her arms and toucheth with her hand the head of the child.

The boy hath strayed to my domina and, again, he doth stroke the embroidery on her robe. . . . She taketh no notice of the child. Her head is drooped. One hand lieth across the marble window-sill: the other hangeth at her side. . . . The child is conscious of her sorrow. In sympathy, mayhap, he doth put his little fingers down the back of her hand. . . . Her hand twitcheth at his touch and my domina doth draw it quickly away. . . .

The woman is angered and pulleth round the child's face towards her own. . . . Oh! That woman is cruel. . . . She sayeth somewhat of the boy being so like his father that none could mistake him for aught but the son of Licinius Sura.

The woman knoweth where to stab. Yet is there true feeling in her voice and, though I am against her, meseems that she is not wholly false. She is doing the last thing that she can do in the cause of herself and her son. . . .

Now she talketh fast and wildly and seemeth scarcely to guess whither her frenzied utterance might lead her. . . . For she is telling something very strange to my domina. . . . I cannot get it right. . . . She is betraying the secrets of Licinius—revealing that he is a conspirator—a plotter for the cause of Judæa against the Roman State. . . . Oh, that is a dangerous game! Her mind appeareth not clear upon the matter. And yet I know not whether it be all false. She hath a motive behind . . . mayhap it be that, herewith, she doth put somewhat in the hands of my domina to bring to him hurt and punishment. . . . But how can she wish to punish Licinius! Yet, methinks, that rather would Salome make Licinius suffer than that Valeria should not suffer through him. . . .

And, as the woman raveth, my domina turneth on her a look—sharp, wild, uncomprehending, but as though the mad words had touched in her some spring of fierce and desperate adventuring. . . . 'Tis but for a moment and her face becometh marble again, but the boy, seeing the movement and the look, goeth nearer to the Domina and again toucheth her robe.

Then, doth his mother pull him roughly away and the boy is frightened

and clingeth to his mother's skirt while yet he looketh over his shoulder at Valeria.

And the woman doth watch my domina out of those narrow, wicked eyes. . . .

There seemeth not a drop of blood in Valeria's face. Her features are as though cut in marble save that her white lips tremble a little. But she gaineth courage to steady herself. The pride in her doth sustain her spirit.

Gravely, her eyes do regard the woman, going slowly from the head of Salome to her feet. And soon, the insolent stare of that other doth droop before her gaze. . . . Then, bowing her head politely, my domina answereth with ice-like dignity and with no falter, now, of lips or voice.

In this wise doth her speech shape itself—That the information her visitor hath brought—albeit not entirely unknown to her—hath still for her some interest : and that the wife of Licinius Sura—as, rightly or wrongly, the lady may please to style herself—should now rest satisfied, seeing that it is always well for husband and wife to dwell in love and concord. But for herself, she saith—one whose upbringing and conditions of life are of a different order—she is convinced that love, whether within or without the bond of marriage, is a thing not worth the troubling after . . . a distraction 'tis true, but for the hour only ; and, after its passing, a fresh distraction taketh its place. Yet since Licinius and his . . . companion . . . do hold another view of love, Valeria doth hope it may yield them happiness. For her own part, she is wearied by such form of amusement, and men have ceased to interest her in that manner. . . . Verily, she doth consider herself more fortunate than many a Roman matron, in that her husband doth not too frequently seek her company. . . . As for bartering peace of mind and the joy of calm, intellectual pursuits for the embraces of any man, she hath seen the folly of such pleasurings and desireth them no further.

Then, again, she doth make a distant gesture of politeness and saith that she hath an engagement a short time hence and that, since there can be nothing more to discuss, she would bring this interview to a close.

Thus, in stately manner, she giveth the signal of dismissal, holding herself erect and looking clear before her. Her hands press the arms of her chair. Her head is high. She hath the air of being mistress of herself and of the atmosphere. . . .

I am glad. . . . I am glad . . . my domina !

The woman standeth uncertain, abashed and yet defiant. . . . Now, her face weareth a sullen look. Her eyes send forth a glance of baffled rage, which doth fall beneath my domina's strange unliving gaze. Then, she taketh the boy by the hand and turneth as if to leave the court. . . . But before passing beyond the fountain the woman stayeth her steps and, again, with arrogant mien and the evil light burning in her long black eyes, she doth face the Domina, her right arm raised as of one about to speed a parting shaft barbed with deadly intent. She speaketh and there is daring insolence in her tone. ' Will the Domina permit me to deliver a message with which I am charged by Licinius Sura ? '

And, as my lady bendeth her head, uttering no word, the woman continueth :

' I have to say that Licinius hath received the Domina's letter reminding him of the promise she did exact from him—against his better judgment—to be at her house this evening. And having no trustier messenger—for the Domina is aware that Licinius hath now but a slave or two for his service

—he doth send the reply through my lips. I am bidden to tell the Domina that he doth regret he cannot keep the appointment, seeing that important business calls him elsewhere.'

With the insult there cometh suddenly a great stain of red upon the marble whiteness of my domina's face. But she moveth not nor speaketh. And I, hearing the woman, would fain cry out, 'Thou liest,' so sure am I that Licinius did never send that message. . . . But I dare not. . . . And the woman, who hath waited a few moments, with a look on her face, meseems, of malicious expectation which changeth to somewhat of angry disappointment, doth proceed with her prating.

'Truly,' said she, 'it be a matter of weightier import than such pretty dalliance as he hath of late indulged in—and one that shall occupy Licinius Sura not only this night but many other days and nights in the future. . . . For, at dark, he goeth forth to the secret meeting-place of the Christians, there to confer with a certain high leader among that powerful body; one who hath a great following in Rome and in Asia Minor, and by whose aid the safe and swift carrying out of my husband's plans will be assured.'

Oh, now, do I need no more certain proof that the woman is lying to serve her own wicked ends than that she doth thus show her ignorance of that meek and gentle Body of the Church and of the Blessed Teacher who cometh to visit it. But I like not that she should name the Christians; and though I cannot believe that Licinius and this woman have any true association with them, her words do make me wonder. Yet, methinks, perchance some whispered breath of the Teacher's coming may have reached the woman's ear and she hath taken it to fit her purpose, as a fighter, whose weapons are spent, will snatch at any chance stick with which to do a hurt. . . . And there be somewhat over-bold and reckless in the woman's voice and bearing which doth convince me of her falsity.

And still my domina moveth not. . . . But I see that a tremor doth faintly stir her limbs, and again in her eyes that wild and questing look, her mind seeming to cast about for deliverance from her agony. . . . And still, the woman, as if maddened by Valeria's scornful silence, doth prate stormily on, weighing not the perilous import of her revealings.

'Haply,' she sayeth, 'thou didst not believe when I told thee of the doings Licinius doth hide from thee but wherein *I* am his counsellor and his helper at need. Haply, thou knowest not that Jewish blood doth run in the veins of us both. 'Twas to serve my husband's interests that I stayed behind him in Judæa and, at his command, have followed him to serve them by his side in Rome. 'Tis Licinius's nature that in my absence and for lack of man's work, he should turn to that love-pastime which hath ever been his folly, so long as it might chance to hold him. But now that duty, perforce, hath brought him to his senses he knoweth well that *my* love is the staff upon which he may most safely lean. And to-night it will be *I* and not *thou*, Domina, who shall await his return and the news of his prospering. And in *my* arms, not thine, shall he find comfort and fellowship in his labours for the reinstatement of our country and the welfare of our children.'

'Twas thus she spake—or somewhat in such fashion, for so great were my anger and my wonderment that I was like not to have taken in all her words. And when she had thrown her gibe, and still my domina answered not, she dropped her bold eyes and her insolent mien and then, smitten, methinks, by the white scorn upon my domina's face, she took the child

again by the hand and, turning her about, she went forth from Valeria's presence.

All is quiet now in the court. I hear the fountains plashing and the distant murmuring through the heat-mist from the Campagna below. And I can hear the sound of the woman's footsteps on the marble and the quicker pattering of the boy's feet . . . and then, the movements of the door-keepers and of attendant slaves speeding from their waiting-chambers. But none of the Domina's women may come before her until she giveth the summons. I, alone, have had that privilege. . . .

Yet, to-day, do I seem afar-off—so long have I been parted from her nor had she given sign of desire for my return. . . . And my mind seemeth all in strange confusion. Scarce can I tell whether it be with my bodily eyes or with the eyes of dream that I see her sitting there transfixed, and her gaze stark as that of a dead woman.

Well do I know that, verily, the sword hath pierced to her soul, and my domina's pain is my pain ; and my heart yearneth to her as, it seemeth to me, would yearn the heart of a mother to her nursling. Yet, can I do naught to relieve her suffering . . . naught . . . naught !

At last, she stirreth. A spasm doth shake her body, and she taketh her two hands from the arms of her chair, by which she had seemed to be holding herself in control, and she clutcheth her breast tight on its left side, swaying as if in agony greater than she hath strength to endure. . . . Oh, my domina ! . . . my domina ! . . .

Yet better for Valeria, methinks, that sharp, deep sword-thrust which destroyeth at a stroke, than lingering death by the slow poison of her ill-requited love. . . . And I minded me how I had seen her prostrate, in bitter anguish, before Demeter's shrine ; and how, after time had passed and Licinius Sura had not yet come back into her life, she had recovered strength sufficient to find some measure of content in her lot. . . .

Now, she maketh a strange, wailing, choking sound which doth tear my heart. . . . Alas ! the sword hath not slain her love. . . . I cannot bear it. . . . Oh, thou must not look. . . . No one should see her like this. . . .

She hath flung her arms across the window-sill and her head lieth upon them, and ever she maketh that terrible gasping moan. . . .

I can feel that her mind is all darkness and confusion, and—worse far than that—doubt made certainty. . . .

Oh, would I could tell her that the tale be not true. . . . Could I but have reached her before the woman came. . . . But I did not know . . . I can only see the picture . . . and now darkness riseth and covereth it from my sight. . . .

The darkness doth confound my vision. . . . There are some things not clear to me—some things of which I have no understanding. . . . But I will go back—I know what thou dost want . . . I *can* go back and get thee what is needed.

This I would that thou shouldst comprehend. . . . If thou hadst a bird whose wings were grown and then some one did clip them—well that is how it is with me—like the dropping of myself right down through space into one small cell. . . . Methought I had done with it all. . . . When I am up here it doth not seem that any of this were *me*. . . . But I know that to get what thou dost want, it must be I, myself, who bring it. . . . I must take up the old garment and put it on again. . . .

Thou knowest that when a dreadful thing be past, if it were undeserved thou art lifted above the pain. . . . It was I myself who had to go through

that pain. For the best part of me was Nyria then. And I knew that I need not go back. . . . But I will go—I am going. . . . Thou must hold me. . . . Oh !—it was so horrible . . . I cannot do it now. . . ."

. . . . . .

NYRIA (resuming): " I did turn me away, for it hurt me sore to see my lady's suffering. And as I looked out on the terrace, meseemed that from behind a pillar I caught the flutter of a red feather, such as Gregorio doth flaunt in his cap, and the wave of a mantle that he weareth when walking abroad. And methought that in his jealous spying he had hidden there and watched for what might hap between the Domina and the woman who had gained her way into her presence. And it angered and grieved me that the eyes of that prying slave should perchance have beheld my lady in her dire distress.

But when I turned me again I saw that Valeria had lifted herself out of her abasement. . . . Ah ! she is brave, my domina ! Her head was raised : she sat upright in her chair, and though her face was marred by weeping and her eyes were wild and stared with vacant gaze before her she had regained her air of marble-cold composure. Distraught she seemed, yet turned to stone. . . .

Now at the door of the entrance from the slaves' antechamber Aeola appeared and cried out in amaze at sight of me, for she knew not that I had returned. I hushed her quickly, and whispering that I would speak with her when I had made my obeisance to the Domina, bade her remain without.

' Methinks, the lord Martial waiteth,' she said.

Then, at the voice of Aeola, my wits came back to me, and I felt as one who hath awakened from a fearsome dream. But yet I knew that it had been no dream. Now, I supposed that Gregorio had met with Martial who, by pretended right of cousinship, had taken upon himself to enter by Valeria's private gate, and, the terrace being free to Gregorio, 'twas, mayhap, on account of Martial that he lingered there.

And now, while Aeola went back to her place and by the slaves' door I entered the court to my domina, I saw Gregorio run quickly past the wide opening between the pillars and, likewise, I saw that Martial advanced from beyond the grape trellis and that Gregorio stopped and conferred with him.

My domina looked at me in a strange, unseeing way as, rising from my reverence, I said to her that being now restored to health I had hastened back to take up my service at her command. . . . But so wild and strange was her look that it seemed she did not know me.

' 'Tis Nyria, Domina,' I said.

' Nyria ! ' she said after me : and it was as though my name brought to her little meaning. And my heart was chilled at this and at receiving no word of welcome. But I knew that her mind was far away, and I understood how great had been the shock which put her thus beyond herself : and, methought, ' I am but a slave who hath been absent and whom she hath forgotten.' Thou knowest, she hath a certain hardness, and though I never felt any bitterness it hath been in my mind that she could not care much for me because—save for that one great love—she hath no power of deep affection. She was ever kind to me, but I knew, when she let me do things for her, that it was just because she wanted them done and could trust me to do them faithfully.

Again I made obeisance. 'The Domina hath no commands?' I asked her, and she answered, meseemed, vexedly—'None. I need thee not.'

And when I craved permission to absent myself until the morning-robing, so that I might attend the Christian meeting and hear the Blessed John who was come from Ephesus, she said again, 'I need thee not. Go whither thou wilt': and I knew not whether she had taken the meaning of my words.

Fain would I have lingered but I dared not. There was naught she would have let me do and the day was already far spent. Stooping, I kissed her shoe that was stained with the ruby wine like blood, and, seeing that she made no movement to keep me, nor spake further word, I betook me from her presence.

Then Aeola—leaving Corellia and the other women in the waiting-room—went with me to get some food which we ate together and, afterwards, I sought my little chamber and prepared myself for the meeting, to which I went forth as the sun was setting."

CHAPTER XII

The Betrayal

The Commentator upon the super-physical Level, speaking through the lips of the Instrument, points out various influences, political and personal, which are in operation in Rome at this crisis of Nyria's history and, further, describes how Martial cunningly extracts from Valeria the secret of the Christians' meeting-place.

The Commentator: "Again, it is well that I should try to clarify the situation, of which, to Nyria, in the darkness and confusion of her mind, many aspects are obscure.

Picking up the political threads, I must go back to the late summer and winter of A.D. 94, when Licinius Sura was in Palestine and the trials took place of Rufus, Orfitus, Acilius Glabrio, and of Apollonius of Tyana, and others in connection with reported conspiracies hatched in Judæa.

First, however, I should like to give you some particulars of the man—Marcus Licinius Sura—whom you are trying to trace in history. I believe I am right in saying that you will not find him in any of the available historic records and that, by this means, except inferentially, you will not be able to establish his identity.

This Marcus Licinius Sura, Valeria's lover (who must not be confused with the historical Lucius Licinius Sura, the friend of Trajan and, later, owner of the Sura villa), was the son by a Jewess of the elder Sura and was legally adopted by his father into the Licinian *gens*, of which there were other important branches.

The irregularity of his succession to his father's estate—though common enough and, by the Roman law of adoption, counting for nothing—may have been a reason for the slightly invidious manner in which he was regarded in the more exclusive ranks of Roman society, and by members of his own family.

Now, the one of these whom Marcus Licinius most disliked and even feared was that Lucius Licinius Sura referred to, who was, in fact, absent from Rome serving under Trajan during most of the period with which we are concerned.

Lucius Licinius Sura, it may be said, did not trouble himself much about Marcus Licinius. The only thing which concerned Lucius was the villa overlooking the Circus Maximus, which he coveted and had already tried to obtain.

There was another of the family also mentioned by historians—one, Palfurius Sura, rather a low type of character but a full-blooded Roman, about the same age, I should think, as Marcus, with a round bullet-head, black hair and beady, black eyes—a bit of a dandy, but without his cousin's fine manners and good looks. For Marcus's Jewish strain, grafted on to the Roman stock, produced an uncommonly handsome man of brains and breeding. The Jew showed breeding in beauty of form and artistic tendencies. The Roman shewed breeding in a certain strong type of manhood.

This little fellow, Palfurius Sura, held some small post—that of a kind of chamberlain—about the court. I won't say that he was exactly an informer, but I should think it likely that he was in with Regulus against Marcus. When he could reach the ear of Domitian, he made use of his opportunities. Domitian despised Palfurius Sura but listened to him.

Concerning the plot to place Nerva on the imperial throne, and the trial at which Apollonius—acquitted—made his sensational disappearance and the evidence against Nerva broke down, there is no doubt that Nerva did have knowledge of the plot[1] and that he lent himself to the idea of becoming emperor.

But Nerva was a mere catspaw. Though kind to all those personally dependent upon him—his soldiers loved him—he was without courage or moral backbone. His tendencies were Christian. Whether he became a Christian before his death is a moot point. Anyway, if he did, he suppressed the fact.

But he had two pulls in his favour—one that he was a good figure-head: the other that Domitian was afraid—not of Nerva himself—you had only to look at Nerva not to be afraid of him—but because of the Chaldæan prophecy that Domitian must beware of Nerva. That prophecy was Nerva's chief weapon: it gave him a sort of false courage.

Nerva held an appointment in Judæa and the chief reason of Apollonius's impeachment was that he had gone to Judæa to visit Nerva. In reality, the object of Apollonius's visit was to persuade Nerva to drop the plot, telling him that Domitian's hour was not yet come and that there was no use in doing anything before that hour should strike.

Marcus Licinius Sura's mission was, on the contrary, to foment the plot, secure Nerva's co-operation and stir up disaffection in Judæa.

But rumours of Judæan machinations still filled Domitian with dread. The imperial mood was dark and incalculable. No one could tell who would be the next victim of Cæsar's suspicions. Licinius hesitated on his way back from Judæa. You will understand that, though he never wrote to Valeria, he kept up communication with Salome. She no longer lived at the villa but partly in a cheap lodging in Rome and partly in the country, Licinius supplying her with money for herself and the child.

Salome had a vulgar kind of cleverness and she had the interests of Licinius at heart. All she wanted was to get him back under her influence. She had heard through some underground channel that he was suspected of complicity in the Judæan plots and that were he to return to Rome he would be arrested and perhaps condemned. She resolved to start at once and prevent his coming.

To do this she raised money by selling her jewellery, took the boy with her, met Sura on the borders of Palestine and stopped him from going further, naturally making the most of the danger she had run and the danger she was helping him to avoid.

Of course the man was touched though he felt the woman a nuisance and, when she implored him to take her back to live with h m, showed distinct disinclination to do so. He had enough on hand, as it was, and did not want to encumber himself with a mistress. But Salome knew how to play upon his weakness and soon their former relations were resumed.

Salome had never known the full extent of Licinius's plotting. But she

[1] The Edessa plot against Domitian involving Nerva, Apollonius of Tyana and others. See Appendix 24, Bk. III.

had gathered enough to put two and two together and found out a great deal more than Licinius had ever intended her to learn. For, beneath his apparently candid charm of manner, Marcus Licinius Sura was a very secretive person.

Of course the complete resumption of his liaison with Valeria complicated the position as regards Salome. Marcus Licinius had a strong streak of recklessness in his nature or he never would have allowed his reawakened passion for Valeria to lead him into a danger which he might certainly have foreseen.

He had been chosen for the Jewish propaganda chiefly on account of his Jewish blood. There was sincerity in his desire to free his mother's country, but another and more powerful incentive was the knowledge that the success of his enterprise would enormously enhance his own prestige and improve his worldly prospects. For Marcus Licinius Sura was, comparatively, a poor man.

The plotters were prepared to wait for definite action till their plans had fully matured. Meanwhile, Licinius Sura and Nerva were working in with the Christians, and Licinius had been deputed to scour the length and breadth of Judæa in order to ascertain the political bent of the people and, more especially, of the Christian population.

Before he went to Judæa, he had known nothing about the Christians except from outside report. Now, when he began ferreting round in the endeavour to ingratiate himself with the Judæan population, in order to study their mode of thought and investigate their religious grievances, he discovered among the orthodox Jews a stronger feeling of animosity against their Christian brethren than he had expected to find.

Sura was wise enough to see that this party spirit would interfere with his revolutionary scheme, and he realised that he knew too little of the Christians in Rome to judge of the nature of their support. After he had been about a year in Judæa, it seemed to him best that he should return quietly to Rome and study the conditions there. He understood that the number of Christians was increasing rapidly all through the empire, and that, with the exception of a few malcontent hotheads, they were a placable set, leading secluded lives, not coming before the public as spectators of shows and participants in holiday excitements, and asking only to be allowed to worship their—as Licinius considered—strange god, without molestation. Marcus Licinius Sura had no fanatical stuff in his composition, being rather an advocate of tolerance in the matter of religion, but he was superstitious, and the Chaldæan prophecy might well have influenced his political opinions. In any case, he felt that this large and malleable section of the community might prove a useful factor in an uprising for the redistribution of power.

He thought that he could, at a given signal, command a united body of all the Christians in Rome, backed by several thousands in Judæa and more thousands in other parts of the empire, who would be delighted to accept liberty of creed at the hands of pro-Christian Nerva. And were these, again, backed by some of the leading spirits and combined with their followers among the better classes in Rome—then, he felt there would be every prospect of a revolt bringing about the downfall of Domitian and an era of peaceful government under Nerva and his successors.

But Licinius was not aware of the counterplot against himself nor of how closely he was shadowed.

Regulus and Martial had joined forces. Gregorio was a tool employed by both, though, in his heart, Martial had a contempt for the Greek boy and would not have been ill-pleased to dispense with his services.

Martial's scent had become keener since he had discovered that Regulus, also, was after Licinius Sura. That came to his knowledge through Thanna. Not that Thanna had betrayed Regulus, but finding that Martial hunted the same quarry, though from a different motive, she had decided with Regulus, who was cunning in his profession of informer, that he should improve his acquaintance with Martial and make use of him as an ally. Martial was frequently with Thanna—that introduction having been effected by Gregorio—and the matter was freely discussed by the principals of the two parties.

Now, Regulus had long ago learned the object of Licinius Sura's visit to Judæa and of his unostentatious return to Rome. He was aware that Licinius had only just escaped being included in the impeachment, some months before, of Nerva and his followers, and that he was now endeavouring to incite the Christians to aid in a general rising. He knew also that an important leader of the Christians was visiting Rome and that a special meeting of the Band had been convened. But so closely did the Christians guard their secrets that he could not find out where the meeting was to be held.

Regulus, after the usual practice of informers, had spies all over the city. It struck him that Valeria, on account of her relations with Licinius, might be in Sura's confidence and that he might contrive to obtain through her the information he wanted. But he had not found it easy—though he had attended her winter literary parties—to get into sufficiently close touch with Valeria. Here, Regulus made use of Martial, promising a proportion of the State reward if Martial could put him in the way of having Licinius arrested in circumstances justifying the accusation of treason.

Martial had got an inkling that the assembly of Christians was imminent, but he too had found it impossible to ascertain the place of worship of the sect and to-day he was calling at the villa on the Cœlian in the hope that he might by some means entrap Valeria, perhaps unwittingly, into giving him an indication. He guessed—but could not be certain—that Licinius would compromise himself by attending the Christians' gathering, which he assumed would have a revolutionary bent. Therefore, all was ready for a surprise of the Christian camp if only they could be sure of their prey.

The visit of Salome to Valeria was an impetuous step on the part of the former, taken without the knowledge of Licinius or of Martial and his allies. Nor, of course, had Salome any idea of the assault they contemplated. Salome, as Nyria rightly conjectured, was not in the confidence of Licinius and, in reality, knew very little from him of his activities in Judæa and only by accident of his project for that evening. Most of what she did know she had learned by adroit questioning, putting two and two together, and by tampering with his correspondence. Had she not intercepted Valeria's letter to him, she could not have put up the bluff she did put up or thus have shot her last bolt.

Naturally, the spying party did not want Salome to discover that Licinius was sought for by officers of the State. Her unconscious part in the affair was left to the diplomacy of Thanna, who represented to Salome that the sympathies of herself and Regulus were entirely with the discarded wife, as they pretended to regard her. Salome only knew of Regulus that he had been on Licinius's track, in what was called the Edessa conspiracy, but she believed that was all past and did not realise that Regulus always hunted down any political suspect, from whose capture he hoped to derive pro-

fessional profit, with a keener and more implacable spirit of vengeance from the fact that he had once eluded the informer's vigilance.

Thanna only spoke of Regulus to Salome as a kind and generous lord to whom she was sincerely attached, and took care not to arouse suspicion or fear in Salome's mind.

Thus, Martial on his arrival at the villa to see Valeria was somewhat taken aback to find that Salome was just before him. It had been planned that Gregorio should admit Martial so that Valeria would not be able to avoid seeing him. Gregorio, therefore, ran to inform Martial who had waited while the Greek boy did his eavesdropping.

Martial had come in by the private gate and remained out of sight in Valeria's garden. It would not have been dignified for Martial to be caught spying through the fretwork of the court, whereas Gregorio, if he were seen, could easily explain his presence.

As Salome was making her exit, Gregorio rushed back and in a few words told Martial the gist of the conversation. Then it occurred to Martial that unless he saw Valeria at once, Salome's visit would have so upset her that he might not be able to see her at all, and he bade Gregorio announce him without preliminary warning.

During those few minutes, Nyria was speaking to Valeria and, when Nyria went out, Gregorio brought in Martial, who was astute enough to perceive that Salome's course of action had prepared the ground for his own."

. . . . . .

COMMENTATOR (continuing): "Now, with regard to the scene between the two women which Nyria has just described, you will understand that the girl had barely recovered from the effects of that malarial fever, aggravated by worry of mind, for which Stephanus had sent her to the purer air of the hills; and being, as you know, one of those curious half-disembodied creatures for whom there was at all times but the thinnest veil between physical and non-physical existence, she was in, her present condition, more liable than usual to confuse them with each other.

Hence, her uncertainty, at moments, as to whether she were really present in her body on that occasion or was viewing the scene, as she says, 'in a picture' or 'from the Beyond.'

She had, in fact, arrived almost immediately on the opening of the scene and had stood in the rear seeing and hearing everything but not fully taking it into her everyday consciousness. For, not having yet spoken to Valeria and being ignorant of the doings at the villa during her absence, she was largely making use of her intuitional faculty.

Then, the final catastrophe, falling upon her so soon afterwards, blurred later her physical memory, and this accounts for the occasional incoherence of her utterance.

Immediately upon the Salome scene, came the scene between Valeria and Martial—which is of great importance in the sudden development of the tragedy—a scene that Nyria did not witness and of which she knew nothing when setting forth for the Christian meeting, but of which the result—when it was realised—intensified her bewilderment.

I will give you the colour and actual detail of what passed—not as Nyria had she been present at the time, would give it, but with sufficient of the spirit and of the dialogue to enable you to depict the scene."

. . . . . .

RECORDER: In presenting the following scene, I have followed the above instructions and—seeing that although the Commentator's words were spoken through the Instrument's mouth, Nyria herself had no part in them—I have ventured, while dealing faithfully with the indications supplied, to adopt, in very limited measure, the novelist's method and to fill in gaps, here and there, where the verbal setting appeared to be inadequate.

. . . . . .

COMMENTATOR (resuming): "When Gregorio ushered Martial into the court and retired again behind its creeper-screened fretwork, Valeria was sitting vacant and distraught as Nyria had left her.

She did not appear to have heard the poet's name, and Martial, quivering with excitement, found it difficult for the first minute or two to compose himself as an ordinary visitor.

Martial had a temperamental peculiarity not often noticeable because he was seldom nervous and it only overtook him at a crisis when he was not sure of his ground. The peculiarity was that at such times he seemed physically unable to keep his body still.

He advanced to Valeria with an airy, curvetting movement and slightly exaggerated bow, and his opening remark was a fulsome compliment, such as—she had already told him—she disliked to receive from her friends. And Martial, delighted at the implication of friendship with her, had tried to get himself out of the habit of making them.

But now, 'Most Exquisite,' he began, 'to this poor poet who has been tramping the streets of Rome, thou in thy pale green robe resting amid fountains and with flowers around thee and at thy feet, dost verily resemble a goddess in her shrine.'

Valeria made no answer. She just looked at him with eyes that did not seem to see him, though, in a dull way, she knew that he was there.

Martial realised her mental condition. His glance was keen and his wits were alert. He seized the significance of the scene—saw the red pool of spilled wine beside the broken glass on the marble pavement, the stain, like blood, upon her dress and her embroidered shoe and some fresh-gathered flowers which Salome, when she pulled the boy roughly away, had shaken out of her child's hand to the floor, at the Domina's feet. And, most of all, was he impressed by the attitude and appearance of Valeria herself, as she sat limp and huddled in her cushioned, inlaid arm-chair, her hands hanging loosely by her sides, her neck—usually suggesting statuesque dignity—sunk between her shoulders, her face white and death-like; the only live thing in it, her eyes, which stared out from between red-rimmed lids, the eye-balls flushed, and with the look of a ferocious animal rousing slowly to the desire for prey.

Her silence embarrassed Martial. He made one or two of those curvetting steps and, performing another bow, delivered some further florid remark upon the contrast her delightful interior presented to the thunderous heat outside.

'The atmosphere, it would appear, is in sympathy with the mood of Rome itself,' he said, 'for, assuredly, the seething passions of the city are likewise gathering up for a storm.'

Valeria still only stared blankly at him, and he went on in this strain, saying, 'That there has been much ferment beneath the surface in Rome

of late, and that to all thoughtful minds it would be cause for thankfulness did the tempest burst, so that it bring about justice and the redress of wrongs.'

And, while Valeria remained silent, he added, meaningly, 'I speak of redress for private as well as for political wrongs, and I speak, not of justice in the future but of immediate justice.'

Valeria made no response. All Martial's powers of observation were focused upon the one point. He could not help making fussy movements, thus working off his own agitation but never losing sight of his aim, and deliberately weighing every sentence that he uttered. 'The Most Noble Valeria must feel with me that it would indeed be an offence against the gods if, in Rome—once the nursery of truth and loyalty—perfidy were not punished and justice paid where justice is due.'

There crept a flicker of comprehension into Valeria's blind, suffused eyes. She murmured heavily one word, 'Justice.'

Martial saw that the thought had found entrance to her mind and dwelt upon it. 'Ay! Justice, dear lady. Is it not a decree of the old Greek gods that justice must be meted to those who have justly suffered?'

'Suffered.' . . . She spoke in a husky whisper, as if groping after a lost clue. Martial's eyes never left her face. He continued, enunciating his words with great distinctness:

'The thing which doth move me most, Valeria, is that suffering which comes to a noble heart from having put too great faith in fickle man. I pray that the gods may preserve thee from this anguish of misplaced faith.'

Again she repeated after him the word 'Faith.' . . .

It was plain that the chords of her emotion vibrated only on certain notes; and he proceeded, speaking slowly and impressively:

'Thou knowest well, Valeria, that suffering of the kind I mean falls most often upon women. Yet a high-born woman speaks not of her wrongs but conceals such wounds, and, in proud silence, endures her humiliation. In this, I honour her, though, methinks, that to accept outrage dumbly, is an offence against eternal justice. Compensation is a law of nature and, for my own part, gladly would I aid one who had suffered insult wrongfully in order to obtain a just revenge.'

The word 'revenge' appeared to pierce to her intelligence. She repeated it to herself twice in the same hoarse whisper, and Martial felt that those single words, one after the other, had hammered their way into her brain and were linking an incomplete chain of thought. Going nearer, almost grovelling before her, he exclaimed fervidly: 'Oh, would that it were in Martial's power to protect those whom he adores from pain—or, if too late to shield, that he might avenge their wrongs!'

She seemed to be listening intently, the stony set of her features relaxing.

'Were the wrongs thine, for instance, dearest lady,' Martial cried—'if, by unhappy chance, sorrow had fallen on thee through the treacherous cruelty of one whom thou hadst trusted. Then, verily, mightst thou command Martial's arm to strike a blow which, haply, thy woman's hand hath not strength to deal.'

A sudden, wild look of understanding came into Valeria's face. Martial noted it triumphantly. But his direct overture caused in her a certain recoil. Her nobler self sensed a temptation against which she unconsciously rebelled. And this revolt of her soul was translated for the moment into physical revulsion from the cringing creature before her. She drew back and raised her arms, trembling as she uttered a shuddering 'A . . . ah!'

Martial perceived that he had erred and, in an instant, was erect again standing a pace or two from her, now dropping his somewhat theatrical manner and speaking with an air of calm reasonableness.

'I am foolish,' he said quietly, 'to talk thus to one so highly placed as the Domina Valeria. How should any wrong befall such an one for which her most devoted friend could find cause for vengeance? A man must needs wait for some other possible emergency in which to prove his loyalty to *thee*.'

Valeria's upraised arms dropped, but not limp as before. She sat in her customary attitude, with her elbows and hands resting on the broad arm of her chair, her attention fixed upon the man as if she were trying to grasp his real meaning.

Martial looked at her keenly and changed his tone. 'Strange that this subject should have arisen,' he said. 'I came not here to speak of personal vengeance, though it is true that my mind has been full of the question of political vengeance. Haply, Valeria, 'twas that which made me think how ill I could bear it did anyone act perfidiously by thee.'

But he did not then press that point further. He turned as he spoke and took a stool near her. Now, his gesticulatory restlessness seemed to have abated. He was no longer nervous, for he felt more sure of himself and of her. He began talking with almost an appearance of unconcern, nevertheless, studying her closely the while, and, presently, going back to the subject he had started on arrival—the seething undercurrents of sedition in Rome—saying, in a quiet persuasive manner, 'I know that thou dost seldom care to bestow thine attention upon State matters, Domina, but all must surely now be interested in upholding Cæsar who, whatever his private life may be, claims as Cæsar the service of all true Romans. Mayhap, thou hast heard that he is sore disturbed by rumours of another plot against him and is anxious to discover if they be well-founded, though, I am told, that he is prepared to deal most leniently with the offenders if they belong, as 'tis said, to the conquered Jewish race. Suspicion pointeth to the Christians; but I scarce think that among that rabble there can be any persons of sufficient note to instigate a conspiracy. It would be a good thing, however, if a party of Christians could be caught worshipping or conferring together so that Cæsar might assure himself as to whether there be any truth in these whispers of a rising in that quarter. Most likely, the tale is false and the Christians would find their case the better for their innocence being publicly asserted.'

Valeria's brows were drawn together over her drooped eyes. Martial waited to see if she would speak, before he said, tentatively:

'Such action, if it be but the fluttering of a nest of silly fanatics, may alarm malcontents and lighten the clouds over Rome—to say nothing of easing Cæsar's anxiety. Well would it be if the minds of peaceful citizens could be cleared of doubt. It doth make heavy hearts to think that one who has, perhaps, been held dear, and in close, familiar intercourse by some of us, may be proved a traitor, having repaid our trust with deceit and our love with treachery.'

Again the thrust pierced Valeria's torpid brain. A slight moaning sound forced its way from her throat.

'Nevertheless,' said Martial, 'far better is it to know the truth and to wipe out such traitorous friend or lover for ever from one's life.'

Valeria made a sudden movement. Drawing herself together, she lifted

her elbows from the arms of her chair and put both hands up to her forehead as if to brush something away. Then, clasping them against her breast, she leaned forward, her lips parted but making no sound.

. . . There was a long pause. . .

Then Martial bent forward too, and said with emphasis :

' I have it in my mind to search out the meeting-place of these Christians and to supply a small body of them for the stilling of Cæsar's fears.'

This time, Valeria addressed him, bringing out her words slowly and hoarsely.

' What . . . wouldst . . . do ? '

' Do, dear lady ? Take a dozen or so to Cæsar's basilica and there let them answer for themselves.'

' But haply . . . haply . . .' she gasped, ' Cæsar . . . might . . . condemn.'

' Ay ! Condemn them to tell the truth and then pack them off as he did those youths of the house of David—dost remember ?[1] . . . Cæsar harms no riff-raff of that sort. He doth reserve his vengeance for such as are worth it. Run thy mind, Domina, over the names of those that he hath sent to death and thou'lt see they were Romans and all men of note, and that others against whom the charge was not proven, he left unharmed.'

' True,' she answered. And then slowly, ' But if, haply, there were a Roman citizen among the Christians . . . of more note than they ? '

Martial shrugged. ' He would receive a lesson and one deserved, for a Roman citizen of any note should understand that such associations are not befitting a man of position. But Cæsar sickens of the shedding of blood. He might only frighten the fellow by one of his fantastic tricks. Or, at worst, he might give a sentence of banishment for a few months. Then, time would be allowed for cool reflection and the whole affair be soon forgotten.'

Valeria leaned back, her brows drawn close, her eyes again drooped, her hands folded upon her lap and showing the blue veins on their whiteness so tense was their clench.

Martial affected to dismiss the matter.

' It may not be easy to find the nest of these Christians. . . . And yet . . .' He bent his chin between his thumb and forefinger, his gaze glued to Valeria's face as he affected to consider. . . . ' And yet, I have bethought me that I might. . . . Their place of meeting for the worship of their crucified God is, report says, outside the city . . . among the underground tombs. Methinks I can guess the whereabouts. . . . One would take the road that passes down . . . below . . . below the Esquiline. . . .'

' Nay,' she interrupted, rousing suddenly, putting out her hand and pointing before her : ' The path passes down behind the Aventine, where it joins one that circles the hill's base, having come forth from the city by a road. . . . But I know not the road for I have not been that way.'

' Nay, nay, the Most Noble Valeria doth not of course enter those low parts of the city,' rejoined Martial with forced quietude. . . . ' But the path behind the Aventine. . . . Perchance thou hast come upon it in thy rambles ? '

' Ay,' she answered in an absent voice, her eyes following where her finger slowly pointed. ' There is a knoll—far beyond the houses—a wild, unfrequented knoll which jutteth out some way past the Nævian Gate.[2] Thou

[1] Grandsons of Jude, the brother of Jesus, brought before Domitian. See Appendix 25, Bk. III.

[2] The knoll which jutted out some way past the Nævian Gate. See Appendix 26, Bk. III.

canst gain it by winding along the descent, leaving to thy right the road which goeth to Diana's temple and taking thy way leftward to where the hill seemeth to divide. . . .'

'Ay . . . ay . . . and then ?'

'Then, mount to the knoll by a steep goat-track that takes thee to its verge—'tis a lonely spot far from any habitation and only goats wander there for the herbage,' she answered dreamily.

'And then ?' he repeated with ill-controlled eagerness.

'When thou art on the hill-brow which doth face the Tiber's course and the tombs of the Appian Way thou'lt see, close beneath thee, a landslip and a ledge of crumbling wall over which thou mayst watch the Christians as they pass along a narrow path below. . . .'

'And whither—whither go they ? . . . And how to reach them ?'

'They wind along the path descending and disappearing where lie the ancient quarries which are worked no more. Methinks, there is another goat-track descending to that path, but it is very steep and I have but seen it from above.'

Breathless with excitement, he asked, 'And at what time go they thither ?'

'Towards nightfall, mostly, methinks,' she answered in the same dreamy voice.

'And how may a man find their meeting-place ?' Unable, now, to keep still, he had risen, and his question came low and imperatively as he bent over her : but he tried to maintain a level tone lest by raising his voice he should break the spell that seemed upon her. She still pointed with her finger, slowly tracing the direction.

'The lower path doth turn, I have been told, and if thou followest it along the Quarries' edge thou'lt reach a little valley betwixt the sides of the hill. There, the red rocks arise on either hand like walls, and they close in and strew the open space. . . . Then, as thou goest—I have been told . . .'

The finger stopped.

'Ay, ay—thou wert told ?—Then—as thou goest—is it there, the meeting-place ?'

'Go where the rocks draw close'—she pointed again—'thou'lt find a crevice by which a man may enter though creepers cover it. I have been told it is by a great twisted thorn. . . . But go not in, lest thou lose thyself amid the labyrinth of caves. I have been told, likewise, that only those who have learned the clues come forth alive.' She paused, her hand uplifted, her eyes, with a fierce gleam in them which startled him, straining as if they beheld something that was not there : and on her lips was a strange smile.

Martial's blood ran free again. He had been like to choke in his anxiety. 'Thou hast told me all but this,' he said. 'Knowest thou when the Christians next meet ?'

'To-night,' she answered. . . . 'To-night he will be there. He goeth to hear the stranger speak and, haply, to enlist his aid. But she—she awaiteth his return.' Valeria's voice broke in a horrible raucous sound that convulsed her throat.

'Be content,' cried Martial. 'She will await him long. To-night, at least, he shall woo solitude within the cells' : and Martial burst into an impishly exultant laugh.

Now he understood the nature of the shock that had turned this cold, proud woman into an emotional puppet which he had cleverly moved to serve his purpose.

And she had served it well. He had succeeded far beyond his hopes. Never could he have believed that Valeria was capable of this blind passion of love and hate. Now he knew. He read her right through. His poet's brain seized the picture which filled her frenzied imagination—the picture of her triumphant rival waiting . . . waiting in vain for Licinius's return. . . .

And, in truth, that was the only thought alive in her. . . . It was like a lurid light in the blackness of her hell. . . . What did the Christians matter to her ? . . . What did anything matter but that she must do something swift and deadly ? . . . Something to avenge the insult which had humiliated and maddened her. . . . She never gave a moment's consideration to Nyria. . . . The slave-girl had been out of her life these many weeks past. . . . Nyria, whom she had trusted to do things for her that she would have trusted to no one else, was of no use to her now. If Valeria had even taken in the fact of the girl's return and of her request to be allowed to attend the meeting in the Christians' chapel, the whole episode had made so little impression upon her that Martial's visit had wiped it from her remembrance.

Martial, individually, was nothing to her either. She never noticed him as he made excited movements round her chair, almost gibbering in his delight at having done so well for himself.

Primarily, the man was after money. He saw his lean purse refilled by this lucky stroke. Two thousand sestertia ! He could count on that—or more—from Paulinus for proof of Valeria's infidelity. And if his information should lead to the trapping of Licinius Sura there would be the share of Regulus's big reward from the State. A double stake for the winning.

In his exultation, he forgot to act his part. He made a false step. . . . Going eagerly towards Valeria, he bent over her and put his hand upon her arm, clutching it with more force than he was aware of.

' Domina, I thank thee. By Atè we shall have them now. Thou and I should stand high in Cæsar's favour after this. He hath no great love for Licinius Sura. And thou—thy revenge is in thine own hand and in mine. . . .'

The pressure of the man's fingers upon her bare flesh, roused Valeria as a rough touch might startle a somnambulist out of her sleep-trance. She gave a violent start and, staring dazedly at Martial, seemed for the first time to recognise him, while the utterance of Licinius Sura's name, which he had hitherto avoided, made her realise, in part, the significance of his words.

He delayed no longer. ' Forgive me, Domina,' he said. ' It draws on to sunset and I must hasten, for there are preparations to be made.'

Again, he bowed to her profoundly, and taking his cap waved it in a flourishing salute while, literally dancing down the court, he went out beneath the grape-hung archway. . . . Valeria had risen from her chair. As she turned her head towards his retreating figure, she glanced down upon her arm where the red mark of Martial's clutching fingers shewed upon her bare flesh.

The sight of that mark seemed to unlock her brain. She gave a stifled shriek, and an expression of horror and awakened comprehension came upon her face. She advanced mechanically into the middle of the court and, with her arms raised a little before her, stood motionless, watching Martial disappear along the terrace. There was a dreadful wonder in her gaze.

' What have I done ? ' she said. '. . . What . . . have I done ? '

Then, as she stood there, her face changed. Out of its dark terror and puzzlement, grew a horrible look of exultant vengeance, and then the face was slowly lightened by the evil counterpart of a smile. Her arms dropped.

Her face, with the evil smile still upon it, thrust itself forward in an avid, mocking way.

'She waits for him,' Valeria said. 'Ay . . . but the waiting will be long.' "

. . . . . .

COMMENTATOR (resuming): "Let me help you a little further in unravelling the tangled threads by giving you a few words about Aeola. You will see my reason for this later.

Aeola, you understand, was the only one of the slaves in Valeria's household in whom Nyria placed confidence. This, because of the manner in which they had first been brought together during the Domina's illness at Saturnalia time and, afterwards, by the gradual closeness of Aeola's attendance with Nyria upon their mistress, which made it inevitable that Aeola should gain some knowledge of the relations between Valeria and Licinius Sura.

Aeola was a tender-hearted, impressionable being and very susceptible to Nyria's influence. Thus, when Nyria became a Christian, Aeola wished to learn something of the new religion and, in the beginning, Nyria took her to two or three of the services though, Aeola being outside the pale of the Church, had to submit to the restriction imposed upon any friend of a member of the body when going to the chapel—that she should be blindfolded so that she might not discover the secret of its position.

The result was that Aeola became deeply interested in Nyria's religion, and, infected by Nyria's enthusiasm, and perhaps impressed by the fact that persons of such high degree as the Domina Domitilla and her husband favoured the new faith, she was receiving instruction and it had been settled that she should soon be baptised.

But Aeola cared more for Crispus than for any religion; and, moreover—sweet loyal little creature as she was—had not the stuff in her for real staunchness to a more or less proscribed creed. However, Crispus, though he regarded the Christian tenets with contempt, nevertheless made no opposition to Aeola's new predilection, for, seeing that Nyria had improved enormously in health and mental tone and that she insisted upon attributing her improvement to having become a Christian, he thought Aeola could get no harm from sharing to a small extent in her advantages, though, for his own part, Crispus declared the old gods were good enough for him. But then, apart from his devotion to Aeola, Crispus was wrapped up in his profession and was working hard to obtain the privileges appertaining to the gladiatorial vocation.

For I think I am right in saying that a gladiator who had distinguished himself above all other gladiators at a certain number of provincial shows, was entitled to claim the silver prize—a considerable sum of money in silver set apart from State funds to provide rewards for combatants at the public games. And, further, that he who vanquished the existing champions at the great games in Rome received the golden prize, which meant, not only a very large sum in gold but, also, the right to retire, if he pleased, from future public contests. And this was the ambition of Crispus in order that he might gain money enough to buy Aeola's freedom and keep her in comfort as his wife.

Now, that is all I wanted to say about Aeola's affairs, and Nyria will again take possession of the Instrument."

. . . . . .

CHAPTER XIII

Spake the Blessed John

Nyria tells of how she went forth to the meeting-place of the Christians to see the Blessed John, and of how Thanna overtook and warned her of certain evil that should befall: then of the coming among them of the Blessed John and of the comforting words he spake concerning the Love of God and the duty of love among men.

Nyria: "Now, when I left the house, though my heart was heavy for my domina, I felt wellnigh happy because I was going to see the Blessed John, and because I was glad to be again with mine own people. In truth, so the Christians seemed to me, for, thou knowest, to one who hath no kin, 'tis joy to be thus attached. And we, being taught to look upon each other as brethren, though, so far, I had had no great commerce with the Christians save in the chapel, yet I had grown, from worshipping with them, to feel myself one of their body. Therefore, was I very glad to be once more with them.

And, likewise, when I tried to remember that which I had seen since my return and the taunting words Salome had spoken—in the which, alack! my reason told me there might well be somewhat of truth, seeing how oft Licinius had failed my domina—yet was my heart a little eased concerning Valeria. For, verily, though I mourned because of her present suffering, it seemed to me that in the end she would be happier were that ill-boding love altogether removed.

For I feared, indeed, that naught but trouble would come to her from dealings with Licinius Sura.

But my mind was greatly confused concerning that evil woman's tale and I scarce could tell if all that had seemed to happen were real or whether, mayhap, the fever had got hold of me again, as, verily, it might have done, seeing that I had made the long journey in the heat and, save for a little milk, had tasted nothing since daybreak. And I think there may have been some cause in this. For I felt stronger and of clearer mind since I had eaten with Aeola and had rested and prayed for a brief space in my own little chamber.

Thus pondering, after having gone out through the little gate in the wall, I walked down the hill, and I had not descended far when I saw Martial before me and, with him, the boy Gregorio. Martial did anger me—I knew it was not fitting for a Christian to be angered, but meseemed that Martial bore himself not as a lord should—holding converse in such fashion with slaves. I liked not to call him 'lord.'

He was walking—thou knowest he was not rich enough always to command a litter—and Gregorio walked beside him, laughing and talking over his shoulder and seeming in great excitement. And as they went on in front

of me, I saw, approaching, two goodly figures of man and woman, of whom one was Thanna and the other her lord, Regulus.

Now I had not seen them before together, and I looked at the lord Regulus to see what like he might be toward her. But they, seeing Martial, did stop to speak, and just before they stopped, Martial turned and bade Gregorio leave him. That I knew by the sign he gave, and I saw that Gregorio was unwilling to go. Nevertheless, Martial compelled him, and he came back past me in wrath so that he scarce noticed me. Haply, he thought not to see me there, supposing I was out of Rome.

Then I, coming slowly down the hill, beheld that these two lords did talk freely before Thanna, who stood by them and did also speak, shewing much interest, and I heard Martial say that 'twas a pity Cæsar was at Albanum. But the lord Regulus replied that he held Cæsar's signed permit to do that which he himself should deem best. 'But,' said he, 'Cæsar will return from Albanum to see the fun, for Cæsar loves sport, and he hath had no such quarry of late.'

This I caught as I went by, not looking up, but Thanna must have seen me for she left the two lords and ran down the road behind me. Now, she overtook me near the gate of Licinius Sura's house, and just as she approached I did hear the voice of the little child within the court and, now, he seemed to be playing merrily, and I knew that the woman Salome had returned. Thanna called to me to stop; but when this I did, she, likewise hearing the sound of the child, glanced over the wall and said:

'Nay—haste thee on, Nyria—I would speak to thee, but not here. Go round yon curve. . . .' The which I did quickly, for I had no mind to linger, seeing that time pressed for me and I was eager to be gone.

Now, I heard the lords' voices raised in some sort of discussion, and then they lowered them, suddenly, as Thanna ran back and spoke to them and, methought, I heard her say they should not speak thus loud, for walls have ears.

On she came to me, and put her arm in mine, and said that 'twas long since she had seen me; whereat I told her I had been out of Rome.

'And what did thy lady in thine absence?' she asked.

I said, 'My lady did right well.' But I had no mind to talk of my lady with Thanna, and, in truth, I felt sore that Valeria had not missed me, and though my domina was not one to open her lips freely, methought she might have shewn that she was glad of my return.

But I knew that she cared little for aught save Licinius and, methought, that perchance she had been vexed because of him. So now I kept silence. . . . But, thou knowest, Thanna was never one to take a hint.

'Hast thou power with thy lady?' she asked. Whereat I shook my head. I would not say either way.

'I trow thou hast not,' said Thanna, 'for thou didst never make the most of thy chances, Nyria. Had thy mistress been mine, I'd have learned to rule her long since—even as I rule my lord.'

'Haply, I have not thy ways, Thanna,' I said.

'Thou hadst best adopt them if thou wouldst save suffering to thy domina and to thyself,' said Thanna. 'Look thee here, Nyria, I am minded to warn thee, though the gods alone know why I should, for it is in no one's interest save that of this milk-faced lady of thine. But thou carest for her I well know. See now, it is no secret that she hath stooped herself to the ways of other dames and visits, as a lover, at yonder villa. I would urge thee to

keep her away from Licinius Sura if thou canst, for, if thou dost not, no good to her will come of it.'

To that I answered Thanna that my lady was doubtless interested in Licinius Sura, seeing that there hath been long acquaintanceship between them, but that their friendship—if 'twere such—could be but of small account.

Now, I would have thee understand that when I spoke in such manner to Thanna, I had the belief that all was over between Valeria and Licinius Sura, and that thus 'twas permitted me so to say without taking on me the sin of lying. For I had never forgotten that lie I told Paulinus, and I desired not to lie again : and though no harm had come of it, yet the remembrance lay ever heavy upon me.

Whereon Thanna said, ' Then is she the more ill-advised, for even Roman ladies, who have seldom aught of wit at their finger-ends, place not themselves in such positions of chance as hath Valeria.'

The which, alas ! I could not deny, but I liked not to listen to such words, and I suppose that I shewed Thanna I was displeased.

' Thou art foolish, Nyria,' said she. ' See, what doth Thanna gain by warning thee thus ? Naught : and thou knowest, Thanna doth not disturb the broth unless there be gold at the bottom. 'Tis for thine own sake, for I would not have thee troubled by the sight of such sorrow as may fall on Valeria if she do persist in her ways. Thou knowest, this Salome hath claim on yonder half-breed lord—which she is like to make good, seeing that her tie of race-blood be a knot that secures the bond. Now,' she added, ' take my word for it, Nyria, Valeria had best leave Licinius to Salome, for Salome is no mean opponent to be reckoned with.'

After that, she said that she had a sympathy with likely love-affairs but that, for her part, she saw not why such as Valeria, who had a generous lord of her own and all else that a great Roman lady could desire, must needs spend herself upon this Judæan upstart.

Now, though I liked not Licinius and knew that Thanna said wisely, I would not hear any friend of my domina so spoken of, and this I told Thanna. But Thanna only laughed.

' I would thou wert but bent on thine own love-matter, Nyria,' she said. ' When doth Stephanus lift thee o'er his lintel ? Nay, 'tis of little import to me, for, thou knowest, Thanna doth now consort with lords and hath mounted several steps higher than Stephanus standeth. Yet would she not neglect her friends. Bid Thanna to the marriage-feast and she'll come right gladly and with well-filled hands. Haply, her lord, likewise, since Regulus doth go where Thanna leadeth. Say, Nyria, would it not cheer thy heart, after thankless tending of such coarse brutes as the Most Noble Julia, and of this milk-and-water mistress of thine, to have a fair good merrymaking over thy espousals with Stephanus who, whate'er be his position now, is verily a man —and who, if he did take a wife of Thanna's wit, would speedily advance him to something higher.'

All this was so much words to me and no more.

' 'Tis kind thou art, Thanna,' I said, ' but I think not to marry Stephanus. I have no time for thoughts of marriage.'

' Alack ! ' she said. ' If women think not of that which doth concern them most and which is their best advantage, yet to which all may not attain, then must they indeed be fools. Now, Thanna is no such fool, seeing that she serves none without her full price, and right well hath Thanna

served Regulus this two years past—for the which Thanna's price is marriage, and she'll have it, too.'[1]

And, just then, Thanna looked over her shoulder and the lord Regulus glanced at her as he and Martial walked together on the other side and, methought, his look was tender and was proud.

'Come hither, I need thee,' he said, and held out his hand.

Thanna nodded as one who would come when she willed.

'Fare thee well, Nyria,' she said. 'Haply, thou and I must walk different roads. Yet hath Thanna done her best for thee. Prepare thy mistress, and bid her avoid Salome nor trespass upon her fields, else wilt thou and she have troublous matter to consider.'

And this she whispered ere she ran off.

Now, I walked slowly on behind them pondering upon what Thanna had said, and on what might be the danger she had threatened. And it seemed to me that it would not be well I should go back and warn Valeria, seeing that Salome and the boy had already been with her—of the which Thanna was ignorant—and knowing, as I now knew, that Valeria had for ever cast forth Licinius from her heart. Therefore, I went on my way. But, thou knowest, I would have turned me had I thought I could have served Valeria by so doing. Nevertheless, having seen her, methought that, for this night at least, I could do naught for my lady: and the voice of mine own people seemed to call me. Wherefore I hastened on.

My thoughts did turn on Stephanus since Thanna had spoken of him for Stephanus had been wont to walk often to the Christian meetings. Yet I had not dared to call on Stephanus to-night, for I was still his patient and it seemed likely that he would be angry with me for adventuring myself thus.

Wherefore, seeing that the lords and Thanna hasted down before me towards the city, I took the road that brancheth off towards the knoll.

By this way, I climbed over the bit of hill and down through a broken place in the rock wall, and so joined the path above the Quarries. Wherefrom, I came down into the valley, the which is a small and pleasant place with short-growing grass that the goats had nibbled, and clumps, here and there, of shrubs and flowers, and opening, maybe two or three hundred yards away, towards the Campagna. And on either side were the rocks which rose high, shewing no opening to such as knew not where to look for it. But I myself did know it well and, even as I came down, there were a few in advance of me—Lucius and his aged parents and, here and there, others who spoke a word to me. But 'twas our way not to draw too closely together and each would slip by himself through the opening in the rocks, making sure that no stranger was in sight. Though, when one had once entered, there was a greater safety within the walls of rock, for the passages were many, and—unless one had oft traversed them as we had done—one had like to find oneself in straits, not knowing which way to turn. But I, being sure of my way, did walk on, yet lingering not to-night to read the tablets, for my heart was still full of Valeria and I could not help wondering how she bore herself. I was glad that Aeola might be within call, though well I knew that my lady would hold herself proud and cold as she had ever done and would not suffer that a slave should behold her grief. But I hoped that Aeola

[1] There appears no record of Regulus being at this time a widower, but Pliny, in Letter 2, Bk. IV, comments upon his ostentatious grief at the death of his son and of his desire to remarry.

had learned somewhat and would wait without in the antechamber till our lady should give command for her entrance.

Now, I should tell thee that Aeola would have come with me that night if she could have obtained permission to absent herself. But Crispus was in Rome for a brief space and she expected him to come up that evening. She knew not at what hour he would come, else would she have persuaded him to take her to the meeting and, seeing that he had not yet arrived, she liked not to company me. Wherefore, Aeola did not apply for leave and was in attendance for the unrobing.

Thou knowest that Aeola and I had some food together before I started, and 'twas then that she told me of the Domina's doings and of how that woman Salome had been often to see her but had not been received until to-day. Also, that she thought the Domina had not been so oft of late to the villa of Licinius Sura. For, thou dost understand, that by this time I did let Aeola speak to me of those matters, seeing that she was grown older and wiser, and that she would soon be married herself. . . ."

. . . . . .

NYRIA (resuming) : " Now I was about to take my place near the bottom of the chapel nigh to the door where I always knelt—unless for any reason I wanted to speak to Clement and then would I go up higher. But the chief elder, Gaius, was very stern and would allow none to linger. Likewise, he was one who did know the Blessed John and oft boasted that he had letters from him ;[1] and I feared lest he should drive from thence any who might stay too close upon the Apostle's road. Yet I did sorely desire to see the Apostle near, and to speak to him if it were possible. Wherefore, I drew me into the shadow of a pillar and knelt there waiting, for I knew that Clement would come that way and that, like enough, he would have the Apostle with him : and so it proved.

But they were not alone, for the Domina Domitilla was there and her two sons and Flavius Clemens. The boys walked on either side of her and one of them held the Apostle's hand, the which, when I saw it, though I loved the lady Domitilla, I had no eyes for any other than him. For he had a kindly look, and yet he seemed to me scarce of Earth.

The cave was dark, though torches were set about the chapel entrance. Many had gone in, but Gaius had seen me not, though he came often near the door as if waiting to welcome the Apostle. Wherefore, I had hid myself more closely behind the jutting rock, with my cloak over my head, and so remained kneeling while the Lord John and the Domina Domitilla approached to where I kneeled. Now Gaius had come forth again and did salute the Lord John, making a deep prostration, whereat the Apostle raised him and embraced him, greeting him as ' Well-beloved in the Lord.'

Then I saw that Clement walked behind with Flavius Clemens, and the eyes of Clement, which went everywhere, did fall on me, and he drew me forth and led me before the Apostle saying :

' Brother, here is one who would fain bear her Lord on His cross as the Master doth desire ; and well I know that thou wouldst greet this maid.'

Whereat, I was wellnigh covered with confusion ; but Domitilla smiled on me.

[1] Can it be that the " Well-beloved Gaius," to whom St. John addressed his third Epistle, is identical with the Gaius of Nyria's story ? See Appendix 27, Bk. III.

' 'Tis a child of mine in the Lord, and dear to me after these,' she said, as she stood, putting a hand on each of her son's shoulders.

Whereon, the great Apostle turned and glanced upon me, with the light of his mild blue eyes—which seemed to me like the eyes of one of those who did minister to that Lord Himself—full upon me.

' Verily,' he said, ' the Master knoweth them that are His and haply, thou, little maid, shalt have thy desire,' and he touched my head, which touch seemed to me to bring a shaft of light all through my being so that I would have forgot all else and followed him. But Gaius, making his way among the crowd, did lead them further within and I meekly stayed me in my place.

And then it seemed to me that to-night I must draw nearer. Therefore, I went up nigh to the front of the people and we all knelt as Clement brought the Blessed Apostle round. But Domitilla, with Flavius and their children, knelt near the foremost of the throng.

Thou knowest, my heart was full of many things, for the strangeness and wonder of seeing him who had known Christ was enough to fill a maid's thoughts : and likewise, as I knelt and bathed me in this peace, I did long most mightily to carry back that peace to Valeria. For it seemed to me that in such she would surely find a balm which might make her forget Licinius.

Now the ceremony began with the singing of a hymn which we all sang kneeling, while Clement led the Blessed John round among the people, proceeding at the topmost and passing in a circle from one side to the other and then remaining in the centre at the top again so that we might see him well : and Gaius bore his cloak behind and seemed as if he could not take his eyes from off the Teacher.

Though, verily, the Apostle's mien was lowly and his look homely, but rugged and now worn as though he had passed through much of suffering. His cheeks were hollow and thin : yet was there the light of a bountiful compassion upon his face. His form was square and likewise rugged ; he was not so tall as Clement but bigger built, so that, methinks, his arms had been brawny and his hands, as he gathered his robe, were larger and not so finely shaped as the hands of Clement. His hair was white, falling meekly in waves like snow upon his shoulders, and his beard, which descended over his chest, was white also. His eyes were very blue and oft-times they seemed to me to look beyond the earth. But the most wondrous thing about him was his voice which rang so loud and deep that it wellnigh filled the chapel, yet when he spoke softly it might have been followed anywhere, for all could hear it.[1]

And I had a fancy that there were Twain that stood on either side of him and upheld him, who were dazzling bright and whose garments dropped dew. But haply, that was just a fancy of my brain, for I had had such visions sometimes and none others saw them. But the Apostle spoke not out of his own strength. That, well I knew, for such strength as he had had must now be long past. And yet there was a fire within him which was of milky whiteness and still burned like flame.

The hymn was of the golden city whereof he hath written. But Clement had written the words of the hymn and one among the ladies had made music for them.

[1] For the disputed question of the personality of St. John see Appendix 28, Bk. III.

Then first, Clement spake a few words saying that he did present the Apostle who, after much suffering and long privation, had come from his own people that he might speak to us. Whereat, all cried with one voice:

'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'

And on that, the Apostle bent his head and then began to speak. . . . It was chiefly of truth and love—and much about love—that he spake.

'My little children,' he said. *'Behold there is but one commandment that I give unto ye, for in this one lieth all other commandments whether greater or less. For it is, as it were, the womb of heaven wherein all good things that shall be born lie hidden. And this is that word which the Master Himself spake unto us who did stand nearest to Him on that night before He suffered. It is, that ye shall love one another.*

For love is as the bond of God: the only fetter that He layeth on the flesh, the link that bindeth all mankind in one body and doth hold that body to the higher body of them that have gone before. Wherefore (said he), *this one thing I would make clear unto you—that without love all faith and works be imperfect. . . .*

For who shall declare the nature of love?

It is as the Breath of God that goeth forth upon the surface of the globes, quickening all to life, and none can wholly understand it save such as have had that love of God dwell within them. And even they know it but dimly.

Yet, in the Light that shall hereafter be revealed, they shall know love as it is.

Before, I gave a commandment for each one of ye that thou shouldst serve thy fellow-man and that thou shouldst look to the vengeance of heaven upon them that did suffer thee ill. Yet now this word I must take back from amongst you. For there is but one power, whether in heaven above or in earth beneath, that shall conquer; and this is love. . . .

My little children, my love verily have I given unto ye, whether I know ye or know ye not in the flesh. For the Master's love worketh through me to such as are called to be His. And this love I would that ye did shed abroad, forgiving each other all such wrong as may be done against you, and thinking only of that love which is mightier than any spirit of vengeance. . . .

For, who shall know when he may be called into the presence of the Master Himself, where is naught but love?

For the day of the Lord cometh, as ye have been told, in a way that ye know not and at a time that shall be unknown. And for you all, it may, haply, not come together. Yet, that day may shortly dawn for some of ye: wherefore, think ye, how ill it would be were ye called forth with the clinging weight of some deed of ill-nature impeding ye from His Presence. . . .

Now (said he) *there be but these two things that I will put before ye who are well taught in the teachings of the Church by this faithful pastor. . . .'*

And at that he did signify the Bishop Clement: and then he said:

'Remember only that God is Love and God is Truth. Wherefore go not before Him with the weight of any dark sin upon ye, but wearing the garment of truth and breathing forth love. . . . And look well unto yourselves that there be none among ye who should, haply, be as that son of perdition who was amongst us on that sacred night when the Master went forth to His shame and agony—and that, at the bidding of the most evil of the sons of men.

For if there be one among ye who shall so far fail in that which he oweth to his Lord and to his brethren as to plunge them into darkness and danger, behold, the state of that one shall be terrible as was his whose name we may not speak.

And though the prayers of the righteous should go forth, yet know ye not that such a soul shall be plunged into the darkness where he would have hastened his brethren? Therefore, in times like these it be needful that we should hold together in a bond that may not be broken. For, if the hands of the heathen be raised against ye, yet shall they not prevail if ye be gathered under the cross of Christ. But to him that would betray his brethren, even as Christ was betrayed, there is but little hope, though the Master Himself be all powerful and all merciful. . . .

And yet (said he) *fear not. For in the region where love is strongest, there be no room for fear, which shall be cast forth into outer darkness. . . . Therefore, strengthen ye yourselves with love that your bonds be the bonds of love and not of fear. . . . He that is perfect in love knoweth not fear. . . .'*

Now, what I heard I did hear only in broken bits, for when he talked of love, I bethought me a great deal about different kinds of love, and my mind did wander towards Stephanus.

And when he spoke of how Christ doth care for the lambs of His flock and I longed that I too might have such care, it seemed to me that none but Stephanus had ever taken care of me and, methought, perchance 'twas wrong to wish for other care when that which was given me I would not allow. But I always felt that Stephanus's care did not satisfy me quite, and I knew not why. I could not make it out. Because, sometimes, I found in him so great sense of rest, and then there were times when I could not find that at all. I always knew how much Stephanus cared for me, but there were things in him which turned me from him, and then I would be sorry, for it seemed more my fault than his. . . .

I was thinking of that and of the love of Valeria and Licinius and of my love for her. . . . And then when the Blessed John spake of betrayal the sin did seem to me so terrible that I was thankful I had not betrayed Valeria. . . . And yet I wondered what the Apostle would think if he knew that I had lied to Paulinus. . . . And then he, seeming to answer my thought, said:

'For the love that a man beareth to his brother or to his mother—what be these but symbols of that eternal and boundless mystery of love—a love now unknown, yet of which man shall learn some day. And, behold, the love that a man beareth unto his wife is the symbol whereby Christ hath chosen to set forth His love for them that are His.

But I say unto you that the love that a man beareth unto his wife or his mother or brother—to him or to her that standeth nearest and closest to him—is yet but the faint shadow of the love of Christ which in His human manifestation He hath endeavoured to shed amongst us. . . . Yet, not truly shall we understand that love till we are fitted to be with Him as He is and where He is—when, having accomplished all things, with the glory that shall be His own upon Him and the world beneath His feet, Christ shall shew us of the fulness of the love of God. . . .'

And it did seem to me that if Christ had said He were the door by which man could enter in, yet that now the door was John.

And at the end of the address Clement said the prayer, but the Apostle himself gave the blessing, with his arms outspread over the people. And, again, it seemed to me that the light of a dazzling Presence shone behind him, and I longed that I might have looked upon Him of Whom the Apostle had spoken. . . .

And still his arms were raised in blessing when the people began to sing another hymn. . . . I cannot tell thee of that hymn, for the while, my thoughts were drifting around the chapel. . . . 'Twas curved—the upper part of the cave, and went far back into darkness. . . . And there were torches, flickering . . . and the old man's arms made long, strange shadows.

And as my eyes went following the shadows into the dimness of the cave, lo! of a sudden, they beheld Licinius Sura. He stood within an archway—somewhat hidden by a pillar, seeming lost in thought and observing none. His head was lowered and his arms were folded beneath his toga, but I knew that 'twas verily Licinius and I wondered what did he there and if, having been in Judæa, he had become a Christian. But that, I could scarce believe, seeing that my domina had been told naught of the matter. . . .

I have never read the thoughts of Licinius Sura. . . . I know not if I can. . . . I will try. . . .

He is not thinking of my domina. There is something pressing mightily at the back of his mind, but it toucheth not Valeria. . . . 'Tis something with danger in it . . . something that hath to do with another people—the giving of freedom to those oppressed by tyranny and the gaining of privileges now denied. . . . I know not. . . .

But, meseemeth, Licinius is not all selfish. . . . There be good in the man's heart. . . . But he is not strong enough to carry this thing through. He is like that in his love for my domina. He doth love her in his way, and yet his nature is not able to carry his love. . . . Methinks it is a certain spiritual weakness. But not in the sense of religion: he careth not for religion: he is here to-night, not for worship but for the furtherance of his plan. . . . And for that, I feel that he hath not within himself sufficient strength. Licinius knoweth not his own weakness because of the strange falsity that is in him. . . . Long, long, will it take for him to overcome these faults—many, many ages. . . . They will outlast, through and through, and cause much suffering to himself and to others also. . . . He will have to go through great pain here. . . . But not only here . . . not only in this life. . . . What does that mean? I know not . . . I cannot understand. . . .

I see it like a picture. . . . I was kneeling there and praying. . . . I was not thinking of Licinius except in thinking of my domina. . . . I prayed that he might be kinder to her and make her happier. . . . I cared not much for his happiness although, in truth, I never did care for anyone's happiness so much as for hers. . . . I never thought of anything mattering in comparison with that. . . . I was praying for her—and for some other things. There was that one thing I had thought of often—what should I do if there came a time when I should be in danger myself and have to stand firm. . . . And I could not quite tell. . . . I always knew that if it were anything that mattered for my domina, I could be strong enough, but I never could feel sure that, if I were tried, I should hold to the faith, myself. . . . I used to hope it might be so but I felt afraid lest, if I were in any sharp danger, I should want to save myself. . . . I prayed very much that, if such should come, I might be strong and faithful. Yet was I afeard.

There were prayers going on, thou knowest, for the Church and for all who were members of that Body. . . . I ought to have kept my mind upon them but I had not done so. I had my cloak over my arms and my head was down upon them, and I was thinking my own thoughts and praying my own prayers. . . . I know that that was wrong. For, when many are in

danger and a multitude be bound together, the thought of each should be for all—that all be held by the power of prayer so that none might fall away. . . . There were some that night, I did hear, who gave up the faith and fell back from the truth. And then, methought, that had my prayers not lacked in force that night, they might have helped a little to increase the bond of strength which held us all together. But I always felt that I was too small and weak to be of any account, save to help Valeria. . . .

But something dreadful did happen . . . something more horrible than was before. . . . Her heart became changed and then . . . No. No, it cannot be. . . . Valeria would not willingly do a cruel thing. There was ever in her—I know there was—such true gentleness. . . . I cannot find out now . . . I will try, but not now. . . . I am afraid to look from the Beyond. . . . I am afraid to know if Licinius were really unfaithful to my domina's love. . . . He did not love that woman as he loved Valeria. . . . And yet. . . . And yet, I fear me lest it might be true. . . . The clouds are gathering. . . . They dim the torches on the walls. . . . They hide the preacher from me. . . . All is dark. . . . .

There's another picture. . . . I see rocks. . . . It's outside the Quarries. . . . There are men in armour. . . . The torches shine upon the armour. . . . There is some great harm being done—some great betrayal. . . . I see the people who were praying. . . . Some are trying to hide in the shadows under the rocks. . . . Some are making for the city. . . . They put their cloaks over their faces. Oh, I do not want to look. . . . I am frightened. . . . Now, it is all moving. . . . One minute it is like a picture and I can't feel anything. . . . And the next minute, I can feel the ground and the rocks behind. . . . I can see the faces of the soldiers. . . . A-a-h! (shuddering). Let them not touch me. . . ."

CHAPTER XIV

In the Mamertine

Nyria tells of how she was caught and taken with the Christians, by order of Cæsar, to the Mamertine prison: of how Stephanus visits the prison and the tale is spread that 'twas Valeria who betrayed the band, out of revenge for the falsity of Licinius Sura: then, of how the Christians fall upon Nyria for having given information to her domina of the whereabouts of their meeting-place and denounce her for a traitor.

Nyria: "Thou knowest, though the soldiers seemed to come suddenly, they must have been there some time, only that none of us who were in the chapel knew it. At the last, we all joined in the singing of a hymn, but some few, after the Preacher had given us his blessing, stole out—those who had needs hasten home early.

The soldiers, I have heard, did not stop these people. They waited till the greater number of us had come forth and were collected in the space among the rocks, some talking happily together of the Blessed John and the comforting words he had spoken. For the officers feared that, did they give the alarm too soon, some might escape by little-known passages through the Quarries.

The soldiers had hidden themselves behind the rocks where the small valley openeth and, as the Christians streamed out through the crevice in the hillside, in ones and twos, close following each other, those who were foremost found the opening to the valley barred by armed men. I was bare-headed in the middle of the crowd, not having put my cloakover my head, for the night was warm, and none thought of danger.

And lo!—Scarce can I tell thee what happened, so suddenly it came and so greatly was I affrighted. . . . From the rocks all around, soldiers burst forth and there was a flare of torches in the still dark night—they must have lighted them before they sprang—and, in a moment, all was terror and wild confusion. The men shot their torches in and out among the people, and I could see the gleam of their armour and hear the rattling of their spears amid the crying of women and children and the loud commands of the captains and the callings of the soldiers, who would have each one they seized say who and what he might be.

A great helmet shadowed my face and a man looked down and caught me by the shoulder, crying out:

'Why, 'tis Paulinus's little maid, the yellow-haired German girl! What doeth she here?'

And he bade me not shrink and be afraid, but that I must speak out what business had brought me among this rabble. And his manner angered me, and I answered back quickly and sharply that I was a Christian and came to the meeting with the rest. For I knew that he must learn the truth

and I would not seem ashamed of my companions and of my faith. And the man told me to keep my silly tongue between my teeth and not to chatter thus if I wished to save my skin.

Now, more soldiers leaped from the rocks amongst us and, but for the torches flaring in that dimness, some women and children would have been trampled to death as the soldiers seized certain ones who were trying to flee and evilly entreated such as resisted. But, for the most part, the Christians said little, and the weaker ones seemed stunned by the suddenness and violence of the onslaught coming when they had least thought of it.

The man who had taken me kept his hold on my bare shoulder. But I could not endure the grasp of his great hand and, in the riot, I did contrive —I know not how—to twist myself away. I leaned me against a high rock in the shadow and, now, pulled my cloak over my head as many others were doing, and some were hoping to escape. But, every moment, the soldiers made more prisoners. . . .

And then I saw Licinius Sura. He was taller than the rest and he stood by himself in a little open space ; and at first they did not touch him, so busy were they with those that gave trouble. He stood quite still with his cloak wrapped round him and the hood over his head. Methought, he might have passed to one side and got away unnoticed. But he moved not and I heard one of the soldiers call out : 'Where is he—the man we have come to find ? Amongst this rabble, who can there be of any consequence ? '

Another two or three soldiers rushed forward and one called roughly : 'Whom have we here ? ' and plucked at his cloak. But Licinius flung it open and stood facing them and answered straight.

'Licinius Sura.' He gave his name proudly, like that. . . . And he asked :

'Is it I whom ye seek ? '

Then the captain of that company—he who had spoken—went up to him and said a few words in a low tone.

Licinius nodded his head sharply and folded his arms but would not speak another word. . . . And then the soldiers closed round him and I saw him no more. . . . And I felt sick and sore afeard. The ground seemed to rock under me and I put out my hand to steady myself. But I should have fallen had not a soldier caught me—he who had spoken to me before—and he told me I must bear up and go along with the rest ; and I had to go. . . .

Oh, it was a very long way. . . . Thou knowest, the place was outside the city and though we could reach it by those wild paths I have told thee of—and by that secret passage by which I went to my baptism—they knew naught of those shorter ways and marched us round by the public road, which was far to go. . . . The soldiers put us in the middle and closed us in so that none might pass their spears. . . . I knew not how I stumbled along or whither I was going. . . . I had lost count of things.

There was an old woman—a kind old woman—next me in the crowd. I know not who she was. She held my hand and talked to me. . . . She said it gave her comfort to feel a young warm hand like mine. She said that she knew she was going to her death and that she would fain keep in touch with life as long as she could. . . . But meseems, there was not much life in me just then. . . .

We got into the town—I remember not into what part—I mind me that the stones seemed to rise up and strike my feet. . . . I could not walk

straight. . . . There was a singing in my ears and, methinks, I fell. . . . I remember no more about that. . . .

Afterward, they told me that I had stumbled in the dark and fallen—the soldiers hurried us so—and that a soldier had picked me up and carried me. . . .

I knew not whither they were taking us, but I must have wakened somewhat when they got to the place, for I mind me of a great building stretching out in the dim light and some knew it for a prison, and some did not. . . . And again I lost myself. . . ."

. . . . . .

NYRIA (resuming) : " When I awoke I was in prison—that was a long time after—at least so meseemed. . . . It was a cold, dark place—the cold I minded not—in which we were crowded all together. The floor was stone and very hard and there was naught to lie upon. My cloak was under me—that grey cloak my domina had given me—and that was a comfort . . . all of us had not cloaks. . . . My face was wet and my hair. . . . They told me that the soldier who had carried me dashed water over me when he brought me in.

I know not the name of the prison[1]—I never thought about the name of the place. . . . I ought to know. . . . They were talking of it among themselves. . . . I could get to know for thee. . . . It was a big prison. . . .

All seemed to me dimness and bewilderment, down there. 'Twas a prison that lay underground, but not very deep. There were gratings that went up above the earth, and such light and air as came in did come through them. Thus, it was fortunate to obtain a seat near a grating. And yet, at first, the people did not think of that. Such as were friends or belonged to the same family herded together and, of the rest, the women in one part and the men in another. . . . There were divisions of a kind—little rooms that went one into another ; many of them having no doors : and, in some parts, there were dividing pillars, or bits of wall that jutted out and separated one place from another. . . . The men and women were put in all together, but, in a manner, they separated themselves. . . . Most of the women who had husbands, clung to them, and some had children, but these were few. . . .

Yet many had got quite separated. Afterwards, when other prisoners were thrust upon us, sometimes they were relatives of those who had been already taken.

Most of the people were in great dread, and they kept calling to one another to ask if their friends were there. And such as had left behind those whom they loved, called for them also. Some had children at home, and one man had left a young sick wife who was expecting her baby ; and he was sore troubled and desiring to know how she fared. But none came to us from outside whom we might question.

At first, I scarce gave heed to what was going on around me. . . . All my thought was to get back to my domina. . . . I did not think then of seeking some means of letting her know into what pit I had fallen. I was too sick and frightened to think of anything—it had come so very suddenly and it all seemed like a nightmare. . . . I had only known—when I spoke to the soldier—that I must not deny my religion. . . . That was the one

[1] Afterwards Nyria said that she thought it was the Mamertine. (Recorder.)

sensible thought I had. . . . There was nothing else clear in my mind. . . . But when dawn came, I began to remember a little. A faint light was showing through the gratings. I crawled near to one of them and laid me down in a corner by it because there I got more air.

And then I wondered about my domina. I expected that she would miss me at the morning-robing and that, when she heard what had happened, she would send and get me out, though I minded me that she had asked me no questions and had seemed to pay no heed when I had told her whither I was bound. But I knew that Aeola would tell her and I was sure that she would send and save me. I did not think there would be any difficulty, because my master always had a great deal of power and could do almost anything he pleased, and Valeria had but to ask him if she were not able to manage it herself. I knew that she would not mind asking him that for me, and I did not trouble very much except for the waiting in that dark prison.

Somewhat I remembered of Paulinus being at Albanum that night. Yet I felt sure that Valeria would send. . . . But the time went on and no one came, and then I thought that she might not know I was in prison and I hoped she would hear before evening, for she would wonder where I could be, and it would distress her.

I never thought then of Licinius or that the soldiers would have taken him. I supposed that they had just wanted him to tell them something, for the officer who had spoken to him was a friend of his and I had seen none lay hand on him save when the soldier had rudely pulled his cloak, not knowing who he was. I could not have believed that he, too, was a prisoner. . . . He was not down there among us—at least, methinks he could not have been. . . . I crawled around later in the day and, perchance, had he been there I might have seen him.

They brought in and set down for us jugs of water and some coarse brown cake—the country kind. There was nothing else; and some of the women were perishing for lack of food and were too weak to get it for themselves. I did what I could, but my arms were shaking so that I could scarce pour out the water and I ached all over me. Methinks, it was partly from the fever and partly from lying so long on the damp stones. . . . But we were all suffering together and my suffering was less, mayhap, than that of many others. . . .

And then the old woman made claim on my kindness, for she was feeble and had been injured in the struggle. One of the men had pushed her down and her poor old shoulders were bruised and sore, and she cried for some of those belonging to her though none had been with her when we were taken. Haply, I did comfort her somewhat, for she leaned on me and I made her drink a little water and eat some of the coarse bread. But, for myself, I felt to want it not, seeing that I had been well fed at the farm, and, in Valeria's household, we had all that we could desire and, verily, not one of us would have touched such food. . . . But, after a while, I made pretence to eat that thus I might encourage the others.

And all that day passed and no one came. . . . So dim was the prison that, at first, one scarce knew night from day and, at evening, the blackness fell quickly. They lent us not torches unless—as happed after a while—certain persons visited the prison. . . . But for me, as yet, none came."

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NYRIA: "Thou understandest, my mind is greatly clouded concerning that time. It cometh to me in broken parts. Methinks, I lost myself between; and, verily, it be like unto an evil dream from which I awoke to sick confusion and pain and weakness, so that, oft, I could not drag my limbs or lift my head.

I will try to make clear to thee the order of certain happenings which I knew. But there be much that, even now, I know not. . . .

Thus, the days went on—methinks two or three or mayhap more—I know not. . . . And the number of us increased, seeing that every day fresh prisoners were thrown in among us. For many of those trying to escape had been traced to their homes and brought in. . . . I heard the people talking among themselves and they were wondering who had done this thing and if there were one false among us who had betrayed the rest. . . . 'Twas certain, they said, that some one must have given forth a clue to our meeting-place in the old Quarries—or how could the Prætorians have known where to find the entrance? . . .

And I heard men asking each other and some of the women among us, whether they had always been careful to keep everything secret as we had been taught to do. . . . And I felt very unhappy; and yet I knew it was impossible that harm could have come through me, because there was no one to whom I had told anything except Stephanus and my domina, and they, I knew, could both be trusted not to say or do aught to injure us. . . . Stephanus was ever wary in his talk and, besides, he had been himself to some of the meetings, and, for my sake, he would have been doubly careful.

And then, I could not doubt my domina. She *could* not have been untrue. I knew that she did not care really about things that concerned not herself and that she liked me to tell her about the Christians only just because she was interested in what was strange or new, and because, she said, I had a way of prating that did distract her thoughts from the life in Rome that she loved not. . . . And my domina was not a careless speaker—one of those who say things without thinking. . . . It was not only because of me that she would be careful. She knew that the Christians had been persecuted before and, mayhap, might be again. And she knew—for I had told her—that some of her friends, such as Clemens and Domitilla, were of the faith and she had said to me how strange it oft seemed to her to meet them and to know their doings and to say nothing. . . . Oh, never could my domina have betrayed us—I felt 'twas dreadful to harbour for a moment such a suspicion. . . . I hated the thought . . . yet it would keep coming back. . . . Thou knowest, we had been told we must never tell anyone . . . and I had told her everything—always.

Now, there was the old priest—an Elder—him they called Gaius—who seemed sore disturbed in mind at what had befallen. . . . He sat in his own corner and muttered to himself. For the others pressed not too close upon Gaius, seeing that he was of note in the Church. Yet it was not long since his baptism and he had been but as ourselves. Nevertheless, was he considered a very godly man and, as such, had obtained preferment under Bishop Clement, and now all thought of him as better than the rest, he being an Elder of the Church.

Methinks that the hearts of many were filled with feelings they feared he would condemn. Yet, at first, they murmured not loudly nor shewed anger, seeming but as people in great tribulation—the women moaning and

the men questioning each other if there were aught that could be done. . . . But, thou knowest, we were all just like unto a flock of sheep.

Now Gaius presently raised his hands to heaven and lamented aloud that already the pains of hell gat hold of him and that he feared the torments of death were approaching. Wherefore, he said, the Spirit of the Lord had come upon him and told him that there was a traitor amongst us—and which of us could it be?

And each looked at the other and murmured among themselves and asked: 'Who is it. . . . Who is it?'

Then Gaius said that, haply, the traitor had not been taken, but that, of a surety, his sin would find him out and the punishment due to one who had betrayed the Lord's Elect would fall upon him; and, said he, the terrors of that man would be greater than any such as could come to us who had not committed this sin of Judas—he that had betrayed the Master Christ.

And these words of Gaius disturbed the people and the men said that if they could find that man they would fall upon him themselves; and the women said that if it were a woman they would fain themselves tear her to pieces. . . . But I held my breath, knowing naught, and waited all that day for Valeria to send for me.

Then, towards eve, Gaius, having somewhat recovered himself, came amongst us and commanded that we should draw together around him; and he knelt and prayed that if it were the Lord's will, the finger might point to the betrayer, so that we might know our enemy and scorn him while yet we should take care to keep ourselves true.

Now I liked not the prayer of Gaius, for it seemed to me that one, having done such wrong, lieth in the hand of God to be punished: or—if the offender hath suffered and repented—to be forgiven, even as the Lord Jesus forgave those who nailed Him on the Cross. And that it was not for such as we are to scorn such an one, seeing that none of us can know his own weakness, but that rather should we pity him and pray for his forgiveness.

But Gaius, having prayed after his own manner, we all sang a hymn.

Then they brought us in again jugs of water and the cakes of brown bread, and I took them round and waited on those who could not fetch for themselves, for there were many weak; and some, besides the old woman, had been injured by the soldiers though, afterwards, we heard that Cæsar had given orders that none were to be struck down.

It was while the people were again asking among themselves concerning who might have betrayed us, that some named Licinius Sura, and questioned whether it could have been he. . . .

'Wherefore,' said they, 'did he come among us? Wherefore did he seem to spy out our ways and ask us so many questions concerning our worship?'

For it appeared that Licinius Sura, although he went forth in disguise from his villa, did not, among these good folk, conceal his name. But it had been his way to tell them all he was of the same blood as themselves and felt an interest in all that concerned them. But, now, many were angered when they spoke of him, and some doubted his Jewish blood, and some said he was a Roman spy, and most who knew aught of him did attribute the wrong to him. For it was proved that he had not wished to be admitted into the faith and had shrunk from converse with Gaius who often received, first, such as desired to come to the Bishop."

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NYRIA: "Methinks, it was the next day about noon—or it may have been more days—I know not—that Stephanus came among us, he having obtained a written permit which should allow him to visit the Christians in prison—and this not for his own pleasure but because it was Cæsar's will that such as were sick should be tended. For Cæsar wanted no ailing ones to make sport for his Show—but this we knew not till later.

And when Stephanus stood there, I could scarce believe it—he looked so strange. His hair seemed grey in the dim light and his face so thin and drawn. A soldier came in with him who was on guard at the door. Now and again, one or two of the soldiers would walk through the rooms, and this was one I knew not. But he was not a bad man and, afterwards, he was kind to me. And Stephanus, when he saw me, gave a great sigh: and I ran to him and he took me in his arms and did embrace me, forgetting the rest of us. But they rose up from the stones where they lay and such as stood about turned and hailed him, for some of them he had tended when sick, and some others knew him.

'Thou comest as a messenger from the outside world,' they said. 'What news dost thou bring?'

But he heeded them not and only clung to me, saying:

'Verily, thou hadst wellnigh escaped me. What shall I say unto thee, Nyria? Haply, Stephanus cannot be wroth with thee, seeing he hath found thee again. But wherefore didst thou do this thing? How should he have known that thou wast here?'

And then he told me that he had but overheard a chance word among the soldiery that Paulinus's yellow-haired maid was among the prisoners. For, believing me safe at the farm, he had thought to himself that 'twas well I was not in Rome.

'Thou hast been unfair—unfair to a man all along,' he cried. 'Verily, thou hast served me ill. . . . And I would have died, Nyria, to save thee this!'

But seeing that I clung to him and wept, he soothed me as one might soothe a babe. 'There! There! Haply, thou hast learned wisdom. And thou shalt not be called upon to suffer, even though Stephanus stand in thy stead. Yet wiser wouldst thou have been, Nyria, hadst thou not placed faith in yonder fiendish-hearted woman. For, knowest thou not?—'Tis all over Rome that she hath done this deed? She—so that the man she hath grown tired of should be removed from her path. . . . Ay, such is Valeria! . . . And I told thee . . . and thou wouldst not believe it.'

Now, the folks around had heard his words, and with one accord they cried her name, 'Valeria! . . . Valeria? Who is this Valeria?'

But Stephanus seemed to hear them not, for all his mind was bent on me. 'Thou hadst been wiser to beware of Valeria, as I said,' he persisted, and pressed my face against his shoulder. 'Perchance it is through thy prattle that she hath learned enough to enable her to do this deed. . . . There! . . . There! . . . Weep not, child. I say not that it is so. But well I know the confidence thou hast placed in Valeria. And well do I know, alack! how she doth repay them that fain would serve her.'

But the crowd clamoured to be heard. 'Who is this Valeria?' they cried again, 'and what truck hath she with this Christian maid?'

And one or two of the men repeated the question and called on Stephanus to answer them; and he said:

'Valeria is this maid's mistress,' and, holding me closer, he turned his back a little to shield me.

'Weep not so, Nyria,' he said. 'At least, my dear, thou didst mean no falsity.'

Whereon the men tried to lay forcible hands upon me. 'Hath the maid been false?' they cried. 'Let her speak and answer for herself.' . . . And others said:

'Of what use to ask her. If she hath been false, she will be false again.' . . . And the women cried: 'Lo! We have harboured a traitor.'

Then Stephanus spake them back roughly, asking, 'Would ye have the wisdom of sages from the mouth of a young maid?'

And as they clamoured the more to know the truth, he nodded toward the soldier. 'Ask him . . . he knoweth.'

So they called upon the guard . . . 'Tell us. Was it a woman who betrayed us?'

And he jeered, 'Ay, verily. When did a woman not betray? . . . When was there not a woman where there was mischief? . . . If men go forth to hunt, they go for sport, but women's sport is to snare. . . . Truly, ye were caught like rabbits in a hole. Never was there such a nest of rabbits as we took that night.'

Then still they questioned the guard, shouting, 'Tell us . . . tell us who did betray us?'

And, verily, they looked as though they would have fallen upon him, although he was armoured, so fiercely did they all press around him.

But he drew himself against the wall and thrust his spear before him, and said loudly, 'Back, ye vermin. . . . Back, ye bouncers. . . . Ye will leap no more upon your native plains, for when Cæsar sets his quarry forth, Cæsar himself doth quickly follow. . . . Back to your places, I say. . . . Crowd not thus together . . .'

And with the head of his spear, he drove them aside. Then seeing that Stephanus held me close, he bade us stand apart, lest, he said, Stephanus should give me some drug—to ease my punishment. . . . Yet, methinks, the man meant not unkindly to us.

Then did Stephanus draw me away, whispering that he had somewhat special for my ear alone. But because the soldier was looking at us, he dared not touch me, and he could only speak to me in a very low tone from behind his teeth, without moving his lips, so that the men should not see what he was saying. He had often done that with me when I was helping him tend those who were sick, that they, too, should not understand. . . . And he told me that he was very much afraid for me—that it was all over Rome that the Christians were to be destroyed, and that he must make me escape before it should be too late.

He said that he would come at night and try to loosen the gratings and that then, if I could raise myself at all, he would be able to lift me out by the shoulders, but that I must try to sleep beneath the same grating every night, for he might not always be able to come, and he would have to be very careful because the soldiers were watching all round the prison. But everybody liked Stephanus and trusted him, and it was easier for him to get about among them than it would have been for anyone else.

He told me too that, very likely, there might be another way of escape—that some of the prisoners would be picked out for different parts of the Show—the men for games to try their strength and make sport for the people and that some of them might save their lives in that way. . . . And that the women—the good-looking ones, thou knowest—might be kept and

not killed. . . . But he said he would rather they destroyed me than let me live in such fashion. . . . It was very terrible and he could not say much. But to that part I scarcely listened. . . . For I wanted to know about my domina—if he had seen her—if she had heard of what had happened, and did he know why she had not sent for me ? . . . And then in his anger, he forgot himself, and threw up his head and spoke clearly, ' That woman ! If I can once get thee out of here, thou shalt never go back to her.' And then he said that it was indeed Valeria who had betrayed us all that night. She had done it, he said, to serve some private end of her own, but what that was he understood not. . . .

And the people who had been quieted somewhat, though still murmuring together, heard him ; and they shouted again, and pointed at me, and said that for certain I was the traitor who had aided this Valeria in her evil work. . . . And it made me go all cold and stiff, though I knew it was not true that she had done this thing.—Thou wouldst not have believed it, wouldst thou ?—And I told them it was not true. . . . But they would have it so : they would not listen, and I think some of them would have killed me if they could have got hold of me then. . . .

Now, I spoke aloud and told Stephanus that he lied—that he had always hated my domina—that he had never understood her—that he was bitter against her because of me—that it had all been my fault he had felt like that—and that perhaps I had been unkind to him, and I was sorry, but that I knew her better than he did, and I was certain she had never betrayed us. Whereat, Stephanus did ask why, if that were so, she had not sent to have me released—she, whose word had so much weight that even Cæsar would not have refused her anything did she but smile upon him.

Now, I knew that Stephanus's temper was roused, and there was a taunt in those words. But I let it pass. I said, perhaps my lady did not know where I was—that I was only waiting for her to send someone and that then all would know this story of her to be untrue. . . . And I asked Stephanus would he go to her and tell her I had been brought here and beg her to help me out.

But Stephanus swore that he would as lief beg the life of a lamb from a she-wolf who held it beneath her paw. . . . No, that was not the way to save me . . . there would be no help there. . . .

And at that, I burst into fresh weeping. . . . I knew he was wrong, but I could not put him right, and I knew it was because of the bitterness in his heart against her and for the unkind way I had treated him. . . . But he was not to be convinced . . . and, impatiently, he turned again to the soldier and asked him to say by whose doing the cave had been surprised that night, and for what motive it had been done.

And the man answered, ' Thou hast said rightly enough—'Twas Valeria, Paulinus's wife, who gave the information, and gossip saith that this woman, who was reputed the proudest and coldest in Rome, had a lover who hath proved false to her and, he being mixed up in the Christian plot, she hath thought to avenge herself on him in this manner. For she would fain, no doubt, have him removed from her path that she might seek a better gallant as 'tis the custom of Roman ladies.' But to his mind, the soldier said, it was wicked work thus to wreak vengeance on others who had done her no wrong. But women had no mercy in their love-affairs, and this one, for all her coldness and her pride, was headstrong and vengeful as the rest.

And, with that, Stephanus turned to me and asked what now I thought.

But I only shook my head. I could speak no more. I heard the people question excitedly who the man could be, 'For,' said they, 'we have no gladiators amongst us—such as might aspire to be the lover of so great a lady.'

''Tis he whom they call Licinius Sura, "the ill-begotten spawn of old Sura from his sojourn in that cursed Judæa whence the most of ye come,"' replied the soldier. 'But now he be safe enough betwixt these walls and when ye meet again, verily, 'twill be a merry meeting, for, together, ye shall make sport for the gods and Cæsar. . . . The gods alone know what he did amongst such as ye,' said the soldier. 'For Sura is a well-favoured man and hath a certain position, though no great riches. . . . Methinks there will be a striving for his villa, where an officer hath already taken possession, driving out a Jewish woman and her brat whom this Sura did harbour.'

'But ye will see naught of that.' 'Twas another soldier—one more cruel-hearted than the first—who spoke. 'For ere then,' said he, 'ye will have formed the bodyguard for the traitor Licinius, to speed him on his way to Hades.'

Then I heard one of us say, 'Mayhap 'twas Licinius Sura who did betray us. Haply, 'twas he who told this Roman lady the secret of our meeting-place.'

And I turned me round on hearing that, but Stephanus put out his hand and pulled me back. 'Hush . . . Hush. Let them think it,' he said. 'Like enough he did.'

But some had caught his words and pointed to me, and cried, 'If not Licinius, 'twas this maid. For if the lady be her mistress, what more easy than that she should be the traitress. Say, girl, didst thou ever speak of us to this fine lady friend of thine?'

Then before I could answer, Stephanus did swing me half-behind him and thrust his hand over my mouth, gripping my face so tight that I bore the marks upon my cheek and chin for a day after. . . . And now, Gaius, who had been saying prayers by himself in a further division of the prison, hearing the sounds did come forward.

'What meaneth this unseemly turbulence?' he asked. 'My friends, though trouble hath come upon ye, bear it with calm and fortitude as it is our duty to do.'

And yet, methought, he himself had not shown so great fortitude.

Then, half a dozen or so called upon him, saying:

'Thou art an Elder of the Church. Tell us, shall we not know the truth? The lot of falsity lieth between this maid and Licinius. Shall she not confess if she be the guilty one?'

Now Gaius liked not Licinius, for Gaius was of the people and his manners were not as those of Licinius. Methinks, he would fain the blame were laid on Licinius as, haply, it might have been had they not asked me that question.

But now, turning to Stephanus, he said, 'Friend, remove thy person from before the maid. I would speak with her.'

And as Stephanus sulkily obeyed, he said:

'Is it thou, Nyria? Surely suspicion hath not fallen on thee? Or if it hath, thou canst refute it? Thou wouldst not have done aught to bring thy brethren into danger?'

But I quavered, and before response came from me the men and women said to Gaius, 'Put thy question differently, Elder. Ask the maid straightly whether she did ever tell her mistress where the Christians meet for worship?'

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DEMETER

And Gaius, seeming to understand, turned upon me.

'Hast thou ever told her that?' he asked.

Now I had no mind to lie nor had I time to think. For though I had lied for Valeria, yet never would I have lied for myself; and so sure was I, still, that Valeria had not betrayed us but that, haply, it had been through some accident of Licinius, that I scorned to hide the truth, and answered:

'My lady knoweth that I am a Christian, seeing that she knoweth everything concerning me. Like—likewise——' I began. But again Stephanus stopped me and spoke instead.

'The maid knoweth not what she saith, for she hath had the fever and at times becometh light-headed, and she is sore distressed at that which hath chanced. . . .'

'Distressed! Ay, so are we distressed,' the people cried. 'And who but she herself hath brought about this evil chance?'

'Let the maid speak on,' said Gaius sternly. 'Answer, Nyria, the question that I put thee. Hast thou ever told thy lady of our place of meeting, what hours we meet, and who are like to be there?'

And just a moment I waited, and then I said straightly:

'Ay, sir—that have I done. . . . But Valeria would not betray thee—Valeria would scorn to betray anyone. . . .'

They listened not. They screamed shame on me and hooted at me, and not even Gaius could still their anger. It did need the soldier's spearhead for that. . . . And Gaius looked at me with his eyes like unto two swords. It seemed that they would pierce me.

'The Lord be merciful unto thee,' he said, 'that the eternal punishment of the betrayer be not thine.'

And I trembled all through me, thinking of hell-fire. But I knew I had not sinned of intention. . . . And all were against me. . . . Methinks they would have ill-treated me had not Stephanus taken me in his arms again and shouted at them that the maid was not right in her head and must be left in peace. . . . And he drew me away to a corner under one of the gratings and held me to his heart very tenderly and, while he made pretence of kissing me, he did whisper:

'Sleep thou here, to-night. Lie beneath this grating and watch for me. I will come above if it be possible. Every night will I come till I have set thee free.' And then he said that I must go right away out of Rome with him and we would be happy elsewhere. . . .

'Happy! . . . Couldst thou be happy if they had put a knife into thine heart?'

Poor Stephanus! He said his heart ached if he had made me suffer, but that he hated to see me stand there the blind dupe of a cruel, cold-hearted woman who had never really cared for me. . . . I knew it wasn't true but . . . but . . . it did hurt me so. . . .

I know not what happened then. The soldier talked a great deal and the Christians asked questions of Stephanus about Clement and the Apostle . . . of whom Gaius desired to learn. . . .

No, methinks 'twas the next time they asked those questions. The soldier said the time was up and Stephanus went away hurriedly, and after he had gone they all fell on each other asking why they had not thought to question him about their friends; and the mother of Lucius was anxious to know whether he had escaped, and Gaius desired news, especially, about the Apostle who, he was wont to say, was a great friend of his. . . .

They had all been too wroth against me to question Stephanus and they all abused me and blamed me. . . . They said they had doubted me before, but that now they knew me for what I was. . . . There was not one to stand by me and I went and sat by myself in the corner, and they kept on flinging hard words to me from a distance. . . . But I heeded them not. . . . The words did not seem to strike me ; my head felt light and I knew not what they meant.

Then an old man, seeing me sitting alone, came over by me and took my hand. He said I must not mind what they said—that though I had done this thing, I had not realised it and that there was forgiveness even for such a betrayal. . . . But I could not tell him that I knew my domina had not done that evil ; and it was right of them to blame me if I had been wrong in telling her. I began to see that I had been wrong. I ought never to have told her, and, mayhap—if it were possible she had done that thing—the fault was more mine than hers. So I said nothing. There did not seem anything left to say . . . and I was so tired. . . .

By and by, they brought in the jugs of water and the brown cake that was always given us. It was no use my going round to help anyone, because now, they would not have anything to say to me. One woman was very sick : she had fever on her and she was so weak that she could not lift her arms and I had been tending her, but now she would not let me come near her : and many drew themselves away and would not speak to me. . . . The old man brought me some water and a piece of the bread. I was glad to drink but I could not eat : it seemed as though the bread would have choked me. . . .

When he had gone, none else came near and I stayed there apart and tried to make things out. . . . But I could not think. I felt so puzzled. It seemed as though all the world were dark and there was no one I could trust. . . . And then I felt ashamed. For Stephanus had been here and I knew that I could trust Stephanus. . . . But my thoughts kept going round in a circle over and over again. I kept remembering all the dreadful things he had said about Valeria. And then I recollected that the soldier had said her lover was false to her. . . . And the words of Salome about Licinius—though then I had not believed them—came back to me. . . . I hoped that, at least, *that* was not true. . . . But I could not be sure. . . . I never had been sure of Licinius. He always seemed to me the sort of man who would fail her at a moment of difficulty or misunderstanding. . . . And yet I knew he loved her. . . . Then I thought that if she had wanted to punish Licinius perhaps that was why we were taken—just because we had all been at the Meeting together. . . .

But oh, how dreadful of her ! . . . How could she do it ? But I felt sure she had not, because she loved him so. . . . And then, the next minute, when I remembered how she had looked that time I saw her—the last time—I thought that perhaps she had indeed done it. . . . And to say that she had never cared for me ! . . . Certainly, she had not seemed to care much for me then.

Oh, how could she have done it ! . . . And when I thought that perhaps she had, I hated her. And that felt worst of all."

CHAPTER XV

The Price of Freedom

Nyria tells of how, each night, she lies beneath the grating and of how Stephanus tries vainly to loosen the bars for her escape, while whispering news of the doings in Rome. Then, of how Paulinus visits her in prison and offers her freedom if she will give evidence against Valeria.

Nyria: " I laid me down that night, alone, under the grating as Stephanus had told me. But I could not sleep for wondering if he would come, and I felt faint for I could not eat the food and, thou knowest, I had lately been ill and needed nourishment. The water was stale and smelled, and the bread had worms when we left it an hour or two. . . . Haply, that was from the damp—I know not.

But, presently, I heard Stephanus's voice whispering very softly, and I put my hand up through the bars and he kissed it and then he talked with me.

He said I had been foolish but that he would strive to save me. And then he told me about loosening the bars. . . . He said he would lift me out and we would escape hence—I have told thee that. . . . .

But I urged upon him that he should go to the Valerian villa and show my plight to Valeria for that she would at once send and save me and that was better than climbing through bars. . . . But he said that he would not go near her and 'twas then he said that about the lamb and the she-wolf. . . . Seeing that she had landed me in this plight, said he, he would ask naught of her. But when I prayed him, he said that he would seek out Paulinus, for that Paulinus was the better-hearted of the two and that he had shewn kindness towards me and might be moved now again.

So then I said I knew not whether Paulinus would bear with me if he heard that I had lied unto him. And I told Stephanus the story of my lie and wherefore I had lied, though I begged him not to betray Valeria. But I knew I could trust Stephanus.

He made a clicking sound with his teeth and said that was bad and he hoped it would not come to Paulinus's ears. Nevertheless, sooner, said he, would he face Paulinus's rage than Valeria's scorn, and he would ask my life of Paulinus when the occasion offered, but that, meanwhile, he should see what he could do himself.

And, all the time, he was working at one of the bars trying to loosen it, but he had to spread the sand about the socket afterward to conceal his work.

He told me he must go before the watch was changed and that he could only come when one of the guard was there who favoured him. He had brought me food, and this I did eat thankfully: and also, in a flat bottle, a drink he had made me which was half-drug and half-wine, he said, and would strengthen me, and thus he fed me all the while. But he bade me hide the food lest the others snatch it from me, for the rest were starving.

This I did. I ate each night and would secure a portion in my robe that

I might eat on the following night if Stephanus came not. But in the daytime I went without food—of the which, when the Christians saw it, they said the devil did preserve me, for I was one of his agents and had betrayed them to their undoing. For, seeing they knew not I had means of sustenance, they wondered that I lived.

Now, Stephanus kissed my hand again and bade me keep up heart, for that none of us were like to suffer as yet, seeing that Cæsar was anxious to take prisoners all the Christians in Rome and to make of them a goodly show and thus stamp out sedition.

There was to be a grand show, Stephanus said, wherein many of them would be called on to take part.

Thus, did Stephanus come times again within the prison, bearing Cæsar's permit to minister to the sick, for, thou knowest, it was Cæsar's will that all should be kept in strength so that when the day came they might make better sport for the Court and for the people. And it was after this that the food was changed and better food was given us that health might be kept in the prisoners. Yet still it was of the plainest quality. And if any were feeble, Stephanus was directed to give them medicine to sustain them, though some would fain have had poison and died. Yet, notwithstanding, they shrank from death, for each looked for a way to escape. But some prayed Stephanus that, haply, if there be no hope at the last, then he would bring them poison, whereat Stephanus said :

' Nay, that will I not, for I'll not take on my head the death of one who hath not sinned against me. Moreover, Cæsar would be sore wroth if he knew that I had thus abused his permission to come amongst ye. . . .'

But Stephanus cared not to come often into the prison, for he liked best to talk with me at night at the window, though he spoke very low lest anyone should hear.

Now, 'twas when Stephanus came to the sick that he told such as asked him concerning Clement. How the bishop had withdrawn with the blessed Apostle into the chamber behind the chapel and how it was only in the dawn that Lucius had stolen forth and seeing a glimpse of soldiers—one or two—remaining in the valley—had gone back again and they had stayed in hiding three or four days till the soldiers, thinking that none more would come forth, had gone away. And thus they had escaped and were now in Clement's house upon the Cœlian.[1] But that the Apostle kept himself within so that none might see him. This by Clement's desire lest harm should come upon him. But that Clement was sore grieved and had offered up prayers in the house by the river for the saving of us who had been taken. For none dared go again to the chapel until this be forgotten. Likewise he told us that Clement would fain have come to us in prison but that he durst not ask for a permit till the Apostle be safe speeded on his way hence.

And the mother of Lucius was glad to hear news of her son. . . . I remember not about Lucius's father.

The mother of Lucius was very hard upon me and would not let me give her drink and would not let me serve her though she was old and feeble. She said that her house had been harbourage for traitors and that I was one—and at that I mourned greatly.

And then, when they thrust me back after I had seen Paulinus—but of that I have not yet told thee. . . .

[1] Nyria says that Clement's house was on the Cœlian hill. It is also stated that he lived on the Esquiline.

All is confusion in my mind and I know not if it were before or after this that Paulinus came. Methinks 'twas then that Gaius sat himself beside me again and spoke more kindly. But he said it had grieved him to see my proud spirit. For that I bore myself stiffneckedly who should have humbled myself before those whom I had thus offended. He said that though there was no hope for her whom we would not name, yet the thief on the cross had been forgiven at his pleading to our Lord, and that, if I prayed, I, too, might be heard and that he would pray with me.

Then, said I, that I grieved sore for mine own share in the mischance but that I liked not to hear him pray against Valeria—for so he began.

And he said that if he had not seen how they were all against me, and knew that I must suffer, he would upbraid me for my obstinacy and hardness of heart.

'For,' said he, 'none should screen a sinner.'

And I said I cared not what they did, so that they spake not against Valeria. For my heart was full of bitterness. . . .

The people talked much together. Several had friends who came to see them, and all spoke of the betrayal and all blamed Valeria. But I sat, ever alone, in my corner and said never a word . . . I could not. . . . Before, I had felt strong enough to deny everything they said, but now I was so tired, and I knew it might be true; and that began to take the spirit out of me. . . ."

. . . . . .

NYRIA: "I know not how the days went. . . . I lost count of everything. . . . I used to hear Stephanus at the grating every night. . . . He dared not cut away the bars on account of the noise. He could only loosen them in the ground and he had to be very careful lest it should be noticed that the soil had been disturbed. . . . He always brought me food—anything that was thin and that he could slip down between the bars. And he used to bring me the drink and medicine, and I used to drink it and pass it back again to him. If it had not been for that, I know not what I should have done. . . .

Yet it seemed that, then, none thought of any of us escaping. . . . Every few days some of the prisoners would be taken away and many never came back. They were moved to other dungeons and we knew not what became of them, and I got to wonder if it would be my turn next. . . . I did not greatly care. I trusted Stephanus. I knew that he was doing all he could, but it was very difficult for him lest the soldiers should discover. And if he had been taken prisoner, there would have been no chance for me. He used to tell me at night that was why he was so slow and careful."

. . . . . .

NYRIA (resuming): "Now, I mind me, Stephanus did tell us that Flavius Clemens was tried before Cæsar and was in prison. . . . But his sin was against his sons, for, said Cæsar—so told Stephanus—that he cared not what Clemens chose to do with himself but that the heirs were as the fruit of Cæsar's own loins and that Clemens had offended against Rome. Thus, the boys were taken from him. . . . Yet Domitilla was allowed to see them.

Alas! Domitilla's heart was very sad. . . . Then, once, before the last day, Domitilla had the permit and came to see us, and did pray fervently with us so that she subdued even the soldiers who were in attendance. . . . For,

methinks, some of them were of Christian leaning. And I think not that harm came to Domitilla for so doing. But I knew not then.

Domitilla said that she came, likewise, as Clement's messenger, for that, at her earnest pleading, he had refrained from coming amongst us, seeing that his life was precious to the Church, and hers, she said, was of no account. . . . Domitilla was not angry with me, though I had not dared to draw nigh her for fear. But she came to me where I sat and said she had heard of my refusal to betray my mistress and, seeing that I was made to suffer for what had been without my intention, she bade me remember the words of the Master—how He had prayed upon the Cross: 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.' . . .

'Twas then she prayed that strength might be given to such as might be called upon to suffer—for it was not known which would be chosen. . . . Thou knowest, some had been taken away already—methinks 'twas to make room for those new ones that were brought in—but we knew naught. . . .

Now, it was just before Domitilla came, that Aeola was cast in amongst us, and when I saw Aeola I grieved sore. And yet it comforted me to feel her near. . . . But the pain I felt was far greater. . . . Nevertheless, it could not be said that I had betrayed her. She knew not how it was that the harm had come to her. For she was but walking in the city with two or three others—having been to a prayer meeting at Clement's house—and they had all been taken and bound and brought to the prison. . . . She was sore distressed, fearing that Crispus might not know what had befallen; and when Domitilla came that day, I prayed the lady that she would seek out and acquaint Crispus of Aeola's danger.

Stephanus had likewise promised to do this. But there were many days when Crispus was away from Rome, and he only came back just before—and then it was too late. . . . And Stephanus told us that Licinius Sura was in the prison, and that Cæsar willed he should make a fine show at the Games. . . . Then, to me, at night, he said—that none knew what Valeria suffered, for that she had shut herself up and would see or speak to no one. . . .

But Stephanus was bent on seeing Paulinus. . . . Yet was it two or three days before Paulinus returned again from Albanum to Rome, and then two or three days before Stephanus could see him, and then I saw not Stephanus that night so I knew not that Paulinus was coming. . . ."

. . . . . .

NYRIA: "Now, 'twas towards midday when the guard called me, saying that there was one who would speak with me; and when I asked who it might be, he told me it was my master. Then did I feel sure that all must be well and that Paulinus had come to fetch me. And, in my joy, I turned me to those around, telling them that my master had come for me and that now was it certain Valeria had not betrayed them for, were that so, he would not have come. Then some of them cried, jeering at me—Did I think my master would come himself to fetch a slave? More like that he wanted to know somewhat fresh about us and was going to question me. But, said they, there was nothing fresh I could tell which would do more harm, for that enough harm had been done already. . . . And it was of no use trying to make them understand, and I had no time for talking, so I followed the soldier. . . . I mind me that I felt very much ashamed—my dress was so tumbled and my hair must have been rough and dirty from lying on the

stones. One of the soldiers had brought me a piece of comb, and I had tried to keep me as nice as I could but it was very difficult.

Paulinus was waiting in one of the upper rooms of the prison. A soldier took me to him and left me within the door, but methinks he stood somewhere outside, for he was there when I came out again.

Paulinus was alone. He had got an order to speak with me. He looked big and burly—just like himself: broad-shouldered and rather hot. He had his toga on, of course, but he undraped it and threw it half open.

Methought he seemed very strained. There was an anxious, worried look upon his face and his eyes watched me sharply. The beads of moisture stood all round his forehead and he kept wiping them off. He had a folded paper in his belt—I saw it sticking out lengthways. . . .

I was very glad to see my master, but I felt a little frightened. He spoke kindly and bade me come near to him, where he sat between the table and the window, and, as I stood, he made me turn my face to the light.

Then he said I looked ill and that he was sorry to see how much I had been suffering. He made me feel nigh to weeping, so strange it did seem to hear words of kindness.

Then he said that he had come to me on a matter of great import: that it was necessary he should speak to me about it. He took the paper from his belt and asked if I knew what that was.

I shook my head. Thou knowest, I could not read save a few little words.

He pointed to my own name near the top. He said it was an order for my release.

Oh, if thou didst know what it felt like to see that! I could scarce believe it, though I had told the people that I knew all would be well. . . . I suppose I looked very pleased and glad. . . . And then, he said that before I could leave the prison there was something I must do—that he had got that order for me with much difficulty, and that now I must help him to do what he wanted. He only wished to ask me a few questions, and I must answer them truthfully.

Something in his face frightened me. I felt those questions would be hard to answer. I knew not what to say—so I just stood still and waited and, all the time, he kept watching my face with his little twinkling eyes.

He did not speak for a minute or two, and then he asked me if I thought it right—I who called myself a Christian and professed a strict faith—to deceive a kind master who had never said a rough word to me.

I knew then what he meant, and all down inside me I felt a sinking fear.

He said that he knew about Licinius Sura. And when he spoke his name, he seemed to lose the quiet firm voice he had had, and spoke roughly and sharply and very quickly, saying one thing after another and tumbling the words on each other. . . . He was angry and puzzled—I saw that. I knew well that he was not telling me what was quite true. There was something which leaped up in me and told me to be careful. I knew then that this was his way of trying to find things out, but he had not done it cleverly.

I waited because, still, I did not know what to say, and he was speaking so fast there was no need for me to say anything till he stopped. So I kept silent and faced him as best I could.

He said things about my domina and about Licinius. He said he knew that she had been untrue to him. He knew that she had been having a great deal to do with Licinius, for a long time past, and that I knew all about it—that of course it was natural I should keep quiet, for no doubt she had

paid me well. But he was my master and he was prepared to pay me better.

Now that was a hard thing to say to me and it was not a wise thing. . . . I knew it. . . . For it shewed me that if he were so anxious to get the truth out of me, that meant that he did not know all. So, still I said nothing and I turned it over in my mind as quickly as I could. . . . I hoped I should not have to speak but I knew that I must, and I knew not what to say. . . . I was frightened of him. Nevertheless, I felt not afraid in myself. I remember being brave enough to face him, but I could not bear to see him standing there and talking so fast and looking so anxious all the time. And yet I was sorry for him.

And then it went through me like a flash that mayhap this would be the way to make Valeria suffer for the suffering she had brought on us. . . . And the next moment I hated myself for thinking, even for an instant, that I could have wished to make her suffer. It seemed so strange that I could have such a thought : it was not like anything that I had ever felt before. . . . But that thought did come, pressing back and back. . . . I thought, too, how little she had cared for what she had done. . . . I thought of those poor people suffering in the dungeons and blaming me for their pain. . . . I thought of death on the one hand and liberty on the other. . . .

Then I went straight up to my master, and I put my hand on the paper, and I asked him if that was what he meant—that I was to buy my freedom by betraying my mistress ?

He sort of laughed and gave his great shoulders a shrug, and said :

' Thou hast no need for qualms. She hath betrayed ye all and careth not one sesterce for the lot. And I'll warrant 'twill be no pleasant thing for thee to go back and face her, child. But we'll manage better for thee than that.'

Then he told me that he had made up his mind to divorce Valeria—that for years she had made him suffer by her coldness and her pride. But that now he had found her coldness was but a mask, and that, truly, the fire burned within, only that it burned not for him.

He did not seem to mind what he said. He spake quite openly to me. And then he said, ' By all the gods, I like the front thou dost show, my child. There shineth the spirit of a brave woman—not of the puny, sickly thing thou didst look just now. . . . But we'll change all that. Say but the word and thou art free as air—free to walk out of this place with me and I'll take thee where thou shalt be tended and well cared for and regain all thy pretty looks. And then, perchance, a handsome husband will come along and steal thee from my care. But if that should be, we'll make it worth his while. Thou shalt have a goodly '—I mind me not of the word[1]—' to take with thee, and, though I think I need not say it to thee, thou'lt have no cause to be afraid of her, for she shall not set eyes on thee again.'

Then he waited to see what I had to say, and when the words would not come, he patted my arm, and said :

' Speak up, child, I am not going to blame thee whatever there may be to confess. 'Twas not likely thou couldst help it—and, as I said, she paid thee well, no doubt ; and she would have paid thee ill in other ways hadst thou not obliged her. Besides, I know the determined spirit of the woman and how she doth carry her own way through everything. If *I* could not do what I wished with her, was it like that *thou* shouldst have any power to

[1] The Roman dowry . . . *dos* (*res uxoria*). See Appendix 29, Bk. III.

oppose her ? . . . No, no. . . . By Jupiter, I'll forgive thee all, for it goeth to my heart to see that little pale face. . . . Now speak up, my child, speak.'

Then I told him that I could not say much because there was not much to tell. . . . I said that it did all sound very delightsome for me, and I thanked him for his kindness. . . . But I said if that were the price of my freedom, I must remain a prisoner, for I had not the power to buy it.

He seemed struck back for a minute. He looked at me keenly ; and then he threw his arm down on the table, and said, ' Thou liest : and thou dost know it.'

I saw that he was fierce in his rage, but I felt not inclined to shrink. I only kept silence.

Then he got up and took me by both shoulders and shook me as he had done before, long ago, when he had asked me the same kind of question about Valeria, and then I had answered him with a lie. . . . Now, he spake in deathly fury. . . .

' Am I to be defied by thee—a wisp of a girl who will be thrown to the beasts like a . . .' I forget—the word hath gone—he meant something for food.

I was afeard when he touched me. I never could bear a man to touch me. But there was naught I could do.

Then he felt, methinks, that he had made a mistake, and he stood back and spoke fast again and in a shaking voice :

' Look, then . . . I have told thee all—just what is at stake. The truth is that certain evidence is lacking[1] and thou canst supply it. I have my suspicions, but I can prove nothing. This woman hath been no better to thee than any other mistress would have been. Why shouldst thou care for her ? Thou knowest what she hath done. It is no secret. It hath leaked out somehow. . . . A lovers' quarrel. . . . A woman's desire for revenge ! They are all alike. But I thought she was different from the others. . . . She hath taken it all too seriously and so hath brought herself to this ! . . . Licinius is in prison. Licinius will meet his death at the Games. Whatsoever shall happen—whether thou dost own up to the truth or not, he will never be anything to her, any more. . . . But think of all those years I have spent with that woman for my wife—only to find out this ! . . . Dost thou not think I need my revenge ? And I'll have it, too—whether thou wilt or not. But it can be more complete if thou dost help me. . . . I have shewn thee how I will make it worth thy while. . . . Now look on the other side. Thou hast had enough of those dungeons to know what is before thee. Choose.'

But he had said something that made me feel the more for Valeria—I could not have betrayed her. Oh, no—I could not. . . . I hated her. I did not want to see her again. I knew what she had done. I began to understand it all. . . . For a moment I had felt as though I could have killed her myself. . . . But I could not—no, I could not give her up to him. . . . And then, that minute when he said that Licinius was lost to her—that never would she have anything to do with him again—that made me feel for her. It seemed to me that she had lost so much more than I. For not only had she lost her love, but she had taken all the burden of this dreadful guilt upon her. . . . I could not forgive her—no, not yet. . . . I did not feel as though I ever could. But I could not give her up, either.

Mayhap, it was that I had been so used to screening her in everything, and I had learned how to do it as best I could. So I just shook my head, and

[1] The law of divorce in Rome. See Appendix 30, Bk. III.

said to Paulinus that I was very sorry but I could tell him nothing. . . . I said that I would tell him anything I could but that there was nothing to tell.

'I always thought the Christians spoke the truth,' he said: and that hurt me more than anything.

He turned back to the table and snatched up the paper as if he would have torn it across. Then there flashed across me all that that paper meant to me—and I gave a little sob.

He was back at my side in an instant, and put his hand under my chin and turned my face to him.

'Thou art a little fool,' said he. 'She is not worth it. Come, why should we care—either of us? Let her go.'

But I could not . . . I only gulped down the sobs and tried to push his hand away.

He seemed to be doing all he could to keep his anger back. 'Tell me,' he said, 'didst thou ever go out with my wife to meet her lover?'

I shook my head again. I tried to speak . . . I tried to say, 'Never.'

'Didst thou never admit him to the house?' he said. 'When others were not there—to her private rooms?'

'Never,' I said, now quite clearly. The lie came stronger then: I could not think of anything but just how to lie so that it would make him believe—because I felt that I had done it badly.

He asked me a few more questions. I said 'No' to all of them. . . . And then I scarce remember what happened. . . . He crushed the paper in his hand. 'Am I to believe,' he said, 'that this be all that is to be got from thee? Wilt thou learn wisdom if time be given to thee?'

'I can say no more than I have said,' I answered. . . . And I think that was all. I saw him tear the paper in a thousand bits and tread them under his foot. I could see that he was beside himself with rage and disappointment. . . . But in myself I did not feel anything. . . . At the last, he raised his voice and shouted at me, but scarce did his words take hold of my mind. . . . 'The most obstinate little liar that ever deserved the Arena,' I heard him say. 'Go back to thy dungeon; and may the woman thou art fool enough to sacrifice thyself for, give thee some reward. . . .'

And then he strode past me to the door and the soldier took me in charge again. . . . But I was stupid. . . . I did not seem able to walk or speak. . . . He pushed me in front of him along the stone passage, and I heard Paulinus's tread as he went the other way. . . .

The soldier shoved me down into the place underground. He was sorry for me, I think. He said something to me but I know not what it was.

I felt all dazed when I got back, and just stumbled across to the corner where I usually sat, and they began hooting and jeering at me for returning thus amongst them.

Lo! they cried, this, then, was the fine lady who had said that one of the highest Romans in the city was come to fetch her away out of her dungeon and to make apology, no doubt, for any accidental mistake that had brought her there. . . . But what was become of Paulinus? Had he forgotten to bring a litter for me, and had he gone back to fetch one? Or, perchance, a litter was not grand enough for me and he would come in a chariot with a team of the finest horses to take me to his palace. Meanwhile, of course I had to wait, and 'twas bad management on the part of the prison officers not to give me a better place to wait in. . . . Why had I not waited

in the room wherein Paulinus had seen me ? . . . Liked I not that room ? Or was it because I was anxious to come back and see more of my companions, since it might well be the last I should see of them. . . . They were going to make sport for us in the Arena a few days hence. . . . Should I then not come with Paulinus to watch the Show ? . . .

I know not what else they said. They went on jeering, but I heard not half of it at the time. I can only remember it in bits, now. . . . It did seem to me that they need not have gone on wasting their strength that way, for it mattered not what they said. Methinks, nevertheless, that it did, indeed, hurt me, for, presently, I found the old man sitting by me and holding my hand and bidding me not to cry. I knew not that I was weeping, but now I saw that the tears were dropping down into my lap. . . . I had forgotten to wipe them away.

I heard the old man speaking to me as it were in a dream. He said I must not mind—that it was very cruel of them to taunt me thus but that they were all so sore with thoughts of the danger they were in, and which they laid in great part to my charge, that they could not curb their angry speech. He said that he had tried to soften their hearts but had not been able. A few were sorry for me, he said, but I kept so much to myself that they were afraid to come near me and, said he, if I were not so distant and so proud, and did not hold myself apart, mayhap they would not stand away from me. He said I must not vex myself against them even though they mocked me, seeing that Christ was mocked by His tormentors and He had done no wrong, and yet could forgive them and pray that their hearts might be turned from hardness and that they might be forgiven. Therefore, should I feel, said he, that if Christ had so suffered, then could I suffer and forgive likewise ; and that if there were any blame to me for what I had done, that ought to make the suffering easier, and that, mayhap, I had deserved it a little.

I told him that I could say naught about it, for I felt not nor understood enough of the matter. I said that I knew they were trying to hurt me but that they did not really hurt me. It did seem as though I cared not. . . . I said that I supposed I had done wrong and that, if I were to blame, it was right they should treat me so, but that I could not feel I had sinned greatly, for I had not meant to sin. . . .

And then he said that was true, no doubt, and that I had never thought my mistress would make bad use of the knowledge I had given her. But that I had been wrong to trust her and that I ought to have obeyed the instructions of the Elders never to speak of anything to do with the Christians among those who were not of the faith.

I said I knew that in this I had been wrong, but that I could not believe Valeria had betrayed us. Alas ! I did believe it, now, but I would not say so. I told him that I could not talk about her to him, for he knew her not as I knew her and that, though I was very sorry for my own part in the harm that had come upon us, I could not say that she had any share in it.

Whereat, he said that he feared I still had in myself much of obstinacy and hardness of heart—that it was right to uphold one's friends but not right to screen the evil-doer . . . and that if I chose to range myself on the side of evil he could say no more.

I answered him not . . . there was naught for me to say : and I wanted him to go away.

Then he left me and I sat by myself in that dark corner. . . . And the

night came on. . . . Nobody brought me any water or bread that evening, and I was too much afeard of them all to go for my share.

So I stayed, and, by and by, when it was quite dark and I could see through the small clear space of window a star far up in the sky above, Stephanus came round and kneeled down by the grating.

I put my fingers between the bars and he kissed them, and told me to keep up heart though the days seemed long. Methought he was growing rather hopeless himself for he had not been able to come every night lately.

He had told me the soldiers were beginning to suspect him and that he was obliged to stop and talk to them and to pretend he only came for that: and he would try to get them to stand aside and to have something to drink with him and so to pass the time in chat lest they might think he was watching for any of the prisoners. . . . Because most people who knew Stephanus knew that he did hold me dear, and though, mayhap, the guard did not all know I was in the prison, some might have heard it.

He had worked to loosen those bars, but they were very firmly wedged with cross-pieces into the earth on either side, and some were fastened with clamps to the prison walls. He had loosened one or two, but not sufficiently, and he was trying all the time, he said, to think if there were no other way by which he could get me out.

But to-night he was very sore and unhappy and even angry with me. He had met Paulinus leaving the prison, for Stephanus was always hanging about the place—waiting round about in case some opportunity should come by which he might get near me. To-day, he had seen Paulinus coming from the prison, and guessed it might have to do with me. He had been trying to see Paulinus and had been up, once or twice, to the house but never could find him there. Now, he stopped him and prayed him for the sake of my service in his household to save me if he could.

At first, not knowing what he wanted, Paulinus would not stop. Then when he saw who it was and heard Stephanus's request, he said that he had just come from me and that he had offered me life and liberty if I would do his bidding in one little thing and that I would not, and had thus thrown away all my chances of escape.

Stephanus told me that he could not at once believe Paulinus's words, but when he heard that it was true and that I had really done this thing, he said he felt that I must be mad and not know what I was about. It seemed to him then, he said, that the only chance he had was to snatch me by sheer force out of the dungeon since, when the door was opened for me, I would not go.

I told him that I could not go and that even he would not have me betray one whom I had served and to whom I owed everything.

But he said that what Valeria had done had changed everything, and that I should be committing no wrong. And that even a great crime might be excused me at that price.

But I said I could not—and there was an end.

He said I had proved that I would not—not that I could not, and that he feared this was indeed the end, for it was not likely that Paulinus would come to plead with me again. And he said that it was strange I should be such a little fool when there were none among my fellow-prisoners that would not thankfully release themselves if such means were offered them.

I could not bear to talk about it but I had to answer Stephanus.

I said, mayhap, they were made differently and that, mayhap, I had

done a very wicked thing, for I had told many lies, but that I should tell them all over again and I could not help it if I were wrong. I said that I had not denied my faith, and wherefore should I deny my friend? And that I thought, even if it were a sin, Christ would understand and would forgive. And that, in any case, the thing was done—the moment had gone and I might not call it back. . . . Nevertheless, I could not make myself sorry, for I knew that I should have hated myself if I had betrayed Valeria, and it did not make it any more right that I should betray her because she had betrayed us—if indeed she had. . . . I said that I could not help what others did, but I could help being a traitor, myself.

And then I prayed Stephanus not to be angry with me, for I was very lonely and unhappy, and none of them would speak to me, and none of them would understand and, if he failed me, what should I do?

He swore then that he never would fail me—that he had not meant to be unkind, but that it made his heart sick and his whole spirit feel at war with man, when he saw what I was put to and how much worse things might be coming—that, indeed, he meant not to say a word the which should add to my burden—that he would lighten it if he could. But how could he help me if I would not help myself? And that when such a chance was given, it was like opening wide the prison gates and yet I would not come out.

Now Stephanus spoke very low—in whispers—with his lips close to the bars, and I was nearly as high as the grating so it was not very far. And, even if the other prisoners had heard us, it was not likely they would tell against another, because it might be one who had a friend coming and who —if he did make his escape—might help the rest. Still, they all seemed so ill-disposed towards me that I did not know what they might do and I dared not run a risk.

Therefore, I told Stephanus he must go. And I put up my hand once again through the grating. And he prayed all the gods of Greece to keep me —for he said the Roman gods were as the Romans themselves and liked only to take their pleasure in the torments of others. But, he said, there had been strength and power in the Grecian gods of old and, if he had never prayed before, he prayed now, night and day, that they would protect me.

But I told him that I trusted only in the Christ—that He could save me if He would and that if not, He would give me the strength that I needed.

Then Stephanus said a dreadful thing. . . . He said he heard men say that if that man had been the Christ he could have saved himself and he would have come down from the Cross. . . . And was it likely, if he had not saved himself, that he would trouble much about one poor little maid away in Rome?

Stephanus said that he had no great pride in his own powers and that he felt he could not do much, but he'd liefer trust his own arm to save me than any god. He said he knew not whether the gods we believed in—supposing they were there—stood not too high up—too far away—to hear us call. But, at least, there'd be no harm done in praying. So he prayed to those he knew; and I could go on praying to the Christ. But because I had lied and Christ was a god of truth, mayhap, he would not listen to me. Nevertheless, whatsoever might hap, I could believe that Stephanus himself would never fail me while he lived. Gods might be false or true—he could not say—but a man that loved a woman as he loved me could never be untrue to her.

Then he went away. . . . I tried to sleep but I could not. I was very unhappy—because, thou seest, nobody could understand: nobody could think I had done right: everybody did blame me and everybody said I ought to have done something else; and yet it did seem to me that there was nothing else I could do. . . . Then, when I pondered upon his words, I saw that, haply, Stephanus had spoken truly—I had lied—I had told dreadful lies, and I was not at all sorry. I could not have betrayed my domina. . . . Nevertheless, for those few minutes when I was with Paulinus —Oh, I had wanted to—I wanted to, badly, then. . . . It seemed so easy. After all, as he said, she would never know—and it would mean so much to me and to Stephanus.

Poor Stephanus! I began to feel that perhaps I had not been quite fair to him. . . . And yet, what else could I do? . . . He was a man and strong enough to stand alone and he had not needed me—not in the way she had needed me. And I had not felt for Stephanus in the way I had felt for her. It seemed to me that his not having me never did him any harm. It was not as though things would have gone wrong with him without me. But with her, it was so different. She was always doing things—if she were left alone—or wanting to do things that she would be sorry for afterwards. . . . I saw that now, and I saw that, mayhap, it was because she had been left alone that she had done this thing. . . . I knew that if it were true, Licinius must have done something terrible—terrible —to make her thus turn against him. I knew how she would suffer and mourn. I knew, too, that if I could get away and be free without doing her an injury, then I might go back and help her. . . . But if I could only get away by being false to her I should be ashamed to see her any more. . . . Thou knowest . . . I could not. . . ."

CHAPTER XVI

Domitian, or the Lions?

Nyria tells of how Paulinus again visits the prison and of how he takes her to the palace of the Emperor, there to receive the promise of release and of future rich living if she will consent to become the slave of Domitian.

Nyria: "Now Paulinus came again afterwards. . . . I know not how soon. . . . One day they told me he was there—— No, at first, they told me naught. . . . They but called me out and the guard led me to where was a woman who had got a clean change of clothing for me and who told me I must wash and dress myself. There was a new white dress and a cloak, and, first, I was given some food and wine.

I wondered what it all meant. I thought it could not mean that I was to be free. I had got past thinking of that.

I was taken to the rooms belonging to the woman—she was the wife of one of the men who had charge of the prison. She helped me to dress and combed out my hair. . . she said it was a fine thing to have a white skin and yellow hair like mine that made men think it worth while to save me. . . . But for her part, she wondered what they saw in a milk-faced maiden like that. She would rather have one of a healthy red and brown cheek, and she said that I only looked fit to stand instead of one of the sculptured figures in the temples.

I was so tired I did not care what they did with me. . . . And then Paulinus came. When I saw him, I was very much surprised and rather frightened. I wanted not to go through all that over again and I wondered wherefore he had sent for me.

But he came in half-smiling and saying that he was glad to see me looking better. . . . No doubt, he said, the prison fare was not such as to make one strong and that, mayhap, he had over-tried me the time before. . . . And then he said that he had thought a great deal about our conversation and he could not help feeling that——" (the rest inaudible).

Recorder: The voice of the Instrument had grown fainter. . . . Nyria drew a deep breath of exhaustion and, presently, she said: "It seemeth as though all strength were taken out of me. . . . I cannot lift myself . . . and the words come not. . . . But I will get them. . . . I am trying. . . . Wait. . . ." After the lapse of a minute or two, she resumed in her natural tones.

Nyria: "Paulinus said that he felt he had not been wise to speak to me as he had done, but, at least, I had shewn him that I was not to be moved aside. But he said, now must Nyria see for herself that there was a great deal on his side, and that in coming to me for my help he had come but to ask me for what he thought would be most welcome to me, since it meant liberation. He said that he had succeeded with great difficulty in getting that promise of freedom for me—only because he had been able to represent

to those who were in power that I was needed—that my evidence was necessary to his case and that it would not be witheld. It was for this I was to be freed. He had no power otherwise.

I thanked him for his kindness but again I told him that I could say no more. He said that he would now ask me no more. That I was to learn what other persons thought of the matter. That he had not been alone in demanding the justice of my evidence and that now I should hear what the Emperor had to say in the case. . . . That I was to go with him to the Palace and see Cæsar. . . .

When I heard him say that . . . my heart went like water inside me, and I felt that I could not go. I could not fight any more. It would be better to meet death at once than listen to any more people . . . and all my old fear of the Emperor came back upon me and I seemed to see the great Palace with its many pillars like the teeth in the jaws of a huge beast, opening to crush me . . . and I had to go into them . . . and I could not. . . ."

RECORDER (from a note made at the time): She seemed so exhausted that I bade her not go on, and tried to concentrate upon getting strength for her, but my efforts seemed of no avail. . . .

NYRIA (faintly): "It's like a pulse beating slower every time—life-beats—getting weaker . . . pumping . . . and there's no more power. . . ."

RECORDER: I made a great effort to reach that higher level from which I had found that vital force is supplied. But this effort, too, seemed fruitless. In vain, my fervent desire for her escape from the *Nyria* surroundings to that clear, silvery region whence the Instrument had before brought me messages from our Friends upon the super-physical levels.

But now, in her terror, as upon a former occasion, she sobbed and clung to me like a frightened child, crying out that there were beasts around her. . . . Would they see her? . . . Could they get at her? . . .

This time I felt powerless to deal with what I realised to be a foretaste of the martyrdom in the Arena towards which Nyria was approaching. . . . I set all my will-force upon her return to present-day consciousness. In a minute or two, she came back to our world, seeming at first a little dazed, but remembering nothing of her terror of the beasts or of Nyria's painful condition which had really frightened me and had made me feel that I might be dealing with forces beyond my power of control. I felt that I could never bear to take her through the harrowing experiences leading up to her martyrdom. . . . I feared ill effects upon her physical body. . . . I feared that my own courage might fail me and disaster result.

But as soon as the Instrument had doffed the *Nyria* vestment she became her usual calm self: and, when I told her of the scenes she had just described, was not at all perturbed, but seemed to regard the whole *Nyria* experience as a curious psychological phenomenon in which her living personality was scarcely concerned.

. . . . . .

NYRIA (after a pause): "Yes, I can do it. . . . Let me stand away for a minute. . . .

When Paulinus told me that I was to go before Domitian I felt that this mattered more than anything else that had gone before. I was too greatly afeard to feel anything but just that. . . . I knew not what to do or what

to say. . . . And then, while I was thinking how I could escape from it, I got that dreadful singing in my head and the room went round . . . and then I remember not what happed except that the woman was by me when I opened my eyes again, and they were giving me some wine to drink and the woman was scolding me.

But Paulinus looked worried. He seemed rather sorry for me, but he was in a hurry. He asked me if I felt better and said that if I did we must make haste.

Then I pushed the wine away and I thought I would try to tell him. . . . I said I should be quite well if only I could be left alone—that it was the fear that had made me faint—that I wanted most of all not to go to the Palace. . . . I told Paulinus that I had always been terrified of the Emperor. . . . I did not say why, and Paulinus thought it was only because he was the Emperor. . . . But that was not the reason.

He said that I need not mind—that I had often seen Cæsar quite close—that he would not seem any more terrible now than he had seemed then—that Domitian had ordered me to go and that I must obey. . . . Paulinus said that he thought, too—he did not want to raise any foolish hopes in me—but he thought it was just possible that this might mean a chance for my life if I would be good.

I knew not what chance there could be. I felt sure the Emperor would only tease me, and he had always looked so cruel. . . . But I began to see that there was no hope for me with Paulinus and I did not want to go on asking. I always hated to ask for anything I could not have. I would rather have endured than be refused. . . .

I had to walk, and I tried, but my body shook so that I could not get along. . . . Paulinus was so strong—and he walked so quickly. He had his litter just outside and, when he saw that I was not able to go afoot, he waited while they got a litter for me. . . .

I remember being carried along over the heads of the people, feeling very strange and far away. The sun was shining: it was very hot but I did not feel as though I belonged to any of it. I seemed to be slipping out of it all. . . . And yet I knew that it was me—myself—being carried along.

We seemed to take a long time getting to the Palace. I was thinking all the way and, always, it felt like a bad dream. They carried me up those steps where I had so often walked behind Julia's litter. But we were not carried so far as she used to be: they put us down at one of the outer entrances and we walked through the corridor till we came to the door of a room—I knew it: I had been there with Julia. It was not the big room where the Emperor received most of the people, but a smaller one where he sometimes saw anyone who came specially.

I was left outside with a guard of soldiers and Paulinus went in. He was not gone very long, and then the door opened again and two more soldiers came out. They took me in between them and we stood a little way off—at the end of the room. Paulinus stood near the Emperor but, presently, he called my name and I had to go nearer while the guard stood back.

And then I felt that haply it was not right nor wise to hold myself so lowly: it might look as though I were ashamed of being a Christian. So, when I had made obeisance, I tried to lift my head and to look at Cæsar as though I were not afraid of him.

He smiled a little and seemed to be quite kind. He said he was sorry—not to see me there—but that I should have been obliged to come on such a business as this—and that he hoped it was all a great mistake and that he should find I had not been faithless to the gods.

I did not answer but looked down again. Methought I had better not answer unless he asked me a question.

And then he put it a little differently. He said—Was I faithless to the gods? And I said that I knew no god but one.

He said then, and frowned a little, that he supposed it was true I had been fool enough to join that sect which called themselves Christians, but that perhaps it had been through ignorance—How could I know—a child like me?

I answered humbly—might it please Cæsar, but, in truth, I had known a good deal about the Christians before I had been allowed to join them: otherwise, I should not have been fit to do so. And that I was no child but old enough to know my own mind, and that I had done what seemed right to me and I was prepared to abide by it.

He laughed a little and said that that was quite a long speech for me to make and that he liked to see I was no fool but knew what I was about. He said he had forgotten I was no longer a child—I looked so young—but that he felt I did not really know what I was doing or what would be the outcome of it all.

He spoke to me then a great deal—methinks, he meant it kindly. . . . He said a great many things. . . . I remember not much about that part. . . . He was telling me how very foolish I was and how wrong . . . and of all the harm that the Christians did—things I knew were not true; and I knew he could not understand or he would not have said them. . . . He asked me if the gods of Rome were not good enough for me to worship? How was it that I knew better than those who were so far above me?

I answered very little. . . . I said that I knew I had not much knowledge, but that I felt it was all true for me and that I must live by it, because it was the only thing that was true.

He stopped then and just looked at me. Paulinus seemed impatient. He struck the ground with his foot and said to the Emperor . . ."

> RECORDER: From the strain of emotion, the Instrument's voice had weakened to a whisper: but when asked if she was too tired to continue, she answered: "No. . . . I cannot explain. . . . 'Tis the thoughts that come and the things which do press in between, that confuse me. . . . Wait. . . . I can tell thee what thou wouldst know. . . ."

NYRIA: "The Emperor seemed to be thinking what he should say next when Paulinus told him how obstinate I was and how I would not let myself be moved, and Paulinus added that torture was the only thing which could shake such a little rock.

But Domitian said No; that was not the way to deal with women—that I had often shewn myself to have brains above the run of them, and that it was worth while to argue with me if only to see what I should say. And, with that, he turned to me and said:

'Thou seest, I am interested to know thy reason. I cannot think that thou wouldst act thus unless thou hadst one.'

Then, he asked me why I would not worship the gods which other men thought good enough?

I told him I knew very little of those gods, but that men made them out

to be not much better than themselves and I wanted something higher and something that I could know more of before I could render worship.

And then he said that men did worship himself. . . . Would I take him for my god? Would that satisfy me? He could understand, he said, that one, with intelligence such as mine, would like to know more of that which she worshipped and that if I would choose to worship him, he would see that I had enough knowledge of him to warrant the worship.

I knew not what to say and again I held my speech. . . . But he pressed me for an answer and bade me draw closer.

'Come,' he said, ''tis no great thing for thee to do. Men say that thou hast been faithless to our religion and hast joined a false sect. Justice in Rome doth demand that those who do this should suffer for it. Even Cæsar cannot acquit thee without some proof. Give me but this. Kneel to me here—before Paulinus—and hail me as the Lord thou dost worship, and thou shalt be free.'

Then sore did I tremble, for I saw that he meant what he said. But I told him that I could only kneel to him as the Emperor; not as a god. That I would kneel to him most gladly, seeing that he was the great Cæsar and I a slave: but that there could be no worship in my heart for him because, although he was Cæsar, I knew he could be no more than a man. . . .

Paulinus was very angry, then. He begged to be allowed to take me away to be whipped. But the Emperor said again that was not the way to treat women. . . . He put out his hand to me and looked at me very strangely and as though he were thinking deeply. Then he turned to Paulinus and said:

'I will deal with the maid alone.'

Now was I most sore affrighted, for I knew not what he meant to do. He bade Paulinus go without and wait and then he sent all the men from him—even the lictors—and they shut the doors.

There was a stool near the Emperor's feet and he pointed to it, saying kindly: 'Come hither, Curly-locks, and be seated,' as had been his wont at times when I was in attendance upon Julia: and I answered:

'Craving Cæsar's permission, I would rather stand.'

Whereat he frowned and then seeing that I trembled from fear, he spake with gentleness and bade me not to be afraid. For, he said, though it might seem that I had been brought there to plead with him for my life yet that, verily, he felt it was he who pleaded with me. He did desire, he said, to make all things easy for me, but I would not let him. Now, there was but one way. He had tried all he could that might be done publicly. Now, he would speak to me himself in private.

He asked me then if I did not wish for liberty—if I cared not for my life? He asked me what my life had been—had I found it unhappy? It was by my own will, he had heard, that I did enter the household of Paulinus. There had been another of the blood of Julia's husband who had the right over me and who would have kept me. He said 'twas of himself he spoke. He had forgotten at the time, for other matters had put it out of his mind. But he had often thought of me since and of how good and faithful I had been to Julia. Perchance, I thought, said he, that he had forgotten. But he had always remembered. He could not really forget although there had been affairs of State to occupy his thoughts. . . . Haply, it might seem strange to me, he said, knowing myself to be but a little slave-girl, that he, the Emperor, should speak to me thus. . . . But there was no strangeness

in it, for he had always seen much more in me than I had supposed and had always cared for me a little and but for untoward happenings would have taken me in possession.

And now, he said, he beheld the child grown a woman and knew the strength and beauty which lay in her character, having seen that she was strong enough to stand up and answer even Cæsar in defence of that which she held dear. Oft had he doubted, he said, that women could be loyal. But now was he certain that one woman, at least, could not be untrue. And he had felt that would I but do for him as much as I would do for my faith, then might he indeed count upon one loyal heart to serve him. . . . Nor would he ask me to abandon my faith but only that I yield to him an equal fidelity. Then would he see that I was safe to practise my religion as long as I might wish to do so. For the rest, he swore by the gods that he would take me as I was and keep me—that at once, he would order Paulinus to give up claim upon me.

'Knowest thou not,' he said, 'that Cæsar's word is law. And yet, shalt thou likewise understand that Cæsar, the all mighty, doth stoop to ask from thee, a slave, that which no great Roman lady would dare refuse him?'

Thus he spake. . . . But I understood him not—so strange did it all appear. . . . And within myself I wondered—was this a wooing, or did I still dream a dreadful dream?

Naught did I know of wooing, save that Stephanus had always told me that he loved me and desired me for his wife. . . . And, verily, I had seemed to belong to Stephanus, withal I had never loved him—if that were love of which he spake . . . and this I know not. . . .

But Domitian stood apart. 'Twas like into some great, grand beast. . . . Not handsome—ugly more like—and terrible, methought. . . . Yet fine in fearsome fashion. . . .

Yet, now—in man-guise, he did show much eagerness and, mayhap, sincerity in his speech . . . and all the while, he strove, meseemed, to be very gentle.

And then I thought of Cæsar as men said he was—a man like unto some fierce wild brute who snatched at the prey he wanted and when he had devoured it, called for more. . . . And I knew not wherefore he should speak to me thus—in gentle voice and even, meseemed, with tenderness.

Yet, was I afeard, for I felt that behind the man, there lurked the beast ready to spring. . . . And when I stopped to think, the more was I afeard.

But, one thing was clear in my mind—compelling me—that I must make him know 'twas impossble—that which he asked. . . . And I knew not how to tell him, for though he stooped to plead, yet did I see most plainly that pride of power did lift him up, wherefore he questioned not my gladness that he should favour one so low as I who am but the slave, Nyria.

And when he saw me still mute before him, he cried, part angered, part jesting, and yet part tender:

'Art thou then tongue-tied before my greatness? . . . But have no fear, Nyria. Thou didst say truly that though I am Cæsar and many worship me as their lord and god—yet, nevertheless am I a man: and 'tis as a man, and not as Cæsar, that now I would thou shouldst regard me. . . . Hast thou no answer to give me? . . . Come nearer to me, Nyria. . . ."

I saw him stretch forth his hand to draw me closer. . . . And then, I know not. . . . For again the dizziness overtook me. . . ."

RECORDER: At this point, Nyria ceased speaking. Then, after a short period of unconsciousness on both planes, the Instrument returned to ordinary life and did not continue her account of Nyria's interview with Domitian until the following day. But when she resumed the narrative, it was as though Nyria had herself been expelled from the Roman body, and, for a little while, seemed to be describing the scene in Domitian's palace as an observer instead of as the chief actor in the drama.

THE INSTRUMENT (taking up the story): "Men of the body-guard are standing—some by the doors and others at the foot of the great marble stair outside the room where the Emperor was with Nyria. . . . Paulinus, thou knowest, did wait in an antechamber at the other side—methinks—of the corridor. . . . No, I am not within the throne-room. . . . Thou didst bid me go straight back and I am telling thee what I see. . . .

There are lictors there, also. . . . The men are laughing and talking among themselves. . . . I cannot hear what the lictors are saying; they stand down the stairs a little way off and the soldiers would not talk to them, for those of the body-guard do think themselves very superior. . . .

Of these, there are about eight or twelve. . . . The soldiers are in armour and have shining breastplates—thou canst see the tunics beneath, at the knee: and they have great gold helmets on their heads with pieces that come up in a curve at the back. . . .

They are talking about the Emperor and saying it is just like Domitian. And some are wondering that he can care to take up with another man's slave-girl; and some are saying that it is because she is fair and because of her pretty face and the little proud way that she hath with her. . . . And then a man among them says that Domitian did always admire that girl, and that he remembers, when Julia used to come to the Palace, Domitian looked more at the maid than at the mistress. . . . And some wonder what will be the outcome of it and others say, 'Of course she will be glad enough to buy her life at such a price—and to get her liberty too! Truly, may she think herself well-favoured of the gods. . . .'

But there is one soldier among them—a thin, fair young fellow. . . . I think he is a Christian . . . but he is not suspected—who doth declare that Nyria will hold to her faith at any cost. . . . And who, when they ask him why he is so sure, answers that he has heard that the Christians never deny their faith, but ever hold to their word. . . .

This man has cared for Nyria but she does not know it. . . . He has tried to make her see, but he thinks she is too pure and spiritual to understand these things. . . . And now he is wondering and trembling for her. He knows what Domitian can do. . . .[1]

And lo, behold! Now, I can see right through the wall of the corridor, which leadeth by another door to the room wherein is the Emperor.

I can see servants who hurry along carrying fine robes of lovely white and coloured silks—all gold and embroidery. Can these be from the Empress's wardrobe? For no one else could have such beautiful robes. . . . And there are long chains of pearls, and I see many jewels shining brightly. . . . Now, there comes one bearing a golden box full of gems, and here are two little slave-boys carrying peacocks' feathers—lovely pearl-handled

[1] Here arises a question as to the complete mergence of the Instrument into the Nyria personality. For the young soldier—doubtless Alexamenos—would have been well known to Nyria.

fans—great things to swing to and fro, and smaller ones studded with jewels.

Then all these things are spread out on the floor of the room where the Emperor is with Nyria. They have been sent for to bribe her. . . . Domitian picks up first one and then another and holds them out before her. . . . But she stands silent and, on her face, there is a look of misery.

Yes, I can see Nyria. . . . She looks very white and thin and her eyes are red and seem full of tears. . . . The face is very earnest. There is no wavering in it. . . . The Emperor does not understand that. He looks like a great stupid animal—half-man, half-beast—as he bends towards her stretching forth his huge bare arms and, with his hands shaking a little, holds out the pearls on his thick, strong fingers. His scarlet and gold-embroidered toga, which he has thrown back undraped, hangs loosely from him, showing the tunic underneath, and he shows the great bare knee and leg and the gold thongs of his shoe binding his foot. His face keeps flushing and then turning white—it is always like that when he is excited—and his head is poked forward—there's something gold round it above the little fringe of his reddish hair. He is speaking and his manner seems gentle in a curious, restrained way. But his voice is hoarse and rough and there's a sense of fierceness underneath that he is trying to hold back.

The girl has said something but he would not listen. Though her mind is fixed, she is afraid of hurting and angering him and has not spoken plainly, and he thinks she is hesitating and that he may tempt her to his will. He is urging her—talking fast, eagerly. . . . Now he takes a long chain of pearls and throws it over her head. It has caught in her hair. . . . A startled look comes into her eyes. . . . She draws back . . . puts up her hand to pull the chain away. . . . But he checks the movement, and takes her wrist firmly in his hand. . . ."

> RECORDER: Here, the Instrument shudders violently and it would seem that contact with the man's hand has roused to full consciousness the very soul of Nyria. She cries out in a tone of fear and intense repugnance, but in which, through the terrified pleading, there is a note of contempt, even, of command.

NYRIA: "'Touch me not. . . . Take thy hand from off me. . . . I would give thee back thy pearls. Send away these fine robes and jewels. . . . I want them not. . . . Haply, it seemeth strange to Cæsar that I like not this splendour. Of what use to Nyria would be that which Cæsar of his bounty doth offer her? . . . No . . . no . . . I pray Cæsar that he will order their removal.'

Now he hath sent the slaves out with all the fine things . . . and I am alone with him again. . . ."

NYRIA (after a pause, in a tone of deep distress mingled with horror, and as though speaking her thoughts aloud): "I am so afraid of him. . . . What can I say? . . . I have only told him the truth—that I could never feel for him in that way. . . . How could I? . . . I told him that I could not feel for anybody like that—that I know not what it means. . . . Thou canst not make thyself do what is impossible. . . . But he says that I can. . . ."

A long pause.

NYRIA (with a shuddering sigh, takes up again the thread of her thoughts and of Domitian's pleading): "I know not what to say. . . . He doth frighten me. . . . I know not what the love is of which he telleth . . . but

it doth sound like something terrible. . . . How could he love me? . . . He hath not seen me for a long time—I have kept me out of his way. And when he did see me, he scarce ever spoke to me except to tease. . . . He says he hath always cared. . . . But methinks it is because he cannot have me. . . . And why doth he want me—he—the Emperor, who can buy any number of slave-women if he desireth them . . . ?

But then he sayeth that he cannot buy a woman's love though he can buy her service. . . . But what were all those pearls and silks and feathers! . . . Was it not that he was trying to buy mine? . . . Oh! I want none of those things. . . . I care not for them. . . . And if it were for him that I did care, then, would it be naught to me that he should give—or that he should not give. . . .

And he sayeth that I may keep my faith—only that I must let the world think that I have worshipped him. How could I worship a man? . . . They do that—the Romans, I have heard. . . . He sayeth that I need only kneel to him once—before Paulinus and the Guard—that they may bear witness. . . . And that then, I need never do it again—and I shall be free.

But I must give myself to him, and, oh! . . . That is more horrible than all. . . . I know not what it would be, but I know that I hate him to touch me. . . . His hands are so great and strong and thick—and though he be gentle, I feel that they could crush me at any minute. . . ."

NYRIA (suddenly and sharply): "No, I cannot. It is impossible.

He sayeth now that I am mad. . . . Yet would I rather have him speak like that than as before. . . . But I would that I were not alone with him. He doth make me tremble with fear. . . . All the gentleness seemeth gone from him. . . . But still he doth try to get it back. . . .

He sayeth that I know not what I am doing—that it is mad and foolish too—that never can I have such a chance again—that he will not give it to me—that he was wrong to stoop to me—he who could have had me whipped till the blood ran—and when he could keep me if he choose—and fling me to the beasts if he choose. . . . There! . . . Do I know? He asks. . . . That is the truth—and that will he do if I do not yield me to him. . . ."

NYRIA (her voice faint and agonised): "How can I help it! There is no choice. . . . Of what use is it to press me? . . . Oh, I am afeard. He doth look so furious—not like a man—but like a great red animal. . . . There's foam on his mouth—and his big hands twitch. . . .

He sayeth he will kill me if I do not do his bidding. . . .

Now he is coming close to me. . . . I can feel his breath—hot upon my cheek. O-o-h! . . . He says that what I would not give by choice he will take by force and then kill me himself if he so willeth. . . ."

RECORDER: The Instrument is trembling with agitation and her hand quivers convulsively. . . . There is a long silence—a sense of extreme tension. . . . Then a curious change comes over her. Her body is motionless. . . . But now, as she opens her lips, the note of wild terror has gone from her voice. . . . She speaks in firm, calm tones, giving an impression of exaltation and of distance.

NYRIA: "Oh, no. He cannot touch me. I know that he cannot. I am not afraid."

RECORDER (after a silence): "Why cannot he touch you, for you are alone and in his power?"

NYRIA: "I know not why . . . I never moved. I was standing a little way back from him. . . . I thought he was going to choke me. . . . But I was not afraid. I only looked at him and he stopped—quite close in front of me, and his great hands dropped and hung down at his sides. . . . And then he said that it was an evil god (speaking very slowly) . . . some evil power of the Christians that did protect me. . . . And he seemed to be afraid. . . . And he winced and moved restlessly and would not look at me.

And then he bade me 'Begone.' That if I would not come to him willingly he needed me not—there were plenty who would.

And he turned back to his seat and struck the little gold gong on the table beside him. . . . And then I know that I trembled; yet still my strength upheld me . . . and still I did not fear. I knew that he could not touch me. . . .

And the doors burst open and the soldiers came in. And Domitian signed to them. . . . His face was purple: he had not power to speak. They took me by the shoulders and marched me out. . . ."

NYRIA: "I mind me not of any more just then. My head seemed to grow light. . . . I suppose I went down between the soldiers. . . . Yes, methinks they took me to a little room near the entrance and there they waited for orders from Cæsar. . . . And when these came, I was taken back to the prison. . . . I know not how I went. . . . The sun was very hot—and it doth give me such a pain in my head—I can feel that—but I remember not anything else—except, now—the prison walls—they are thick and high and of grey stone, with carving round the entrance. . . . And soldiers who walk up and down, and many who stand in lines all round the prison—they say there hath been some talk of the prisoners escaping and so they have brought more of the Prætorians. . . ."

THE INSTRUMENT was now told that she might take off the *Nyria* garment and that she would not be asked to put it on again. She gave a sigh as if of relief.

"Is it over? Oh, shall I never have to go back again. . . . Sometimes I have thought that going back will make it all return and haunt me."

. . . . . .

RECORDER: Those words were the last spoken by Nyria through the Instrument—as nearly as I can fix the date, in the early part of 1903. Though on coming to herself the Instrument had no remembrance of her experiences in the *Nyria* personality, and though I had been assured that no harm would result from them to the physical vehicle, Nyria's terror and suffering had seemed so utterly real, that pity forbade me to prolong the ordeal.

The conclusion of her life-story was then supplied by the Commentator on superphysical levels, in vivid touches of description which I have done my best to connect and embody in the following section.

CHAPTER XVII

In the Vaults of the Colosseum

Here the Commentator, on superphysical levels, takes up the threads of Nyria's narrative and gives certain realistic details of the scenes in the vaults of the Flavian Amphitheatre where the prisoners are awaiting their doom on the morrow.

Commentator : " Once more I intervene to supply a rough outline of events during the twenty-four hours preceding the Games in the Colosseum.

The things which I tell you, come to me as reflections of the thoughts and feelings of those who went through that night of agony—impressions forming themselves into pictures within the Memory of the Great Whole which shall endure for ever.

You will understand that Nyria, when she visits the Palace, is absent three or four hours and that, in the interval, her fellow-prisoners have been removed to the extensive under-structure of the Flavian Amphitheatre.

Here—where the wretched company are assembled in a large half-underground hall, the doors of which lead through another hall to the wide iron gates opening into the Arena—there enters Matho, the lawyer—a short, thickset, middle-aged man with a rugged, debased face, who, commanding silence, reads a proclamation from the Emperor.

This, to the effect that the mighty lord-god Domitian Cæsar, desiring that the condemned be fortified to fight valiantly in the arena and thus win a chance of life, has, of his clemency, ordained that a bounteous feast of meat and wine be served to them on this last evening.

At the announcement, they, who have lived for many days on worm-riddled bread and foul water, think that Matho mocks them. Hungry, eager eyes peer at him and cries of execration follow him as he goes forth.

But after he has gone, men come in, bearing trestles and long slabs of wood which they set up in the middle of the hall. Behind them, others bring in huge baskets containing meats on great platters, and still others carrying fat pitchers filled to the brim.

It is Domitian's tendency to caress before he kills—a cat-like refinement of cruelty. The feast is plenteous and of good quality and with it flow rivers of strong red wine.

I see the beast awaken in most of the famished prisoners, who go nearly mad at sight of the tempting drink and viands. They rush the baskets and the tables and fight for the meat and wine. I see pitiable instances of bestiality—which exceed in cruel realism any description that I could give—when the weak and old, crying to be allowed to approach, are flung aside by the young and lusty, who make a ring round the tables and hit and snarl and drink and devour like ravenous animals. . . . And the soldiers, looking on, throw taunts and jeering laughter and, at last, leave the rabble to battle as it may.

Picture the scene. . . . The brutal orgy going on. Those of coarser strain, who surround the table, eating ferociously and drinking heavily, tearing the meat asunder and seizing the pitchers of wine which spill as the ones behind jostle the drinkers. . . . The old and weak, literally trampled upon as they drag themselves along the floor to pick up the pieces which have fallen. . . . Others, more kindly, aiding them as best they can. Some, spiritually-minded and more fortunate, who have managed at the beginning to obtain food, taking only just enough to support their poor strength, then holding aloof and praying softly to themselves.

Into the midst of this turmoil Nyria is brought. . . . She stands bewildered. The sight of Aeola calls her to herself. Aeola is in a state of wild terror. She is aware of her danger and her one thought is that if Crispus only knew of it he might save her. She has heard one of the soldiers who brought in the tables say that Crispus has returned to Rome—that he is entered for the gladiatorial matches to-morrow. . . . Aeola prays Nyria, should Stephanus come that night, to beg him to convey a message to Crispus.

But Stephanus comes not that night. To the last, he is striving after some means of saving Nyria. He has seen Domitilla. He has tried in vain to get speech with Paulinus. Every channel of deliverance is closed to him. All effort is useless. All hope is vain. . . .

Now, Nyria's pity is stirred by the pitiful complaining of that old sick woman, who, before, had railed at her as their betrayer and had refused her ministrations, but who, now, is crying out for assistance to get some food. Being small and very thin, Nyria contrives to slip under the outstretched arms of some of the men close to the table and to get from it a plate of meat and a cup of wine which she takes to the old woman and, she, though at first unwilling to be helped by Nyria, cannot resist the temptation, and Nyria, leaning over the sick woman, feeds her as she might feed a child.

Then Gaius—you remember the Presbyter?—broad-shouldered, high cheekboned, with long, lank grey hair, very prominent black brows, large nose and grizzled beard. Rather a self-righteous person, but now he has lost his air of self-complacence: and, though, poor old fellow! he does his best against it, he is in as big a fright as the faintest-hearted among them. Gaius, seeing that Nyria has got food for the old woman, begs her to try and get some for him also, and, again, she slips through the ravening crowd and contrives to fetch him meat and wine. As she stands beside him, in the fresh white robe which the Keeper's wife had put on her for the visit to Domitian, so thin, so pale, so ethereal, her yellow hair smooth-combed, rippling around her, a strange contrast does she present to the Presbyter, shorn of his ecclesiastical propriety, his clothes dirty and disordered, his hair and beard unkempt. Moreover, he has been completely unmanned by the discreditable scene and the behaviour of his flock. He now stands up and implores them as his brethren, his children, to remember who and what they are and to eat with decorum and be mindful of others' needs. But none listen to him and when he puts forth a hand to enforce a hearing, it is rudely thrust aside.

After a time, the worst of the rabble—their craving appeased—become more quiet. Gradually, they move away from the table and lie about in half-drunken heaps.

And, when Gaius gives the call for prayer, few answer him. The Elder mutters to himself and his murmured supplications are echoed by the little company he has gathered around him in a corner of the prison. . . . Then

at last, he lays himself down to sleep and, before long, sleep overcomes them all.

Only Nyria remains awake. The lights die down. The prisoners are allowed a few oil lamps for the supper, but these, by degrees, flicker out and the great hall is in complete darkness.

Aeola has been hysterical from horror and dread. She is afraid that tomorrow it may be too late for Crispus to obtain her release. Nyria tries to soothe her and gives her wine and food and at last Aeola, too, falls asleep.

But, all through the hours, Nyria remains awake. She can just see the grey light of the sky through the bars of a high grating like that in the other prison. . . . And thus she sits, head raised, limbs still, stony, unable to combat her hard and bitter resentment against fate—her hard and bitter anger against the woman she has so greatly loved and who has brought about her undoing. . . .

Her thoughts wander back on the past . . . to her childhood in the Hercynian Forest . . . her service in the robing-room of Julia. . . . Euphena's strange prophesyings . . . she remembers certain words—'For Nyria there shall be no carrying forth and no burial.' . . . She understands now what Euphena had meant.

But it is not for me to tell of Nyria's feelings during her vigil that night.

At last sleep comes to her.

. . . . . .

Dawn creeps into the dark hall and makes visible the huddled heaps of sleepers. . . . Some of these groan in their sleep as though they are in pain.

A low gleam from the rising sun penetrating the grating and falling upon her, awakens Nyria. Presently she hears the unlocking of the prison door. Several of the guard come in. Two of them bear piles of what seem garments and the load of one appears oddly shaped and wavy. But in this almost underground place it is yet too dark for her to distinguish what manner of things they lay down near the door.

The soldiers move about in different parts of the hall. They shout at the sleepers, kick them, shake them, make coarse jokes upon their being late abed after last night's carousal. . . .

The light increases. . . . One of the soldiers calls out to a company of young women herded together in a side recess:

'Wake up, ye sluggards! See ye not that Cæsar has sent ye the robes and wreaths of the Bacchantes?'

Now, Nyria is able to tell that the piles of garments are spotted skins of panthers and leopards and that the dark wavy mass consists of great trails of ivy.

The women whom the soldier has addressed rouse at his call. There are a number of them—the tallest, strongest and comeliest of the Christian maidens. These were selected by two officials on the previous evening to impersonate, it was said, the female followers of Bacchus in a masque in honour of that god to be performed at the Games on the morrow.

The women, when they perceive the pile of spotted skins and the masses of ivy, eye these with shuddering curiosity. The soldiers draw nearer to the band of maidens and, as the men exchange remarks with each other, seem to be appraising them in cynical, jocund fashion, one man saying with a laugh and a shrug that it will need strong hands and sharp claws to make mincemeat of Licinius Sura.

The women, bemused and but half-awake, gaze blindly at the soldiers, not taking in their meaning. But a spasm of instinctive horror seizes Nyria. And when Aeola, faintly disturbed by the voices, moans in her sleep, Nyria places herself in front of her friend and throws the corner of her cloak over Aeola's head and face.

Before long, light pierces every dim corner in the vast cellar. The sun has mounted some way above the horizon. All through the hall, the heaviest of the sleepers have awakened, some trembling, some still half-comatose, their brains deadened by drink, others becoming suddenly alive to their desperate situation. No food is allowed them this morning—that is part of the cruelty of Domitian—but they are still fed with illusive hopes that the brave fighters will be granted their lives.

By and by, Aeola starts up, stares wildly around her and then realising where she is, becomes hysterical again. As time goes on, she falls to gibbering. . . . She does not quite lose her reason but she comes near it, until later on, she hears one soldier tell another that Crispus Sabinus is the name of the fellow with the net who will fight the heavy-weight Balbus Plautius. And hope revives faintly in Aeola's heart but dies again with the fear that no news of her will have reached Crispus.

As the morning advances, sounds of bustle and preparation increase and soldiers pass through, going to and from different parts of the lower building.

The Christians are in various stages of agony, of wild apprehension, of calm and heroic resignation. Poor old Gaius is not able to pray. He sits mummified, his lips from time to time moving.

Now, the guard round the prisoners is doubled, trebled. Through the grating and the thick walls of the vaults of the Ampitheatre can be heard the clamour of crowds outside and the arrival of early sightseers eager for seats. Officials have been going round, passing the condemned under review, dividing them into groups according to the times of entry into the Arena, inspecting the costumes of performers in the masques. . . .

Those women, appointed to enact the parts of Bacchantes, are ranged together and receive orders to undress and drape themselves with the dappled hides and to wreathe their streaming locks with ivy: while certain properties, appertaining to the Bacchic frenzy of that god's mystic rites, are supplied them—to each an ivy-bound thyrsus with pointed end and also mechanical, or dead, yet life-seeming serpents such as twine round the arms and writhe upon the bosoms of maddened Maenads. . . . At the same time, these girls are instructed—for what should modest Christian maidens know of ancient Pagan drama?—in the manner and purport of this grim tragedy which to them shall be no play-acting but must be carried through in bloody and awful actuality.

The masque for which they are cast is Euripides's tragedy of *The Bacchæ*, in which Licinius Sura as Pentheus, bound to the topmost branch of a tall fir-tree, is seen prying into and mocking at the Dionysiac mysteries and is dragged down, rent limb by limb and his flesh torn to pieces by the Bacchanals whom the god has purposely driven mad. The idea being that as Licinius Sura has scorned and plotted against the self-styled god Cæsar, he shall be destroyed in the same manner as was Pentheus who in the old Greek story flouted the divinity of Dionysus-Bacchus.[1]

Truly diabolic is the vengeance of Domitian. He has taken great personal

[1] The death of Marcus Licinius Sura. See Appendix 31, Bk. III.

interest in this item of the programme, making coarse jests and declaring that it is only fitting for one so highly favoured in his loves as Licinius, to be speeded to Hades by a bevy of the finest women who can be got together for that purpose.

A few of the maidens—the youngest and most ignorant—unable to understand, far less envisage, the horror, stand dumb-stricken. Most of them shriek and protest, praying that they be not forced to commit this revolting deed.

The soldiers, half-jeering, half-compassionate, bid the women pluck up courage and take heart, seeing that the more energy they can put into their task the better hope have they of preserving their own lives. 'Verily,' says the chief officer, 'ye should thank the gods for granting ye this means to avenge yourselves and your sisters upon this vile betrayer who hath brought ye to such sorry pass.'

And with that, and a stern injunction to the Bacchantes to robe themselves without delay, the officials leave them for the moment and turn their attention elsewhere.

Now the wretched women go reluctantly forward. They try to look at the accursed apparel, but, covering their eyes, shrink back in loathing. Some break into violent sobs: some pray aloud: some scream out in passionate despair. . . . The whole tragic company realise that their fate is upon them and that there is no escape. Yet none dare touch the spotted hides. . . . Until, at last, one girl—a stalwart, crazy creature—makes a dart at the pile and snatches up a leopard-skin. She throws it over her naked body, then, seizing a trail of ivy, winds it loosely round her head and the tendrils mingle with her flowing hair. . . . She waves her arms and holds forth one of the mock serpents, its tail coiling about her wrist, its head uplifted, moving with her movements. . . . As she begins to dance she utters a wild cry. . . . Again . . . again. . . . The madness is upon her. The wild, reiterated cry becomes a yet wilder chant. . . . Other women, infected with the Bacchic frenzy, follow her example. . . .

Shutting eyes and ears so far as is possible, Nyria crouches over Aeola in their corner which is not far from the entrance to the outer hall. . . .

From outside the Colosseum, from the Arena and from the tiers of seats above it, where the great ones of Rome are taking their places, there comes a noise so loud that it deadens that nearer chant of the demented Bacchantes."

. . . . . .

COMMENTATOR: "Noon—the hour at which the Games begin—is drawing near. The Show opens with gladiatorial contests in which favourite professionals take part. . . . Among the Christians, the earlier performers have already been marshalled into the outer hall whence the iron gates open on the Arena. Nyria remains, supporting and trying to soothe Aeola's terrors. Their turn comes later.

Now—louder shouting of the excited mob. . . . Frantic acclaimings of the imperial cortège. . . . Rattling of armour as the Prætorian Guard defile into position around the imperial podium. . . . All sounds blend into a mighty and sharply punctuated clamour which gradually diminishes to a multitudinous and all-pervading hum of human voices. . . . The Emperor is seated.

Not till near the hour does Stephanus come. . . . A man pale and worn who has worked up to the last moment—in vain: has searched out every

possible means of deliverance, explored every loophole of escape—all to no avail. A man whose last hope has left him.

The Christians gather in a crowd round him, crying out that he must give them drugs. . . . It is hard to press through their importuning arms. But he pushes all aside. . . .

'Nay . . . nay . . .' he mutters, and makes his way to Nyria.

He folds his arms round her feet. . . . He is offering something to her, but she silently refuses it.

Aeola, who, scarcely conscious, has been lying across Nyria's knees, suddenly starts up . . . listens intently. . . .

Some soldiers are passing through, bringing Christian men dressed as gladiators towards the iron gates. . . . The soldiers speak interestedly of Crispus who is matched against Balbus Plautius. . . . Aeola eagerly watches the great iron gates which open and close again. . . . The gladiatorial contest is going on. . . . The soldiers on guard spring to the wall dividing the prison from the Arena. High up on either side of the great iron gates is a loophole. . . . Two soldiers climb up to these and look into the Arena. . . . The fight is a single one between Balbus Plautius, the heavy-weight, and Crispus, the net-thrower. . . . And the cry runs that Crispus Sabinus is fighting for the life of his sweetheart . . . and Aeola knows that he has received the news of her danger.

The soldiers at the loopholes quote the betting . . . discuss the combatants. . . . There are sounds of applause from the Arena. . . . Other soldiers detach themselves from the guard and climb also towards the loopholes in hopes of getting a peep. Now comes a mighty round of applause. . . . One cries 'Victory to Crispus.' Then one tremendous salvo. . . . Then silence. . . . The lookers-on convey that the fight is over—that Crispus has won. . . . That is so. . . . Balbus Plautius, the slave-beater, lies prone, to pursue his calling no more. Crispus has avenged the lashes which Balbus Plautius once dealt on Nyria.

The silence is tense. Aeola waits spellbound. . . . The soldiers make known by gestures that Cæsar is about to speak. . . . Crispus has craved his boon—the lives of two maidens. . . . And Cæsar's great voice, good-temperedly jeering, asks, 'Does Crispus emulate Pentheus. Does he too lay claim to the service of many maidens?' And the great lord-god Domitian Cæsar grants Crispus the life of his sweetheart Aeola.

'But for the maid called Nyria,' Domitian adds, 'with her I will deal myself.'"

. . . . . .

Note by the Recorder

October 16–17, 1929.

Now, I have to tell, under the above recent dates, a remarkable happening which closes the history of Nyria.

Be it remembered that Nyria's last words to me were spoken through the Instrument in the early part of 1903. And that, since that year, the original script of her narrative had been packed away and left undisturbed until I began the present compilation in 1928.

Then having arrived at the final chapter, I felt that the true, dramatic climax to the story was lacking and that there was small chance of this being attained unless the conclusion could be given in Nyria's own words.

It occurred to me that, though the channel through the Instrument could never be reopened, it might be possible to find some other means of access to either Nyria herself or to that Source of Information upon superphysical levels with which the Instrument had kept me in touch for many years after the Nyria association ended.

And very soon—almost, it seemed, by pre-designed combination of circumstance—a new means of communication presented itself in the person of Mrs. H. D., the well-known psychical investigator and automatic writer, with whom I arranged a consultation.

It may be well, perhaps, to say here that this was my first experience of the professional psychic intermediary—if I except one far-back, trivial and disillusioning instance which had strengthened my disinclination towards mediumistic adventuring.

But on the present occasion I found myself in an atmosphere inspiring confidence, and the results of that first interview far exceeded such hopes as I had allowed myself to entertain. Certain tests of identity which I had mentally imposed were satisfactorily fulfilled and, after a minute or two and while still maintaining a critical attitude, I felt inwardly assured that I was once more in communication with those Teachers who in former years had helped and instructed me. When I asked whether it would be possible for Nyria to resume and bring to completion her unfinished story, I was told that the attempt might be made but that it must be regarded simply as an experiment the success of which could not be guaranteed.

The attempt was made, the response immediate. In two sittings, each of about an hour, Nyria's description of the last night and morning of her earthly existence—up to the moment when memory and sensation ceased to function in the Roman personality—was automatically written by the hand of Mrs. H. D. without, on her part, falter or pause save for the reading aloud of that which had been transmitted through her pencil.

It is for the reader to determine by comparison of text and style whether the same Nyria who through the lips of the Instrument had told her tale almost up to the end, now guided the pencil of the Automatic Writer in providing me with its conclusion.

But first it should be understood that while these later communications were being given, I sat apart, having no physical contact with the Automatist. Also, that until I spoke briefly of my special object in approaching her, Mrs. H. D. had never read or heard the story of Nyria, knew nothing of the tragic situation of the slave-girl at the point where the tale had been broken off and the narrator had picked it up again, had not been shewn any portion of the script and was ignorant of Nyria's old-world mode of expression.

For myself, at the reading aloud of the first paragraph beginning with the familiar prefatory 'Thou knowest,' and continuing as though there had never been a twenty-six years break, I was filled with astonishment and delight. And as I listened to the poignant tale, told in Nyria's characteristic manner and phrasing, there did not seem to me much room for doubt as to who was the narrator.

Here, I lay before you the end of Nyria's story, copied from the pencilled sheets of foolscap paper which Mrs. H. D. handed to me. Here, I have done practically no editing. Except for the insertion of one word, obviously an accidental omission, and the transposition of two or three others in order to convey more clearly the meaning, nothing has been added, altered, or taken away.

NYRIA (by the hand of Mrs. H. D.): "Thou knowest that I was bitter, for I have told thee so. The whole cup of bitterness had filled me before I was taken back to the prison. I was not conscious—I did not know what happened. All I knew was that I was without the blessing of Christ—for I could not forgive.

Thou wilt ask—What was in the heart of Nyria ?—How Nyria felt ?—She felt nothing but that she was full of sorrow and had no hope. But that will not tell thee what she felt . . . for she was confused: she was dazed. She could not think. She did not see those who were with her in the prison. She wanted to be alone. She wanted to be in the dark—— Oh! Thou canst not know, for thou hast not felt it, the bitterness wherein no sweetness was left.

So, in a corner I crouched—in the corner that seemed darkest—and I shed no tears—for the tears that I should have shed seemed dried within me. I felt but one thing—bitter. And then Aeola came to me and crouched beside me. And Aeola said comforting words. She told me that Stephanus was strong and would help and that she still hoped that he would deliver me. And that Crispus was sure to conquer and had given his promise that if he conquered he would ask for me as well as for Aeola. But nothing did it mean to me—not even words, for I scarcely heard the words that Aeola spake. I never answered, nor did I press her hand, though she spoke lovingly and stroked my hair. For, within me, was but the one thought—I could not forgive. I knew that—although no other thought was in me. And I could not even say to myself 'thou art no follower of Christ'—for my poor mind was so dazed that all had become confused.

I could not tell what were the strange shapes that I saw—Valeria—Domitian—Christ—they were all confused, one in the other.

Aeola left me at last and I sank on to the ground and felt no cold nor moisture—I would have been glad to *feel*. . . . Then, I began to sleep—a strange sleep that was not sleep—I saw no one—not the walls of the prison nor the people within the prison, but shapes and forms, all confused and that seemed enclosed in bitterness. I could not say whether I was awake or slept.

It was now late at night, and I moved. I had lain on the ground until my body ached—thou knowest it was a frail body at all times, and, now, it was torn by what was within. I was glad to feel my body again—to feel my limbs aching—it lifted me a little out of the bitter world that was all confusion.

I could think a little then. Not about to-morrow or the fear of to-morrow, but about the past, and I could see Aeola, who lay not far from me. Thou canst not know what a comfort it was to see and feel again. I knew I was alive. I felt a hope within me. I felt that the bitterness and the unforgivingness would be shaken away from me as one would shake off snakes that encircled him. I knew that the serpents would not fall from me yet, but I felt hope that they would go. . . . Then I began to speak to myself and another Self spoke to me—that other Self that knew Christ and could forgive, and I knew that if these two Nyrias could become one I would be saved.

Oh! Thou knowest what was my love for Valeria—that, to me, my domina was as a goddess and that no pain could be as bitter as the pain of knowing that she had sent me into this state of great, deep misery. I knew that if I forgave I should have her again, and I cried out intently, 'Oh, come to me, Nyria—the other Nyria—and enter into me so that I may find

mercy!' But she still stood outside me, and I cannot tell how long it was—but dawn came and yet we two were not one. And I could see all those that were in the prison, and Aeola who slept still. Some there were that groaned: some wept—these I envied.

And as the dawn grew brighter I felt more comforted. I did not give one thought—no, not one—to what would befall me and to the sights I should see and the fears that would surely set upon me, I was fixed on the past—oh thou canst not know what I would have given to have that past again!

And at the last, after all this suffering—*She*—that other Self—entered into me. I knew it, for I felt that I had melted at last—I that had been colder than ice, began to weep. The tears came warm from my eyelids and I wept, and in those tears the bitterness left me and I could say that I forgave—or rather that Valeria was mine again.

I cannot tell thee—for there are no words—what those tears took from me. For when the weeping had ceased, I was taken away to where Christ was—where, I do not know, but misery was turned to joy and I became conscious of all that was around me without any feeling of fear or sadness. I felt so full of joy that I would have liked to share it with those who groaned and wept. For life seemed now of no value, seeing that I had something ten times more precious than life.

I went to Aeola who awoke and in waking, groaned. Now, dawn was well come and the prison was filled with mournful sounds. Aeola was not hopeful as she had been the night before. She wept and was full of fear, and I went to her, telling her of the great joy that was within me, and the words I spake seemed to give her back hope. Yet I knew now that I would not be saved—that I must die, for, otherwise, I could not have the precious thing that was mine.

And after that—through all that happened, I had no fear. I was not even afraid when the gates were opened for the beasts. I would have been happy to know that I was the first who would be devoured. That lasted till the end—that feeling that I was with Christ, though where, I knew not.

I will describe what that prison was when I awoke and was at peace. Thou knowest that at all times until now, I had loved life in spite of my serving, and that she who was dearest to me did not give me the love I could give her. I had loved living. Now, in the prison, I wondered why these people who groaned and wept did not rejoice. Women there were, there, who cried aloud, rocking their bodies to and fro, and others who sat, as I had sat the night before, silent and without the comfort that tears bring. Then others that cried aloud and knocked their heads against the prison walls, and others that talked, trying to forget and yet fell into silence.

All these loved life. I, only, lived away from it and was taken into a world of joy.

And now Stephanus came into the prison. He came to me, and asked, 'How dost thou fare?' And I, smiling, said, 'I am well. I am full of joy and hope.'

And he looked sadly, for he did not hope for me. And he spake gently to me, and said that I must not let hope carry me too far from the truth. And kind words he spake, telling me again and again how much he loved me, and I could only smile on him for he could not know what was within me. . . . And he went from one to another, telling them to be brave men and not to let their terrors get hold of them. And then again, he came to me and sat

close by me, and from his girdle he took a small phial and offered it to me, saying :

'Take this if thou hast fear—take it now,' he said. Then I knew that Stephanus knew I could not live. But I pushed the phial away—not unkindly—for now that I was no longer in the world, I loved Stephanus for the love he had given me and pitied him that he should try to spare me pain when I could feel none.

Long he strove with me to take the phial, but I refused.

Then I spoke to him at last, after his long pleading, and said, 'Have comfort, Stephanus, for, for the first time, I give thee love, and now that I am going to my death I have no fear. Fear is dead in me. What lives in me is joy—joy that I should be taken from the world before my time, by Christ.'

And he, looking at me, thought me mad and tears fell from his eyes, and once more he offered me the phial, but I, smiling, refused, saying, 'Canst thou not see that I am not sad nor have I any desire that my body should not suffer. For the other self that is within me has gone into a world where no suffering is ?'

So Stephanus turned from me and wept, and bade Aeola keep the phial and give it to me so soon as the Guard should come into the prison. . . .'"

On the following day. October 17th, 1929.

NYRIA (resuming) : "Thou knowest the whole story. So now, though thy heart may be torn yet thou hast been told that after the hour of midnight, on the night before the end, Nyria was no longer in the world or permitted to bear pain any longer.[1] *Who* entered into the body of Nyria I cannot tell, but she felt nothing, for she was taken away by the Lord Christ. So after the phial was given to Aeola, Stephanus did not come near me, but stayed away at the far end of the room. I crouched in the same corner where I had slept and saw and noticed little. I was not afraid. I was interested in what I saw and horrified for those who had not had my good fortune.

And now I heard a noise outside which sounded like hissing and derision—I could not tell what was happening there but I feared that the crowd were putting someone to torture. Then through the gate I saw Licinius Sura. He walked in the midst of a crowd of Bacchantes. He was dressed as a woman is dressed—as a priestess might be dressed—in a white robe with a golden girdle and on his head a crown of leaves. And the Bacchantes were dressed in the skins of leopards and wild animals with crowns of ivy leaves on their heads—vines that were not plaited into a crown but fell loosely over their faces so that their appearance was wild. But the faces of these had nothing in them save horror, for evil as was the lot of Licinius, worse was the lot of those that were forced to slay him.

He saw me there by the door, and saw that my eyes were not as those of a living human being, and he called out to me, 'Ah, little Watch-dog!', as he used when both of us were happy, and he repeated this twice, thinking I could not hear ('Tis thou, little Watch-dog! I may not say well met, here and now, but, haply, 'twill be better met an hour hence across the Styx').

[1] A point confirmatory of the genuineness of the present communication may here be noted. I was told in 1902 through the Instrument that the real pain of Nyria's martyrdom lay in the shattering of her faith in Valeria and that of the actual death-pangs she was unconscious, for she had been taken out of her body before she faced the beasts in the Arena. (Recorder.)

And then he cried out fiercely, 'Little Watch-dog, if thou hast a god, as thou sayest, can he not aid a man in such plight as mine? And can he not help thee, Nyria, who art his child?'[1]

This Licinius said with great bitterness, and I, from where I was, pitied him, for I knew that he could not forgive, and I knew that he would suffer the whole, while I suffered nothing. I could not open my lips. If I could have come down to my body and moved those lips I would have spoken words of comfort to Licinius, but I could not, I was half-entranced and but half-conscious of what was going on.

Then I knew that the Arena was being prepared and that after Licinius we others should come into the Arena. And I heard something beyond the noise of the crowd which was a different noise from theirs, deep and full. And, in the state I was, I could not tell at first what that noise could be. But suddenly I knew that the beasts were roaring.

Stephanus watched me while Licinius passed. I knew his eyes were fixed on me.

And now Crispus came into the prison and spake to Aeola. Crispus looked at me also and whispered to Aeola, who shewed him the phial. Thou canst imagine how I longed to tell her that I was not there, but I could not. And then Crispus told Aeola that he had come to bear her away. And Aeola smiled and Crispus threw his arms about her and bore her out of the prison. But first Stephanus came up to her and I saw that she gave him the phial. And now again I crouched beside the wall, waiting and longing that the end should come. I dreaded lest they should speak to me, for I had not power to speak or reply. . . .

And then Alexamenos came into the prison and came straight to where I was. Thou canst never know the anguish that I suffered when Alexamenos spoke to me, for I was given power to reply to him, and the pleading and agony in his eyes pierced my soul. For Stephanus, after Aeola was taken away, came wistfully towards me, offering the phial in silence. This was before Alexamenos had come. And Stephanus silently pressed the phial on me and I refused. And then he flung his arms about me and wept . . . and Alexamenos found me. Alexamenos spake to Stephanus, saying, 'I have something of importance to tell her, make way for me.' And Stephanus, like a frightened thing, let go and sank down beside me. Then, speaking quickly, and pleading, Alexamenos told me that he had seen Cæsar and that Cæsar had said that if I would make obeisance he would grant me my life. But I, who was already with Christ, shook my head. But he went on pleading, and so awful was the look in his eyes, and in the eyes of Stephanus who pleaded also, that I was torn inwardly though I knew that bodily pain I could not feel.

And I could not tell them what had happened, that was the great agony. If I could have told them that I was with Christ they would have wept no more. But I could not. That was the only pain I had to bear after I had been taken away. I felt for the first time what great love these two had given me and I knew that now they gave me even more love than before, and I suffered. . . . Thou knowest what it is to love and pity, but thou dost not know what it is to love and pity and not be able to give the only comfort that could help. I spake—but when I spake it was not I. It was the thing

[1] The Commentator, in describing this incident, quotes Licinius as saying the words which are bracketed and which in her dazed condition might well have failed to impress Nyria's brain. (Ed.)

that was in me—the other I that I had left behind. I said, 'Nay, I will not do obeisance to Cæsar. I am in the midst of death and great cruelty and shall I make obeisance to him who is the creator of cruelty? No, I will trust to Christ who pities and is kind and gentle. He will take all my pain away.'

And yet Alexamenos continued to plead, to weep, to beg me to do this shameful thing. And now Stephanus joined with him and both begged me to save my life by the only means that was. But I had no fear—not even of the awful sights I should see nor of the beasts whose roaring grew louder every moment.

And now, above the beasts and above the noise of the crowd, came another noise that was screaming. . . . So loud and terrible that it drowned all the rest. All in the prison knew what that noise was. It was the Bacchantes, who, in horror and sickness, were tearing Licinius to pieces. . . . And then I thought—for I had not thought of her since I forgave her—of my domina. I wondered whether she was there above us and whether she saw the thing she had done to Licinius.

And then greater happiness came to me. For in the midst of all this horror, I knew that pity for her whom I loved more than all else had come into my heart, I suffered with her and in her. I felt sure she must have been compelled to see this awful thing and that neither Licinius whom she had loved nor I whom she had loved less, could suffer as she suffered. For I had learned that suffering of the body is little compared to suffering in the deeper part of the soul. For my domina had murdered the love that was in herself with her own hands. And I knew that all happiness, all pride, and all that was sweet was taken from her by herself.

With that, all my being wept for her. I pitied her with my whole soul. Nothing was left in me but love for her. These two that were beside me, I pitied too, and I felt that Christ had opened my heart at last and poured sweetness into me that could never change—and as my own time came nearer, I grew stronger and spake to Stephanus and Alexamenos in a manner I had never spoken before—telling them that I loved them both and that they need not weep, for I had had my choice and was glad that the beasts would devour me. But they, being very sorrowful, took it that I had lost my reason and stared at me with miserable wondering eyes. And at last, after a long time, the screaming of the Bacchantes ceased and we knew that Licinius was no longer alive.

That stillness was worse than the screaming, for if my domina had seen it, I knew that she had died a thousand times within her soul and I prayed to Christ that my domina should be taken away out of her body as I was. I prayed with all my soul and then I felt calm all of a sudden—I felt as if my prayer had been granted me, and that gave me great peace.[1]

And then Stephanus offered me the phial once more and I refused once more, for they were coming in to take us. I had heard the clanking of the spears outside and knew that it must be soon, and I rejoiced.

And then we were taken out and before we went I kissed Stephanus and Alexamenos and bade them rejoice with me.

I was not afraid, but others went out screaming—grey in the face and trembling in the limbs. I prayed that I might take their pain on me, for I had learned to pray since the middle of the night before.

[1] It will be remembered that in Appendix 25, Bk. I, "Scenes from the Life of a Roman Lady," she is described as having fainted at sight of her lover in the Arena. (Ed.)

And now the great space opened before us and there was the great crowd that shouted and struggled with excitement. And the roaring of the beasts was so loud that we felt they were already upon us—and I was full of calm and peace and saw something new that gave me even more comfort—I saw—or felt that my two selves were looking at each other and that my self that was with Christ circled her arms about my body shutting out all besides, and I became unconscious of all and know not what the end was."

APPENDICES TO BOOK III

IN THE HOUSE OF VALERIA

Appendix 1

"He (Domitian) sent two expeditions against the Dacians, the first upon the defeat of Oppius Sabinus, a man of consular rank: and the other upon that of Cornelius Fuscus, prefect of the Prætorian cohorts. . . ." Suetonius, *Domitian*, VI.

Appendix 2. Cornelia, the Vestal Virgin, who was Buried Alive on a Charge of Unchastity, but to the last Denied her Guilt

Pliny says "That emperor (Domitian) had determined that Cornelia, chief of the Vestal Virgins, should be buried alive, from an extravagant notion that exemplary severities of this kind conferred lustre on his reign . . . the priests were directed to see the sentence immediately executed upon Cornelia. As they were leading her to the place of execution, she called upon Vesta and to the rest of the gods to attest her innocence." Pliny's Letters, Bk. IV, Letter 2.

Sir William Gifford in an appendix to his essay on the dates of Juvenal's Satires, prefacing the translation of these by the Rev. Lewis Evans, M.A., says: "Shortly after the death of Julia, the Vestal Virgin Cornelia was buried alive. A.D. 91."

This does not agree with Nyria's chronology, right in other particulars, by which we have computed that Julia's death took place very early in 93.

Appendix 3

The war to which Paulinus and Asiaticus were sent may have been that mentioned by Dion Cassius as follows:

"In Moesia, the Lygians having become involved in war with some of the Suebi, sent envoys asking Domitian for aid. And they obtained a force that was strong, not in numbers but in dignity. . . ." Dion Cassius, Bk. LXVII.

A.D. 91–92 is the date given for this expedition, but the marginal dates in Dion's history are not reliable.

Appendix 4. Inferential Evidence of the Existence of Marcus Licinius Sura, Valeria's Lover

There is no actual evidence to be found in history of the existence of Marcus Licinius Sura, the lover of Valeria. There are, however, certain points to be put forward, which may be taken as inferential evidence of his authenticity.

Into the period of Nyria's story come two members of the Sura family frequently mentioned by writers of the time. Palfurius Sura, and the still better known Lucius Licinius Sura, intimate friend of Trajan. Nyria says that these two were cousins of Valeria's lover.

The site of the villa described by Nyria is identifiable by archæologists of today and is marked on the map of imperial Rome, on the very spot where Nyria places it, as the Thermae Surae—baths added to the villa by Lucius Licinius Sura to whom, later, Trajan gave the property which, presumably, was then in the gift of the Crown.

Referring to the villa, Lanciani in his *Pagan and Christian Rome* gives the following particulars:

"There lived in Rome, time of Messalina, Marcus Licinius Crassus Frugi (Sura), consul, A.D. 27, ex-governor of Mauretania, husband of Scribonia, by whom he had three sons. One married Antonia, daughter of Claudius by Aelia Paetina, and was killed by Claudius, instigated by Messalina, A.D. 47. The second son, Licinius Crassus, was murdered by Nero, A.D. 67. The third son, Lucius Calpurnius, was adopted by Galba.

Rofstovtzeff in his *Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire* mentions the Suras as an ancient Roman family. There is no record of the assumption of the surname of Sura—said to have been a cognomen in several Roman gentes—except of its bestowal on one P. Lentulus who had been concerned in the Cataline conspiracy and had made the gesture of kicking out his leg (*sura* means calf of the leg), in defiance of lawful authority.

Merlin—author of *L'Aventin sous L'Empire*—assumes Lucius Licinius Sura, Trajan's friend, to have been the original possessor of the villa. He says, "Nous sommes mieux instruits sur un autre des hôtes de la colline (*L'Aventin*) que Martial nous désigne (Martial, Bk. VI, p. 289) Sura, le voisin de Diane Aventine (see Nyria's description of the nearness of the temple) n'était pas encore arrivé au moment, ou parut, probablement en 92, le Sixième livre des Epigrammes, à la brillante destinée qu'il occupa plus tard. Originaire de la Tarraconnaise, il fut sous Domitien légat de la Minervie et légat de la Belgique. Sous Trajan, il devint un des principaux personnages de Rome. Le prince (Trajan) adopté par Nerva sur les conseils de Sura (note Victor, Ep. 13) combla d'honneurs son bienfaiteur. En 102 L. L. Sura est consul pour la seconde fois."

This fits in with Nyria's story and is one of the points in favour of Marcus L. Sura's authenticity. Lucius L. Sura, if he were legate in Belgium, must have been absent from Rome during the years when Marcus Licinius Sura played his part in the Sura house, facing the Circus, close to the temple of Diana—where Nyria tells us she used to wait while Valeria was with her lover.

Also, Dion Cassius (Bk. LXVIII), writing of Trajan's expedition against Decebalus and the Dacians (the same against which Domitian had gone in 85–86), speaks of Trajan having sent a Licinius Sura as an envoy to make peace with Decebalus. (This is the first mention of L. Licinius Sura in Trajan's connection.)

Nyria tells us that Marcus Licinius Sura, who in her time owned the villa, and was Valeria's lover, had in him Jewish blood through his mother, that he was adopted by the elder Sura, his father from whom he inherited the villa. This therefore would account for his Jewish sympathies and for his having been mixed up in the Judæan plot which in the end brought him to his tragic fate in the Arena.

Now, it would not have been in Trajan's power to present the Sura villa to his friend Lucius Licinius Sura, had not the property lapsed to the State, as it would have done through the condemnation to the Arena of its rightful owner according to the following law:

"Under the Empire the rule was established that persons condemned to death, to the mines and to fight with wild beasts, lost their freedom and their property was confiscated." Smith's *Classical Dictionary*.

Thus, had Marcus Licinius Sura never existed, Lucius Licinius or Palfurius Sura or some other member of the Sura family would already have had the villa in possession.

Another point of inferential evidence is the epigram of Martial, Bk. VI, Ep. 64. To a Detractor, who "allow yourself to find fault with my books which are known to fame and to carp at my best jokes—jokes to which the chief men of the city and of the courts do not disdain to lend an attentive ear—jokes which the immortal Silius deigns to receive in his library, which the eloquent Regulus so frequently repeats and which win the praises of Sura the neighbour of the Aventine Diana who beholds at a less distance than others the contests of the great circus. Even Cæsar himself, the lord of all, the supporter of so great a weight of empire, does not think it beneath him to read my jests two or three times."

If "Cæsar" be Domitian, then Marcus Licinius may well have been the inhabitant of the Sura villa.

Bearing in mind that Martial was essentially a time-server and eager to flatter the favourite of the hour, it might naturally be supposed that in this epigram, he alludes to Lucius Licinius Sura, Trajan's friend and counsellor. The whole question depends upon whether his books were produced and published in chronological order and at what date the epigram was written.

In this respect one may quote from the introduction to the English translation of Martial's epigrams (Bohn ed.) as follows:

"Many difficulties exist in the chronology of Martial's Epigrams but the researches of Lloyd Dodwell and Clinton have done much towards their satisfactory elucidation. It appears that the different books were collected and published by Martial, sometimes singly and, at other times, several together. Their chronology and order of publication are thus stated in Dr. Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography:*

'The *Liber de Spectaculis* and the first nine books of the regular series involve a great number of historical allusions extending from the games of Titus A.D. 80 to the return of Domitian from the Sarmatian expedition in January, A.D. 94.

'The second book could not have been written until after the commencement of the Dacian War (II, 2), that is, not before A.D. 86, nor the sixth until after the triumph over the Dacians and Germans (A.D. 91): the seventh was written while the Sarmatian War which began in A.D. 93 was still in progress and reaches to the end of that year. The eighth book opens in January, A.D. 94: the ninth also refers to the same epoch, but may, as Clinton supposes, have been written in A.D. 95. . . . The tenth book . . . celebrates the arrival of Trajan in Rome after his accession. . . .'"

Now, in Book VI, containing the Epigram "To a Detractor," quoted, there are scattered about, various fulsomely adulatory epigrams addressed to Domitian. Likewise the epigram to Julia's statue—presumably that in the Vatican—reproduced in this volume. Other allusions to Julia suggest that the book, or at least these portions of it, was written before the death of Julia in 93. Certain minor touches date Books VI, VII and VIII to the reign of Domitian—in Book VI, Matho the lawyer was still wealthy: the son of Regulus (later so ostentatiously mourned by his father) was in his third year and there is a pleasing note in Martial's mention of the child's delight in his father's success as a pleader.

All the dates given in the above extract from the Introduction to Martial's work conform with the course of events as related by Nyria. Thus, apart from Nyria's own life-like narrative, there seem grounds for inferring the historic actuality of Valeria's lover, and certainly none for denying it.

Appendix 5. The Worship of Demeter

Everyone knows the story of Demeter (Earth-mother) or Ceres as she was called in Rome, and of her daughter—variously named Kore, Persephone, Proserpine—whom Aidoneus (Pluto) carried down beneath the earth to his kingdom of Hades, the abode of the dead: of the distracted mother's vain search for the girl and of her anger which caused her to withhold the fruits of the earth from man. Then, of how, in the guise of a weary old woman, she sat mourning upon the "stone of sorrow" near Eleusis where she was found by the daughters of Celeus and taken to his house; and of how she abode there as nurse to the infant Demophoon whom she would have made immortal but was prevented by his mother, Metaneira, who snatched her child from the divine fire. And how, after that, seeing that the earth still remained unfruitful because of Demeter's wrath, her daughter was restored to her through the intervention of a river-god, of Hecate and of the "all-seeing Sun." Only, however, with the stipulation that Persephone should have taken no food during her stay in the infernal regions. But unfortunately Persephone had partaken of the fruit of a pomegranate. Therefore she was compelled to return every year and, for each

seed that she had swallowed to remain a month in Hades with her husband where she was known as Kore, queen of the Dead.

The following extracts are from Smith and Marindin's *Classical Dictionary :*

" The cult of Demeter, however much developed by additions from Egyptian and from Orphic sources, was probably in its first origin merely such a worship of the Corn-mother or Corn-spirit as is found in the folk-lore of many, perhaps of most countries. For the Greeks she was originally a Pelasgic deity, named Pelasgis, and foreign to the Dorian people." Hdt., II, 171 ; Paus., II, 22.

The reader will recall Nyria's allusion, in the early part of this book, to the Domina's subconscious memory of having during a former life far back in the history of Greece, served as priestess in a temple of Demeter, which, from Nyria's indication of the position, would have been in the north of Thessaly. It may be conjectured that perhaps this subconscious memory accounted for the Roman lady's emotional appeal and her devotion to that goddess which otherwise seem scarcely in keeping with Valeria's hard and sceptical attitude towards any form of religion—pagan or Christian.

Appendix 6. Character of Martial

The sycophantic attitude of Martial, confirming Nyria's estimate of his character, is touched upon in the following extract from *L'Aventin sous l'Empire*, by Alfred Merlin, pp. 340–341.

" Nous ne pouvons pas préciser ce qu'etait ce Gallus (to whom several of Martial's epigrams are addressed). Il devait occuper une situation assez haute puisque Martial avait cru avantageux de se concilier ses faveurs."

Appendix 7. The Character and Writings of Tacitus

Tacitus himself in " A Dialogue concerning Oratory," which certainly the Instrument had never read, corroborates the Commentator's remark upon his own great interest in that subject. All that we know of the historian's domestic conditions is gleaned from his *Life of Agricola*. As regards the man's manner of work and his private character, Tacitus's self-revelations concerning these in the " Dialogue " conform with Nyria's and the Commentator's appreciation of his qualities.

Appendix 8. The Death of Agricola

Tacitus in his *Life of Agricola* tells how his father-in-law's last days were embittered by the Emperor's neglect and ingratitude for Agricola's brilliant services to the State in the conquest of Britain. Of his death and the suspicion that Domitian had poisoned him Tacitus speaks thus.

" His decease was a severe affliction to his family, a grief to his friends and a subject of regret even to foreigners and those who had no personal knowledge of him. . . . Their commiseration was aggravated by a prevailing report that he was taken off by poison. I cannot venture to affirm anything certain of this matter, yet during the whole course of his illness the principal of the imperial freedmen and the most confidential of the physicians was sent much more frequently than was customary with a court whose visits were chiefly paid by messages ; whether that was done out of real solicitude or for the purposes of State inquisition, on the day of his decease, it is certain that accounts of his approaching dissolution were every instant transmitted to the Emperor by courtiers stationed for the purpose, and no one believed that the information which so much pains was taken to accelerate could be received with regret." Tacitus, *Life of Agricola*, c. 43.

Also . . . " Agricola for the rest of his life lived not only in disgrace but in actual want, because the deeds which he had wrought were too great for a mere general. Finally he was murdered by Domitian for no other reason than this, in spite of his having received triumphal honours. . . ." Dion Cassius, Bk. LXVI.

Appendix 9. Domitian's Mock-triumph in Celebration of his Pretended Victory over the Germans

"He (Domitian) was conscious that his late mock-triumph over Germany, in which he had exhibited purchased slaves whose habits and hair were contrived to give them the resemblance of captives, was a subject of derision." Tacitus, *Life of Agricola*, c. 39.

"It was in the same year that Domitian made his pompous expedition into Germany, from whence he returned without ever seeing the enemy." Footnote to above in Tacitus's *Life of Agricola* (Bohn).

Appendix 10. The Mistake of Phyllis and the Death of Paris

The error of Phyllis is thus related, "He (Domitian) put to death a scholar of Paris the pantomimic, though a minor and then sick, only because both in person and the practice of his art he resembled his master." See Suetonius, *Life of Domitian*, X.

"He (Domitian) planned to put his wife Domitia to death on the ground of adultery, but having been dissuaded by Ursus, he divorced Domitia after murdering Paris the actor in the middle of the street because of her. And when many persons paid honour to that spot with flowers and ointments, he ordered that they too should be slain. . . ." Dion Cassius, LXVII.

Dion Cassius's dates are here queried, and his account of the course of events is not in accord with that of other historians. See also the "Epitaph on Paris the Actor," Martial, Bk. XI, Ep. 13.

Appendix 11. Juvenal

Little is known for certain of Juvenal outside what can be gathered from his own satires. There is a very brief biography which has reached us in various forms, but it seems doubtful if even in its original form it dates back earlier than the 4th century A.D., and the statements made in it must be received with caution. We do not, as a matter of fact, know the date either of Juvenal's birth or death; the earliest date assigned for his birth is A.D. 42, but this seems decidedly too early and Professor Ramsay puts it down as any time between A.D. 60 and 70.

The Satires, as we have them now, are numbered in the order of their publication. They were first published in five separate books:

(*a*) Satires 1 to 5; (*b*) Satire 6; (*c*) Satires 7 to 9; (*d*) Satires 10 to 12; (*e*) Satires 13 to 16.

The 16th Satire is incomplete, suggesting that the author died before its completion. Satire 15 gives us a clue to the date at which it was written by its reference to the consulship of Aemilius Juncus, who was Consul in the year 127. This Satire we may therefore be sure, was written A.D. 127 or 128. It is also important through its allusion to the fact that Juvenal had visited Egypt. Various and contradictory accounts are given with regard to the sojourn of the satirist in that country. It is connected in the Biography with an attack (in Satire 7) on an actor who was a favourite at Court and whose hostility, it is said, led to Juvenal being sent in a sort of honourable exile to that country. The Biography indeed makes the incredible statement that he was given a military command there in his 80th year. Others have connected his exile to Egypt with the expulsion of the philosophers from Rome by Domitian; that, of course, giving a very much earlier date. Thus Sir William Gifford observes: "In A.D. 95, Domitian banished the philosophers from Rome, and soon after from Italy. Though Juvenal, strictly speaking, did not come under the description of philosopher, he might, not unreasonably, have entertained some apprehensions for his safety, and with many other persons eminent for learning and virtue, judge it prudent to withdraw from the city. To this period I have always inclined to fix his journey to Egypt."

This view, it will be noted, coincides with the statement made by Nyria in the course of the present script. "Excuse," she says, "was found to send him into Egypt not by banishment but that he might take up some civil office there. I know not what it was, but I think that Domitian either feared or liked him, for Juvenal would go to the edge of Cæsar's wrath, yet Cæsar took no vengeance."

The clue to the situation evidently hangs on Satire 7. Though this Satire was not published till a very much later date, probably indeed, not until the commencement of the reign of Hadrian, it was obviously written in the reign of Domitian and it is not unreasonable to suppose that it was recited by Juvenal in the Forum where a large following collected to listen to his declamation, and the Satire, containing as it did an outspoken attack upon the ruling powers, would not unnaturally have been much talked about, more especially as it included a violent onslaught upon Paris, the most popular actor of the day, whose enmity Juvenal would consequently have incurred.

Its introductory lines, "On Cæsar alone hang all the hopes and prospects of the learned. He alone, in these days of ours, has cast a glance upon the sorrowing Muses," must originally have been intended as a compliment to Domitian, from whom a patronage of literature was anticipated which was unfortunately doomed to disappointment. The actual publication of the Satire at the commencement of the reign of Hadrian made these introductory lines appear apposite to the accession of a truly literary and artistic Emperor, but the reference to Paris, who was assassinated by the order of Domitian, leaves no doubt as to the date at which it was originally written.

Nyria tells us that she had heard that Juvenal was born at a place called Aquinum and that he was the son of a freedman. The latter statement is confirmed by the Biography and is probably correct. As regards the former we may take it that this also is accurate. "When Umbricius" (says Professor Ramsay), "on leaving Rome, bids good-bye to his old friend Juvenal, he speaks of the chance of seeing him from time to time when he comes for the sake of his health 'to his own Aquinum.'" Though this then was his native home, it seems clear that with exception of the interval of his sojourn in Egypt, almost the entire period of his active life was spent in Rome and he is said to have died there at a good old age. Certainly he lived well into the reign of Hadrian and we may put his death inferentially at about the year 129.

Nyria describes him as of middle age at the time she knew him, about A.D. 93. If he were forty at this date, we should place his birth about midway between the earliest and latest estimates, and his death would have occurred when he was in the late seventies.

Appendix 12. Offices of Quaestor, Aedile, and the Policing of Rome

Nyria's reference to the quaestor gives rather the impression that a quaestor was a kind of policeman. There may have been a certain inferior order of quaestor answering somewhat to that description, but the quaestor proper appears to have been a much more important personage.

In the days of the Republic two orders of Quaestor were established—the quaestores publicii who had to do with the taxes and uses of the public revenue (the Aerarium of Treasury in the temple of Saturn) and the quaestores parricidii or public accusers, who had a seat in the Senate. Later, the number of quaestors was increased and plebeians were made quaestors. They were undoubtedly responsible for the keeping of order and, in the Army, one reads of a quaestor accompanying each consul as paymaster.

Nyria may have been confusing the office of quaestor with that of the aediles, who belonged to the class of minor magistrates. There were the curule and plebeian aediles.

"Augustus appointed a *præfectus urbis* who exercised the general police which had formerly been one of the duties of the aediles. . . . The aediles existed under the emperors but their powers were greatly diminished. . . . This will serve to

explain the fact mentioned by Dion Cassius (IV. 24) that no one was willing to hold so contemptible an office and Augustus was therefore reduced to compelling persons to take it: persons were therefore chosen by lot out of those who appointed the curule aediles specially to the office of putting out fires and placed a body of 600 slaves at their command, but the *præfecti vigilum* afterwards performed this duty. . . . In like manner, the curatores viarum were appointed by him to superintend those within Rome. . . . They (the aediles) retained under the early emperors a kind of police for the purpose of repressing open licentiousness and disorder. . . . The care of the streets and pavements with the cleansing and draining of the city belonged to the aediles. . . . They had a general superintendence over buying and selling, and, as a consequence, the supervision of the markets, of things exposed to sale. . . . The aediles had various officers under them as praecones, scribae and viatores." Smith's *Dictionary of Antiquities.*

It would appear that as time went on confusion arose between the offices of quaestor and aedile and other orders established for the preservation of order. . . . It would be interesting to discover how far Nyria was justified in using the term as, in her time, almost synonymous with policeman.

"The office of quaestor was the entrance to all public employments." Note to Tacitus, *Life of Agricola*, c. 6, p. 350 (Bohn).

Appendix 13. Domitian's Early Intellectual Tendencies

"He greatly affected a modest behaviour, and, above all, a taste for poetry, insomuch that he rehearsed his performances in public though it was an art he had formerly little cultivated and which he afterwards despised and abandoned.

He celebrated upon the Alban Mount every year the festival of Minerva . . . with contests for prizes in oratory and poetry." Suetonius, *Life of Domitian*, II, IV.

A composition of his remains on record as having had distinct merit.

Appendix 14

Statius, the poet. For full account of his works, see *Remarks on the Life and Times of Domitian*, following Suetonius's *Life of Domitian* (Bohn ed.).

In Statius's *Silvae* there is a reference to Veleda, Nyria's kinswoman.

"Statius, in Juvenal's time, was a favourite poet. If he announced a reading, his auditors went in crowds." From a note in Tacitus's *Dialogue on Oratory* (Bohn ed. p. 400).

Appendix 15. Flavius Archippus

"A philosopher in the age of Trajan." Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary.*

Nyria's description of this philosopher is fully borne out in the correspondence of Pliny the Younger with Trajan concerning a grant made to Flavius Archippus by the Emperor Domitian and claimed by Archippus after Domitian's assassination. See Pliny's *Letters*, Bk. X, Letters 66 and 67. Also Trajan's reply, Bk. X, Letter 68.

Appendix 16. The Wonder-worker Apollonius of Tyana

There is a similarity between the miracles said to have been performed by Apollonius of Tyana and those recorded in the Gospels of our Saviour which has been commented upon by many writers. Nyria's version of these differs very slightly in detail from the accounts well attested in history but no more than would be the case with one speaking from hearsay, and it is difficult to believe that facts so corroborated were entirely without foundation.

The accuracy of Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius*, undertaken at the request of Julia Domna, wife of the Emperor Severus, and founded on the journals of Damis, Apollonius's friend and travelling companion, has been much questioned and the suggestion made that Julia Domna, under the influence of the Eclectics, wished to put forward a Pagan Messiah against the advancing claims of the Christian Messiah.

Dion Cassius tells us as " an astonishing fact " which surprises him more than anything else, of Apollonius's vision, while lecturing at Ephesus, of the assassination of Domitian by Stephanus at the actual time at which it happened.

For details of Apollonius's life see : Enfield's *History of Philosophy*, Bk. III, Chap. 2, S. 2 ; Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius*—Dion Cassius, Bk. LXVIV ; *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* by G. R. S. Mead.

The most remarkable story, however, told of Apollonius of Tyana is his reported magical disappearance from before the tribunal of Domitian.

It was in the summer of A.D. 94, in consequence of rumours of disaffection in Judea, that Apollonius was summoned before Domitian on the charge of aiding a conspiracy to put Nerva on the throne, and it was then that he made his sensational disappearance from the tribunal chamber which is told in his Life by Philostratus and mentioned by other writers but is dismissed by some as apochryphal. See Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius of Tyana.*

" Apollonius was accused of exciting an insurrection against the tyrant (Domitian), he voluntarily surrendered himself and appeared at Rome before the emperor : but as his destruction seemed impending, he was smuggled out of Rome, or, as his admirers averred, escaped by the exertion of his supernatural powers." Smith and Marindin, *Classical Dictionary.*

Of this disappearance no mention is made in the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* by G. R. S. Mead, and by most historians the tale is regarded as a fable. But if Nyria is to be taken seriously there must have been tales in Rome at the time about this seeming miracle.

It appears, however, that the power to vanish at will is not confined to ancient times. Mr. Yeats Brown in his *Bengal Lancer* quotes the case of an Indian Yogi of to-day who produced before him, from the ether, whatever scent was asked for and whose disciples declared that he could make himself invisible—in other words, vanish from the eyes of a crowd of spectators as Apollonius is said to have done.

Appendix 17. Ascletario—An Astrologer

" Nothing, however, so much affected him (Domitian) as an answer given by Ascletario the astrologer—and his subsequent fate. This person had been informed against, and did not deny his having predicted some future events, of which, from the principles of his art, he confessed he had a foreknowledge. Domitian asked him what end he thought he should come to himself ? To which replying, ' I shall in a short time be torn in pieces by dogs.' Domitian ordered him to be slain, and, in order to demonstrate the vanity of his art, to be carefully buried. But during the preparations for executing this order, it happened that the funeral pile was blown down by a sudden storm, and the body, half-burnt, was torn to pieces by dogs : which being observed by Latinus, the comic actor, as he chanced to pass that way, he told it, among the other news of the day, to the emperor at supper." Suetonius, *Life of Domitian*, XV.

Appendix 18. Pliny and His Wives

Pliny was thrice married, twice during the reign of Domitian and a third time, probably about A.D. 100, during the first years of the reign of Trajan. It is of the last wife, Calpurnia, who was his truest helpmate and assisted him in his literary labours and activities and in the entertainment of his wide circle of literary friends, of whom we hear almost exclusively in his letters. But there are brief allusions to the other two wives and the facts of the case can be pieced together by occasional references in his correspondence. Nyria calls Pliny's first wife Antaeia but there is no mention of her name in any of his letters or in any historical document of which we have knowledge. It appears that he married her when he was very young indeed, probably not more than two and twenty. He alludes to a dream he had about his mother-in-law (Antaeia's mother) in one of his letters (Book I, Letter 18), stating that he was a mere youth at the time (adolescentulus). This wife, according to Nyria's narrative, died about the

autumn of A.D. 93. We may assume from Julia's statements with regard to her that at the time of her marriage she was appreciably younger than Pliny himself, perhaps not more than 17.

According to Nyria, Pliny was for a time quite inconsolable over her death. He married, however, for the second time about a couple of years later, according to Mommsen, " a young girl of the upper middle classes of whose name we are ignorant." It appears, however (according to the same authority), that she was the daughter of Pompeia Celerina, and stepdaughter of Vectius Proculus.

This second wife died near the beginning of the brief reign of Nerva, early in A.D. 97, not improbably in childbirth. Pliny alludes to the fact that he had quite recently lost her in his letter to Quadratus (*Epistles*, Bk. IX, Letter 13), in which he gives an account of the speech he made in the Senate attacking Publicius Certus who had prosecuted Helvidius during the reign of Domitian, thereby securing his condemnation. This fixes the date of her death within a very few months.

Pliny married for the third time " towards the age of 40 " (says Mommsen), Calpurnia, granddaughter of his fellow-townsman Calpurnius Fabatus. Calpurnia was an orphan, having lost both her parents. Fabatus, her grandfather, was one of Pliny's most honoured correspondents, and his own constant devotion to the granddaughter is apparent in the various letters of which she is the recipient.

Pliny alludes to this, his third marriage, in a letter to Trajan (Book X, 3A) expressing his hope, not, unfortunately, to be gratified, for a child to perpetuate his name. " I was not," he says, " without this inclination even in that former most cruel reign (i.e. Domitian's), *as my two marriages will easily incline you to believe.*" Pliny trusts that the happiness of having a child, denied to him in the case of his two previous marriages, is only a postponed joy. " It is better so, perhaps," he says, " for I prefer to become a father only now when I can be secure and happy in my fatherhood."

Some critics, misreading the clear meaning of the text, have thought that the second marriage was to Calpurnia, but the reference is unmistakable, as Mommsen, Samuel Dill, Hardy and others have shown, to two marriages *during the distressful time of Domitian's reign.*

A very valuable picture of the literary circle of which Pliny was the heart and soul, is given in Samuel Dill's *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, (Book II, Chap. 1), fully bearing out Nyria's references to his social and literary activities.

This subject is still more exhaustively dealt with in A. M. Guillemin's learned French work, *Pline et La Vie Littéraire de son Temps*. Paris 1929.

After holding various public offices under Domitian, Pliny was finally designated as Consul by Trajan for the year A.D. 100. Later on he was despatched by that Emperor as legate with Proconsular powers to Pontus in Bithynia, with instructions to reorganise the finances of those provinces. Much of his correspondence with Trajan is still extant and testifies to the confidence and esteem with which that monarch uniformly regarded him.

Appendix 19. The Villa on the Aventine and Possible Association of Vitellius's Family with Clement of Rome

History gives no warrant for Valeria's statement that Bishop Clement had once been her teacher ; nor for the name " Florus " by which she addressed him. It is generally accepted that he was a distant connection of Flavius Clemens and Domitilla, but for this there is no definite authority. That he was Valeria's tutor is not improbable when during Vitellius's campaign in Germany before his elevation to the throne, Galeria Fundana, then in poor circumstances, lived with her family in the villa on the Aventine.

This Villa, Suetonius, in his *Life of Vitellius*, speaks of as " his father's house " ; but Tacitus says probably more correctly that " Vitellius, seeing the city conquered, was conveyed in a litter by a private way to his wife's house on

Mount Aventine, with intent, if he could lie concealed during the day, to fly for refuge to his brother and the cohorts at Tarracina." Tacitus, *Hist.*, Bk. III, c. 84.

Returning, however, to the Palace, Vitellius was dragged out of concealment there to his unseemly end.

Appendix 20. Euphrates

"Euphrates. . . . An eminent Stoic philosopher, a native of Tyre or, according to some, of Byzantium (Nyria speaks of him as coming from Asia Minor). He was an intimate friend of the younger Pliny. In his old age, he became tired of life and obtained from Hadrian permission to put an end to himself by poison." See Smith and Marindin's *Classical Dictionary*.

Also: "Besides these events of that year (A.D. 119) Euphrates the philosopher died a death of his own choosing, since Hadrian permitted him to drink hemlock in consideration of his extreme age and his malady." Dion Cassius, LXIX, 8.

The point referred to in a footnote by the Recorder, is of interest as an argument against the theory of thought-transference. The Recorder, whose knowledge of the Flavian period and of personages in periods far more remote was at that time of a hazy nature, had in some unaccountable way confused the name Euphrates the philosopher with that of Euphranor, a Greek painter and sculptor who lived some five hundred years B.C. Nyria, corrected on the point, persisted that she was right; and so of course it proved, later. Euphrates is much quoted in Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* as the great opponent of the Wonder-worker: and Nyria's description of Euphrates—his doctrine, his marriage and social position—agrees in all respects with the accounts of his biographers, none of which had the Instrument read. See *Letters of Pliny the Younger*, Bk. I, Ep. 10, and Philostratus's *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*.

A detail of Euphrates' personal appearance, unknown to the Recorder and of course to the Instrument—Nyria's mention of Euphrates at the close of the lecture stroking his beard—was found some time afterwards to be surprisingly verified in Pliny's description of the philosopher, as follows:

"He (Euphrates) reasons with much force, acuteness and elegance, and frequently rises into all the sublime and luxuriant eloquence of Plato. His style is varied and flowing and, at the same time, so wonderfully captivating that he forces the reluctant attention of the most unwilling hearer. For the rest, a fine stature, a comely aspect, long hair and a large silver beard." Pliny, Bk. I, Letter 10.

Appendix 21. The Expensive Favours of Galla

See Martial's *Epigrams*: Bk. IX, Eps. 4 and 37; Bk. II, Eps. 25 and 34; Bk. III, Eps. 51 and 54; Bk. IV, Ep. 38; Bk. VII, Ep. 18 (in Latin); Bk. X, Ep. 95.

Appendix 22. The Roman Law of Marriage

"If a woman lived with a man for a whole year as his wife, she became *in manu viri* by virtue of this matrimonial cohabitation. The consent to live together as man and wife was the marriage: the *usus* for a year had the *manus* as its result. . . . The Law of the Twelve Tables provided that if a woman did not wish to come in the *manus* of her husband (or vice versa) in this manner, she should absent herself from him annually for three nights (trinoctium) and so break the *usus* of the year." Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*.

Appendix 23. Regulus—Advocate, Informer

For particulars of Regulus and condemnation of his character, see *Letters of Pliny the Younger*, Bk. I, Letters 5 and 20; Bk. IV, Letters 7; Bk. VI, Letter 2.

Also note in Tacitus's *Dialogue* concerning Oratory, c. 12.

Martial, the time-server, however, alludes to Regulus in a flattering manner. See Martial, Bk. I, Eps. 12, 82, 111.

Appendix 24. The Edessa Plot

So called from the meeting between the supposed conspirators having taken place at Edessa. "A very ancient city in the north of Mesopotamia, the capital of Osroëne. It belonged to the Province of Mesopotamia in the time of Trajan and accordingly was afterwards sometimes under Rome, sometimes under Oriental rule." Smith and Marindin's *Classical Dictionary*.

Edessa was close to the border of Syria.

Appendix 25. The Grandsons of Jude, Brother of Jesus

All historians agree that there was great unrest among the Jews and great uneasiness on the part of Domitian in his later years about "the King of the Jews." This is shown by the following incident.

"We find the primitive, but decaying and expatriated Church of Jerusalem still maintaining the hereditary principle during the reign of Domitian, for Hegesippus (Euseb. iii, 20) tells us that certain grandchildren of Jude, brother of the Lord, being sent to Rome, that tyrant questioned them as to their claim as descendants of David, on which they explained that the kingdom they expected was a spiritual one, to be founded at the end of the world, and shewed their horny hands as peasant cultivators, on which he contemptuously dismissed them." *First Christian Generation*, by James Thomas, Chap. X, p. 350.

It is also agreed that in A.D. 94, 95, 96, Domitian had many noted persons put to death on the charges of atheism—otherwise, not worshipping the gods, and himself as "lord-god," and for the adoption of "Jewish manners."

Clement of Rome, in his letter to the Corinthians, generally accepted as genuine, speaks of sudden and repeated calamities to the Church and refers to the Neronian persecution, saying, "we are in the same lists and the same struggle awaits us." . . . This would have been written about the same time or soon after the execution of Flavius Clemens.

Rufus and Orfitus were also punished in the Jewish conspiracy charge in 95. (Orfitus is said to have been a Christian).

Appendix 26. The Knoll Beyond the Nævian Gate

The Nævian Gate can be easily located in some of Lanciani's maps of ancient Rome as one of the four gates between the Porta Capena on the Cœlian hill above what appears to be a small knoll jutting out on the little Aventine not far from where the two parts of the hill seem to divide.

The Little Aventine had, according to Lanciani, many underground quarries and the road to the Christian meeting-place probably went round that part of the hill to the inner bend nearer the Cœlian : or it is possible that the deep bend of the hill below the Nævian Gate may have provided a more secluded entrance to the Chapel. Either locality answers to Nyria's and the Domina's description.

Appendix 27. Gaius

The following verses in John's third epistle seem appropriate to what is said of the presbyter Gaius and also to foreshadow the visit of John to Rome.

V. 1. "The Elder unto the well-beloved Gaius whom I love in the truth.

V. 13. "I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee.

V. 14. "But I trust I shall shortly see thee and we shall speak face to face. . . ."

Third Epistle of John.

Appendix 28. John the Apostle and John the Elder

With reference to the statement of Nyria that she met John the Apostle at Rome, there is an old tradition that John (either John the Apostle or John of Ephesus) went to Rome, where he suffered torture. If there is any truth in the story, which is not unlikely, it may be assumed that he was exiled to Patmos by Domitian, following this episode.

The question necessarily arises from Nyria's allusions, whether she actually saw John the Apostle, described in the Gospels as the brother of James, or John the Elder, and whether the two were or were not identical. It is noteworthy that she alludes to John as "the Apostle," but this would be an expression that might very well be employed by the Christians of that day of one who held such a prominent position in the Church as John of Ephesus, and who, moreover, if we identify him with Papias's John the Elder, is believed to have been one of those who in early youth had seen and known Jesus Himself.

The whole question of the problem of John the Apostle and John the Elder is threshed out in a very scholarly and dispassionate manner in the *Problem of the Fourth Gospel*, by H. Latimer Jackson, D.D. (Cambridge University Press), to which book readers are referred.

Those who adopt the hypothesis that John the Elder was a different person from John the Apostle, and is to be identified with John of Ephesus, point to certain statements and allusions to the martyrdom of John the Apostle at Jerusalem, notably those of Philip of Side and Georgias Hamartolus who both quote Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis (*c.* A.D. 70–140), as stating in the second book of his *Sayings of the Lord* that John the Apostle and James his brother were put to death by the Jews. Thus, adds Hamartolus, plainly fulfilling the prophecy of Christ concerning them, "Ye shall drink of the cup that I drink of."

They also lay stress on the fact that when Paul met the Apostles at Jerusalem, after his conversion, it was mutually agreed that he (Paul), should preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, while John elected to remain with the Palestinian converts, and that there is no evidence that he ever changed his mind or left his native environment. If, however, John the Apostle had been long dead (and there are many authorities who take a contrary view), it is probable that to the early Christians of that day, John of Ephesus, as a leading light of the Asiatic Church, would fill the whole picture while his namesake's memory would sink into oblivion. To Nyria, at least, there would be only one John and he would naturally be regarded as the Apostle of the Lord.

Recorder. . . . Nyria, when I questioned her later on this point, answered, "I spoke of John who wrote the Gospel:" and when asked,

"Did you, as Nyria, know that he was the Beloved Disciple?"

N. . . . "I believed that he was. It was John who wrote the Gospel."

Rec. . . . "Did he say that he had written the Gospel?"

N. . . . "No, he never spoke of it. He spoke little and would answer few questions that we put to him."

Appendix 29. Roman Dowry

The *dos* (*res uxoria*) is everything which on the occasion of a woman's marriage was transferred by her or by another person to the husband . . . for the purpose of enabling the husband to sustain the charges of the marriage state (*onera matrimonii*). . . . The *dos* was a matter of great importance in Roman law, both because it was an ingredient in almost every marriage and was sometimes of a large amount. The frequency of divorces also gave rise to many legal questions as to *dos*. Smith's *Greek and Roman Antiquities*.

Appendix 30. The Roman Law of Divorce

Divorce was not easy to obtain when, in the case of Roman patricians, the marriage had been a sacred marriage by confarreation as presumably was the marriage between Valerius Paulinus and Lucia, daughter of the Emperor Vitellius.

"Corresponding to the forms of marriage by confarreatio and coemtio, there were the forms of divorce by diffareatio and remancipatio. According to Festus (*s. v.*), diffarreatio was a kind of religious ceremony so called, 'quia fiebat farreo libo adhibito,' by which a marriage was dissolved. . . . It is said that originally marriages contracted by confarreatio were indissoluble, and in a later age this was the case with the marriage of the flamen dialis (Gell X, 15) who was married by

confarreatio." See Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* under *Divortium.*

Also: "By the Lex Julia de Adulteris, it was provided that there should be seven witnesses to a divorce, Roman citizens of full age and a freedman of the party who made the divorce." Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities.*

Appendix 31. The Death of Licinius Sura

Although Licinius Sura was a free-born Roman, there is no improbability in his having been forced to undergo the terrible fate of Pentheus—being torn down from a pine tree, limb by limb, as described in Euripides' *Bacchae.*

Acilius Glabrio, a man of consular position, had been condemned by Domitian to fight lions in the Arena.

Martial in his epigram on Laureolus gives a further example of such realistic method of execution. In a note appended to this epigram we read that it "refers to a Ballet or Drama of Action, composed either by Nævius or by Ennius,—for on this point the learned disagree—in which a certain Laureolus, a noted robber, was crucified on the stage. Usually the death was simply a stage-death, without harm to the actor. Domitian has the honour of introducing a real death—that of an unfortunate wretch already condemned 'for the amusement of this detestable people.'" See Gifford and Mayor on Juv. viii., 187, and for a curious comment, compare what Martial says of the tigress in Ep. 18, 6: "Postquam inter nos est, plus feritatis habet!"

Appendix 32. The Roman Travelling-Carriage

The *carpentum* was the carriage in which Roman matrons were allowed to be conveyed to public festivals. The *carpentum* contained seats for two, sometimes three, persons, besides the coachman, drawn sometimes by four horses like a quadriga. . . . The *carpentum* was also used by private persons for journeys.

The relief of a carriage preserved in the British Museum . . . exhibits a closed *carpentum* drawn by four horses.

There was also the *carrucca,* the name of which only occurs under the emperors. It had four wheels and was used in travelling. Carruccæ were used for carrying women . . . these carriages were sometimes used in Rome by persons of distinction. . . .

The *harmamaxa* (evidently the style of carriage used by the Domina), a carriage for persons, very similar in its construction to the *carpentum,* being covered overhead and enclosed with curtains so as to be used by night as well as by day. See Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities.*

Appendix 33. The Gilded Gate at Forum Julii

At Fréjus, the ancient Forum Julii founded by Julius Cæsar, the sea has in these intervening centuries receded nearly a mile from the quays of the Cæsars and the bay on which Nyria saw, with other-world vision, Roman galleys plying and Roman battleships harboured against emergencies, is now "a forlorn and deserted place where the broken aqueducts may be seen stretching away through bean-fields and weedy drills of corn. . . . To think of the fleet of Actium rocking where these vines and lettuces grow seems like a fable." . . .

From *The Maritime Alps,* by Miss Dempster.

The question is raised by some recent writers whether a confusion of sound between the words "aurea" and "horrea," which last means granaries, may not have turned the golden gate of Forum Julii into a fable also. Lentheric suggests this, as follows:

"Est-ce la couleur blonde de cette maçonnerie ensoleillée, ou les riches marchandiess que l'on faisait passer par cette porte pour les amener dans les magasins de la ville, qui ont fait donner à cette arcade le nom de *porte d'Or, porta aurea?* Il est difficile de l'admettre; encore moins faut-il croire, avec quelques antiquaires pas trop naifs, que de grands clous à tête dorée reliaient les stucs

peints qui décoraient la porte et dessinaient, sur les piliers, les bandeaux et la voûte, des dessins étincelants.

" Cette fameuse porte d'or n'était, en réalité, que l'ouverture principale d'un élégant portique qui donnait accès sur le quai ; c'est là qu'il faut placer l'ancien rivage de l'étang, ce que dans notre vieux français on désignait, il y a à peine trois siècles, sous le nom de l'orée (1), dont l'étymologie ora, bord, plage, est tout à fait transparente. La porte d'Orée, porta Oræ, n'était donc ainsi nommée que parce qu'elle s'ouvrait sur la berge même de la lagune qui constituait le port de Fréjus ; et cette designation, sainement interprétée, est d'autant plus intéressante qu'elle nous donne une nouvelle et précise indication de l'ancien état des lieux."

" *La Provence Maritime,*" *Ancienne et Moderne*, par Charles Lenthéric.

The disembodied Nyria, if she is to be believed, declares, however, that the gate really was, as tradition holds, plated with gold.

The Instrument had no knowledge of the back history of that part of the coast and there was no thought in the Recorder's mind of the Gate, nor had she seen or heard of any ruined traces of it.

FINAL WORDS BY THE RECORDER

THE following notes of two experiences with Nyria which did not happen in the sequence of the story—the first being near the beginning of our association and the second nearer its close—are added as a postscript to the foregoing narrative.

These final words may be considered by some readers an inartistic anti-climax to Nyria's poignant description of her last hours upon earth. Other readers, however, may hold the view that as an integral part of this strange psychic manifestation and as perhaps presenting further material of interest to psychological students, the notes should be here recorded. Also, for two other important reasons.

The first one, as illustrating a theory, already advanced by M. Flammarion and other scientists, that nothing which has once existed can be lost and that, imprinted on the circum-ambient ether of any given locality, there must remain the imperishable photograph of events which have taken place on that spot—in short, a picture-gallery provided for us in space, accessible to those who possess its key.

And the second reason—that a question is opened up as to the after-death state of a soul revealing itself under conditions so remarkable as those governing the case of Nyria—assuming of course that she was relating the story of an actual worldly existence. For it should be remembered that Nyria was seeing and recording through the lips of the Instrument, that which happened to Valeria after she—Nyria—had passed out of life, and—a suggestive point—that she made her observations without any show of the old, quickly roused emotion which, in life, had characterised all her dealings with that Roman lady.

It is, indeed, a comforting reflection that, while from this borderland to which the soul of Nyria had winged its way, she could observe what was happening to those who had wronged her so cruelly on earth, she was yet sufficiently detached from the past to be able to do so without feeling rancour or suffering pain.

Moreover, a question of misplacement, artistically speaking, cannot be taken into serious consideration when the aim sought is presentation of the simple truth.

Then, too, though the personality and the fate of Valeria are relatively unimportant to the reader, there is a certain dramatic justice in the dispassionate evidence here furnished by Nyria that the evil deeds of Valeria did not go unpunished but that she suffered a terrible remorse for the sin she had committed in dooming so many innocent victims to the beasts in the Arena.

Thus it has been decided that these final words shall stand.

The first notes were made one afternoon in April 1900 as the Instrument and I were sitting together on the balcony of our hotel at Monte Carlo which faced the height of La Turbie and the Corniche road slanting zig-zag down from behind the ruined Trophy of Augustus towards Menton.

As we talked over the day's doings, I noticed the indefinable change in her voice and, glancing at her, in her face, which always meant that she had become Nyria.

But the old Roman garment did not knit itself quite closely at once over the modern English personality. She was saying: "Now, I am beginning to see it all just as it used to be. . . . Wait." . . . Yet, though it seemed to be Nyria who spoke, I knew from what she had already told me, that Nyria, in her lifetime, had never visited that region.

Was it Nyria? I could not be perfectly certain. . . . She went on:

NYRIA: "The road goes high up—it is wide and it passes near the top, by the great Monument you spoke of. Farther back, the road is very wild—Here, it is near the sea. The place where we are (Monaco) is a settlement, the time of it not so very, very long ago. This little bay is used for fishing boats to put into in bad weather; it is too small for ships. The Roman ships are so unwieldy that they never dare go anywhere that navigation is difficult.

A little way off, the road came through a mountain—I can see the opening of the tunnel. I can see a cavalcade coming along. It is a very long one. Valeria is in the principal carriage, but there are others: and there are baggage wagons and foot-slaves following, and, before and behind, an escort of mounted soldiery—not a large one, just enough to protect her."

RECORDER: "What is the reason for her journey? Follow the cavalcade and tell me where it is going."

NYRIA (slightly petulant): "I would rather not go with that cavalcade; there's such a feeling of greyness and sadness about it. . . ." (After a pause) "Do you see two little steps at the back of the carriage where servants can sit? That's where I am now. . . . If you want to know about the journey, I can tell you a little; but if you want to know why she is making the journey you would have to go back to the Flamen. He talked to her and advised her to go. As to the reason of it. . . . Oh, I should have to go back such a long way—And, it is not because I don't want to do what you wish—but it would hurt so dreadfully. . . .

You don't understand. . . . I should have to go back through time and space, and it is not easy. . . . Now, that past is cut away from me and it would be like bruising myself against things I must fight if I were to try and reach that past again. . . . For there must be continuity of thought . . . threads to take hold of. . . . If you don't mind leaving that part for the present. . . . And the Flamen—for it is very important to know what he said to her. . . . But I can tell you about the journey and the country to which she went.

You want me to describe the carriage.[1] It is a large one—fine and gilded, with four horses—sometimes eight where the road is difficult. . . . It has four wheels, those at the back smaller than those in front. . . . The carriage is built up in front and there's a place near the shafts where the driver can stand or sit. . . .

The carriage is so large that it is like a small room inside. There's straw upon the floor to make it soft and, over that, rugs and cushions upon which one can lie. Or, you can have a raised seat or two fixed if you want to sit up and see the country; and there are shelves and hooks on which you can fasten things so that they don't slip.

Valeria's carriage does not usually have a cover but there are sockets into

[1] The kind of travelling-carriage used by Valeria. See Appendix 32, Bk. III.

which poles can be fitted and over them an awning thick enough to keep out rain or sun and with side-pieces which can be put up or let down. The edge of the awning is scalloped and has gold fringe.

I see Valeria sitting there. She is in black or some dark colour and wears a white linen veil about her head and shoulders. . . . I know that she has a much more handsome silk gossamer veil but she does not seem to care to wear it. Her face is very pale and I can see her eyes. There's a still, cold look in them—a *struck* look.

Two women sit further back—in the outer part of the carriage. One is a girl who used to work under Corellia : the other is an older woman. There are more of Valeria's women in the next carriage behind and there are great bales of luggage.

The road is very well kept on the whole, but the wheels of the carriages bump into the ruts and it is difficult to get them out again. . . . The horses have high, pointed collars and bits of gold shine here and there upon their harness.

The road goes for a long way along the coast to that country which you know,[1] and they have been travelling for many days. Sometimes, if there is a deserted house on the way, they make use of that for the night. But Valeria usually prefers to remain in the carriage under the awning and to have a bathing tent put up for her. They carry tents and everything that is needed with them, and there are one or two big places on the way where they get fresh supplies.

You ask me to read the mind of Valeria. . . . How can I tell you what she is thinking and feeling ? One can't make anything of a mind like that : it is all blackness and sorrow. What would *you* feel if you had, of your own doing, cut off from you everything that you loved ? . . . Yes, she is thinking in a way of Licinius, but her mind is dulled : she has no sensible knowledge of her grief. . . . She has just got herself together enough to start on this journey. . . . She came—I told you—because the Flamen advised it, and she wanted to get away from Rome and Paulinus wanted to get rid of her for his own purposes. They both wished it done in a manner that would create least scandal and that was why they fell in with each other's plans. . . . The Flamen had told her a great deal : it came back to her afterwards.

Now, for many miles, she has sat huddled up and miserable—not afraid of any danger, although I can see that, further back, they passed a tremendous gorge where the road overhung the cliff with the river dashing below. The men had to go to the horses' heads—there were eight horses for that bad piece of road. . . . I can see the sun shining on the curved pieces of the soldiers' helmets as they tug at the horses' bits to keep the beasts from rearing back. And, all the time, she sits on, still and silent, just staring and seeing nothing. . . .

Yet, there was a great deal to see that at any other time would have interested her greatly. For, you know that all along that shore temples had been built for the worship of two or three great persons of old time.

One was the very strong man with the lion-skin, who came over the mountains and tore up the ground—do you know that story ? And there was the goddess the sailors were so fond of—the one who rose out of the sea, and who was very beautiful. . . . And there was another, a man—not the

[1] The coast-line we were then traversing from the present Italian frontier, back, past Menton, Monaco, Nice, Cannes and past the Esterel Mountains to Fréjus, the ancient Forum Julii in what was then Gallia Narbonensis. (Recorder.)

one with wings on his feet, though I think he was here too. . . . Stop a minute, I never seem to know much about those gods and goddesses. . . . It was the god who rules battles. He too had temples about here.

And I want to tell you of one beautiful temple, further in that direction (pointing to the land-curve on the near horizon beyond Menton). It was nearer the sea than the road, on a level place facing the sea where the hills went up steeply. It was a sort of natural cave. The inside was lined with white stone, fluted, and at the entrance stood a figure of the goddess. She was very young, very lovely, very soft. There was the look on her face of a girl who is just turning into a woman—a look of great modesty, shy and yet fearless. Her hands hung down by her sides, quite simply. She was standing on a square pillar—you call it a pedestal—with a ball on the top. One foot is on that, and she is putting the other forward as if she were going to walk into the sea.

That image was the embodiment of a change from the lower worship to the higher, because men were becoming surfeited with mere brute passion and it was then that the young spirit of love began to grow.

For you know, there were two kinds of worship. The lower was only because, at that time, men could not care for more than what is just pretty to look at and to be used for the continuation of life. They were not able yet to realise the pure spirit behind the outward appearance. . . . Then afterwards, other people came and they had another form of worship which was higher, but still not the highest.

Young girls used to come and pray before that image that they might be like the goddess, though many, when love came to them, would lose sight of the spirit and would cling to the grosser part. . . . But the prayers did them good.

Now I see the cave-temple quite empty. I don't know what happened. I have a feeling that a strange people came along the shore and that they blackened and broke the image. Perhaps that was not real, but that they blackened the worship so that what spirit it had was destroyed.

Valeria had heard of this image of the goddess and had thought that she would not pass without going down to look at it. But she did not care enough. Love was dead in her heart. She felt that the goddess had failed her. . . .

Now have you had enough about that ? Do you see the goats of the hillside ? Not much grass for them here—just patches. . . . And there's a little ragged boy shepherding them. . . . I can see the bees and butterflies, and the little yellow flower that is so pretty . . . and the pink little flower . . . and it's warm and bright down here. . . . There's a woman going down the hill with an earthen pitcher—a peasant woman.

I'll tell you one thing that puzzles me. . . . When I'm looking at a place, the scene shifts and one picture comes across the other. . . . At one moment, you see the coast-line with the curious little houses and the boats below that you would call curious too. . . . And you see the road, and men in armour and Roman carriages. . . . And then it all changes and the houses are like the houses now—straight, and red and grey and ugly . . . and the spirit of it all is gone. . . ."

Nyria laughs softly. . . .

RECORDER : " Why do you laugh ? "

NYRIA : " Oh, I'm laughing at several things. . . . The thoughts come so fast. . . . I was wondering whether any of this gives you what you want.

. . . You say that I am to tell you what I see, and so I do—things like the peasant woman and the rest. But of course they're not in history. . . . You might not believe what I tell you if it were not that, here and there, you get something you can prove to be true. . . .

But you need not believe if you don't like, nor need anybody. . . . And it does not matter when I tell you of something that's simply just there, but is of no importance to the State and that you would not find in the Books if you went to look it up. . . .

Ah, that's nice! (as she was released). Yes, it's like getting out of school to climb down the warm rocks and be with the bees and the goats—so much better than rummaging among temples and statues. There's more of the heart of life in a sunbeam than in a statue where the spirit is imprisoned in stone. But it's what you have been taught about working up through the lower worship. It's like growing the blade of grass and getting the corn of wheat out of its husk. . . . And if men will worship, even pleasure, when the motive is not bad—that is better than not worshipping at all. . . ."

. . . . . .

The second set of notes of Nyria's talk was made as we two sat alone together among the ruins of the old Roman amphitheatre at Fréjus, formerly Forum Julii.

On this occasion, when a glimpse was given of the last days of Valeria, the Recorder had been asked by a friend interested in the subject of reincarnation, to try and trace, through the Instrument, one Annius Gallus, Governor of Gallia Narbonensis, and his wife, who, in the time of Domitian and his successors, had lived at Forum Julii.[1] A letter—the connecting link—having been put into her hand, the Instrument said:

"Yes, I knew I had to get ready for this, but I have not been able to go and find the things beforehand because they haven't belonged to me at all."

Nevertheless, the charge was fulfilled. Annius Gallus and his wife were described and identified. . . . They are not concerned in the story of Nyria.

THE INSTRUMENT: "I can tell you about this place. But it all comes up in bits—a piece here, a piece there. You'll have to weed them out and put them together yourself if you want to. I will show you what I see.

I have a sense of spring and of beauty. . . . The house of Annius Gallus is on one of the lower hills. I look over to the sea and I can see the fleet at anchor in the bay and the galleys with their rowers. . . . They keep ships here in case they are needed but the ships seem unwieldy and cumbersome. . . . The city is large in its way. . . . There's a high road leading into it, straight through the gates and out again. . . . I see a high bright gate which is one of the gates into the town. It looks as though it were plated over with gold. It shines—I suppose it's gold. I can see—can't you?—the soldiers in armour—the guard. There's one standing now with his hand on the metal gate: he has the charge of it. I am up here in the shadow: the houses are high and cast deep shadows.

There are people walking about—just now, not many: it's the middle of the day, when they rest. . . . There are shops—low, open shops on to the street with the goods displayed on trays as they are in Rome. But it is not Rome and the wife of Annius Gallus finds it dull. For though rich

[1] The Gilded Gate at Forum Julii. Appendix 33, Bk. III.

and important, it's not the fashionable world: it is what you would call a provincial town.

A good many people live here. What sort? There are the people who keep shops and the people who do work—the same as in all towns: and there are the homes of well-to-do people. But the richer, grander persons have mostly houses outside the town because they come here for the country air. . . . Many of them have State offices in this part of the country.

There are also many people, great at Rome, who come here; and there are the people who have what you call farms. So many of the rich people make their money like that. . . . Here, they grow fruit and grain of all sorts, and these are sold in the different markets and the money that comes from them goes to their masters in Rome. . . . The man, Paulinus—he has a farm. He was a careless sort of person and never troubled about making money—there was no need: there was plenty: it seems to me that he got it from something else.

His house here has been rather neglected. Many things connected with it want seeing to. He never comes now because his wife is there: she does not want him either: they are better friends apart. There is a strain between them—something not known but suspected. It is on his side; she does not care. . . .

This woman is a friend of the wife of Annius Gallus and comes often to see her. . . .

What is this woman like? She is aged, but not by years. She looks as though she had been through the tombs. Her eyes seem to see death before them always: there's a strained look in them that's terrible. . . . And yet sometimes, there comes—I know it—a look of peace. She is growing to a greater strength and a deeper knowledge. But, meanwhile, the world is very dark—just dead to her.

The only things within it that she feels to be living are those two little lads—the boys who hang about her, always, on either side.

The wife of Annius Gallus does not care about the children but the other will seldom let them leave her. There are times when she can scarcely bear their presence and there are other times when she cannot bear to be without them. They are young and warm and human and she yearns to the spirit of life in them because it seems as though they are the only things where she can find it.

She likes the country: she always cared for sunshine and flowers and the open air, but she doesn't enjoy these now. It's all pain to her: it's like carrying a knife in her heart. But I think that peace will come to her, though she must suffer a great deal first. There's only one thing that's a satisfaction to her out of the past—that the pain is over. She believes it is over: she thinks she can never now cause more suffering to those she cared for and whom she injured—that in a measure they are out of her power and so she can hurt them no more. She takes a kind of comfort in that.

Yes: oh yes: she has terrible remorse—that is her share of suffering and she knows that she has brought it on herself. But there's peace coming out of it. There can be no sense of having gained a haven—that cannot come yet. She fancies, sometimes, she has gained a haven: she would be thankful for it if she could really feel it. But the world does not seem real to her. She walks like a woman in a dream. Those two little children's hands are the only things that ever seem real to her.

Do any of her old friends come—Pliny or Tacitus? Well, they are at Rome: and it's a long way—a very long way. I don't think they come. She lives very much alone: she does not receive people. . . . No, she does not write now—her writing is crippled. She couldn't write because it would seem like writing in blood. You see, all the power of her has been used for something that meant blood—it has gone from her. Now, when she draws upon her strength, upon her power for anything, it seems tinged with the pain of that time. She can only lead a life that doesn't mean any giving out of herself in anything. She leads a very quiet life. I can tell you more about it by and by. There seems a fear in her to use herself—because she once used herself with great strength; it did great harm. And now she dreads to do anything that shall act upon another.

Bands of death are all round her: so she feels, and they gird her like ice. But the children's touch is warm and young and lifelike, and they love her. They are very simple, young children—boys, both of them. And they didn't love her at first—they were afraid of her. Then, she found them difficult because they scarcely knew her.

There's a great deal I'm to tell you, but I seem very far off from it. Yet I'm not far off from her. I know from inside her what she feels. The wife of Annius Gallus, although she is her friend, does not know, but she is sorry for her. She never did know the truth: she only thought it strange and sad that one so beautiful should bury herself in a country place and see no society but her children. She herself was obliged to be there, because of the position of Annius Gallus, her husband. But she had known the other woman in Rome, and she could not understand what had brought her here. Some said it was a quarrel between her husband and herself. For he never comes—there is a man who manages the estate. They say her husband sent her here because there was suspicion of disgrace. And if there was nothing of the sort, why then does she stay with only the children in this remote place?

Yet it doesn't seem that she is obliged to stay: it seems as though she might go back if she wished. Only she can't bear to go back: and here it is good for the children. And she would like them to be brought up differently from the sons of patricians in Rome. She teaches them a little herself: she talks to them and reads to them. But they had been allowed to grow up half-wild, and neither of them cares much for books. They are good children—honest, simple sort of boys, but they had lived such rough and half-neglected lives. They had run wild over the country and mixed with the peasants. She has found it difficult to overcome her repugnance to their rough ways. Still she clings to them: they seem to be all she has.

She works out of doors—she lives out of doors, but she cannot set her mind to anything that requires continued thought or effort. She was always very proud you know, but now she does not seem to mind that: she does not seem to think of that. And she is much more gentle than she used to be: and she does things now for poor people herself, when as before, she would have given money to have it done.

Oh no, she is not really old—not at all: she is barely old enough to have these children. . . . She has lost something in what you call the past. But I seem to see all this—not cloudily, but as though it did not belong to me—as though it were apart from me—shut off from me—cut away from me by something that has fallen between. I don't know what—I don't under-

stand, and yet I can feel that woman from the inside of her. But I cannot see back into the past: there's a gulf between."

. . . . . .

And with these last scenes, here ends the story of Nyria.

It seems probable that Valeria died before her husband, Valerius Paulinus, was, as we have seen, made Consul A.D. 101. Pliny writes to congratulate him and makes excuses for not having done so in person. We hear no more of Paulinus till Pliny writes to the Emperor Trajan at his death, thus:

"Valerius Paulinus, Sir, having bequeathed to me the right of patronage over all his freedmen except one, I entreat you to grant the freedom of Rome to three of them," whom he names. (Pliny's Letters, Book X, Letter 105.)

Trajan replies warmly, acceding to the request. (Book X, Letter 106.)

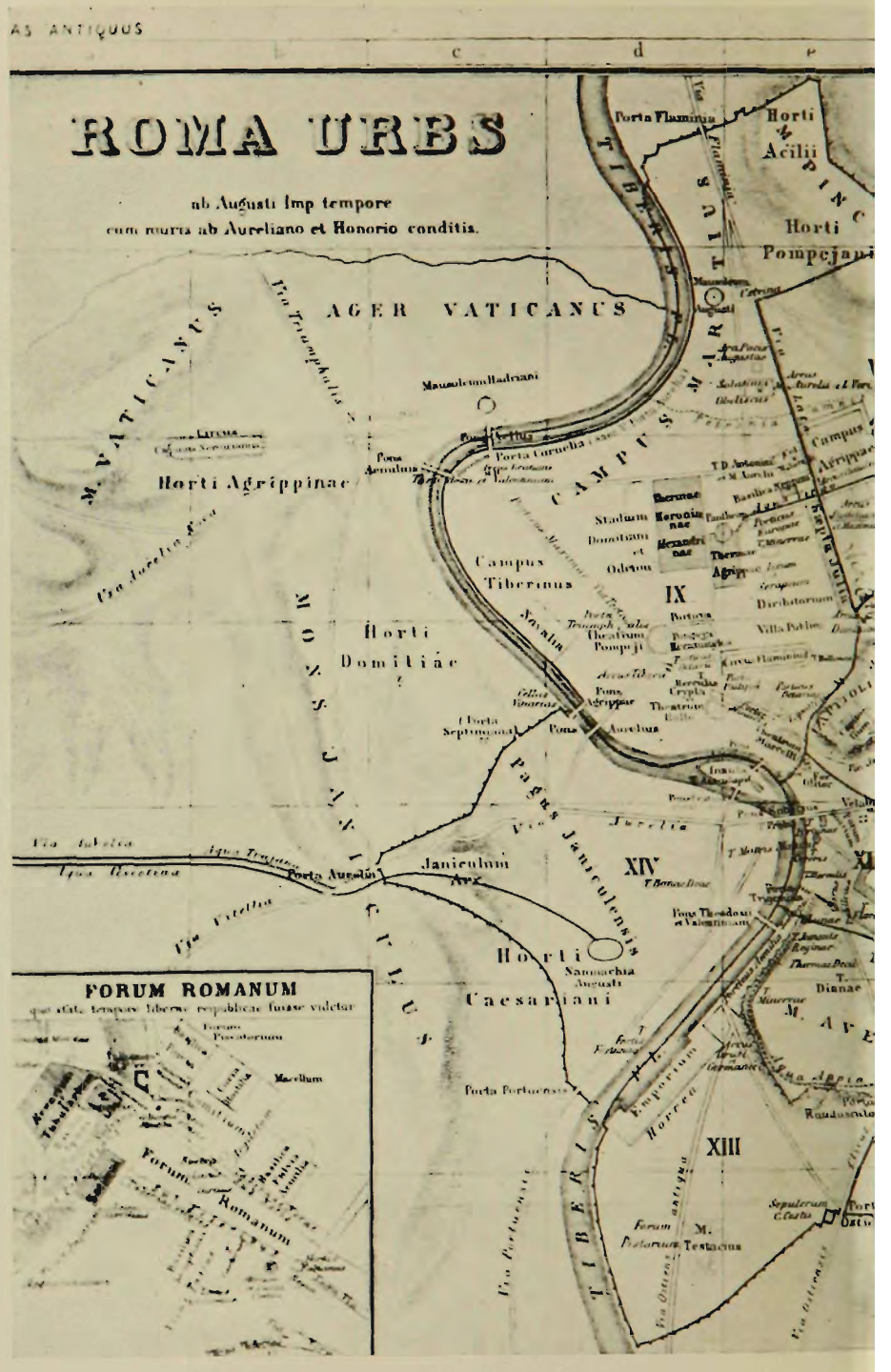
There is no allusion in the correspondence to Paulinus's widow, if, indeed, Valeria were then living.

It seems strange that in Pliny's letters to Valerius Paulinus [there are two in the collection] one finds not the smallest mention of Valeria.

I once asked the Commentator what had been her end, and he answered with almost ironic terseness:

"She died at Forum Julii. They buried her under an olive-tree and planted violets on her grave: and her sons mourned her sincerely—for two hours."

THE END



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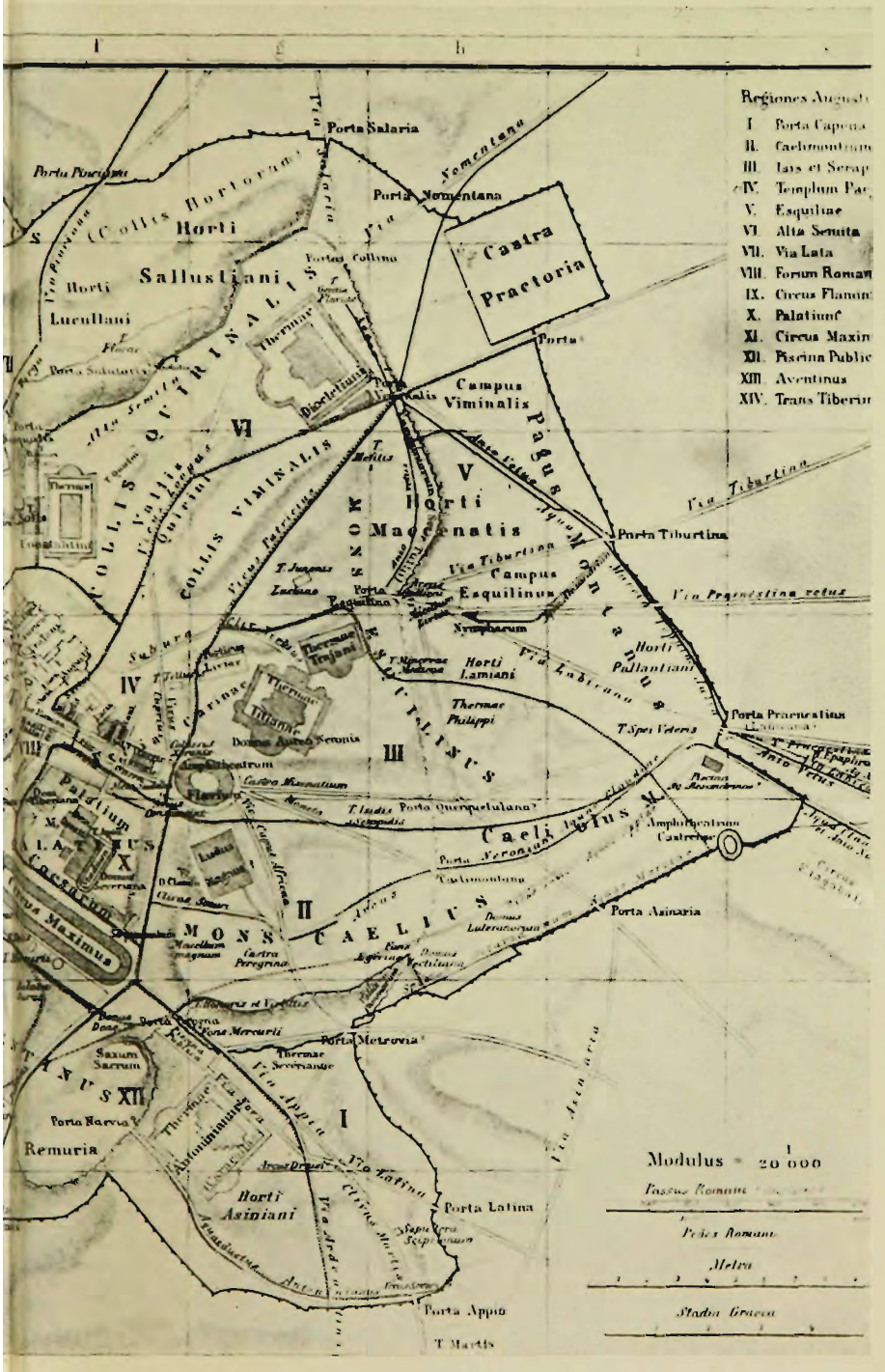

Published by Dietrich Reimer, in Berlin.

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