

1906

SAUL OF TARSUS A TALE OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS



“The seed of his teaching has spread abroad”

Page 4

This Gutenberg Project eBook is made
available by the International Missionary
Baptist Publishing Ministry P.O. Box
1676, Smyrna, TN 37167



“The seed of his teaching has spread abroad”

Page 4

SAUL OF TARSUS
A TALE OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS

By
ELIZABETH MILLER
Author of The Yoke

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
ANDRÉ CASTAIGNE

INDIANAPOLIS
THE BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

COPYRIGHT 1906
THE BOBBS-MERRILL COMPANY

CONTENTS

Chapter

- I [Saul of Tarsus](#)
- II [A Prudent Exception](#)
- III [The First Martyr](#)
- IV [The Bankrupt](#)
- V [Agrippa in Repertoire](#)
- VI [Marsyas Assumes a Charge](#)
- VII [The Bondman of Hate](#)
- VIII [An Alexandrian Characteristic](#)
- IX ["—As an Army With Banners"](#)
- X [Flaccus Works a Complexity](#)
- XI [The House of Defense](#)
- XII ["Scattering the Flock"](#)
- XIII [A Trust Fulfilled](#)
- XIV [For a Woman's Sake](#)
- XV [The False Balance](#)
- XVI [A Matter Handled Wisely](#)
- XVII [A Word in Season](#)
- XVIII [The Ransom](#)
- XIX [The Deliverance](#)
- XX [The Feast of Flora](#)
- XXI [The Fining Fire](#)
- XXII ["In the Cloak of Two Colors"](#)
- XXIII [A Letter and a Loss](#)
- XXIV [The Digged Pit](#)
- XXV [The Speaking of Eutychus](#)
- XXVI [The Arm Made Bare](#)
- XXVII [The Proconsul's Deliberations](#)
- XXVIII [The Strange Woman](#)
- XXIX [In Extremis](#)
- XXX [The Eremite in Scarlet, and the Bankrupt in Purple](#)
- XXXI [The Dregs of the Cup of Trembling](#)
- XXXII [Sanctuary](#)
- XXXIII [The Dregs of the Cup of Fury](#)
- XXXIV [Captives of the Mighty](#)

- XXXV [The Approach of the Day of Visitation](#)
XXXVI [On the Damascus Road](#)
XXXVII [In the House of Ananias](#)
XXXVIII [The Requital](#)

In Memory of
My Soldier Brother
Ralph Miller

Lieutenant Sixth Cavalry
U.S.A.

SAUL OF TARSAUS

CHAPTER I

SAUL OF TARSAUS

On a certain day in March of the year 36 A.D., a Levite, one of the Shoterim or Temple lictors, came down from Moriah, into the vale of Gihon, and entered the portal of the great college, builded in Jerusalem for the instruction of rabbis and doctors of Law in Judea.

With foot as rapid and as noiseless as that of a fox among the tombs, the Levite crossed the threshold into the great gloom of the interior. This way and that he turned his head, watchful, furtive, catching every obscure corner in the range of his glance.

He saw that three men sat within, two together, one a little apart from the others. From this to that one, the alert gaze slipped until it lighted upon a small, bowed shape in white garments. Then the Levite smiled, his lips moved and shaped a word of satisfaction, but no sound issued. Silently he flitted into an aisle which would lead him upon the two, and suddenly appeared before them.

The small bent figure made a nervous start, but the Levite bowed and rubbed his hands.

"Greeting, Rabbi Saul; God's peace attend thee. Be greeted, Rabbi Eleazar; peace to thee!"

Rabbi Eleazar raised a great head and looked with an unfavorable eye at the Levite; in it was to be read strong dislike of the Levite's stealthy manner.

"Greeting, Joel," he replied in a voice quite in keeping with his splendid bulk, "peace to thee. Yet take it not amiss if I suggest that since there is no warning in thy footfall or thy garments, thou shouldst be belled!"

The other had dropped back in his seat, and the Levite bowed again to him.

"I pray thy pardon, Rabbi Saul, but I came as I was sent—in haste."

"It is nothing, Joel," Saul answered. "Give us news of the High Priest's health."

"He continues in health, God be thanked, but his spirit was sorely tried—" He stopped abruptly to look, as if in question, at the man sitting apart in the shadows.

"Who is that?" he asked suspiciously.

"A pupil," was Eleazar's impatient reply. The Levite looked again, but, the twilight thwarting him, he hitched a slant shoulder and, passing to one of the windows, drew aside its heavy

hanging. Instantly, a great golden beam shot into the cold chamber and illuminated it gloriously. Saul threw his hand over his eyes to shut out the blinding radiance. But the pupil, helped at his reading by the admitted light, straightened himself, glanced up a moment, and turned to his scroll without a word.

"A stranger," Joel whispered, coming back to the rabbis.

"What burden of mystery dost thou conceal, Joel?" Eleazar exclaimed. "Yonder man is an Essene; look about; the stones will take tongue and betray thee, sooner than he."

"Let me be sure, let me be sure!" Joel insisted stubbornly.

As if obedient to Eleazar, he cast an eye about the chamber.

The light which came in at the west was straight from the spring sun, moted and warm with benevolence. That which entered at the east was only a quivering reflection from the marble walls and golden gates of the Temple. The chamber was immense, shadowy and draughty, the floor of stone, the walls of Hermon's rock, relieved by massive arcades supported on pilasters, and friezes of such images as were hieratically approved. The ceiling was so lost in height and cold dusk that its structure could not be defined. At the end opposite the doors was the lectern of ivory and ebony, embellished with symbolical intaglios and inlaid with gold. Beside it stood the reader's chair, across which the rug had been dropped as he had put it off his knees. Before the lectern, across and down the great chamber, were ranges of carved benches, among which were lamps of bronze, darkened and green about the reliefs and corrugations on the bowls, depending from chains or set about on tripods.

But besides the three already noted, the Levite saw and expected to see no others. Eleazar regarded his ostentatious inspection of the room with disgust.

"Thou hast a burden on thy soul, Joel," Saul urged mildly. "Let us bear it with thee."

The Levite came close and bent over the rabbis.

"Question your souls, brethren," he said. "Hath Judea more to lose than it hath lost?" he asked in a lowered tone.

"Its identity," Eleazar responded shortly.

But the Levite looked expectantly at Saul.

"Its faith," Saul suggested quietly.

The Levite nodded eagerly.

"Its faith," Saul continued, as if speaking to himself, "and after that there is nothing more. Yea, restore unto it its kings and its dominions, yet withhold the faith and there is no Judea. Desolate

it until the land is sown in salt and the people bound to the mills of the oppressor, so but the faith abide, Judea is Judea, glorified!"

"What then, O Rabbi," the Levite persisted, "if the land be sown in salt and the people bound to the mills of the oppressor, if the faith be abandoned—what then?"

"God can not perish," Eleazar put in. "Fear not; it can not come to pass."

"Nay, but evil can enter the souls of men and point them after false prophets so that God is forgotten," the Levite retorted. His lean figure bent at the hips and he thrust his face forward with triumph of prophecy on it. Saul looked at him.

"What hast thou to tell, Joel?" he asked with command in his voice. The Levite accepted the order as he had worked toward it—with energy.

"Listen, then," he began in a whisper. "Dost thou remember Him whom they crucified at Golgotha, a Passover, four years ago?"

Eleazar nodded, but Saul made no sign.

"Know ye that they killed the plant after it had ripened," the Levite hastened on. "The seed of His teaching hath spread abroad and wherever it lodgeth it hath taken root and multiplied. Wherefore, there is a multitude of offspring from the single stem."

Saul stood up. He did not gain much in stature by rising, but the temper of the man towered gigantic over the impatience of Eleazar and the craft of the Levite.

"What accusation is this that thou levellest at Judea?" he demanded.

"A truth!" Joel replied.

"That Israel hath a blasphemer among them, which hath been spared, concealed and not put away?" questioned Saul.

"Dare ye?" the Levite cried.

"Dare ye not!" Saul answered sternly. "It is the Law!"

The Levite came toward him. "Go thou unto the High Priest Jonathan," he whispered evilly; "he hath work for thee to do!"

Eleazar doubled his huge hand and whirled his head away. There was tense silence for a moment.

"Is there a specific transgression discovered?" Saul demanded.

The Levite weighed his answer before he gave it.

"Rumor hath it," he began, "that certain of the sect are in the city preaching—"

"Rumor!" Saul exclaimed. "Hast rested on the testimony of rumor?"

"Can ye track pestilence?" he asked craftily.

"By the sick!" was the retort. "Go on!"

"It is the High Priest's vow to attack it," Joel declared. "He hath no other thought. It is said that one of the disputants, who yesterday troubled them in the Cilician synagogue with an alien doctrine, preached the Nazarene's heresy."

"In the Cilician—in mine own synagogue!" Saul repeated, in amazement.

"In thine, in the Libertine, the Cyrenian and the Alexandrian."

"And they suffered him?" Saul persisted with growing earnestness.

"They did not understand him, then; he is but a new-comer from Galilee."

"And I was not there; I was not there!" Saul exclaimed regretfully. "What is he called?"

"Stephen."

There was a sound from the direction of the silent pupil. They looked that way to see that he had dropped his scroll and had sprung to his feet. The Levite dropped his head between his shoulders and scrutinized him sharply. But the young man had fixed his eyes upon Saul, as if waiting for his answer.

"Stephen of Galilee," the Levite added, watching the young man. "A Hellenist; and he wrapped his blasphemy so subtly in philosophy that none detected it until after much thought."

The young man turned his face toward the speaker and a glimmer of anger showed in his black eyes.

"It is bold blasphemy which ventures into a synagogue," Saul said half to himself.

"Ah! thou pointest to the sign of peril," the Levite resumed. "Boldness is the banner of strength; strength is the fruit of numbers; and numbers of apostates will be the ruin of Judea and the forgetting of God!"

Saul caught up his scrip which lay beside him, but Eleazar continued to gaze at the beam of light penetrating the chamber.

"Wherefore the High Priest is troubled, and, laying aside all his private ambitions, henceforward he will devote himself to the preservation of the faith," the Levite continued.

"Which means," Eleazar interrupted, "the persecution of the apostate."

The Levite spread out his hands and lifted his shoulders. The Rabbi Eleazar forged too far ahead.

"It is our duty, Eleazar," Saul said, "to discover if this Galilean preaches heresy. Let us go to the synagogue."

Eleazar arose, a towering man, broad, heavy and slow, but his rising was as the rising of opposition.

"I am enlisted in the teaching of the Law, not in the suppression of heresy," he said bluntly. "Furthermore, my work here is not yet complete. Wilt thou excuse me, my brother?"

"Let me not keep thee from thy duty," Saul answered courteously.

"Joel! Come with me," Eleazar commanded, and together the two disappeared into the interior of the college.

Then the young man who had held his place came out of the shadows into the broad beam of the sun, which fell now over Saul.

"Peace to thee, Saul," he said; "peace and greeting." The voice, in contrast to the tones of the men who had lately discussed, was very calm and level, restrained by cultivation, yet one which is never characteristic of an undecided nature.

"Thou, Marsyas!" Saul exclaimed in sudden recognition. He extended his hands to meet the other's in a greeting that was more affectionate than conventional. The young man with sudden impulsiveness raised the hands and pressed them to his breast.

"Saul! Saul!" he repeated with a quiver of emotion in his voice.

"And none hath supplanted me in thy loves, Marsyas?" Saul smiled. "Art thou come hither for instruction? Am I to have thee by me now in Jerusalem?"

The glow of warmth in the rabbi's manner did not contribute its confidence to the young man. He seemed not less troubled than moved. With searching eyes, he looked down from his superior height into Saul's face. As the two stood together, physical extremes could not have been more perfect.

The rabbi was not well-formed, and his frame had a note of feebleness in its make-up in spite of its youth and flesh. The face was pale, the eyes so deep-set as to appear sunken, the hair, thin, curling and lightly silvered, the beard, short, full and touched with the same early frost. Though no recent alien blood ran in his veins, his features were only moderately characteristic of the sons

of Jacob. He was not erect, and the stoop in his shoulders was more extreme than the mere relaxation from rigidity, yet less pronounced than actual curvature. The veins on the backs of his hands stood up from the refined whiteness of the flesh, and when his head turned, the great artery in his throat could be seen irregularly beating. It was the physique of a man not only weak but sapped by a subtle infirmity.

He wore the head-dress and the voluminous white robes of a rabbi, girded with the blue and white cord of his calling. But his class as a Pharisee was marked by the heavy undulating fringes at the hem of his garment, and by the little case of calf-skin framing a parchment lettered in Hebrew which was bound across his forehead. Herein, by fringe, phylactery and the traditional colors, he published his submission to the minutiae of the Law.

In so much the rabbi could have had twenty counterparts over Judea, but his aggressive nature stamped him with an individuality which has had no equal in all time. Over his countenance was a fine assumption of humility curiously inconsistent with a consciousness of excellence which made an atmosphere about him that could be felt. Yet, holding first place over these conflicting attributes was the stamp of tremendous mental power, and a heart-whole sweetness that was irresistible. The union of these four characteristics was to produce a man that would hold fast to theory, though all fact arise and shouted it down; who would maintain form, though the spirit had in horror long since fled the shape. Thus, inflexibly fixed in his convictions, he was unlimited in his capacity for maintaining them. In short, he was a leader of men, a zealot, a formalist and an inquisitor—one of great mentality dogmatized, of great spirit prejudiced, of immense capabilities perverted.

Such was Saul of Tarsus.

But the other was a Jew of blood so pure, of type so pronounced, that the man of mixed races before him appeared wholly foreign. His line had descended from the persistent love of Jacob for Rachel, through the tents of them that slew the Midianitish women in the wilderness, through the households of Esdras and the camps of Judas Maccabæus.

He was above average height, and built ruggedly, as were Judah the lion, and Jacob who wrestled with the angel. One of in-door habit, he was fair on the forehead, under the soft young beard and the shining black curls at his temples. But his cheeks were crimson, his eyes intensely black and sparkling, his teeth, glittering ranges of shaded ivory. And the bold strength of his profile and the brilliance of his color seemed finished by the deep cleft distinctly discernible.

On his face was written an attribute common among men of a time of Messianic hopes and crises. Asceticism with its blank purity of brow set him apart from the sordid souls in his walk. Yet about him there seemed to be an atmosphere surcharged with physical radiations, with human electricity that fairly sparkled in its strength.

Even Saul, his long-time friend, on this occasion of sudden meeting, remarked this equal power of body and spirit. The Pharisee glanced at the young man's garments,—simple robes without fringes, without gaud, and white as the snows of Hermon.

"Strange," the Pharisee said after his peculiar manner of talking with himself, "strange that thou shouldst elect to be an Essene." A little proud surprise appeared on Marsyas' face.

"I can not be anything else," the young man answered.

"Thou hast not ventured. But, nevertheless, thou wilt be noted in the college. The Essenes are very few these days in Jerusalem; En-Gadi receives them all. And thou art a doctor of Laws—a master Essene. How long wilt thou study here?"

"Five years, Rabbi."

Yet the young man was at least twenty-five years of age. What course of instruction was it which carried a man into middle life before it was finished? What but the tremendous complexities of the Mosaic and the Oral Law. But these things had been taught the young man in the forecourt of the little synagogue in Nazareth where he was born. So, because his learning extended beyond the reach of the provincial Essenic philosopher who had taught him in his youth, the young man had quitted the little hill town in Galilee to come to the feet of the master Essene in the great college of Jerusalem.

To be an Essene was to live a celibate under the regime of community laws, under a common roof, at a common board; to be bodily and spiritually spotless, to believe in the resurrection of the soul, the brotherhood of man, and the frailty and the incontinence of women; to accept no hospitality from one not an Essene and to own no possessions apart from the common ownership of the order. But to be an Essenic doctor was to be the most ascetic scholar and the most scholarly ascetic in the world, at that time.

But Marsyas had no thought on Saul's contemplation of him.

"I heard the talk of the Levite," he said. "Because it concerns me much, I could not shut mine ears against it. I, too, have heard the creed of the Nazarenes."

"How, Marsyas? Harkened unto the heretics?"

"I have heard their creed," he persisted in his calm way. "It differs little from the teachings of mine own order, the Essenes, except that they believe in the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth and the receptiveness of the Gentile."

"And thou callest that a little difference?"

"Not so great that one going astray after the Nazarenes could not be satisfied with the Essenes, if he were obliged to give up his apostasy. I seek a remedy."

"Moses supplied the remedy," Saul averred with meaning.

"The Essenes are not inflictors of punishment," was the even reply.

The Pharisee made a conciliatory gesture. "It is then only a discussion of the practices of my class and of thine."

But Marsyas was not satisfied.

"Thou knowest Stephen?" he asked after a pause.

"Stephen of Galilee? Only by report."

"Perchance, then, thou knowest Galilee," the Essene resumed after a short pause. "Galilee that sitteth between Phoenicia the menace and Samaria the pollution, and is not soiled; that standeth between the Middle Sea, the power, and the Jordan, the subject, and is not humbled. She is Israel's brawn, not easily governed of the mind which is enthroned Jerusalem."

"We are rustics in Galilee, tillers of the soil, mountaineers and fishers, simple rugged folk who live in the present, expecting miracles, seeing signs, discovering prophets and wonders. We are patriots, bound and hooped against an alien, but bursting wide with whatever chanceth to ferment within us. Let there but arise a Galilean who hath a gift or a grudge or a devil, and proclaim himself anointed, and he can gather unto himself a following that would assail Cæsar's stronghold, did he say the word."

He paused and seemed to recall what he had said.

"Yet, we are good Jews," he added hastily, "faithful followers of the Law and such as Israel might select to die singly for Israel's sake. No Galilean is ashamed of himself except when he permits himself to be led so far into folly that he can not turn back."

The Pharisee foresaw intuitively the young man's climax.

"The Law does not remit punishment for blasphemy, even if a soul turn back from its folly," he observed.

Marsyas' face became grave and he gazed at the place on the wall where quivered the reflection from the splendors of the Temple.

"Stephen is my friend," he said earnestly, "a simple soul, generous, fervid, and a true lover of God."

"If he be such, he is safe," Saul replied.

The young man fingered the scarf that girded him.

"The brothers at En-Gadi would receive him," he said.

"What need of him to retire from the world if he be a good Jew?" Saul persisted.

Again the young man hesitated. Saul was driving him into a declaration that he would have led forth gradually. Then he came to the Pharisee and laid a persuading band on his arm.

"Go not to the synagogue," he entreated. "Wait a little!"

"Wait in the Lord's business?" Saul asked mildly.

"Be not hastier than the chastening of the Lord; if He bears with Stephen, so canst thou a little longer. Give love its chance with Stephen before vengeance undoes him wholly!"

"Marsyas," Saul protested in a tone of kindly remonstrance, "thou dost convict him by thy very concern."

"No!" the young Essene declared, pressing upon the Pharisee in passionate earnestness. "I am only troubled for him. Let me go first and understand him, for it seems that there is doubt in the hearts of his accusers, and after that—"

"Thine eye shall not pity him," Saul repeated in warning.

"Saul! Saul! He is my beloved friend!"

"Moses prepared us for such a sorrow as apostasy among those whom we love. What says the Lawgiver—'thy friend, which is as thine own soul, thy hand shall be the first upon him to put him to death!'"

The lifted hands of the young Essene dropped as if they had been struck down.

"Death!" he repeated, retreating a step. "Wilt thou kill him?"

"I am more thy friend, Marsyas," the Pharisee went on, "because I am zealous for the Law. The heresy is infectious and thou art no more safe from it than any other man. And I would rather sit in judgment over Stephen, whom I do not know, than over thee, who art dear to me as a brother."

The young man drew near again.

"Dear as a brother!" he said. "Stephen is that to me. Even now didst thou ask if any had supplanted thee in my loves. No; yet my loves have broadened, so that I can take another into my heart. The Lord God be merciful unto me, that I may not be driven to choose one, for defense against the other! Even as ye both love me, love one another! Saul! Thou wast my earlier friend! I can no more endure Stephen's peril than I can uproot thee from my heart!"

Saul flinched before the concealed intimation in the words. A wave of pallor succeeded by hardness swept over his face, and Marsyas, observing the change, seized the Tarsian's hands between his own.

"Wait until I have seen him," he besought, "and if there be any taint in his fidelity to the faith, I shall stop at no sacrifice to save him. He is, if at all, only momentarily drawn aside, and as the Lord God daily forgives us our sins, let us forgive a brother—"

Saul tried to draw away, but the young Essene's imploring hands held his in a desperate clasp.

"I will give up mine instruction," he swept on. "I will retire into En-Gadi and take him with me! I will give over everything and become one of their husbandmen; I will have no aim for myself, but for Stephen! And if I fail I will take sentence with him! Wait! Wait! Let me return to Nazareth and get my patrimony! I will come then and take him at once to En-Gadi! Saul!"

But Saul threw off the beseeching hands and stepped back from the young man. The two gazed at each other, the Pharisee to discover a crisis in the Essene's look; the Essene to see immovability in the Pharisee.

Then the distress in Marsyas' face changed swiftly, and an ember burned in his black eyes. He straightened himself and stretched out a hand.

"I have spoken!" he said. Turning purposefully away, he went back to his place and took up his scroll. For a moment he held it, his eyes on the pavement. Slowly his fingers unclosed and the scroll dropped—dropped as if he had done with it.

Catching up his white mantle, he walked swiftly out of the chamber and Saul looked after him, yearning, wistful and sad.

Joel came out of the interior of the building.

"I will go with thee to the synagogue," he offered.

The Pharisee looked at him with cold dislike in his eyes, and, inclining his head, led the way out.

At the threshold of the porch he halted. In the street opposite two young men were walking slowly. One was slight, young, graceful and simply clad in a Jewish smock. The other was Marsyas, the Essene, who went with an arm over the shoulders of the first, and, bending, seemed to speak with passionate earnestness to his companion. The faces of the two young men thus side by side showed the same spiritual mode of living, and youthful purity of heart. But the expression of the slighter one was less ascetic than happy, less rigorous than confident.

As Marsyas spoke, the other smiled; and his smile was an illumination, not entirely earthly.

Joel seized Saul's arm, and held it while the two approached, unconscious of the watchers in the shadow of the porch.

"That is he," he whispered avidly. "That is he! Stephen, the apostate!"

Stephen turned his head casually, and, catching the Pharisee's eye, returned the gaze with a little friendly questioning; then he raised his face to Marsyas and so they passed.

The pallor on Saul's face deepened.

CHAPTER II

A PRUDENT EXCEPTION

After he had separated from Stephen, Marsyas went to the house of a resident Essene with whom he made his home, to be fed, to be washed, to offer supplication and to announce his decision to go on a journey. At the threshold of his host's house he put aside his sandals and let himself in with a murmured formula. In a little time he came forth with a wallet flung over his shoulder and took the streets toward Gennath Gate. It was not written in the laws of his order that he should make greater preparation for a journey. He had already acquainted himself with the abiding-places of Essenes in villages between Jerusalem and Nazareth and, assured of their hospitality and the provision of the Essene's God, he knew that he would fare well to the hill town of Galilee.

So he passed through the city by the walk of the purified, garments well in hand lest they touch women or the wayside dust, meeting the eye of no man, proud of his humility, punctilious in his simplicity, and wearing unrest under his shell of calm. He had an unobstructed path, a path ceremonially clean. He had but to hesitate on the edge of a congestion, and the first gowned and bearded Jew that observed him signed his companions and the way was opened. For the Essenes were the best of men, the truly holy men of Israel.

He went down between the fronts of featureless houses, through the golden haze of sun and dust that overhung the narrow, stony mule-ways, until the distant dream towers of Mariamne, of Phasælus and of Hippicus became imminent, brooding shapes of blackened masonry, and the wall cut off the mule-ways and the great shady arch of the gate let in a glimpse of the country without. On one hand was the Prætorium, the Roman garrison encamped in the upper palace of Herod the Great; on the other, the houses of the Sadducees, the Jewish aristocrats, covered the ridge of Akra. Marsyas came upon an obstruction. At a gate opening into the street, camels knelt, servants of diverse nationality but of one livery clustered round them, several unoccupied Jewish traveling chairs in the hands of bearers stood near. In the center of the considerable crowd, a number of Sadducees, priests of high order and Pharisees in garments characteristic of their several classes were taking ceremonious farewell of a man already seated in a howdah. No one took notice of the Essene, who stood waiting with assumed patience until he should be given room.

Presently the camel-drivers cried to their beasts which arose with a lurch, priests and Sadducees hurried into their chairs, the servants fell into rank, the crowd shifted and ordered itself and a procession trailed out alongside the swaying camels toward Gennath Gate. A distinguished party was taking leave under escort.

Marsyas repressed the impatient word that arose to his lips and followed after the deliberate, moving blockade.

The rank of the departing strangers did not encourage the city rabble to follow, and as the escort kept close to the head of the procession the hindmost camel was directly before Marsyas and the occupant of the howdah in his view. Over head and shoulders the full skirts of a vitta fell, erasing outline, and, contrasting the stature with that of the attending servant, he concluded that the small traveler was a child.

Under the dripping shade and chill of the ancient Gate they passed and out into the road worn into a trench through the rock and dry gray earth and on to the oval pool which supplied Hippicus, where a halt for a final farewell was made. Again Marsyas was delayed, and for a much longer time. He might have climbed out of the sunken roadway and passed around the obstruction, but the banks above were lined with clamoring mendicants, women and lepers, and he could not escape ceremonial defilement that might more seriously delay his journey.

Meanwhile the courtly leave-taking progressed with dignified sloth. Gradually Sadducee, priest and Pharisee moved one by one from the departing aristocrat. At the hindmost camel the Pharisees stopped not at all, but saluting without looking at the traveler, the priests merely raised their hands in blessing; but the Sadducees to a man salaamed profoundly, and passed on if they were old, or lingered uncertainly if they were young.

A little flicker of enlightenment showed in the young Essene's brilliant eyes, an angry tension in his lips straightened their curve and he drew himself up indignantly. The young aristocrats tarried and laughed his precious time away with a woman! That was the traveler in the last howdah! Twice and thrice the time they had spent speeding the rest of the party they consumed bidding the woman farewell, and every moment carried danger nearer to Stephen.

Then an old voice, refined and delicate as the note of an ancient lyre, lifted in laughing protest from the front, the young men laughed, responding, but moved away to their chairs, the camel swung out into a rapid walk, and crying farewells the party separated.

With abating irritation Marsyas moved after them. At the intersection of the first road, he would pass these travelers and hasten on.

A breeze from the hills cut off the smell of the city with a full stream of country freshness. Marsyas lifted his head and drew in a long breath that was almost a sigh. His first trouble weighed heavily upon him and its triple nature of distress, heart-hurt and apprehension, sensations so new and so near to nature as to be at wide variance with anything Essenic, moved him into a mood essentially human. Then an exhalation from aft the fragrant spring-flowered groves stole into the pure air about him, bewildering, sweet, and through it, as harmoniously as if

the perfume had taken tone, a distant hill bird sent a single stave of liquid notes. The small figure in the howdah at that moment turned and looked back, and Marsyas for the first time in his life gazed straight into the eyes of a beautiful girl.

Spring-fragrance, bird-song and flower-face were harmony too perfect for Essenism to discountenance. Without the slightest discomposure, and absolutely unconscious of what he was doing, Marsyas gazed and listened until the vitta fell hastily over the face, the bird flew away and the garden incense died.

He passed just then the intersecting road, but he continued after the last camel. He walked after that through many drifts of fragrance, and many hill birds sang, but he knew without looking that the flower face was not turned back toward him again.

He halted for the night at a little village and sought the hospitality of an Essene hermit that lived on the outskirts. But in the night, terror for Stephen, of that unknown kind which is conviction without evidence and irrefutable, seized him. He endured until the early watches of the morning and took the road to Nazareth while the stars still shone.

He had forgotten his fellow wayfarers of the previous afternoon until their camels, speeding like the wind, overtook him beyond Mt. Ephraim. In a vapor of flying scarves he caught again a glimpse of the flower face turned his way.

Then for the first time in his life he reviled his poverty that forced him to walk when the life of the much-beloved depended upon despatch. Nazareth, clinging like a wasps' nest under the eaves of its chalky hills, was many leagues ahead, and the sun must set and rise again before he could climb up its sun-white streets.

His hope was not strong. His plan had won such little respect from him that he had not ventured to propose it to Stephen. It was extreme sacrifice for him to make, a sacrifice lifelong in effect, and in that he based his single faith in its success. Stephen loved him and would not persist in the fatal apostasy, if he knew that his friend, the Essene, was to deny himself ambition and fame for Stephen's sake.

He would get his patrimony of the old master Essene who held it in trust for him, formally give over his instruction, bind himself to the perpetual life of husbandry and seclusion, and then tell Stephen what he had done and why he had done it.

Everything else but the appeal to Stephen's love for him had failed, and he had shrunk from forcing that trial.

But Saul had meant to go to the Synagogue at once; there were innumerable chances that he was already too late.

At noon he came upon the party of travelers again. A fringed tent had been pitched under a cluster of cedars and the slaves were putting away the last of the meal. He saw now as he hurried by that there was a spare and elegant old man, in magistrate's robes, reclining with singular grace

on a pallet of rugs before the lifted side of the tent. The girl sat near. He noted also that the master and the slaves fell silent as he approached and looked at him with interest.

But he sped on, forgetting that it was the noon and that he was hungry, heated and weary, and remembering only that the time and the distance were deadly long.

There was the soft pad-pad of a camel-hoof behind him and a servant of the aristocrat that he had passed drew up at his side. With a light leap the man dropped from the beast's neck and bowed low. The ease of his salaam and the purity of his speech were strong evidences of training among the loftiest classes of the time. The attitude asked permission to address the Essene.

Marsyas signed him to speak.

"I pray thee accept my master's apologies," the man said, "for interrupting thy journey. He bids me say that he is a stranger and unfamiliar with the land. We have found no water for the meal. Wilt thou direct us to a pool?"

Marsyas checked his impatience.

"Save that I am in great haste I would tarry to direct him. But let him send hence into the country to the westward, half a league to the hill of the flat summit. There is a grove by a well of sweet water."

"Nay, the country is as obscure to us as the whereabouts of the pool," the servant protested. "We are Alexandrians and as good as lost in these hills. If thou wilt speak to my master, he will understand better than his foolish servant."

Irritation forced its way up through the Essenic calm. The servant salaamed again.

"The Essenes are noted even in Alexandria for their charity," he said deftly. Marsyas turned with him and went back to the fringed tent.

The old aristocrat still lounged gracefully, as no thirsty man does, on his pallet of rugs, but the girl had drawn farther away and her eyes were veiled.

"I perceived by thy garments that thou art an Essene," the old man said, "and therefore a safe guide in this land of few milestones."

Marsyas thanked him and waited restlessly on the inquiry.

"We have not found a well since mid-morning and I crave fresh drink. The water we bear is brackish."

"Bid thy servants go westward without deviation for less than half a league, until they come unto a hill with a flat summit, which can be seen afar off. They will find there a grove with a well."

"And none is nearer?" the old man asked idly.

"There is none nearer."

"My servants were bred to the desert; they are ill mountaineers. Thou wilt show them the way?"

"They can not lose the way," Marsyas protested; "it is the flock's well and all the hill paths lead to it. Think not ill of me, that I can not go, for I am in haste."

The old man smiled a little.

"An Essene, and he will not stop to give an old man water?"

Marsyas frowned resentfully, but turned to the servant at hand.

"Get thy fellows and the water-skins and follow!"

He turned off the Roman road and struck into the hills to the west. The servitors of the Alexandrian caught up amphoras and hastened after him.

In less than an hour he reappeared before the man under the fringed tent.

"Thy servants are returned. Peace and farewell."

"Nay, but it is the noon. Wilt thou not tarry and rest?"

"I go," Marsyas said resolutely, "to save a life."

"Ah, then I did wrong to delay thee! I remember that Essenes are physicians."

"We can not cure the wicked of their evil intent, so I haste to save one threatened with another's malice. My friend is in peril. I must go unto Nazareth and return unto Jerusalem, before I can save him. And even now I may be too late!"

The magistrate searched the young man's face and then the half-incredulous curiosity passed out of his manner.

"Pardon mine idle wasting of thy precious minutes," he said soberly. "Go, and the Lord speed thee!"

Marsyas bowed low, and keeping his eyes fixed on the gray earth, lest they stray in search of the flower face, he turned again toward Nazareth. He heard a very soft, very hurried and almost imperious whisper, as he moved away, but he knew that it was not for him to hear, and he did not tarry. But a word from the magistrate brought him up.

"Stay! It is not customary for any outside of thine order to offer an Essene assistance, since we would spare thee the pain of refusal. But—it hath been suggested that thy haste may permit thee to waive thy scruples and accept help from me—as it hath been suggested—I filched precious time from thee. Thou canst ride with us, if thou wilt, and take my daughter's camel. She will come with me."

The brilliant eyes no longer obeyed the restraint which would keep them from the flower face. He turned to the girl, shyly withdrawn under the shade of the fringed tent, and knew by the lowered eyes and the warmer flush mantling the cheek that it was she that had made these suggestions.

Twenty reasons why he should accept the magistrate's offer arose to combat the single stern admonition of Custom. He was not yet under the Essenic vow to accept hospitality from none but Essenes, though he had lived in its observance all his life; he could not reach Nazareth under a day's journey and these swift beasts could carry him into the village by midnight. And Stephen's life depended on it.

"We depart even now," the magistrate added, "and I promise thee no further delay."

Ancient usage accused the young man on account of the woman, but by this time she had arisen and passed out of his sight, as if in good faith that he should not be troubled by her presence.

"Thou yieldest me invaluable aid," he said in a lowered tone, "and since I am not an elected Essene, but a ward of the brotherhood and a postulant, I am free and most glad to have thy help. Be thou blessed."

The magistrate acknowledged the young man's acceptance by a wave of a withered white hand and the slaves made the camels ready to proceed.

At midnight, the rocking camels sped without apparent weariness up the uneven streets of Nazareth, white under the stars. At the lewen of the single khan, the drivers drew up and Marsyas alighted to go forward and thank his host, but the magistrate slept, even while his servants lifted him down from the howdah. As he turned away, regretfully, he confronted the veiled girl, almost childlike in stature under the protection of her tall handmaiden. She dropped her head modestly and moved aside to let him pass, but he hesitated, and stopped. Few indeed had been the words he had addressed to women in his lifetime, and now his speech was more than ever unready.

"Thy father sleeps, yet I would not depart with my thanks unsaid. Be thou the messenger and give him my gratitude when he waketh."

"It shall be my pleasure," she answered softly, "and may thy hopes come to pass. Farewell."

"Thou hast my thanks. The peace of the Lord God attend thee. Farewell."

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST MARTYR

Mid-March in Judea was the querulous age of the young year. It was a time of a tempered sun and intervals of long rains and chill winds. Under such persuasion, the rounded hills which upbore and encompassed Jerusalem took on a coat green as emerald and thick as civet-fur. Above it the leaning cedars, newly-tipped with verdure, spread their peculiar flat crowns like ancient hands extended in benediction over the soil. Shoals of wild flowers, or rather flowers so long in fellowship with the fields of Palestine as to become domesticated, were scarlet and gold in shallows of green. Almond orchards snowed in the valleys and every wrinkle and crevice in the hills trickled with clear cold water. The winds whimpered and had the snows of Lebanon yet in mind; the days were not long and the sun shone across vales filled with undulating vapors, smoky and illusory.

The shade was not comfortable and within doors those apartments which denied entrance to the sun had to be made tenantable by braziers. Loiterers, wayfarers and outcasts betook themselves to protected angles and sat blinking and comatose in the benevolent warmth of the sun.

It was late afternoon and without the cedar hedge of Gethsemane, where the ancient green wall cut off the streaming wind, was a group sitting close together on the earth.

One, much covered in garments barbarously striped, and who bestirred long meager limbs now and then, was an Arab. Next to him a Jewish husbandman from Bethesda squatted awkwardly, the length of his coarse smock troubling him, while his hide sandals had been put off his hard brown feet. His neighbor was a Damascene, and two or three others sat about two who were employed in the center of this racial miscellany.

One of these was a Greek, the ruin of a Greek, not yet thirty and bearing, in spite of the disfigurement of degradation, solitary evidences of blood and grace. Opposite him sat a Roman, in a scarlet tunic.

The two were playing dice, but the end of the game was in sight, for the neat pile of sesterces beside the Roman was growing and the Greek had staked his last on the next throw.

Presently the Greek took the tesserae and threw them. The Roman glanced at the numbers up and smiled a little. The Greek scowled.

"The old defeat," he muttered. "Fortune perches on the standards of Rome even in a game of dice. Oh, well, we have had our day!"

The Roman stowed away the sesterces in a wallet and hung it again inside his tunic.

"Yes, you have had your day," he replied. "Marathon, Thermopylæ and Plataea—in my philosophy you can afford to lose a game of dice to a wolf-suckled Roman!"

The Greek sat still with his chin upon his breast, and the Roman, getting upon his feet, scrutinized the sluggish group of on-lookers.

His interest was not idle curiosity in the men. Such as they were to be seen cumbering the markets and streets of Jerusalem by day or by night throughout the year. They were types of that which the world calls the rabble—at once a strength and a destruction, a creature or a master, as the inclination of its manipulators is or as the call of the situation may be. Individually, it has a mind; collectively, it has not; at all times it is a thing of great potentialities overworked, and of great needs habitually ignored. That the man in scarlet should scan each one of these, as one appraises another's worth in drachmæ, was a natural proceeding, old as the impulse in the shrewd to prey upon the unwary. Out of this or that one, perhaps he could turn an odd denarius at another game of dice.

But when he looked reflectively at the west, where the broad brow of the hills was outlined against a great radiance, he calculated on the hour of remaining daylight and the distance from that point to another in Bezetha far across Jerusalem, and felt of his wallet.

It was bulky enough for one day's winnings, and entirely too bulky to be lost to some of the criminals or vagrants that would walk the night. With a motion of his hand he saluted the defeated Greek and the gaping group which sat in its place and watched him, and turned down the Mount toward Jerusalem.

To a casual observer it would appear that he was a Roman. He wore the short garments characteristic of the race, was smooth-shaven, and displayed idolatrous images on his belt, and, in disregard of Judean custom, uncovered his head. But his features under analysis were Arabic, modified, not by the solidity of Rome but by the grace of the classic Jew.

He was built on long, narrow lines, spare as a spear stuck in the sand before a dower, but Judean flesh rounded his angles and reduced the Arabian brownness of complexion. He was strikingly handsome and tall; not imposing but elegant, modeled for symmetry of his type, not for ideality, for refinement, not for strength. His hands were delicate almost to frailty, his feet slender and daintily shod. Never a Roman walked so lightly, never a Jew so jauntily.

His presence was captivating. Naïveté or impudence, carelessness or recklessness, gravity or mockery were ever uncertain in their delineation on his face, and one gazed trying to decide and gazing was undone. Never did he reveal the perspective of a single avenue in his intricate and indirect disposition. He forwent the human respect that is given to the straight-forward man, for the excited interest which the populace pays to the elusive nature.

It was hard to name his years. He was too well-knit to be young, too supple to be old. The only undisputed evidence that he was past middle-age was not in his person but behind the affected mood in his soft black eyes. There was another nature, literally in ambush!

He had reached the gentler slopes of the Mount, when a young man dressed wholly in white approached from the north. The wayfarer walked hesitatingly, his eyes roving over the towered walls of the City of David. There were other wayfarers on Olivet besides the man in white and the man in scarlet. There were rustics and traveling Sadducees, in chairs borne by liveried servants, Pharisees with staff and scrip, marketers, shepherds, soldiers on leave and slaves on errands, men, women and children of every class or calling which might have affairs without the walls of Jerusalem. But each turned his steps in one direction, for the night was not distant and Jerusalem would shelter them all.

The hill was busy, but many took time to observe the one in white. The men he met glanced critically at his fine figure and passed; the women looked up at him from under their wimples, and down again, quickly; some of the children lagged and gazed wistfully at his face as if they wanted his notice. Even the man in scarlet, attracted by the wholesome presence of the comely young man, studied him carelessly. He was a little surprised when the youth stopped before him.

"Wilt thou tell me, brother, how I may reach the Gate of Hanaleel from this spot?" he asked. His manner was anxious and hurried, his eyes troubled.

"Thou, a son of Israel, and a stranger in the city of thy fathers?" the other commented mildly.

"The Essenes are rare visitors to Jerusalem," was the reply.

"Ah!" the other said to himself, "the bleached craven of En-Gadi. Dost thou come from the community on the Dead Sea?" he asked aloud.

"I journey thither," the Essene answered patiently. "I come from Galilee."

The man in scarlet looked a little startled and put his slender hand up to his cheek so that a finger lay along the lips. "Now, may thy haste deaden thy powers of recognition, O white brother," he hoped in his heart, "else thou seest a familiar face in me."

He lifted the other arm and pointed toward the wall of the city.

"Any of these gates will lead thee within," he said.

"Doubtless, but once within any but the one I seek, I am more lost than I am here. Wilt thou direct me?"

The man in scarlet motioned toward a splendid mass of masonry rising many cubits above the wall toward the north. "There," he said. "Go hence over the Bridge of the Red Heifer and follow along the roadway on the other side of Kedron."

As the man in white bowed his thanks, his elbow struck against an obstruction which yielded hastily. The two looked, to see the Greek who had been defeated at dice make off up the hill. The Essene caught at his pilgrim wallet which hung at his side and found it open.

"Ha! a thief!" the man in scarlet cried. "Did he rob thee?"

His quick eyes dropped to the wallet. There were many small round cylinders wrapped in linen within, evidently stacks of coin of various sizes from the little denarius to the large drachma; a handful of loose gold and several rolls of parchment which might have been bills of exchange. The Essene frowned and closed the mouth of the purse.

"A trifle is gone," he said. "He was discovered in time."

"If thou carryest this to the Temple, friend," the older man urged, "get it there to-night, else thou walkest in danger continually."

"I give thee thanks; I shall be watchful; peace to thee,"—and the young man walked swiftly away.

"Wary as the eyes of Juno!" the man in scarlet said to himself. "Essenes never make offering at the Temple; that treasure goes into the common fund of the order. Now, what a shame that the unsated maw of the Essenic treasury should swallow that and hold it uselessly when I need gold so much! Would that I had been born a good thief!"

He sauntered after the young Essene and idly kept him in sight.

"He walks like a legionary and talks like a patrician, but doubtless he hath the spirit of an ass, or he would not have let that knave of a Greek make off with so much as a lepton. I wonder if I should not seek out the thief and win his pilferings from him."

The Essene in the distance, just before he reached the Bridge of the Red Heifer, unslung his wallet and resettled the strap over his shoulder, but the purse did not reappear at his side. He had concealed it within his gown.

"I wish he were not in such uncommon haste; I might persuade him to loan it me. Money-lending is second nature to a Jew. There must be several thousand drachmæ in that wallet—enough to take me to Alexandria. I wonder if he sped so all the way from—*Hercle!* What an aristocrat!"—noting the Essene draw aside his robes from contact with the unclean mob at the opposite end of the causeway.

"What! do they resent it?" he exclaimed, lifting himself on tiptoe to watch the young man, who seemed suddenly pressed upon and swallowed up by rapidly assembling numbers.

Distant shouts arose, the Sheep Gate choked suddenly with a mass, Kedron's banks, the tombs of Tophet and the rubbish heaps there yielded up clambering, running people. The hurry was directed along the brook outside the wall; stragglers closed up and the whole, numbering hundreds, flung itself toward the north.

The man in scarlet, moved by amazement and a half-confessed interest in the man he had seen disappear, ran down the Mount and after the crowd.

But a glance ahead now showed him that the Essene had not called forth this demonstration. The gate next beyond the heavy shape of Hanaleel was discharging a struggling mass that instantly expanded in the open into a great party-colored ring, dozens deep. The flying body the man in scarlet believed to encompass the young Essene swept up to the circle and melted into it.

Meanwhile, around him came running eagerly the travelers, the marketers, shepherds, soldiers and slaves, and behind, the loiterers, who had watched him defeat the Greek. Focalizing at the Bridge of the Red Heifer which spanned Kedron at a leap, the mob caught and precipitated him into its heart. Rushed toward the road on the opposite side, he seized a corner of the parapet, and, holding fast, let the mass stream by him.

When the rush trailed out, thinned and ceased altogether, he leisurely drew near the huge compact circle and stood on its outskirts. But he could hear and see nothing but the crowd about him.

"What is it?" he asked, touching a man in front of him. The man shook his head and stood fruitlessly on tiptoe.

Presently unseen authority in the hollow ring pressed the crowd back. In the ferment and resistance, he caught, through a zigzag path of daylight between many kerchiefed heads, a glimpse of a segment of the center. A young man stood there. About his forehead was bound the phylactery of a Pharisee. At his feet was a tumbled heap of white outer garments. Then the breach closed up.

"A sacrifice?" the man in scarlet asked himself. But such a deduction would not answer for the behavior of the crowd. Its temper was ferocious. They howled, they spat, they shook arms and clenched hands above their heads and forward over their neighbors' shoulders; they cursed in Greek and Aramic; they twisted their faces into furious grimaces; they pressed forward and were driven back and the foremost rank which knew wherefore it raged was not more violent than the rearmost which was perfectly in the dark.

It was typically the voice of the Beast in man. Some circumstance, unknown to the greater body, had waived restraint. Therefore the wolves of Perea could have come down from the bone-whited wadies of the wilderness and said to them with truth: "We be of one blood, ye and we!"

Each felt the support of numbers, the momentum of unanimity, the incentive of relaxed order, and the original cause, however heinous, was forgotten in the joy of the reversion to primordial savagery. Their quiet fellow stood on the outskirts and listened to the yelp of the jackal in man. Before him was a wall of variously clad backs and upstretched heads, beside him rows of raving men in profile, with strained eyes, open mouths and working beards; and one of them was the man who had shown, when asked, that he did not understand this demonstration.

The man in scarlet finally shrugged his shoulders. He had suddenly evolved an explanation—the blood of a fellow man. He turned away, not because he had revolted—he had seen too many spectacles in the Circus in Rome—but because he was disinclined to stand till he had learned the particulars of the uproar. A gnarly hummock, white, harsh and dry, as if it were a heap of

disintegrated ashes, rose several rods away on the brink of Kedron. He mounted it and sat. Yes; he would wait, also, till he saw the Essene again, who, he was sure, had been buried in the ring. It would be unkind to himself to permit a chance for a loan to pass untried.

The tumult continued many minutes before he noticed abatement in the forward ranks. Movement which had been general throughout the interval increased at times, but the mob showed no signs of dispersing.

The western slope of Olivet was now in its own shadow, its ravines already purpling with night. Only the glory on the summit of Moriah blazed with undiminished fire, as the gold of the gates gave back the gold of the sunset.

Presently a number of men, dressed alike in priestly robes, hurried back through Hanaleel into the city. Hardly had they disappeared before the gate gave up a number of radiant shapes in a column, which broke suddenly and flung itself upon the great raving circle. The flash of armor and the glitter of swords were suddenly interjected into a demoralized eddy of stampeded hundreds. Another sort of clamor arose, no less voluminous, no less fervid, but it was a howl of panic and protest against the methods of Vitellius' legionaries sent to disperse a crowd.

A solid core of fugitives drove through the gate beside Hanaleel and the Sheep Gate; fragments, detachments and individuals rolled down the banks into Kedron; screaming, tumbling, falling bodies fled north and south by the roadway and wherever there was a gate or a niche or a crevice it received fugitives who appeared no more. Dust arose and obscured everything but the flash of arms and armor which rived through it like lightning in a cloud. The uproar began to subside, and presently the laughter and jests of the soldiers mounted above the protest. Fainter and fainter the cries grew, fewer the sounds of flying feet, and at last, strong, harsh and biting as the clang of a sledge upon metal, the command of the centurion to fall in settled even the shouts of the soldiers.

There was the even, musical ring of whetting armor as the column filed back through Hanaleel, and silence. The man in scarlet, who had sat on his ash-heap and smiled throughout the dispersing of the mob, a royal creature enthroned and entertained by the discomfiture of the mass, suddenly realized that the obscurity, which he had expected to lift, was the shadow of night. He arose and, dusting off his scarlet skirt, moved out into the road.

At that moment, a figure moving nearer the wall passed him, walking swiftly. It was the Essene.

"Ho! a discreet youth! a cautious youth!" the man in scarlet said to himself; "profiting by experience, he waited in safety somewhere until this light-fingered rabble was dispersed. That must be a fat purse, a fat purse! And I am looking for such!"

He quickened his pace to overtake the young man and in his interest forgot the late riot. Suddenly the young Essene stopped as if he had been commanded. The man in scarlet brought up and looked.

Before them was an immense trampled dusty ring. In the falling twilight, he saw several huddled shapes, in attitudes of suffering and sorrow, kneeling together in its center over something which was stretched on the sand.

A strangling gasp attracted the older man's attention once more to the Essene. His figure seemed to shrink, his cheeks fell in. Swiftly about his lips crawled the gray pallor of one physically sick from shock to the senses. His eyes flared wide and the next instant he flew at the mourning cluster about the prostrate shape in the ring. One or two fell back under his hand, and he leaned over and looked.

A cry, heartrending in its agony, broke from his lips. He dropped to his knees and fell forward with his face in the dust. A murmur of compassion arose from the little group around him, and the man in scarlet lifted his shoulders and turned his back on the blighting spectacle of the young man's anguish.

He walked hurriedly out of the falling night on the Mount, through Hanaleel, into the lights and noise of the City of David. Soldiers on the point of closing the great gate paused to let him through.

"Comrade," he said to one, "what did they out yonder?"

"They stoned a Nazarene named Stephen," was the reply.



“They stoned a Nazarene named Stephen”

Page 39

"They stoned a Nazarene named Stephen"

CHAPTER IV

THE BANKRUPT

Somewhat subdued, the man in scarlet walked through the night in the City of David. After his first sensations he was discomfited.

"Now this is what comes of the irregular barbarity in Judean executions," he ruminated. "In Rome this Nazarene would have been despatched in order and his body borne away to the puticuli and no opportunity given for that painful scene outside. Doubtless I should have convinced the young man and borrowed his gold of him, by this time. Certainly, Fortune is a haughty jade when once offended. But I shall be fortunate again; by all the gods, Jewish or Gentile, I will compel her smiles!

"It would be my luck never to see him again; he will probably linger only to see this dead man buried, and go on to En-Gadi, as he said he would. It would hardly be seemly to approach him about his gold, in his unhappiness, or I would waylay him, yet. A pest on the zealots! Why did they not hold off this stoning for a day?"

Moodily occupied by his thoughts, he passed unconscious of the careless people about him. The huge tower of Antonia set on the brink of Mount Moriah frowned blackly over the street and in its shadow the idle life of the night laughed and reveled and sauntered. The woman of the city was there, the Roman soldier in armor, the alien that bowed to Brahm or Bel, the son of the slow Nile, of the Orontes and of the yellow Tiber. It was not the resort of the lowest classes, but of those that were at variance with the spirit of the city, or the times and their philosophies. Light streamed from open doorways, the wail of lyres and the jingle of castanets resounded within and without. Now and then belated carters, driving slow donkeys, would plod through the revelry—a note of relentless duty which would not be forgotten. Again, humbler folk would retreat into wagon-ways or hug the walls to permit the passage of a Sadducee and his retinue, or a decurion and his squad—rank and power asserting their inexorable prerogative.

Presently there approached the click of hoofs upon flagging. A soldier, passing through a broad shaft of light from a booth, stopped short, drew himself up and swung his short sword at present. Up the street, from lip to lip of every arms-bearing man, ran his abrupt call to attention.

A body of legionaries appeared suddenly in the ray of light—brassy shapes in burnished armor, picked for stature and bearing. Not even the plunge into blackness again broke the precision and confidence of that tread before which the world had fled as did now the mule-riders and the pedestrians of Jerusalem.

After them, the beam of light projected two horsemen into sudden view. There was the rattle and ring of saluting soldiers by the way. The radiance showed up a typical Roman in the armor of a general, but in deference to Israelitish prejudice against images, the eagle was removed from his helmet, the bosses of Titan heads from breastplate and harness. This was Vitellius, Proconsul of Syria and the shrewdest general on Cæsar's list. By his side rode Herrenius Capito, Cæsar's debt-collector, a thin-faced Roman in civilian dress, and with the ashes of age sprinkled on his hair.

The man in scarlet took one glance at the gray old countenance frowning under the sudden light of the lamp and slid into the obscurity of an open alley at hand. He did not emerge till the hoof-beats had died away.

"So thou comest in search of me, sweet Capito," he muttered, "and I am penniless. But it is comforting to know that thou hast no more hope of getting the three hundred thousand drachmæ which I owe to Cæsar, than I have of paying it!"

After a little silence, he said further to himself, with added regret:

"Now, had I that young Essene's gold, Capito would not find me in Jerusalem! O Alexandria! I must reach thee, though I turn dolphin and swim!"

He continued on his way to the north wall, where he found exit presently into Bezetha, the unwall'd suburb of Jerusalem. Here the houses were comparatively new, less historic, less pretentious than those in the old city. Here were inns in plenty, relaxed order and a general absence of the racial characteristics and the influence of religion. The middle classes of Jerusalem dwelt here.

It was dark, poorly paved, and the man in scarlet laid his hand on his purse under his tunic and walked with circumspection toward a khan. It was no surprise to him to hear the sounds of struggle and outcry. He stopped to catch the direction of the conflict that he might avoid it. It came out of a street so narrow, in a district so squalid, that happiness seemed to have fled the spot. If ever the wealthy entered the place, it was to seek out human beings hungry enough to sell themselves as slaves.

The commotion centered before a hovel, a tragedy in sounds, ghastly because the night made it unembodied. The man in scarlet located it as out of his path and would have continued but for the insistent screams of a woman in the struggle. Harsh shouts attempted to cry her down, but desperation lent her strength and the suburb shuddered with her mad cries.

The man in scarlet lagged, shook his shoulders as if to throw off the influence of the appeal and finally stopped. At that moment several torches of pitch, lighted at once, threw a smoky light over the scene. The passage was obstructed by a group of men uniformly dressed, and several spectators attracted by the commotion. Assured that this was arrest and not violence, the curiosity of the man in scarlet drew him that way. At a nearer view, he saw that the aggressors were Shoterim or Temple lictors, under command of a Pharisee wearing the habiliments of a rabbi. The man in scarlet identified him as the referee in the center of the ring about the stoning. The sudden lighting of the torches convinced him that the attack had its inception in secret.

In the center of the fight was a middle-aged woman clinging desperately about the bodies of a young man and a young woman. It was the efforts of the Shoterim to tear her away and her resistance that had made the arrest violent.

Shouts and revilings told the man in scarlet the meaning of the disturbance. The ferrets of the High Priest, Jonathan, had discovered a house of Nazarenes and were taking them.

"More ill-timed zeal!" he muttered to himself. "Or let me be exact: more bloody politics!"

He had turned to leave when a figure in white, directed from the city, drove past him and through to the center of the crowd, with the irresistible force of a hurled stone. Spectators fell to the right and left before it and the man in scarlet drawing in a breath of amazement turned to see what the light had to disclose.

It was the young Essene, hardly recognizable for the distortion of deadly hate and passion on his face. There were dark stains on his garments and dust on his black hair. Every drop of blood had left his cheeks, but his eyes blazed with a light that was not good to see.

He went straight at the Pharisee. His grasp fell upon Saul's shoulder, drove in and seized upon its sinews. The startled Tarsian turned and the young Essene with bent head gazed grimly down at him. An interested silence fell over both captor and captive. The blaze in the young man's eyes reddened and flickered.

"I have been seeking thee, Saul of Tarsus," he said in a voice of deadly silkiness. "Thou hast been most zealous for the Law in Stephen's case. Look to it that thou fail not in the Law, for I shall profit by thy precept! And even as Stephen fell, so shalt thou fall; even as Stephen came unto death, so shalt thou come! Mark me, and remember!"

The words were menace made audible; it was more than a threat: it was prophecy and doom.

A tingle of admiration ran over the man in scarlet. He who could leave the bier of a murdered friend to visit vengeance on the head of the murderer was no weakling.

"A Roman, by the gods!" he exclaimed to himself. "A noble adversary! a man, by Bacchus!"

A threatening murmur arose from the spectators. But there was no responsive fury kindled in Saul's eyes. Instead he looked at Marsyas with unutterable sorrow on his face. Presently his shoulders lifted with a sigh.

"The city festereth with Nazarenes as a wound with thorns," he said to himself; aloud he called, "Joel."

The Levite materialized out of obscurity and bowed jerkily.

"Bear witness to this young man's behavior. Lictors, take him. We shall hold him for examination as a Nazarene and an apostate."

Marsyas started and his hand dropped. Plainly, he had not expected to be accused of apostasy. But the old mood asserted itself.

"This for thy slander of Stephen in the college," he said with premonitory calm when the Levite approached him, and struck with terrific force. The Levite's body shot backward and dropped

heavily on the earth. The rest of the lictors precipitated themselves upon the young man, and, in desperation and in fury, the one man and the numbers fought.

Meanwhile the man in scarlet thought fast. His Roman love of defiance and war had roused in him a most compelling respect for the young Essene, but cupidity put forth swift and convincing argument even beyond the indorsement of admiration. If the Shoterim took the young man in ward, he would be executed and the treasure come into the hands of the state for disposition. In view of the fact that Herrenius Capito had traced the bankrupt to Jerusalem, Jerusalem was no longer tenatable for the bankrupt. He had to have money to escape to Alexandria and the Essene was too profitable a chance to be lost to the murdering hands of fanatics.

Excited and bent only on preventing the arrest, the man sprang into the crowd and forced his way to the Essene's side. But the next instant he also was sent reeling by a blow delivered by Marsyas in his blind resolution not to be taken without difficulty. Before the bankrupt could recover, the united force of spectators and lictors flung itself upon Marsyas.

Steadying himself, the man in scarlet urged his bruised brain to think. Half of his life for a ruse! for nothing but a ruse could save the young man, now.

Then, with a half-suppressed cry of eagerness, the bankrupt took to his heels and ran toward the city as only an Arab trained in Roman gymnasia could run.

The sentry at the gate passed him and he entered on the marble pavements of the streets for the finest exhibition of speed he had shown since he had carried off the laurel in Rome. He knew the city as a hare knows its runways. He cut through private passages, circled watchful constabulary, eluded congestions, and took the quick slopes of Jerusalem's hills as though the deep lungs of a youth supplied him.

When the broad, marble-paved street, which let in some glimpse of the starry sky upon the passer, opened between the rich residences of the Sadducees, the white luster of many burning torches lighted an area on a distant slope at its head. The running man sped on, taking the rise of Mount Zion without slackening, until he rushed upon a sentry obscured under the brooding shadow of a heavy wall.

"Halt!" The challenge of the sentry brought him up.

"Without the password, comrade," he panted. "Call the officer of the guard. And by our common quarrels in Rome do thou haste, for if I see not Vitellius and Herrenius Capito this instant I expire!"

The cry of the sentry passed from post to post until the centurion of the guard emerged from a small gate.

"One cometh without the countersign," the sentry said.

"A visitor for Vitellius and Herrenius Capito," the bankrupt explained.

"The general and his guest have retired," was the blunt reply.

"Hip! but thou art the same glib liar thou always wast, Aulus," the bankrupt laughed. "Take me into the light, and slap me with thy sword if I am frank beyond the privileges of mine acquaintance with thee!"

The gate-keeper, in response to a short word from the dubious Aulus, let down the chains with a rattle and a small side portal swung in, revealing an interior of semi-dusk.

The centurion conducted his visitor within. Torches stuck in sconces high up in the walls lighted a quadrangle of tessellated pavement, terminating distantly in banks of marble stairs of such breadth and stature that their limits were lost in the unilluminated night.

After a quick glance, the centurion started and slapped his helmet in salute to the bankrupt. The other responded with a skill and grace that could not have been assumed for the moment. The dexterity of the camp was written in the movement.

"I am expected of Capito," the bankrupt said, which was true only in a very limited sense.

"I know, and do thou follow. Thou shalt see him. Were he dead and inurned he would arise to thee."

The man in scarlet smiled a little grimly and followed his conductor out of the light up the marble heights of stairs duly set with sentinels, to a porch that even the Royal Colonnade of the Temple could not shame. A huge cresset with a jeweled hood, depending from a groining so high that its light was feeble, showed dimly the giant compound arch of the portal. An orderly, a veritable pygmy within the outline of the dark entrance, appeared and saluted.

"A visitor for the proconsul and his guest," the centurion said, passing the man in scarlet to the orderly.

He was led through a valve groaning on its granite hinges into the vestibule of Herod the Great's palace.

It was a lofty hall, nobly vaulted, lined with costly Indian onyx and florid with pagan friezes, arabesques and frescoes. Yet, though its jeweled lamps were dark and cold, its fountains still, its hangings and its carpets gone, its bloody genius held despotic sway from a shadowy throne, over the note of brute force which the Roman garrison had infused into it.

At the far end was a small carven table at which two Romans sat, a lamp and a crater of wine at their elbows, the tesserae of a dice-game between them.

Without waiting for the orderly to speak, the man in scarlet stepped forward.

"Greeting, Vitellius. Capito, I salute you," he said. His voice was that of a composed man speaking with equals.

Vitellius turned his head toward the speaker; Capito drew up his lids and his lower jaw relaxed. Slowly then both men got upon their feet.

"By the bats of Hades—" Vitellius began.

"By the nymphs of Delphi!" Capito's aged falsetto broke in. "It is the Herod himself!"

"Herod Agrippa!" Vitellius exclaimed.

"From the faces of you," Agrippa declared, "I might have been the shade of my grandsire. But I have been hunting you. I need help. And as thou hopest to return three hundred thousand drachmæ to Cæsar from my purse, do thou aid me in urging Vitellius to yield it, Capito."

"Help," Capito repeated.

"What manner of help?" Vitellius demanded, fixing Agrippa with a suspicious eye.

"Arrest me an Essene from the hands of Jonathan."

"Jonathan!" the proconsul exclaimed darkly.

"The High Priest, the Nasi, thy sweet and valued friend!" the Agrippa explained with amiable provoke. "He has arrested an Essene on a trifling charge of apostasy and he is my voucher before the Essenic brotherhood for a loan to repay Cæsar. I left him in the hands of the Shoterim, in Bezetha. If he be not speedily rescued, they will stone him without the walls to-morrow and my debt to Cæsar—" he drew up his shoulders and spread out his hands in a gesture highly Jewish.

Capito frowned and Vitellius glowered under his grizzled brow at Agrippa.

"It is one to me," Agrippa continued coolly, as he noted signs of dissent in the contemplation. "I am just as happy and as like to escape Cæsar's displeasure by failing to pay it, as thou wilt be, Capito, if thou failest to collect it."

Capito nervously fingered the tesseræ at his hand.

"Meanwhile," added the Herod, perching himself on the edge of the table, "the youth proceeds to Jonathan's stronghold."

Vitellius looked at Cæsar's debt-collector. "Dost thou see anything more in this than appears on the face of it?" he asked.

Capito scratched his white head. He had learned to look for ulterior motives in every move of this slippery Herod, but he was too little informed in the matter to see more than the surface.

"We—can look into it, first," he opined.

"Jonathan will not await your pleasure," Agrippa put in. "He is hurried now with the responsibility of executing enough blasphemers to save himself popular favor. The Sanhedrim may sit to-morrow, the prisoner come for trial and be executed—even more expeditiously because the Nasi expects thee to interfere, Vitellius."

The proconsul bit through an expletive. Jonathan was a thorn in his side.

"What is it you wish me to do?" he demanded.

"Arrest me this youth. The claim of the proconsul's charge will take precedence over the hieratic."

"But he has not offended—"

"Save the protest; he has; he struck me, a Roman citizen. But draw up the warrant, good Vitellius, and send a centurion after the young man. Thou canst make no error by so doing and thou canst save Capito the favor of his emperor."

Vitellius summoned a clerk and while the warrant for Marsyas' arrest was written, despatched an orderly for an officer. One of the contubernalis to Vitellius, or one of the sons of a noble family serving his apprenticeship in warfare, appeared.

"Take four," Vitellius said grimly, in compliance with Herod's demand, when the young centurion approached, "and go with this man. Arrest by superior claim the High Priest's prisoner, who shall be pointed out. Fetch him and this man back to me!"

The young centurion saluted and Agrippa assented with a nod.

"Thanks," he added nonchalantly. "Come, brother," he said to the young officer, "if we be late it may take the whole machinery of Rome to undo the work of Jonathan."

Agrippa and the Roman legionaries passed out of the Prætorium and turned directly up the slanting street toward the palace of Jonathan, which stood a little above the camp.

The Herod had lost little time and the progress of the arresting party toward the stronghold would not have been rapid with the resistance of Marsyas and the friends of the Nazarenes to retard the movement. After a quick walk of a short distance, the Roman group came upon the Temple's emissaries, entering from an intersecting street.

Saul and Joel walked a little ahead of the broken-spirited prisoners who were centered in a group of armed lictors and a hooting escort of half a hundred vagrants. The flaring torch-light shone down on bowed heads and disordered garments, and showed fugitive glints of manacles and knives.

Among them, unbroken and silent, was Marsyas, heavily shackled. He was marked with blows, but several besides the Levite Joel staggered as they walked, and Agrippa, lifting himself on tiptoe to point out his prisoner to the centurion, eyed the young man with approval.

The officer nodded abruptly and broke through the crowd. The light dropping on his shining armor instantly displayed his authority to halt the group. His command to stop elicited almost precipitate obedience. The hooting vagrants scattered.

The centurion laid his hand on Marsyas' shoulder.

"Thou art a prisoner of the proconsul," he said.

The halt and the dismayed silence caught Saul's attention. He turned back and pushed his way into the center of the circle.

"Unhand him," he said to the centurion. "He is wanted of the Sanhedrim."

The young officer smiled derisively and thrust off the hold of the apprehensive lictors. The four made way through the crowd and the officer passed Marsyas into their hands.

"Make my excuses to the Sanhedrim," the officer said sarcastically. The Pharisee glanced over the Roman's party. Then he stepped without ostentation in the centurion's way—a weak, small figure in fringes and phylactery, living up to his nature as he fronted brassy Rome.

"Show me thy warrant," he said quietly.

The centurion drew forth the parchment and flourished it. Saul took it with a murmured courtesy, and, holding it near a torch, read it carefully. Then he passed it back.

"After the proconsul hath done with this young man," he observed, "the Sanhedrim will claim him. Say this much to the proconsul. We shall wait. Peace!"

He motioned his party to proceed and the crowd moved on, leaving Marsyas in the hands of new captors.

"Back to the Prætorium," the centurion said to Agrippa.

CHAPTER V

AGRIPPA IN REPERTOIRE

On the way two dark figures emerged from the shadows and halted to let the soldiers pass. Agrippa peered at them intently through the gloom, and raising his arm made a peculiar gesture. Both figures approached immediately.

"Do thou fetch my civilian's dress, Silas, to the gate of the Prætorium to-morrow, early, and my umber toga broidered with silver. And thou, Eutychus, prepare our belongings so thou canst carry them and bring them also that we may proceed at once to En-Gadi. I remain at the Prætorium to-night. Be gone and fail not!"

The two men bowed and disappeared.

When the party reëntered the gates of the camp, Herod's vestibule was dark. The prisoner and Agrippa were led to the barracks and turned into a cubiculum, or sleeping-chamber. One of the four was manacled to Marsyas and the bolts shot upon them.

The soldier immediately stretched himself on the straw and, bidding the others hold their peace, fell asleep promptly.

After a long time, when the sounds from the pallet assured Agrippa that the soldier could not be easily aroused, he arose and came over to the side of the young Essene.

The torch-light for the officer of the guard, flaring on the wall without, shone through the high ventilation niche in the cell and cast a faint illumination over the dusky interior. Under the half-light the face of Marsyas looked fallen and lifeless,—his dark hair in disorder on his forehead, his shadowed eyes and slight black beard making for the increase of pallor by contrast. Agrippa looked at him a moment before the young man had noticed his approach.

"The medicine for thy hurts, young brother," he said to himself, "is only one—the comforting arms of a woman. I have had experience; I know! But if thou art an Essene that comfort is denied thee. Now, I wonder what demon-ridden Jew it was who first thought of an order of celibates!"

He drew closer and the somber eyes of the young man lighted upon him.

"So thou dost not sleep," Agrippa said in Hebrew. Marsyas' face showed a little surprise at the choice of tongue, but he answered in the same language.

"Why am I here?" he asked.

"Better here than there," Agrippa responded under his breath, indicating the direction of Jonathan's stronghold.

"Listen," he continued, "and may Morpheus plug this soldier's ears if he knows our fathers' ancient tongue. Canst see my face, brother?"

Marsyas signed his assent.

"Thou sayest thou art a Galilean," Agrippa pursued. "Look now and see if thou discoverest aught familiar in me."

Marsyas raised himself on an elbow and gazed into the Herod's face. Finally he said slowly:

"I have seen thee in Tiberias—in power—as—as prefect! Thou art Herod Agrippa!"

There was silence; the Essene's eyes filled with question and the Herod gave him time to think.

"I had thee arrested," Agrippa resumed when he believed that Marsyas' ideas had reached the point of asking what the Herod had to do with him. "To-morrow thou wilt be fined for striking me and turned loose—to Jonathan—unless thou art helped to escape."

"I understand," said Marsyas with growing light, but without enthusiasm.

"Thou seest I am virtually a prisoner here. I became so, to save thee from Jonathan."

"For me! Thou becamest a prisoner to save me?" Marsyas repeated, astounded.

"Because I need thee as much as thou needest me," was the frank admission.

"What can I do for thee that thou shouldst need me?" Marsyas asked softly, but still wondering.

"Hast—hast thou ever lacked friends so wholly that thou wast willing to purchase one?" Agrippa asked.

"I am thy grateful servant; yet I am an Essene, poor, persecuted, homeless, hungry and heartbroken. What wilt thou have of me?"

In that was more earnestness than blandishment, more appeal than offering. The young man published his helplessness and asked after the other's use of him. Agrippa was silent; after a pause Marsyas put out his hand and lifting the hem of the pagan tunic pressed it to his lips. The act could not fail to reach to the innermost of the Herod's heart. His head dropped suddenly into his hands, and the young Essene's touch rested lightly on his shoulder.

Finally Agrippa raised his head.

"Dost thou know my history, brother?" he asked.

"From the lips of others, yes; but let me hear thee."

"Thou art a just youth; nothing so outrages a slandered man as to pen his defense within his lips. Hear me, then. To be a Herod once meant to be beloved by the Cæsars. In my early childhood, after the death of my young father, I was taken to Rome by my mother and reared among princes and the sons of consuls. Best of all my friends was Drusus, Cæsar's gallant son, and we studied

together, raced and gambled and feasted together, loved and hated—and fought together, and never was there a difference between us except in purse!

"While he lived, I lived as he lived, but when he died his sire drove me out of Rome because I had been the living Drusus' shadow and it stung the father that the shadow should live while the sweet substance perished.

"When Drusus died my living died with him, and when I took ship at Puteoli for Palestine I owed three hundred thousand drachmæ to Cæsar and forty tradesmen barked about my heels.

"I had a ruined castle in Idumea. I forgot that I owned it till I was in actual want of shelter. Thither I went. But I was a young man, hopeless, and young hopelessness is harder than the hopelessness of age. I should have put an end to myself, but Cypros, my princess, prevented me by the gentle force of her love and devotion.

"She could not have balked me more thoroughly had she tied me hand and foot. I railed, but while I railed she wrote and sent a messenger, and in a little time an answer came. It was from my brother-in-law, Herod Antipas, who is tetrarch of Galilee. Cypros had besought him to help us. He wrote courteously, or else his scribe, for it is hard to reconcile that letter with the man I met, and begged me come and be his prefect over Tiberias. I went."

The prince paused and when he went on thereafter it seemed as if his account were expurgated.

"At Tyre before an hundred nobles assembled at a feast he twitted me with my poverty and boasted his charity. I tore off the prefect's badge and flung it in his face. And that same night I took the road to Antioch, my princess with me, a babe on either arm.

"The proconsul of Antioch took us in, but there was treachery against me afoot in his household, and I lost his friendship through it. His was my last refuge under roof of mine own rank. I heard recently that Alexander Lysimachus, Alabarch of Alexandria, was in Jerusalem, presenting a Gate to the Temple, and sending my wife and children to Ptolemais, I hastened hither to get a loan of him. But he had departed some days before I came. So here am I as a player of dice to win me money enough to take me back to Ptolemais. But Herrenius Capito, Cæsar's debt-collector, hath found me out."

He looked down at Marsyas' interested face.

"Let me be truthful," he corrected. "I found him. I could have flown him successfully, but for thy close straits. All that would save thee would be the interference of Rome, and I could command it at sacrifice."

Public version of Agrippa's story had enlarged much on certain phases of his adventures which he had curtailed, and these minutiae had not been to Herod's credit. Yet, though Marsyas knew of these things, his heart stirred with great pity. His was that large nature which turns to the unfortunate whether or not his misfortune be merited. It seemed to him that the prince's fall had

been too hapless for comment. But the word here and there, which suggested the prince's intercession in his behalf, stirred him.

"How shall I make back to thee thy effort in my behalf?" he asked earnestly. "Thou sayest that thou needest me; what can I do?"

"First let me know of thyself."

Marsyas relinquished his thought on Agrippa to turn painfully to his own story.

"I am Marsyas, son of Matthew, of Nazareth. He was a zealot who fought beside Judas of Galilee. I was born after his death, and at my birth my mother died, and being the last of their line, I am, and have been all my life alone. I was taken in mine infancy by the Essenic master of the school in Nazareth and reared to be an Essene. But I developed a certain aptness for learning and in later youth a certain aptness for teaching, and my master by the consent of the order, whose ward I was, designed me for the scholar-class of Essenes, which do not reside in En-Gadi but without in the world. The vows of the order were not laid upon me; they are reserved for the sober and understanding years when my instruction should be completed."

Agrippa frowned. "Art thou not a member of the brotherhood, then?" he asked.

"No, I am a neophyte, a postulant."

The Herod ran his fingers through his hair, and Marsyas went on.

"I had two friends, both older than I. One was Saul of Tarsus; one, Stephen of Galilee. Neither knew the other. Stephen was born an Hellenist, and until the coming of his Prophet, a good Jew. But when Jesus arose in Nazareth, Stephen followed Him, and, after the Nazarene was put away, he remained here in Jerusalem. When I came hither to complete mine instruction in the college, I found the synagogue aroused against him.

"Chief among the zealous in behalf of the Law is Saul of Tarsus. Him I most feared, when the rumors of Stephen's apostasy spread abroad. An evil messenger finally set Saul upon Stephen, and I pleaded with him to spare Stephen, until I could win him back to the faith. But Saul would not hear me.

"I meant to give over mine ambition to become a scholar and take Stephen into the refuge of En-Gadi—"

He stopped for control and continued presently with difficulty.

"But when I returned from Nazareth, whither I had gone to get my patrimony which the Essene master held in ward, his enemies stoned him before mine eyes!"

Stephen's death and not his own peril was the climax of his story and he ceased because his heart began to shrink under its pain.

"And this Saul of Tarsus, whom I heard you threaten over in Bezetha, mistaking your natural grief and hunger for vengeance as signs of apostasy, would stone you also," Agrippa remarked, filling in the rest of the narrative from surmise. Marsyas assented; it hurt him as much to think on Saul as it did to remember that Stephen was dead.

"It was doubtless his intent."

"Implacable enough to be Cæsar! And thou art not a member of the Essenic order—only a neophyte. That is disconcerting. Hast thou any influence with the brethren?"

"None whatever."

Perplexity sat dark on the Herod's brow. Marsyas, with his eyes on the prince's face, observed it.

"Can I not help thee?" he asked anxiously.

"I thought once that thou couldst; but thou sayest that thou hast no power with the Essenes. Now, I do not know."

"What is it thou wouldst have had me do?"

"I have said that I owe three hundred thousand drachmæ to Cæsar. Unless I discharge it, under the Roman law I can be required to become the slave of my creditor. That I might secure intercession in thy behalf, I had to promise Capito and Vitellius that thou couldst help me to repay this sum."

"I!" Marsyas cried, sitting up.

The legionary stirred and Agrippa laid a warning finger on his lip. The two sat silent until the sleeper fell again into total unconsciousness.

"Three hundred thousand drachmæ!" Marsyas repeated. "I, to get that!"

"I knew that the Essenic brotherhood have a common treasury and that they are believed to be rich. I thought that thou couldst persuade them to lend me the sum."

Marsyas shook his head. "They are poor, poor! Their fund is not contributed in great bulk, and the little they own must be expended in hospitality and in maintaining themselves. Their treasury would be enriched by the little I bring."

"O Fortune!" Agrippa groaned aloud. "I am undone and so art thou!"

Marsyas lapsed into thought, while the Herod looked at the solid door that stood between him and liberty. He had set the subject aside as profitless and was a little irritated when Marsyas spoke again.

"What hopes hast thou in Alexandria?"

"The alabarch, Alexander Lysimachus, is my friend. He is rich; I could borrow of him."

"Take thou my gold and go thither," Marsyas offered at once.

"It is not so easy as it sounds, for the sound of it is most generous and kindly. How am I to get out of Capito's clutches, here?"

Marsyas gazed straight at Agrippa with the set eyes of one plunged into deep speculation. Then he leaned toward the prince.

"Will this gold in all truth help thee to borrow more in Alexandria?"

"I know it!"

"And then what?"

"To Rome! To imperial favor! To suzerainty over Judea!"

Marsyas laid hold on the prince's arm.

"Thou art a Herod," he said intensely. "Ambition natively should be the very breath of thy nostrils. Yet swear to me that thou wilt aspire—aye, even desperately as thy grandsire! Swear to me that thou wilt not be content to be less than a king!"

At another time, Agrippa might have found amusement in the young man's earnestness, but the cause was now his own.

"Thou tongue of my desires!" he exclaimed. "I have sworn! Being a Herod, mine oaths are not idle. I have sworn!"

"Then, let us bargain together," Marsyas said rapidly. "I have told thee my story: thou heardest my vow to-night! For my fealty, yield me thy word! As I help thee into power, help me to revenge! Promise!"

"Promise! By the beard of Abraham, I will conquer or kill anything thou markest; yield thee my last crust, and carry thee upon my back, so thou help me to Alexandria!"

"Swear it!"

Agrippa raised his right hand and swore.

The legionary roused and growled at the two to be quiet. Marsyas fell back on the straw and lay still. Agrippa made signs and urged for more discussion, but the Essene, masterful in his silence,

refused to speak. Presently the Herod lay down and slept from sheer inability to engage his mind to profit otherwise.

A little after dawn the following morning, the Essene and the Herod were conducted into the vestibule of Herod the Great, for a hearing before Vitellius and Herrenius Capito. But Marsyas' offense against a Roman citizen was held in abeyance; it was Agrippa's debt to Cæsar which engaged the attention of the judges.

Vitellius was in a precarious temper and Capito looked as grim as querulous old age may. Agrippa's nonchalance was only a surface air overlaying doubts and no little trepidation. But Marsyas, white and sternly intent, was the most resolute of the four.

Capito stirred in his chair and prepared to speak, but Vitellius cut in with a point-blank demand on the young Essene.

"Dost thou know this man?" he asked, indicating Agrippa.

"I do, lord," Marsyas answered, turning his somber eyes on the legate.

"He owes three hundred thousand drachmæ to Cæsar; he says that thou canst help him pay it; is it so?"

"It is, lord."

Agrippa's eyes were perfectly steady; it would not do to show amazement now.

"How?" was the next demand flung at the Essene.

"I can place him in the way of certain wealth," was the assured reply.

"How?"

"The noble Roman's pardon, but there are certain things an Essene may not divulge."

Agrippa's well-bred brows lifted. Was this evader and collected schemer the innocent Essene he had met on the slopes of Olivet the previous evening?

"Answer! Dost thou promise to provide the Herod with three hundred thousand drachmæ which shall be paid unto Cæsar's treasury?"

"I promise to place the prince where he will provide himself with three hundred thousand drachmæ. If he pay it not unto Cæsar, the fault shall be his, not mine."

"Will the Essenes do it?"

"It shall be done," Marsyas replied, his composure unshaken by the menace implied in the questioning.

"Capito, what thinkest thou?" Vitellius demanded.

The old collector shuffled his slippered feet, and his antique treble took on an argumentative tone.

"Cæsar wants his money, not a slave; I want the emperor's commendation, not his blame. But let us bind this young Jew to this."

Vitellius motioned to an orderly. "Send hither a notary; and let us take down this Jew's promise. Now, Herod, speak up. There are no rules of an order to bind you. Where shall you get this money?"

"Of two sources," Agrippa declared, unblushing. "From the young man himself and from the Essenes."

"If you had so many moneyers, why have you not paid your debt long ago?"

"I had not the indorsement of this young Essenic doctor to validate my note, O Vitellius," the Herod responded with equanimity.

The two Romans frowned; the clerk finished his transcription.

"Sign!" Vitellius ordered Marsyas threateningly.

Marsyas calmly wrote his name in Greek under the voucher. After him Agrippa signed the document.

"Now, listen," Vitellius began conclusively. "I believe neither of you. But for the fact that Cæsar would be burdened with a useless chattel I should let Capito foreclose upon you, Agrippa. But there is a chance that this rigid youth may be telling the truth; if he is not—" the legate closed his thin lips and let the menace of his hard eyes complete the sentence. Marsyas contemplated him, unmoved, undismayed, no less inflexible and determined.

"The punishment for his offense against you, Agrippa, is remitted. Get you gone. Capito! Follow them!"

Totally undisturbed by this sudden entanglement in a supposedly clear skein, Agrippa waved his hand and smiled.

"Many thanks, Vitellius," he said. "Would I could get my debts paid if only to deserve thy respect once more. But thy hospitality must be a little longer strained. The wolves of Jonathan wait without to lay hands on this young man. He must be passed the gates in disguise. I provided for that last night. Admit my servants, I pray thee."

"Have your way, Herod, and fortune go with you, curse you for a winsome knave," Vitellius growled.

Agrippa laughed, but there was no laughter in his eyes.

The two were led through a second hall instinct with barbaric splendors, to a small apartment where they were presently attended by two servants.

One was a slow, stolid Jew of middle-age, with stubbornness and honesty the chief characteristics of his face. The other would have won more interest from the casual observer. He was young, well-formed, but of uncertain nationality. His head was like a cocoanut set on its smaller end, and covered with thick, stiff, lusterless black hair, cut close and growing in a rounded point on his forehead. One eye was smaller than the other and the lid drooped. The fault might have given him a roguish look but for the ill-natured cut of his mouth. Both wore the brown garments of the serving-class.

When Agrippa and Marsyas stood up from the ministrations of these two, they were fit figures for a procession of patricians on the Palatine Hill. Marsyas' soiled white garments had been put off for a tunic and mantle of fine umber wool, embroidered with silver. A tallith of silk of the same color was bound with a silver cord about his forehead. Agrippa's garments were only a short white tunic of extraordinary fineness belted with woven gold, and a toga of white, edged with purple. But the prince examined Marsyas with an interested eye.

"By Kypris!" he said aloud, "and thou art to entomb thyself in En-Gadi!"

But Marsyas did not understand.

Capito awaited them when they emerged, and announced himself ready to proceed. Procedure was to be an elaborate thing. A squad of soldiery had been detailed as escort, and stood prepared in marching order; the collector's personal array of apparitors was assembled; his baggage sent forth to his pack-horses,—himself, duly arrayed after the fashion of a conventional old Roman afraid of color.

Agrippa placed himself beside the collector with an equanimity that was almost disconcerting. The old man signed his apparitors to proceed and followed with his two virtual prisoners.

Through the envelope of grief and rancor, the grave difficulties of his predicament reached Marsyas. Unless he could be rid of the surveillance of Capito, both he and the Herod were in sore straits. But Agrippa's amiable temper presaged something, and Marsyas merged the new distress with the burden of misery which bowed him.

They passed out of the simpler portions of the royal house into the state wing and emerged in the great audience-chamber.

It would have been impossible for a scion of that bloody house to pass for the first time in years through that royal chamber without comment upon it. Agrippa after crossing the threshold slackened his step and his eyes took on the luster of retrospection.

"I remember it," he said in a preoccupied way, "but only as a dream. I went this way when my father and mother fared hence to Rome!"

Capito lagged also, and Marsyas and the men following slackened their steps, until by the time the center of the vast hall was reached they paused as if by one accord.

The hall was an octagonal, faced half its height, or to the floor of its galleries, in banded agate from the Indies; from that point upward the lining was marble panels and frescoes, alternating. The galleries were supported by a series of interlaced oriental arches, rich with tracery and filigree. With these main features as groundwork, the barbaric fancy of Herod the Great threw off all restraint and reveled in magnitude, richness and display. He did not permit Greece, the *arbiter elegantiarum*, to govern his building or his garnishment. He harkened to the Arab in him and made a bacchanal of color; he remembered his one-time poverty and debased the hauteur of gold to the humility of wood and clay and stone. He imaged Life in all its forms and crowded it into mosaics on his pavement, subjected it in the decoration of his scented wood couches, tables, taborets, weighted it with the cornices of his ceilings, the rails of his balustrades, the basins of his fountains—until he seemed to shake his scepter as despot over all the beast kind. He was a hunter, a warrior and a statesman; the instincts of all three had their representation in this, his high place. He was a voluptuary, a tyrant, and a shedder of blood; his audience-chamber told it of him. Thus, though he had crumbled to ashes forty years before, and the efforts of the world to forget him had almost succeeded, he left a portrait behind him that would endure as long as his palace stood.

The light of the Judean sun came in a harlequinade of twenty colors, but, where it fell and was reproduced, Nature had mastered the kaleidoscope and made it a glory. The immense space, peopled with graven images, yet animated with ghostly swaying of hangings, had its own shifting currents of air, drafts that were streaming winds, cool and scented with the aromatic woods of the furniture. The portals were closed, and there was no sound. Sun, wind and silence ennobled Herod's mistakes.

The four stood longer than they knew. Then Agrippa made a little sound, a sudden in-taking of the breath.

"See!" he whispered, laying a hand on Capito's shoulder and pointing with the other. "That statue!"

Following his indication, their eyes rested on the sculptured figure of a woman, cut from Parian marble. It was a drowsy image, the head fallen upon a hand, the lids drooping, the relaxation of all the muscles giving softness and pliability to the pose. So perfect was the work that the marble promised to be yielding to the touch. Some imitator of Phidias had achieved his masterpiece in this. Indeed, at first glance there was startlement for the four. A warm human flush had mantled

the stone, and Marsyas' brows drew together, but he could not obey the old Essenic teaching and drop his eyes.

"A statue?" Capito asked, uncertainly taking his withered chin between thumb and forefinger.

"A statue," Agrippa assured him. "The illumination is from the batement light above. Come nearer!"

He led them to the angle in which the image stood, not more than three paces from the wall.

"It is my grandsire's queen, Mariamne," he continued softly, for ordinary tones awakened ghostly echoes in the haunted hall.

"Murdered Mariamne!" the old man whispered with sudden intensity.

"He loved her, and killed her in the fury of his love. They said that the king was wont to come in the morning when the sun stood there, drive out the attendants so that none might hear, and cling about this fair marble's knees in such agony of passion and remorse and grief that life would desert him. They would come in time to find him there, stretched on the pavement, cold and inert, to all purposes dead! And it was said that these groins here above held echoes of his awful grief after he had been borne away."

Capito shivered.

"What punishment!" he exclaimed.

"Punishment! They who curse Herod's memory could not, if they had their will, visit such torture upon him as he invented for himself!"

But Capito was lost now in contemplation of the statue.

"She was beautiful," he said after a silence.

"Didst ever see her?" Agrippa asked eagerly. The collector's back was turned to the prince, that he might have the advantageous view, and he answered with rapt eyes.

"Once; through an open gate which led into her own garden. So I saw her in the lightest of vestments, for the day was warm and half of her beauty usually hidden was unveiled."

"Well for thee my grandsire never knew," Agrippa put in, leaning against one of the cestophori which guarded a blank panel in the wall.

"He never knew; but I would have died before I would give over the memory of it. She was slight, willowy, with the eyes of an Attic antelope, yet braver and more commanding than any woman-eye that ever bewitched me. Her mouth—Praxiteles would have turned from Lais' lips to hers."

Agrippa's hand slid down the side of the cestophorus and fumbled a little within the edge of the molding.

"Her hair was loose," the old man went on, "the sole drapery of her bosom—a very cloud of night loomed into filaments—"

An inert, moldy breath reached Marsyas. He turned his head. The panel between the cestophori was gone and a square of darkness yawned its miasma into the hall.

The prince made a lightning movement; noiselessly the two servants dived into the blackness; Marsyas followed; after him, the prince.

An eclipsing wall began to slide between them and the hail they had left.

"Her arms were languidly lifted—arms that for whiteness shamed this marble—" the old man was saying as the panel glided back into place and shut them in darkness.

"Ow!" Agrippa whispered in delight, "he tells that story better every year!"

CHAPTER VI

MARSYAS ASSUMES A CHARGE

Agrippa crowded past the three that had preceded him into the black passage and, whispering a command to follow, led on. They kept track of him by the sound of his shoes on the stone, but the absolute darkness and the unfamiliar path made their steps uncertain and slow. Frequently the sure footfall before them receded and in fear of losing their guide they stumbled forward in nervous haste.

Presently the darkness about them lifted; the sensation was not that light had entered in, but that the darkness had simply failed in strength. There was a perceptible increase in temperature and the atmosphere, changing from a chill, became muggy and oppressive. Marsyas, drawing in a full breath in search of freshness, told himself that this was the original air of chaos, penned in at the hour of creation.

The floor under his feet became irregular, the instinctive realization that a roof was imminent overhead, passed, and, when the darkness became sufficiently feeble, they discovered that they were following through an immense chamber. Light came in through air-holes in the rock above.

Agrippa spoke aloud.

"This is a quarry-chamber. It was also my grandsire's secret stronghold, trial-chamber and tomb where many of his private grudges were satisfied. But there are no evidences, now. The place was open to the hill-jackals, by another passage which, if my memory has not failed me, shall lead us out."

One of the servitors, whose teeth had been chattering, made a shuddering sound. Agrippa laughed.

"Thou, Eutychus?" he said. "Comfort thee; the jackals have ceased to haunt the place since their hunger was last satisfied, thirty years ago."

An irregular spot of blackness in one of the walls swallowed up the prince as he spoke. Eutychus halted at the edge and drew back with a whimper. But the second servitor, who had not spoken since Marsyas had first seen him, muttered contemptuously some inarticulate word and pushed Eutychus into the blackness. Marsyas followed.

Thereafter it was only time which ensued. Sound, sight and, except for the stone under their feet, feeling were defeated. They moved interminably. Once or twice Eutychus became hysterical from the depression, but the stolid servitor smote him and bundled him on. Ahead a light laugh floated back to them in appreciation of the humor in Eutychus' predicament.

In time a yellow star with ragged points appeared ahead of them, high above the level upon which they had been walking. Eutychus trembled before it, but Agrippa quickened his steps.

"What a memory I have," he observed cheerfully. "Any other than myself would have been hopelessly entangled in these galleries and perished miserably some days hence."

The star enlarged, lost substantiality and presently Eutychus with a gasp of joy faltered that it was daylight. Several minutes later they emerged through an open tomb into high noon over Judea.

Before their blinded vision, the green hills swimming in sunlight upheaved between them and all points of the horizon. The City of David was nowhere to be seen; the sun stood directly in the zenith. Marsyas was lost; but the prince smiled in immense satisfaction and, seeking a grassy spot, sat down and breathed deeply. Presently he motioned to the others to sit. Marsyas came close to him; the others remained at a respectful distance.

For a long time no one spoke.

At last Agrippa fell to inspecting his delicate hands and his garments for marks of the long journey under the earth, and the embroidered shoes for evidences of contact with jagged rock. Satisfied that he was clean and intact, he laughed a little.

"By the hat of Hermes, this was noble apparel to wear through the bowels of the earth. *Eheu!* I was at my best, and not so much as a she-bat saw me!"

Eutychus, entirely recovered, chuckled, and a grin overspread the face of Silas; but Marsyas was plunged in his own reflections.

"This is the country-side west of Jerusalem," Agrippa resumed presently, for the young Essene's information. "Yonder," pointing north, "the road runs which shall lead us hence. We are an hour's journey by daylight above ground, from the Tower of Hippicus. But we are not beyond the zone of danger yet."

Marsyas did not answer. Reaction had set up within him against the foreign interest which had engaged his attention since sunrise. He had thought of himself and had been concerned for Agrippa; he had planned and had achieved ends. Entanglements straightened, immediate danger passed, the cloud of his sorrow embraced him wholly. He did not want to see that Canaan was beautiful, indeed a land of milk and honey. The wind laden with spring sweets struck a chill in his soul; the singing birds hurt him with a pain greater than he could endure. His heart was bruised, his every sensation sore and weighted with a numb consciousness that a dread thing had happened and that it was useless to pray and hope now. The presence of others was an obstacle, vaguely realized, that kept him from yielding to his desire to lie down on his face and hate everything and give himself up to whatever chose to befall him. Agrippa's hand, presently laid on his shoulder, irritated him. He had to restrain himself to keep from shaking it off. But the prince spoke, and his words were helpful.

"Marsyas, I know thy pain. I, too, had a beloved friend foully murdered, and the agony of helplessness against the power that did him to death sowed ashes on my heart. But the time of the Lord God, slow as it approaches, fell at last. The only bitterness in my cup of fierce triumph was that it was another, and not I, who accomplished, at the end, the undoing of the murderer."

"The Lord God forbend any such misfortune from me!" was the bitter rejoinder. "Vengeance can not be vengeance, if it fall from any hand but mine!"

"Thou speakest truly: be thy requital sweeter than mine!"

It was good to find the reflection of his own hurt in another's experience. It did not lessen his pain; but it gave him expression and the assurance of sympathy. Agrippa continued in his pleasant voice.

"This persecution will cease ere long. It is only Jonathan's device to make him noted as one zealous for the faith. He is much disliked. It is reproach enough for a High Priest to be popular with the Sadducees: it is well-nigh unforgivable to be set up by Rome; it is an insurmountable obstacle to be other than eligible, Levitically; but this man hath been wholly undone by these and an offensive personality. Wherefore the people hate him with a fervor which Vitellius must respect. But Jonathan fancies that if he can make him a name as a defender of the faith, the rabble will applaud, and thou and I and Vitellius and the discerning Jews will achieve no more against him than flies whining about a wall! What folly! How oft we believe a thing to be so, because we wish it to be so! Vitellius does not see how the stoning of blasphemers indorses a man whom he dislikes. So Jonathan's time is short and the persecution will cease with him. His

minion will be discountenanced with the master, and thine opportunity is made. Be of hope; thy day is not distant."

But Marsyas' brow blackened.

"A noble reflection!" he exclaimed passionately, "and one that should soothe the Tarsian's dreams! Binding and stoning and killing in his zeal for an usurper of the robes of Aaron! Shedding sweet blood—doing irreparable deeds to serve a vain end, to further a useless attempt—a thing to be given over to-morrow! O thou God of wrath! If it be not sin to pray it, let him stumble speedily in the Law!"

Meanwhile Agrippa observed the sun, and after a little silence that his return to spirits seem not to grate upon the young Essene's distress, arose briskly.

"Up! up!" he said. "It is not at variance with Vitellius' extreme methods to empty the whole Prætorium into the hills in search of us. Up, fellows! To Ptolemais!"

Marsyas arose with the others, but he hesitated and glanced down at the fine garments that covered him. He remembered that he had not brought his soiled Essenic robes with him. He unslung his wallet and extended it to Agrippa.

"Take it, and forget not that I shall ask payment from the strength of that high place to which this may help thee! The vengeful spirit is not of choice a patient thing! I shall wait—but to achieve mine ends. God prosper thee! If thy servants will lend me each a garment thou shalt have back thy dress once more and I will depart."

"Whither?" asked Agrippa without taking the purse.

"To En-Gadi, for the present."

"But the brotherhood will then be guilty of befriending thee and thou art a living example of that which befalls him who befriends one of Saul's marked creatures."

"So I am become as a pestilence," Marsyas said grimly. It was another count against the Pharisee.

"Thou art much beset. Doubt not that Vitellius will seek for thee in En-Gadi, and it were better for thee and for the brotherhood that thou be not found. Thou must leave Judea, for the arm of the Sanhedrim is long."

To leave Judea meant to be banished among the Gentiles, to step out of four whitewashed walls into unknown turmoil; to leave the pleasures of solitude, the peoples of parchment, the events of old history, the ambitions of the soul and go forth amid arrogant heathen godlessness to meet precarious fortunes. The whole course of his life had been entirely reversed in a few hours. Resolute and strong as the Essene was, his face contracted painfully.

Agrippa laid a hand on his arm.

"Remember, it is our faith that this persecution will cease and then thou canst return to thy study in safety," he said as gently as if he were speaking to a child. But in that moment, Marsyas told himself that there would be no returning to his old peace.

"Come with me," Agrippa continued. "I will afford thee protection and thou shalt provide me with funds."

He paused and, taking Marsyas' arm, led him down to a little meandering vale, sweet with blossoming herbs.

"Look," he said, pointing back toward the east.

The hills stood aside in a long, full-breasted series, and revealed through a narrow, green-walled aisle a distant view of Jerusalem, white and majestic on her heights. The morning blue that encroaches upon the noon in early spring softened the spectacle with a tender atmosphere; distance glorified its splendors, and the light upon it was other than daylight—it was a nimbus, the ineffable crown.

Thus seen it was no longer the city of subjection, filled with wrongs and griefs and hopelessness. It was the Holy City, upright with the godliness of David, lawful in the government of Solomon; sacred with the presence of the Shekinah in the Holy of Holies. Here, Sheba might have stood first to be shown the glories of Solomon; here, Alexander might have drawn up his Macedonian quadriga to behold what excellence he was next to conquer. Marsyas felt emotion seize him, the mighty welling of tears in their springs.

"Behold it!" Agrippa said. "We go forth beaten and ashamed, but thou shalt return to it justified; I shall return to it crowned. Believe in that as thou believest in Jehovah!"

He drew the young Essene away and signed to the servitors.

In the days that followed, Agrippa tactfully and little by little won Marsyas out of his brooding. Delicately, he sounded the young man's nature and discovered the channel into which his sorrowful thoughts could be diverted. Stirring incidents of the Herod's own astounding history, graphic accounts of great pageants, of contests of famous athletæ, or of gorgeous cities, vivaciously told, engaged Marsyas' attention in spite of himself. Gradually his sharpened interest began to choose for itself. Expectancy of things to come communicated by Agrippa presently possessed Marsyas.

All this was a new and inviting experience for the young Essene, as well as an alleviation. He had lived a placid, passionless life with the old Essenic master and centered his broad loves on one or two. Evil happenings had wrenched these from him and his affections wandered and wavered, lost only for an hour. By the time the journey to Ptolemais was ended, Agrippa had stepped into his own place in the heart of the bereaved young man.

Ptolemais was built for solidity and strength. Its houses were defenses, its public buildings were fortifications; its mole, harbor front and wall the most unassailable on the Asiatic seaboard. From the plains of Esdraelon in their dip toward the sea, the city was seen, set broadside to the waves, stanch, regular, square and bulky—embodied defiance for ever uttered to whatever sea-faring nation turned its triremes into her roadsteads.

In a narrow street near the southernmost limits of the city, Agrippa stopped. A house of a single story stood before them, its roof barely higher than its door; a heavy wall before it, a narrow gate in that.

"Enter," said the prince to Marsyas, "into the unctuous hospitalities of Agrippa's palace."

He unlatched the gate, and, leading his companion across a small court, knocked at the door, which after a little wait swung open.

An uncommonly pretty waiting-woman stepped aside to let them enter. Marsyas put off his sandals and followed the prince into a small recess cut off by curtains from the interior of the house. A bronze lamp was in a niche in the wall and a taboret stood in the corner. No other furniture was visible.

The prince dismissed the two servitors and they passed behind the curtains, Eutychus stumbling as he went, because his eyes were engaged in attempting to attract the attention of the pretty waiting-woman, who seemed quite oblivious of his glances.

"Send hither your mistress, Drumah," Agrippa said to her. She bowed and departed and presently one of the curtains lifted and a woman hastened into the apartment.

With a low cry of joy she ran to the prince and flung herself on his breast.

"Oh, that thou shouldst come and none to watch for thee!" she exclaimed. "That thou shouldst enter thy house and none but thy hireling to meet thee!"

He laughed lightly and kissed her.

"I have brought also a guest, Cypros," he said. For the first time her eyes lighted on Marsyas and blushing she drew away from her husband.

"I pray thy pardon," she murmured.

The light from the day without shone full on her through a lattice, and since his journey to Nazareth Marsyas had learned to look on women with an interested eye.

She was small, but her figure showed the perfect outlines of the matron, and the Jewish dress, bound about the hips with a broad scarf, let no single grace lose itself under drapery. But it was the face that held the young Essene's attention. There, too, was the blood of the Herod, for Agrippa had married his cousin, but its attributes were refined almost to ethereal extremes. Flesh

could not have been whiter nor coloring more delicate. The effect rendered was an impression of exquisite frailty, produced as much by the pathos in the over-large black eyes and the serious cut of the tender mouth as by the transparency of the exceedingly small hand which lay on her breast as if to still a fluttering heart. Her beauty was not aided by strength of character or intellectuality; it was distinctly the simple, defenseless, appealing type which is an invincible conqueror of men.

"This is Marsyas of Nazareth, an Essene in distress, yet not so unfortunate that he is not willing to help us. What comfort canst thou offer him from thy housekeeping?"

The Essenes were the holy men of Israel; the large eyes filled with deference and she bowed.

"Welcome in God's name. My lord has bread and a roof-tree. I pray thee share them freely with us."

Marsyas' formality so serviceable among the women of Nazareth suddenly seemed infelicitous here, but it was all he had for response to this different personage.

"The blessing of God be with thee; I give thee thanks."

She summoned the pretty waiting-woman.

"Let my lord and his guest be given food and drink; set wine and such meats as we have, and let the children come and greet their father."

The prince thrust the curtains aside and, motioning to Marsyas', waited until his princess and the young man had passed within.

The apartment was a second recess larger than the first, shut in by hangings of sackcloth and furnished with rough seats and tables of unoiled cedar. It was a cheerless room, fit for the humblest man in Ptolemais, but the unconquered Herod and his lovely princess ennobled it.

There was a scarf of damask thrown over one of the tables and two or three pieces of magnificent plate sat upon it.

"That," said Agrippa, pointing to the silver, "hath been my moneyer for years. I have lived a month on a flagon."

Cypros sighed, but three pretty children, a boy and two girls, rushed in from the rear of the house and engaged the prince's attention.

Meanwhile, the attractive servant entered with plates for the table and Eutychus followed with a platter of food. As she passed the young Essene she tripped on an unevenness in the floor and would have fallen, but Marsyas, with a quick movement, more instinctive than gallant, threw out a hand and stayed her.

She thanked him composedly and went about her work, but Marsyas, chancing to raise his eyes to Eutychus' face, caught a look from the servitor that was livid with hate. Shocked and astonished, Marsyas turned his back and wondered how he had crossed the creature.

Agrippa sat at the table, and, with Cypros at his left, bade Marsyas sit beside him. The children were carried protesting away.

The prince filled a goblet of silver with a pale wine, slightly effervescent and exhaling a bouquet peculiarly subtle and penetrating. He raised the frosty cup between his fingers—drink, drinker and cup of a type—and looked at the strip of sky visible through the lattice.

"This to the gods," he said, "or whatever power hath fortune to give, and a heart to be won of libation. I yield you my soul for a laurel!"

The princess leaned her forehead against his arm and whispered:

"It is wicked—forbidden!"

"I poured but one glass: I make the prayer; I have not asked thee or our young friend to pray it with me. But my devices are exhausted. I make appeal now, haphazard, for I grope!"

"And didst thou fail in Jerusalem?"

"As I have failed from Rome to Idumea."

She drew in a little sobbing breath and hid her eyes against his sleeve. Marsyas sat silent. This first evidence of despair on the prince's part was most unwelcome. His own fortunes were too much entangled with Agrippa's for him to contemplate their fall. He felt the prince's eyes upon him. The silver cup had been refilled and was extended to him.

Marsyas took it.

"This to success," he said, "not fortune!"

Cypros stirred. "Success is so deliberate!" she sighed.

Marsyas made no answer; would it be long before he should have his bitter wish?

"Thou seest Judea," Agrippa began, "thou heardest me aspire to it and thou didst abet me in mine ambition. But learn, for thy own comfort, Marsyas, the vagabond to whom thou hast attached thyself doth not grasp after another man's portion. Judea is mine! And Rome must yield me mine inheritance!" The prince's eyes glowed with youth's ambition.

Marsyas listened intently.

"A Herod's word is in disrepute," the prince continued. "Hence I am limited to action to prove myself. But look thou here, Marsyas. Judea is pillaged: so am I. Judea is despised: so am I! Judea weltereth in her own blood: am I not sprung from a murdered sire, who was son of a murdered mother—each dead by the same hand of father and husband? Dear Lord, I am an offspring of the shambles, mother-marked with wounds!"

He shuddered and drew his hand across his forehead.

"Having thus suffered the same miseries which are Judea's, is it not natural that I should relieve her when I, myself, am relieved? I should rule Judea as Judea would rule herself—"

He broke off with a gesture of impatience.

"How I hate the blatant vower of vows! Help me to mine opportunity, Marsyas."

As between Rome and Herod the Great as sovereign, there was no choice. Though the Asmonean Slave, as the Jewish patriots named the capable fiend, gave Judea the most brilliant reign since the glories of Solomon and the most monstrous since Ahab, the nominal independence offered by his administration was absolutely submerged and lost in the terror of his absolutism and the devilish genius in him for oppression.

Herod and Abaddon were names synonymous in Judea, and the mildness of his sons or their inefficiency had not been able to set the reproach aside. No able Herod had arisen since the founder of the house, except, as Marsyas hopefully believed, this man before him. Herod Agrippa was the son of Aristobolus, who was murdered in his youth before his capabilities developed. The Herods, Philip and Antipas, had been mild because they were incapable. The recurrence of mental strength in the blood was an untried contingency. All this came to Marsyas, now, suggested by the implied self-defense in the prince's words, and for a moment he wavered between concern for his people and anxiety for his own cause. Agrippa and Cypros watched him.

"Thou art a just youth," the prince went on in the winning voice that had already made its conquest over the Essene. "I can not prove myself until I am given trial, and judgment without trial is an abomination even unto the tyrant Rome!"

"I have not judged, lord," Marsyas protested.

"And thou wilt not until I have shown myself unworthy of thy confidence. Thou hast even now bespoken God's favor for me—be then, His instrument! Thou art the first ray of light in a decade of darkness that has enveloped me and mine!"

Marsyas put out his hand to the prince. The peril in the Herod blood, in his calculations, had dropped out of sight.

"What dost thou say to me, my prince?" he said. "How is it that thou beseechest me—me, the suppliant, praying thy help for mine own ends? But hear me! Thou aspirest to that place of which I have no knowledge, among peoples whose paths I never cross, into the calling of the great! Yet,

though most unequipped to yield thee support, I am thy substance. Use me! Thou knowest my price."

Agrippa smiled.

"Though I die owing even mine embalmer, I shall pay thee that debt. I have said. And now to the process. What money hast thou?"

Agrippa was silent and Marsyas, watching his face, waited.

"I need," the prince said slowly, "twenty thousand."

Marsyas got upon his feet, and for a moment there was silence.

"I will get it for thee," he said.

CHAPTER VII

THE BONDMAN OF HATE

In a city like Ptolemais, where many pagans lived extravagantly and many Jews lived thriftily, there were, as naturally follows, many money-lenders among the sons of Abraham.

"Seek them all," was Agrippa's charge, "but Peter, the usurer. Him, thou hadst better avoid."

The young Essene laid aside the prince's dress, with its embroidery of precious metal, and, getting into a simpler garment affected by the stewards to men of rank, went out into the city to borrow twenty thousand drachmæ.

He did not get the twenty thousand drachmæ, but he found, instead, that Herod Agrippa was the most notorious bankrupt in the world. Being a Jew and by heritage thrifty, the discovery shook him in his respect for the prince, but at the same time a resolution shaped itself in him against the usurers. But, on a certain day, he returned to the little house in the suburbs of the city to report that he had been placidly refused by every money-lending Jew or Gentile, except Peter, in the seaport.

But he delivered his tidings unmoved.

"Be of hope," he said to Cypros, whose head drooped at the news; "there are many untried ways."

He went again into the city, and visited the khans. There might be new-comers who were money-lenders in other cities.

There were such as guests in Ptolemais, but from their lips he learned that Agrippa was black-listed from the Adriatic to the Euphrates; but Marsyas did not return to the house in the suburbs that night. The weight of his obligation was too heavy to endure the added burden which the sight of Agrippa's suspense had become.

He went to the rabbis of Ptolemais; they told him that they were not money-lenders. He applied to the prefect of the city, who laughed at him. Hoping that the name of Agrippa as a bankrupt had not penetrated into the fields he journeyed into the country-side of Syria and tried an oil-merchant, a rustic, rich and unlettered. But the oil-merchant came up to Ptolemais and made inquiry, shrugged his shoulders, glowered at Marsyas and went back to his groves.

An Egyptian seller of purple landed at Ptolemais from Alexandria. The name of the city of hope attracted Marsyas and he met the merchant at the wharves. But the seller of purple had been to Rome and the topmost name on his list of debtors was Herod Agrippa.

At the end of three days, Marsyas returned to the house in the suburbs to assure the prince that he had not deserted and went again on his search.

His invariable failures began to teach him a certain shrewdness. He discovered early that Essenic frankness would not serve his ends. He found that men were approachable through certain channels; that it was better to speak advisedly than frankly; to lay plans, rather than to wait on events; to use devices rather than persuasion. These things admitted, he discovered that he had unconsciously subordinated them to his use. Though momentarily alarmed, he did not hate himself as he should. On the other hand, it was pleasurable to lay siege to men and try them at their own scheming.

At night in a dutiful effort to cleanse himself of the day's accumulation of worldliness, he went to the open proseuchæ, where in the dark of the great out-of-doors, he was least likely to be noticed, to comfort himself with stolen worship, stolen profit from the Law. But the Law was not tender to those who lived as Stephen lived, and died as Stephen died. Not in all that great and holy scroll which the Reader read was there compassion for the blasphemer. Also, he heard of the great plague of persecution which Saul had loosed upon the Nazarenes in Jerusalem and how the Pharisee had become a mighty man before the Council, and an awe and a terror to the congregation. So he came away from the proseuchæ, not only unhelped but harmed, embittered, enraged, alienated from his faith, and hungering for vengeance.

By day, he walked through the commercial districts of Ptolemais and pushed his almost hopeless search with an energy that did not flag at continued failure. He knew that if he obtained the twenty thousand drachmæ, he bound Agrippa the surer to his oath of allegiance to the cause against Saul. Despair, therefore, was a banished and forbidden thing.

His plans, however, had been tried and proved fruitless. Typically a soldier of fortune, he was relying upon the exigencies of chance.

Ptolemais was a normal town, with large interest and pleasures, and the fair day was too fleeting for one to stop and take heed of another. Passers pushed and hurried him when he came upon those more busy than he. Sailors, bronzed as Tatars, were probably the sole loiterers besides the inevitable oriental feature, the sidewalk mendicant.

So it was that on a certain day when Marsyas overtook a lectica in the street, the old man within complained aloud and had no audience, except his plodding bearers, or the attention of a glance, or a slackened step now and again among the citizens.

"They rob me!" he was crying when Marsyas came up with him.

The young man turned quickly; the declaration was alarming. His eyes encountered the face of Peter, the usurer, a stout, gray old Jew, in the apparel of a Sadducee.

Seeing that he had won the young man's notice the old usurer seized the opportunity to enlarge.

"They ruin me!" he cried.

Marsyas bowed gravely. "Thy pardon, sir," he said. "May I be of service?"

"They sap my life!" the old man continued more violently, as if the young man's question had excited him. "They take, and demand more; they waste, and must be replenished! I drop into the grave and there will be nothing left to buy a tomb to receive me!"

The words were directed to Marsyas, and the young man having halted could not go on without awkwardness.

"I pray thee," he urged, "tell me who plagues thee thus."

"The tradesmen! Because I am wealthy, they augment their hire; because I must buy, they increase their price; they hold necessities out of my reach! It is a conspiracy between them because I am of lowly birth, and I go from one to another and find no relief! Behold!" He shook out a shawl which had been folded across his knees. "I must have it to protect me against the cold. It is inferior; it is scant; yet it cost me fifteen pieces of silver!"

Marsyas glanced at the mantle; even with his little knowledge of fabrics it appeared not worth its price.

"Thou hast servants, good sir, and camels," he said, drawn into suggestion in spite of himself. "Do I overstep my privilege to suggest that thou mayest send to Anthedon or to Cæsarea and buy in other cities?"

"But the hire—the hire! And how should I know that the knavery does not extend to Anthedon and Cæsarea?"

"Then," said Marsyas, "establish thine own booths here and undersell the robbers."

There was silence; the small eyes of the old man narrowed and ignited.

"A just punishment," he muttered. "A proper punishment!"

"Or this," Marsyas continued, interested in his own conspiracy. "Thou sayest they oppress thee because thou art a lowly man! They are foolish. Display them thy power and punish them. Thou art a great usurer; powerful families here are in thy debt. How strong a hand thou holdest over them! What canst thou not compel them to do! Nay, good sir; to me, it seemeth thou hast the whip-hand over these tradesmen!"

The old man rubbed his hands. "An engaging picture," he said. "But unless I haste, they will ruin me yet!"

Marsyas shook his head. "Not if the tales of thy famous wealth be true."

The lectica had moved along beside him and he waited now to be dismissed; but, contrary to custom of that rank which is privileged to command, the old man waited for Marsyas to take his leave.

"Methinks," he began, "I have seen thee—"

"Doubtless," Marsyas interrupted hastily. "I am a steward here in Ptolemais. But I have an errand here, good sir; by thy leave, I shall depart."

The old man made a motion of assent, but he followed the young Essene with a thoughtful eye.

"If I am to know the world's way," Marsyas said to himself, "I can use it, if need be."

He did not visit another usurer, but on the following day went to those places likely to be the haunts of Peter. When, presently, he discovered the old man near a fountain, Marsyas did not attempt to catch his eye. But one of Peter's servants touched him on the arm and told him that the master beckoned, and he hastened to the old man's side.

"Who is thy master?" Peter asked.

Marsyas winced, but restrained a declaration of his free-born state.

"A Roman citizen who is preparing to return to Italy."

"A Roman!" Peter repeated. "But thou art a Jew, or the blood of the race in thee lies."

"A Jew without taint of other blood in all the line."

"Art satisfied with thy service—serving a Roman?" was the demand.

"None has a better lord!" replied Marsyas quietly, but with an inward delight in leading the old man on.

"But it should be more lawful for thee to serve a Jew," Peter declared. "A Roman's slave, a slave for ever; a Jew's slave, a slave but six years—"

Marsyas could rest no longer under the intimation of bondage.

"Good sir, I am not a slave."

"Ho! a hireling."

"No; a free man, unattached and serving for love."

Peter scratched his head. "For love only? Then why not come and be my steward for wages?"

"Thou canst not pay my price," he said with meaning.

The old man lifted his withered chin.

"Thy price!" he repeated haughtily. "And pray, sirrah, what is thy price?"

A figurative answer to add to his first sententious remark was on Marsyas' lips, but he halted suddenly, and a little pallor came into his face.

"On another day, I shall tell thee," he said after a silence, and the old man impatiently dismissed him.

Marsyas turned away from the heart of the city and went straight to the house in the suburbs.

He found Agrippa stretched on a couch where the air entered through the west lattice, and the place otherwise solitary. The princess and the children with the servants had gone into the city.

Marsyas came uncalled to Agrippa's side, and the prince noted the change on the young man's face. He looked expectant.

"My lord," Marsyas said, "thou didst say to me several days ago that thou didst hate a vower of vows. Yet no man is chafed by a vow except him who finds it hard to keep. Wherefore, I pray thee, for the prospering of the cause and mine, assure me once more of thy good intent toward Judea."

The Herod raised his fine brows.

"How now, Marsyas? Has the knowledge that I am a Herod been slandering me to you?"

"Nay, my lord; thou hast won me; and I shall not stop at sacrifice for thy cause, which is mine."

"What canst thou do, my Marsyas?"

"Get thee money."

"I give thee my word, Marsyas. It has been sorely battered dodging debts, yet it is still intact enough to contain mine honor. I give thee my word."

Marsyas lingered with an averted face, which Agrippa tried in vain to understand. He added nothing to emphasize his avowal; perhaps he realized at that moment, more keenly than ever afterward, how much a man wants to be believed.

Presently the young man spoke in another tone.

"Who is this Peter, that I may not ask him for a loan?"

"I owe him a talent already," Agrippa answered with a lazy smile, "which he advanced to me while he was yet my mother's slave."

"Then thou knowest him! How—how is he favored in disposition?"

"How is Peter favored? Are slaves favored? Nay, they are tempered like asses, cattle and apes—like beasts. Wherefore, this Peter is voracious, balky, amiable enough if thou yieldest him provender—not bad, but, like any donkey, could be better."

Marsyas' eyes fell again; it seemed that he hesitated at his next question, as though upon its answer turned a matter of great moment.

"Art thou in all truth assured that this Alexandrian will lend thee money?" he asked presently, beset by the possibility of doubt.

Agrippa laughed outright. "Jove, but this questioning hath a familiar ring! Surely thou wast sired of a money-lender, Marsyas, else his inquiries would not arise so naturally to thy lips! Will the Alexandrian lend? Of a surety! And even if not, then will my mother's friend, the noble Antonia, Cæsar's sister-in-law. If Cæsar had not been so precipitate and hastened me out of Rome, I should have borrowed the sum of her ten years ago. I have not borrowed of the Alexandrian ere this because I had not the money to carry me thither."

After a pause, Agrippa anticipated a further question and continued.

"The Alexandrian is Alexander Lysimachus, the noblest Jew a generation hath produced. Even Rome, that hath such little use for our blood, waives its ancient judgment against Lysimachus. He is alabarch of the Jews in Alexandria, able as a Roman, just as a Jew, refined as a Greek, versatile as an Alexandrian. I saw him four years ago, here, in Jerusalem, when he brought his wife's remains to bury them on sacred soil. He had with him two sons, one a man, grown, with his father's genius, but without his father's soul; the other a handsome lad of undeveloped character, and a daughter, a veritable sprite for beauty, and a sibyl for wits. I was afraid of her; I,

a Herod and a married man, turning forty, was afraid of her! But get me the twenty thousand drachmæ, Marsyas, and thou shalt see her—*Hercle*—a thousand pardons! I forgot that thou art an Essene!"

Marsyas stood silent once more, and Agrippa waited.

"And yet one other thing, my lord," the Essene said finally. "I serve thee no less for love, because I serve thee also for a purpose. Thou wilt not forget to serve me, when thou comest to thine own?"

"I give thee again my much misused word, Marsyas. Believe me, thou hast forced more truths out of me than any ever achieved before. Cypros will make thee her inquisitor when next she suspects me of warmth toward a maiden!"

Marsyas lifted the prince's hand and pressed it to his lips. Without further word, he went out of the chamber and returned to the city.

He sought out the counting-room of Peter the usurer, and found within a commotion and a gathered crowd. The old man himself stood in a steward's place behind a grating of bronze, with lists and coffers about him. Without stood a brown woman, in a strange dress sufficiently rough to establish her state of servitude, and she bore in her hands a sheep-skin bag that seemed to be filled with coins.

About her was a group of men of nationalities so diverse and so evidently perplexed that Marsyas immediately surmised that they had been summoned as interpreters for a stranger whom they could not understand.

The brown woman was passive: the usurer behind his grating in such a state of great excitement and anxiety that moisture stood out on his wrinkled forehead. His eyes were on the sheep-skin bag; evidently the brown woman was bringing him money, and his fear that the treasure would escape made the old man desperate.

"Have ye forgotten your mother-tongues?" he fumed at the polyglot assembly, "or are ye base-born Syrians boasting a nationality that ye can not prove? Hold! Let her not go forth, good citizens; doubtless she hath come from a foreign debtor to repay me! Close the doors without!"

Marsyas pressed through the crowd to the grating, and the old man discovered him.

"Hither, hither, my friend," he exclaimed. "See if thou canst tell what manner of stranger we have here."

The young Essene had been examining the woman; with a quick glance, now, he inspected her face. Dark the complexion, the eyes olive-green as chrysolite, mysterious and hypnotic; the features regular as an Egyptian's, but stronger and more beautiful; the physique refined, yet hardy. The mystic air of the Ganges breathed from her scented shawl. The young man's training in languages was not overtaxed.

"What is thy will?" he asked in the tongue of the Brahmins.

"To exchange Hindu money for Roman coin," was the instant reply.

Marsyas turned to Peter.

"This is an Indian woman," he explained. "She wishes to exchange coin of her country for Roman money."

"Good!" the old man cried, rubbing his hands. "We shall oblige her. Foreign coins are so much bullion; yet, we pay only its face value, in Roman moneys! Good! I shall melt it, and deliver it to the Roman mint! Good! But—but how shall I know one of these outlandish coins from another?"

"I can tell you," Marsyas answered.

The assembled group drifted out of the counting-room and the usurer, sighing his delight, opened a gate and bade Marsyas and the Hindu woman come into the apartment behind the screen. There the exchange was made, and the old usurer, trusting to the Hindu's ignorance of the language, permitted no moment to pass without comment on his profit.

Presently, Marsyas turned to the woman.

"You lose money by this traffic," he said deliberately.

"Rest thee, brother," was the calm reply, "I know it. Yet I must have Roman coin to carry me to Egypt."

Marsyas glanced at her apparel. In spite of its humble appearance, it was the owner of this treasure, that dwelt within it.

The exchange was made, amounting to something over twenty thousand drachmæ. Marsyas, with wistful eyes, saw her put the treasure away in the sheepskin bag. He arose as she arose, and the two were conducted out by Peter.

Without, it had grown dark. The woman had made no effort to hide the nature of her burden. She made an almost haughty gesture of farewell to Marsyas.

"I shall serve thee, perchance, one day," she said and passed out.

Marsyas followed her. At the threshold, he wavered and stepping into the street stopped.

She made a small, frail, dusky apparition, under the black shadows of the bulky buildings of Ptolemais—a profitable victim for some light-footed highwayman, less sorely in need of money than he. But she evidently felt no fear.

Then, he turned and went back into the counting-room.

Peter was behind his grating.

"Who and what art thou?" the usurer demanded, with no little admiration in his tone.

"I am," Marsyas answered, "a doctor of Laws, a master of languages, a doctor of medicines, a scholar of the College at Jerusalem, a postulant Essene."

The reply was intentionally full.

"And a steward for love, only!"

"Only for a time. When I can repay thee a debt long standing, I shall cease to serve at all."

The usurer's eyes brightened. "A debt," he repeated softly. "Is this my fortunate day? Which of the bankrupts who owe me has been replenished?"

"Not yet, the one of whom I speak," Marsyas replied. "Hast thou heard of Herod Agrippa?"

"Herod Agrippa! Evil day that he borrowed a talent of me, never to return it!"

"Perchance, some day—"

"Never! Whosoever lends him money pitches it into the sea!"

"Yet the sea hath given up its treasure, at times. But let me trouble thee with a question. What price did the costliest slave in thy knowledge command?"

"What price? A slave? In Rome? Nay, then, let me think. A Georgian female captive of much beauty was sold to Sejanus once for six hundred thousand drachmæ—"

"I speak of serving-men," Marsyas interrupted.

"Nay, then: Cæsar owns a physician worth eighty thousand drachmæ."

"Hath he cured any in Cæsar's house of poisoning; can he speak many languages; is he also a doctor of Laws and a good Jew?"

The usurer shook his head.

"What price, then, should I be worth to Cæsar?" Marsyas demanded.

"Sell not thyself to Cæsar," Peter cried, flinging up his hands. "It is forbidden!"

"I shall not sell myself," Marsyas said. "I have come only to find how to value my services."

"Whom dost thou serve?" the old man demanded. Marsyas was not ready to disclose his identity.

"A Roman. Peace and the continuance of good fortune be thine."

He bowed and passed out of the counting-room.

The usurer stood a moment, then summoned his servants, and, getting himself into street dress, hastened to follow the young man. Marsyas turned his steps toward the house in the suburbs.

There were several torches about the painted gate in the wall and the light shone on a group alighting from a curricule. Cypros and her children had returned from the city, and Agrippa had come forth to receive them. Marsyas joined the group and Peter's lectica was borne up to the circle of radiance under the torches. The old man's eyes filled with wrath when he recognized Agrippa. He stood up and surveyed him with scorn.

"A Roman!" he scoffed. "A Roman, only to add the vices of the race to the meanness of a Herod! Back to my house, slaves! We have taken profitless pains!"

Agrippa's anger leaped into his face and Marsyas pursued and overtook the litter.

"Thy pardon, sir," he began.

"I have a right to attach thee for the talent thy master owes me," Peter stormed.

"Peace, good sir! I am not a slave."

Peter chewed his mustache impotently, but the young Essene dropped his Greek and spoke in Hebrew, the language of the synagogue, the true badge of Judaism.

"Perchance we may bargain together. Wouldst have me for hire?"

Peter smoldered in sulky silence.

"I can not serve longer without compensation," Marsyas pursued.

"What sum in hire?" Peter demanded.

"Twenty thousand drachmæ—"

Peter blazed, but Marsyas stopped his invective with a motion.

"Nay, peace! I have not finished. Twenty thousand drachmæ in loan to Agrippa, and I will serve thee gratis till he redeems me by paying the principal and the talent he owes."

The usurer, with a snort, abruptly ordered the slaves to proceed.

The next day, Marsyas, loitering on purpose near the usurer's, was approached by a servant and sent into the presence of Peter.

"Hath the bankrupt any hopes?" the money-lender demanded without preliminary.

"He goes to Alexandria, for money, and thence to imperial favor in Rome. There is Antonia who will aid him, as thou knowest. Unless thou helpst him to reach either of these two places, he is of a surety bankrupt; wherefore he can never pay thee the talent or even the interest."

Peter dismissed him moodily and Marsyas returned to the prince. But the next day Peter appeared at Agrippa's door and was conducted to the prince's presence, where Cypros sat with him and Marsyas waited. The old man made no greeting.

"Thou knowest me, Agrippa," he began at once. "For thy mother's sake, whose happy slave I was, I will take thine Essene at his terms, less the interest on the twenty thousand drachmæ."

"My Essene at his terms," Agrippa repeated in perplexity. But Marsyas, with a movement of command, broke in.

"The bargain is at first hand between thee and me, good sir," he said to Peter. "The second contract shall be between the prince and myself. Bring the money here at sunset and the writings shall be ready for thee."

"Twenty thousand drachmæ, less mine interest on the sum," Peter insisted.

"Less thine interest," Marsyas assented, and Peter went out.

Agrippa got upon his feet and gazed gravely at Marsyas.

"What is this?" he asked.

"I have bound thee to my cause," the young man answered.

"How? Nay, answer me, Marsyas. What hast thou done?" the prince urged, impelled by affection as well as wonder.

"I have bought my revenge, and have paid for it with a season of bondage."

"Hast thou given thyself in hostage for us?" Cypros cried, springing up.

Marsyas, without reply, moved to leave the room. But Agrippa planted himself in the young man's way, and Cypros in tears slipped down on her knees at his side, and, raising his hand, kissed it.

"We shall not forget," she whispered to him.

"I shall not know peace till I have redeemed thee," Agrippa declared with misted eyes.

Great haste to get away from the overwhelmed pair seized the Essene. Trembling he shook off their hold and hurried out into the air.

He had to quiet a great amazement in him at the thing he had planned for so many days to do. After a long agitated tramp in search of composure, he began to see more clearly the results of his extreme act. He had fixed himself within reach of Vitellius and the Sanhedrim: unless the ill fortune of the luckless prince improved, he had bound himself to servitude for a lifetime.

But he drew his hand across his troubled forehead and smiled grimly. He had made his first decisive step against Saul!

CHAPTER VIII

AN ALEXANDRIAN CHARACTERISTIC

Nothing but prescience could have inspired Alexander, the young Macedonian conqueror, to decide to plant a city on the sandy peninsula which lay hot, flat, low and unproductive between the glassy waters of Lake Mareotis and the tumble of the Mediterranean.

For a century previous, a straggling Egyptian village, called Rhacotis, eked out a precarious existence by fisheries; the port was filled with shoals or clogged with water-growth, and the voluptuous fertility of the Nile margin followed the slow sweep of the great river into the sea twelve miles farther to the east. No other port along the coast presented a more unattractive appearance. But Alexander, having no more worlds to conquer, turned his opposition upon adverse conditions.

So he struck his spear into the sand, and there arose at the blow a city having the spirit of its founder—great, splendid, contentious, contradictory, impetuous and finally self-destructive through its excesses.

He enlarged and embellished Rhacotis, which lay to the west of the new city and left it to the tenantry of the Egyptians, poor remnants of that haughty race which had been aristocrats of the world before Troy. In its center arose that solemn triumph of Pharaonic architecture, the Serapeum.

But it was they who approached from the south, with the sand of the Libyan desert in their locks, who saw noble Alexandria. Between them and the city was first the strength of its fortifications, prodigious lengths of wall, beautiful with citadels and towers. Within was the Bruchium, with the splendor of the Library, for the Alexandrian spirit of contentiousness sharpened and forced the intellect of her disputants, till her learning was the most faultless of the time and its house a

fit shape for its contents. After the Library the pillared façade of the Court of Justice; next the unparalleled Museum, and, interspersed between, were the glories of four hundred theaters, four thousand palaces, four thousand baths. Against the intense blue of the rainless Egyptian sky were imprinted the sun-white towers, pillars, arches and statues of the most comely city ever builded in Africa. Memphis, lost and buried in the sand, and Thebes, an echoing nave of roofless columns, were never so instinct with glory as Egypt's splendid recrudescence on the coast of the Middle Sea.

To the northeast, there was abatement of pagan grandeur. Here were quaint solid masses of Syriac architecture, with gowned and bearded dwellers and a general air of oriental decorum and religious rigor which did not mark the other quarters of the city. In this spot the Jews of the Diaspora had been planted, had multiplied and strengthened until there were forty thousand in the district.

Those turning the beaks of their galleys into the Alexandrian roadstead saw first the Pharos, a mist-embraced and phantom tower, rising out of the waves; after it, the Lochias, wading out into the sea that the palaces of the Ptolemies might hold in mortmain their double empire of land and water; on the other hand the trisected Heptistadium; between, the acreage of docking and out of the amphitheatrical sweep of the great city behind, standing huge, white and majestic, the grandest Jewish structure, next to Herod's Temple, that the world has ever known—the Synagogue.

The Jews of Alexandria; as a class of peculiar and emphatic characteristics, a class toward which consideration was due in deference to its numbers, its wealth and its sensitiveness, were necessarily the object of particular provision. Therefore, that they might be intelligently handled as to their prejudices, they were provided with a special governor from among their own—an alabarch; permitted to erect their own sanctuaries and to practise the customs of race and the rites of religion in so far as they did not interfere with the government's interests.

Thus much their privileges; their oppressions were another story.

Peopled by three of the most aggressive nations on the globe, the Greek, the Roman and the Jew, Alexandria seemed likewise to attract representatives of every country that had a son to fare beyond its borders. Drift from the dry lands of all the world was brought down and beached at the great seaport. It ranged in type from the fair-haired Norseman to the sinewy Mede on the east, from the Gaul on the west to the huge Ethiopian with sooty shining face who came from the mysterious and ancient land south of the First Cataract.

It followed that such a heterogeneous mass did not effect union and amity. That was a spiritual fusion which had to await a perfect conception of liberty and the brotherhood of man. The racial mixture in Alexandria was, therefore, a prematurity, subject to disorder.

So long as a Jew may have his life, his faith and his chance at bread-winning, he does not call himself abused. These things the Roman state yielded the Jew in Alexandria. But he was haughty, refined, rich, religious, exclusive, intelligent and otherwise obnoxious to the

Alexandrians, and, being also a non-combatant, the Jew was the common victim of each and all of the mongrel races which peopled the city.

The common port of entry was an interesting spot. The prodigious stretches of wharf were fronted by packs of fleets, ranging in class from the visiting warrior trireme from Ravenna or Misenum, to the squat and blackened dhow from up the Nile or the lateen-sailed fishing-smack from Algeria to the papyrus punt of home waters. Its population was the waste of society, fishers, porters, vagabonds, criminals, ruffian sea-faring men, dockmen, laborers of all sorts, men, women and children—the pariahs even of the rabble and typically the Voice of Revilement.

Agrippa, landing with his party, attracted no more attention than any other new-comer would have done, until Silas gravely inquired the way into the Regio Judæorum.

"Jupiter strike you!" roared the man whom the sober Silas had addressed. "Do I look like a barbarian Jew that I should know anything about the Regio Judæorum!"

His words, purposely loud, did not fail to excite the interest he meant they should.

"Regio Judæorum!" cried a woman under foot, filling her basket with fish entrails. "What say you, Gesius? Who, these? Look, Alexandrians, what tinsel and airs are hunting the Regio Judæorum!"

"Purple, by my head!" the man exclaimed. "Roman citizens with the bent nose of Jerusalem!"

"Agrippa, or I am a landsman!" a sailor shouted. "Fugitive from debtors, or I am a pirate!"

"Jews!" another woman screamed; "coming to collect usury!"

A howl of rage, threatening and lawless, greeted this cry, out of which rose the sailor's voice with a shout of laughter.

"Usury! Ha, ha! He has not a denarius on him that is not borrowed!"

The Jewish prince had lived a life of diverse fortune, but never until then had he been the object of popular scorn. A surprise was aroused in him as great as his indignation; he stood transfixed with emotion. Cypros, thoroughly terrified, came out from among her servants and clung to his arm. On her the eyes of the fishwives alighted.

[Illustration: Cypros, thoroughly terrified, clung to his arm (missing from book)]

"Look! Look!" they cried. "Sparing us our husbands by hiding her beauty! The rag over her face! Bah! for a plaster of mud!"

"Fish-scales will serve as well," another cried, snatching up a handful and throwing it at the princess.

"Have mine, too, Bassia! Thou art a better thrower than I!" a third shouted, handing up her basket.

"Be sure of your aim, Bassia!"

The uproar became general.

"A handful for the simpering hand-maid, too!"

"Don't miss the she-Herod!"

"Fall to, wives; don't leave it all to Bassia!"

"Way for the proconsul!"—a distant roar came up from the water's edge.

"Bilge-water in my jar, there, mate; it will mix their perfumes!"

"Way for the proconsul!" the distant roar insisted.

"Don't soil the proconsul, women!"

"Ware, Bassia! The proconsul is coming!"

"Perpol! he will not see! He is the best Jew-baiter in all Alexandria! Sure aim, O Phoebus of the bow!"

"Way for the proconsul!"

"Pluto take the legionaries; here they come!"

"One more pitch at them, though Cæsar were coming!"

"No privileges exclusive for thyself, Bassia! *Habet!* More scales!"

"Scales; shells; water! Scales; sh—"

"Fish-heads! *Habet!*"

"Entrails—"

"Way for the proconsul!"

"Directly, comrades! Shells, water!"

"Ow! You hit a soldier!"

"Bad aim, Bassia!"

"The legionaries! Scatter!"

The centurion at the head of a column now appeared, with his brasses dripping with dirty water, threw up his sword and shouted. The column flung itself out of line and went into the mob with pilum butt or point as the spirit urged.

Pell-mell, tumbling, screaming, scrambling, the wharf-litter fled, parting in two bodies as it passed Agrippa's demoralized group, one half plunging off the masonry on the sands or into the water, the other scattering out over the great expanse of dock. The soldiers pressed after, and, following in the space they had cleared, came a chariot, a legate in full armor driving, his charioteer crouching on his haunches in the rear of the car.

His apparitors brought up against Agrippa's party. They did not hesitate at the rank of the strangers; it was part of the blockade. Eutychus took to his heels and Silas went down under a blow from a reversed javelin. Agrippa, besmirched with the missiles of his late assailants and blazing with fury, breasted the soldiers and cursed them fervently. Two of them sprang upon him, and Cypros, screaming wildly, threw off her veil and seized the foremost legionary.

The legate pulled up his horses and looked at the struggle. Cypros' bared face was presented to him. With a cry of astonishment, he threw down the lines and leaped from the chariot.

"Back, comrades!" he shouted, running toward them. "Touch her not! Unhand the man! Ho! Domitius, call off your tigers!"

"How now, Flaccus!" Agrippa raged. "Is this how you receive Roman citizens in Alexandria?"

The legate stopped short and his face blackened.

"Agrippa, by the furies! I knew the lady, but—" with a motion of his hand he seemed to put off his temper and to recover himself. "Tut, tut! Herod, you will not waste good serviceable wrath on an Alexandrian uproar when you have lived among them a space. They are no more to be curbed than the Nile overflow, and are as natural to the place. But curse them, they shall answer for this! Welcome to Alexandria! Beshrew me, but the sight of your lady's face makes me young again! Come, come; bear me no ill will. Be our guest, Herod, and we shall make back to you for all this mob's inhospitality. Ah, my lady, what say you? Urge my pardon for old time's sake!"

He turned his face, which filled with more sincerity toward Cypros than was visible in his voluble cordiality to Agrippa. Cypros, supported by the trembling Drumah, put her hand to her forehead and tried to smile bravely.

"But thou hast saved us, noble Flaccus; why should we bear thee ill will? Blessed be thou for thy timely coming, else we had been killed!"

Agrippa, still smoldering, with Silas at his feet, alternately brushing the prince's dress and rubbing his bruises, took the word from Cypros.

"What do Roman citizens, arriving in Alexandria, and no proconsul to meet them? Perchance Rome's sundry long missing citizens have been lost here!" intimated Agrippa.

"Ho, no! They never kill except under provocation. Yet I shall have a word with the wharf-master and the prætor. But come, have my chariot, lady. Apparitor," addressing one of his guards, "send hither conveyance for my guests!"

"Thy pardon and thanks, Flaccus," Agrippa objected shortly, "we are expected by the alabarch."

"Then, by the Horæ, he should have been here to meet you. Forget him for his discourtesy and come with me. Beseech your husband, sweet lady; you were my confederate in the old days."

She smiled, in a pleased way. "But we did not inform the alabarch when we expected to arrive," she answered. "He hath not failed us."

"And perchance," Agrippa broke in, "it might disturb Alexandria again to know that the proconsul had entertained Jews!"

"Still furious!" Flaccus cried jocosely. "Oh, where is that elastic temper which made thee famous in youth, Herod? But here are our curricles; at least thou wilt permit me to conduct thy party to the alabarch's."

It was the bluff courtesy of a man who assumes polish for necessity's sake, and suddenly envelopes himself with it, momentarily for a purpose. Agrippa, looking up from under his brows, glanced critically at the proconsul's face for some light on his unwonted amiability, but, failing to discover it, submitted with better grace to the Roman's offers.

The proconsul was near Agrippa's age, and on his face and figure was the stamp of unalloyed Roman blood. He was of average height, but so solidly built as to appear short. His head was round and covered with close, black curls; his brows were straight thick lines which met over his nose, and his beardless face was molded with strong muscles on the purple cheek and chin. He was powerful in neck and arm and leg, and prominent in chest and under-jaw. Yet the brute force that published itself in all his atmosphere was dominated by intellect and giant capabilities.

He was Flaccus Avillus, Proconsul of Egypt, finishing now his fourth year as viceroy over the Nile valley. One of the few who stood in the wintry favor of Tiberius, the imperial misanthrope of Capri, his was the weightiest portfolio in all colonial affairs; his state little less than Cæsar's.

Wherever he walked, industry, pleasure and humankind, low or lofty, stood still to do him honor. So, when he headed a procession of curricles and chariots up from the wharves of Alexandria, he did not go unseen. Many of the late disturbers watched with strained eyes and gaping mouths and saw him turn his horses into the street which was the first in the Regio Judæorum, and not a few stared at one another and babbled, or pointed taut or shaking fingers at the prodigy. Flaccus, the

most notorious persecutor of the Jews among the long list of Egyptian governors, was visiting the Regio Judæorum escorting Jews!

The sight created no less wonder and astonishment under the eaves of the Jewish houses, and throughout their narrow passages, but there was no demonstration. Each retired quietly to his family, or to his neighbor, and gravely asked what new trickery was this.

But Agrippa's party, following their conductor, proceeded through the less densely settled portion of the quarter into a district where the streets opened up into a stately avenue, lined by the palaces of the aristocratic Jews of Alexandria.

Before one, not in the least different from half a dozen surrounding it, their guide halted. The residence was square, with an unbroken front, except for a porch, the single attribute characteristic of Egypt, and the window arches and parapet relieved the somber masonry with checkered stone. The flight of steps leading up to the porch was of white marble.

One of the proconsul's apparitors knocked and stiffly announced his mission to the Jewish porter that answered. Immediately the master of the house came forth, followed by a number of servants to take charge of the prince's effects.

The master of the house, Alexander Lysimachus, alabarch of Alexandria, was a Jew by feature and by dress, but sufficiently Romanized in disposition to propitiate Rome. He wore a cloak, richly embroidered, over a long white under-robe; and the magisterial tarboosh, with a bandeau of gold braid, was set down over his fine white hair. His figure was lean and aged, a little bent, but every motion was as steady as that of a young man, and his air had that certain ease and grace which mark the courtier.

His first quick glance sought Flaccus, for the visit was without precedent and highly significant. But there was neither hauteur nor suspicion in his manner. The bluff countenance of the proconsul showed a little expectancy, but there was even less to be seen on the Jew's face that should betray his interpretation of the visit. The magistrates bowed, each after his own manner of salutation—the Jew with oriental grace, the Roman with an offhand upward jerk of his head and a gesture of his mailed hand.

"Behold your guests, Lysimachus," Flaccus said, "or what is left of them after an encounter with the rabble at the wharf. You should have been there to meet them."

"So I should, had I been forewarned," the alabarch explained, the peculiar music of the Jewish intonation showing in mellow contrast to the Roman's blunt voice. "What! Is this how the accursed vermin have used you!"

He put out his old waxen hands to the prince and searched his face.

"O thou son of Berenice!" he said softly. "Welcome to the worshiping hearts of Jews, once more."

"Thanks," replied Agrippa, embracing the old man. "My latest adventure with Gentiles has well-nigh persuaded me to remain there!"

"God grant it; God grant it! And thy princess?"

Cypros had uncovered her face and was reaching him her hands.

"Mariamne!" he exclaimed in a startled way. "Mariamne, as I live!"

Flaccus, who had fixed his eyes on Cypros the instant her veil was lifted, started.

"Mariamne! The murdered Mariamne!" he repeated.

"Ah, sir!" the alabarch protested, smiling. "Thou wast not born then. But I knew her: as a young man I knew her! But enter, enter! Pray favor us with thy presence at supper, noble Flaccus. It shall be an evening of festivity."

He led them through a hall so dimly lighted as to appear dark after the daylight without, and into one of the noble chambers characteristic of the opulent Orient. The whole interior was lined with yellow marble, and the polish of the pavement was mirror-like. The lattice of the windows, the lamps, the coffers of the alabarch's records, the layers for the palms and plantain, the clawed feet of the great divan were all of hammered brass. The drapery at arch and casement, the cushions and covering of the divan were white and yellow silk, and, besides a sprawling tiger skin on the floor, the alabarch's chair of authority, and a table of white wood, there was no other furniture.

The alabarch gave Flaccus his magistrate's chair, and, seating his two noble guests and their children, clapped his hands in summons.

A brown woman, with eyes like chrysolite and the lithe movements of a panther, was instantly at his elbow.

The alabarch spoke to her in a strange tongue, and the servant disappeared.

"I send for my daughter," he explained to his guests. "The waiting-woman does not understand our tongue. My daughter—the only one I have, and unmarried!"

"I remember her," Agrippa said with a smile.

At that moment in the archway leading into the interior of the house a girl appeared. She lifted her eyes to her father's face, and between them passed the mute evidence of dependence and vital attachment.

She wore the classic Greek chiton of white wool without relief of color or ornament, a garb which, by its simplicity, intensified the first impression that it was a child that stood in the archway. She was a little below average height, with almost infantile shortening of curves in her

pretty, stanch outlines. But the suppleness of waist and the exquisite modeling of throat and wrist were signs that proved her to be of mature years.

Her hair was of that intermediate tint of yellow-brown which in adult years would be dark. It fell in girlish freedom, rough with curls, a little below her shoulders. There was a boyishness in the noble breadth of her forehead, full of front, serene almost to seriousness, and marked by delicate black brows too level to be ideally feminine. Her eyes were not prominent but finely set under the shading brow, large of iris, like a child's, and fair brown in color. In their scrutiny was not only the wisdom of years but the penetration of a sage. Though her tips were not full they were perfectly cut, and redder than the heart of any pomegranate that grew in the alabarch's garden.

But it was not these certain signs of strength which engaged Agrippa. Beyond the single glance to note how much the girl had developed in four years he gave his attention to certain physical characteristics which called upon his long experience with women to catalogue.

As she stood in the archway, the prince had let his glance slip down to her feet, shod in white sandals, and her ankles laced about with white ribbon. One small foot upbore her weight, the other unconsciously, but most daintily, poised on a toe. She swayed once with indescribable lightness, but afterward stood balanced with such preparedness of young sinew that at a motion she could have moved in any direction. Foremost in summing these things, Agrippa observed that she was wholly unconscious of how she stood.

"Terpsichore!" he said to himself, "or else the goddess hath withdrawn the gift of dancing from the earth!"

"Enter, Lydia, and know the proconsul, the noble Flaccus," the alabarch said. The girl raised her eyes to the proconsul's face and salaamed with enchanting grace. Flaccus checked a fatherly smile. He would wait before he patronized a girl-child of uncertain age.

"And this," the alabarch went on, "thou wilt remember as our prince, Herod Agrippa."

"Alas! sweet Lydia," Agrippa said, fixing soft eyes upon her. "Must I be introduced? Am I in four years forgotten?"

"No, good my lord," she answered in a voice that was mellow with the music of womanhood—a voice that almost startled with its abated strength and richness, since the illusion of her youth was hard to shake off, "thou art identified by thy sweet lady!"

Agrippa stroked his smooth chin and Flaccus shot an amused glance at him. Meanwhile the girl had opened her arms to Cypros. The children, one by one, greeted her. The alabarch went on.

"My sons are no longer with us," he said. "They are abroad in the world, preparing themselves to be greater men than their father. But go, be refreshed; it shall be an evening of rejoicing. Lydia, be my right hand and give my guests comfort."

He bowed the Herod and his family out of the chamber and they followed the girl to various apartments for rest and change of raiment.

The alabarch turned to the proconsul.

"If thou wilt follow me, sir—"

"No; I thank thee; I shall return to my house and prepare for thy hospitality. But tell me this: what does Agrippa here?"

"He comes to borrow money, I believe."

"Of you?"

"Doubtless."

"Put him off until you have consulted me. He is not a safe borrower."

CHAPTER IX

"—AS AN ARMY WITH BANNERS!"

Agrippa emerged at sunset from his apartment and descended to the first floor of the alabarch's mansion. The hall was vacant and each of the chambers opening off it was silent, so he wandered through the whole length of the corridor, composedly as a master in his own house. No one did he see until he reached the end of the hall, when there appeared suddenly, as if materialized out of the gloom, the brown serving-woman. The olive-green of her immense eyes glittered in the light of a reed taper she bore. She stepped aside to let him pass and proceeded to light the lamps.

Agrippa stopped to look at her, simply because she was lithe and unusual, but she continued without heeding him. On one of the lamp-bowls the palm-oil had run over and the reed ignited it; but with her bare hand the woman damped it and went her way with a running flame flickering out on the back of her hand.

"Perpol!" the prince exclaimed to himself as he rambled on. "No wonder the phenix comes to Egypt to be born."

At the end of a corridor he passed through an open door into a colonnade fronting a court-garden of extraordinary beauty. It was carpeted with sod, interlined with walks of white stone which led at every divergence to a classic Roman exedra. The awning which usually sheltered the inclosure

from the sun had been rolled up and the cooling sky bent loftily over it. The inert summer airs were heavy with the scent of lotus, red lilies and spice roses which were massed in an oval bed in the center.

At that moment he caught sight of an indolent figure, half sitting, half lying in one of the sections of the exedra.

He knew at first glance that it was not the alabarch's daughter, and, remembering that his last glance in the mirror after his servant had done with him had shown him at his best, he moved without hesitation toward the unknown.

As he approached she raised her eyes and coolly scrutinized him. Her face, thus lifted for inspection, showed him a woman in the later twenties, and of that type which since the beginning could look men between the eyes. She was a Roman, but never in all the Empire were other eyes so black and luminous, or hair so glossy, or cheek so radiant. Her face was an elongated oval, topping a long round neck, which broadened at the base into a sudden and exaggerated slope of marble-white shoulders. The low sweep of the bosom, the girdle just beneath it, shortening the lithe waist, the slender hips, the long lazy limbs completed a perfect type, distinct and unlimited in its powers.

For a fraction of a second the two contemplated each other; perhaps only long enough for each to confess to himself that he had met his like. Then Agrippa came and sat down beside her, and she did not stir from her careless posture. So many, many of the kind had each met and known that they could not be strangers.

"The alabarch should turn his prospective son-in-law into his garden if he would speed the marrying of his daughter," the prince observed.

"He hath the daughter, the garden, and the notion to dispose of her," she answered, "but it is the son-in-law that is wanting."

"But in my long experience with womankind," he replied, "it would not seem improbable to believe that it is the lady and not the lover that makes the witchery of the garden a wasted thing. I have heard of unwilling maids."

"Unwilling in directions," she replied with a smile, "and under certain influences. For if there were any to withstand my conviction, I am ready to wager that there never lived a woman before whom all the world of men could pass without making her choice."

"And perchance," he said promptly, "if there were any to withstand my conviction, I would wager that there never lived a man before whom the world of women could pass without making his choice,—again and again!"

"Which declaration," she responded evenly, "publishes thee a married man; the single gallant declares only for one."

"O deft reasoning! it establishes thee a Roman. What dost thou here, in Alexandria where there is no court, no games, no senators, no Cæsar—naught but riots and Jews?"

"Jews," she said, scanning a rounded arm to see if its rest on the back of the exedra had left a mark on it, "Jews are red-lipped, and eyed like heifers. Sometimes brawn and force weary us in Rome; wherefore we go into Egypt or the East to seek silky and subtle devilishness."

Agrippa moved along the exedra and looked into her eyes. He saw there that peculiar expression which he had expected to find. It was a set questioning, one that runs the scale from appeal to demand—the asking eye, the sign of continual consciousness of the woman-self and her charms.

"Why make the effort? Only tell us of the East that you want us and the East will come to you."

"What? Oriental love-philters, simitars, poisoning, silks and mysticism in the shadow of the Fora and within sound of the Senate-chamber? No, my friend; we must hear the lapping of the Nile or the flow of the Abana, behold camels and priests, and the far level line of the desert, while we languish on bronze bosoms and breathe musks from oriental lips."

"It is not then the Jews," he objected. "They are a temperate, a passionless lot, that carry the Torah like hair-balances in their hearts to discover if any deed they do weighs according to the Law. No, Jews are a straight people. Thou speakest of the—Arab!"

She turned her eyes toward him and measured his length, surveyed his slender hands, and glanced at the warm brown of his complexion.

"So?" she asked with meaning. "An Arab?"

He continued to smile at her.

"And every Jew is thus minded?" she asked, observing later the unmistakable signs of Jewish blood in his profile.

"Unless he is tinctured with the lawlessness of Arabia."

"Ah!" She moved her fan idly and looked up at the sky.

"It is then, of a truth, the Arab, we seek," she added presently. "The Arab that knows no manners but his fathers' manners; who eats, drinks, loves, hates and conquers after his own fashion."

"Without having seen Jerusalem, or Rome?" he asked.

"Rome!" she repeated, looking at him again. "Yes, without having seen Rome or Jerusalem or Alexandria."

Agrippa tilted his head thoughtfully.

"Then, it is good only for a time—for as long as the surfeit of civilization lasts—which lasts no longer the moment one realizes the Arab is not devoted to the bath and that he counts his women among his cattle!"

She laughed outright. "I remember thou didst indorse him not a moment since! Wherefore the change?"

"Refinement in all things! To get it into an Arab, he has to be modified by alien blood."

"A truce! I am in Alexandria; her poetic wickedness has not been entirely exhausted. I—meet new, desirable things—daily!"

Her fan was between them as she spoke and he took the stick of it just above where she held it and was putting it aside when the proconsul, resplendent in a tunic of white and purple, appeared in the colonnade. Beside him was Cypros in her Jewish matron's dress.

Agrippa put the fan out of the way and made his answer.

"Forget not that the East, whether Arab or Alexandrian, is intense—once won. It might harass thee, if thou weariest of it, before it wearies of thee—even to the extreme of pursuing thee to Rome."

The proconsul and the princess approached. The deep-set eyes of the Roman wore a peculiarly satisfied look.

"Men seek for stray cattle in the fields of sweet grass, look for lost jewels in the wallets of thieves, and missing Herods in the company of beautiful women," he observed.

"It is good to have an established reputation, whether we be cattle or jewels or Herods," Agrippa laughed; "for, thou seest, we are disjointed and unsettled, seeing Flaccus now enduring a Jew, again attending a lady.

"Again," said the beauty, "we mark the work of circumstances, which led us into difference just now, O thou disputatious."

"Well said, Junia," the proconsul declared; "some ladies would make gallants out of the fiends! Know ye all one another?" the proconsul continued.

"Except my lovely neighbor," Agrippa replied.

"The Lady Junia, daughter of Euodus, who with her father hath been transplanted here from Rome."

In the colonnade Lydia, the daughter, appeared and beside her a man, by certain of the more obvious signs, of middle-age. But when he drew closer the more obvious gave way to the indisputable testimony of smooth elastic skin, long lashes and strong, white, unworn teeth that

the man was not yet thirty. He was a little above medium height, spare, yet well-built except for a slight lift in the shoulders, beardless, colorless, with straight dark hair, bound with a classic fillet. His general lack of tone brought into noticeable prominence the amiability and luster of his fine brown eyes.

That he was a Jew was apparent no less by dress than by feature. His Jewish garments differed only in color and texture from those worn by his fathers in Judea. The outer gown was of light green scantily shot with points of gold.

The pair walked slowly as if unconscious of the presence of others, and the attitude of the man, bending to look into Lydia's face as she walked, was clearly more attentive than ordinary courtesy demanded.

"Approacheth Justin Classicus," said Flaccus. "In that garment he looks much like a chameleon that has strayed across an Attic meadow in spring."

"Behold, already the witchery of the garden!" Agrippa said softly to Junia.

"This," added the proconsul, introducing the new-comer, "is Justin Classicus, the latest fashion in philosophers, the most popular Jew in Alexandria."

Classicus bowed, glanced at Junia and again at Agrippa, and made a place for Lydia on the exedra, so that he might sit on a taboret at her feet.

"What news, good sir," Agrippa asked, "among the schools over the world?"

"News?" Classicus repeated. "Nothing. Philo is silent; Petronius is mersed in affairs in Bithynia; Rome's gone a-frolicking, scholars and all, to Capri."

"Alas!" said Flaccus; "nothing happens now but scandal; even the ancient miracles of divine visitations, phenixes, comets and monsters have ceased."

"But you say nothing of religion," said Classicus. "Yet possibly it follows, now, in order."

"After monsters, phenixes and the rest," put in Agrippa.

"What is it?" Flaccus asked.

"Perchance thou hast heard," Classicus responded. "It issues out of Judea, which adds to its interest, since we are accustomed to nothing but sobriety from Palestine."

"What is it?" Flaccus insisted.

"A new Messiah!"

"Oh," Agrippa cried wearily, "a new Messiah! How many in the past generation, Cypros? Ten, twenty, a hundred? Alas! Classicus, that thou shouldst serve up as new something which every Jew hath expected and discovered and rejected for the last three thousand years."

"O happy race!" Junia exclaimed; "which hath something to which to look forward! But what is a Messiah?"

"A god," said Agrippa.

"The anointed king," Cypros corrected hastily, "of godly origin that shall restore the Jews to dominion over the world!"

"*Mirabile dictu!*" Junia cried.

"Olympian Jove!" Flaccus exclaimed, smiting his muscular leg. "What a task, what an ambition, what an achievement! I behold Cæsar's dudgeon. Go on, Classicus; though it be old to thy remarkable race, used to aspiring to the scope of Olympus, let us hear, who have never wished to be more than Cæsar!"

"It is not so much of the Messiah," Classicus responded, smiling, "as his—school, if it may be so called. One of the followers appeared at the Library some time ago, perchance as long as three years ago—an Egyptian of the upper classes, much traveled, and told such a remarkable tale of the Messiah's birth and death that he instantly lost caste for truthfulness."

"Alas!" Lydia exclaimed in a tone of disappointment. "Why will they insist that the Messiah must be a miraculous creature, demeaned like the pagan gods and proceeding through the uproar of tumbling satrapies to the high place of Supreme Necromancer of the Universe!"

"Sweet Lydia!" Agrippa protested. "Roman hard-headedness hath turned thee against our traditions!"

"But the Egyptian did not picture such a man," Classicus said very gently. "He went to the other extreme, so far that his hearers had to contemplate an image of a carpenter's son, elected to a leadership over a horde of slaves and outcasts and visionary aristocrats; who taught a doctrine of submission, poverty and love, and who finally was crucified for blasphemy during a popular uproar."

"It hath the recommendation of being different!" Lydia declared frankly. "Tell me more."

"There is no more."

"What! Is it dead?" she insisted. "Dead as all the others? Then it is different only in its inception."

"No," said Agrippa thoughtfully; "it is not dead, but dying hard. The Sanhedrim is punishing its followers in Jerusalem at present. Thou rememberest, Cypros; Marsyas was charged with the apostasy."

"So material as to engage the Sanhedrim?" Lydia pursued.

"We hear," responded Classicus, "that Jerusalem and even Judea are unsafe for them, and numbers have appeared in the city of late—"

"Among us?" Lydia asked.

"No; in Rhacotis," replied Classicus; whereupon Flaccus raised an inquiring eye.

"Is that the sect that the prefect has been warned to observe?" he demanded.

"Doubtless; it seems that their foremost fault is rebellion against authority," Classicus made answer. "So much for their doctrine of submission."

"Tell us that," Lydia urged.

"Apostasy," Agrippa answered for Classicus, "flagrant apostasy; for the Sanhedrim came out of the hall of judgment to stone an offender, for the first time in seven years. I saw the execution; in fact, in a way I was brought close to the circumstances by a friend of the apostate who was attached to my household."

"Is he with thee?" Flaccus asked pointedly.

"No, we left him in Ptolemais. But the note of their presence in Alexandria must have been sounded early, directly they arrived, for I departed from Jerusalem the day following the first movement against the sect, and thence to Ptolemais and Alexandria with ordinary despatch."

"They did not announce themselves," Flaccus replied. "Vitellius announced them. He wants an Essene who is believed to be among them."

Agrippa raised his head and looked straight at Flaccus. He remembered that he had betrayed Marsyas' refuge. Cypros drew in a breath of alarm.

"That was simply done, Flaccus," Agrippa remarked coolly.

The princess laid her hand on the ruddy flesh of the proconsul's arm.

"We have been frank with thee, my lord," she said, "and thou art a noble Roman—therefore a safe guardian of our unguarded words."

The others maintained a wondering silence. Flaccus smiled.

"Vitellius hath bidden me to look for him, adding with certain fervid embellishments that he hath sought everywhere but in Egypt and Hades. Vitellius is no diplomat. Whistling finds the lost hound sooner than search."

"But thou wilt not find him, noble Flaccus," Cypros besought in a lowered tone. "Yield us thy promise that thou wilt not betray him!"

"My promise, lady! Indeed, I gave it in my heart a moment since. Hear it now. Alexandria is subject to thee. Let him come and be our ward."

"I shall depend on that," Agrippa said decidedly. "For I shall despatch a servant for the man, the instant I can so do!"

"And yet," Cypros insisted, still distressed, "if Vitellius requires him at thy hands, how shalt thou avoid giving him up?"

Flaccus smiled at her with softened eyes.

"O gentle lady, the day the young man should arrive, I shall set the prefect on the Nazarenes in Rhacotis. If he be not found, none without this trustworthy circle shall have cause to believe that I am not in all conscience striving to help a brother proconsul run down a fugitive."

"A shrewd strategy," Lydia said dryly, "but one rather costly for the Nazarenes."

"The Nazarenes! Who wastes tears over them? Thine own straight people condemn them, lady."

"An exhilarating recreation, indeed," she repeated as if to herself, "for the prefect, the rabble Alexandrians and the Nazarenes! O seekers of esthetic sport, that will be a rare occasion! Yield me thy promise, my Lord Agrippa, that thou wilt tell us the day the young man arrives!"

Flaccus' face darkened for a moment, but at that moment the alabarch appeared in the colonnade.

"Here comes our host," said Agrippa. "Hast ordered the garlands, Lysimachus?"

"The feast is prepared," Lysimachus replied, and, turning to Flaccus, continued: "Thou shalt see, now, good sir, how Jews feast. In all thine experiences, thou hast never broken bread with a Jew."

"Not so!" Flaccus retorted, "for I was present at the Lady Cypros' wedding-feast!"

"Ho! Flaccus remembering a wedding-feast!" Agrippa laughed, as he arose, taking Junia's hand. "Mars, cherishing a confection!"

"Perchance," Cypros ventured, pleased and coloring, "if Mars' confections were more plentiful and the noble Flaccus' wedding-feasts less rare, they both might forget the one!"

"Never!" Flaccus declared, "though I were Hymen himself!"

As they proceeded toward the colonnade, Cypros drew closer to him.

"Thou canst not know what service thou hast done us by that promise," she said. "It is more than the youth's security; it means my husband's success. For in this young man, we have found Fortune itself!"

The proconsul made no answer, for his gray-brown eyes flickered suddenly as if a candle had been moved close by them.

CHAPTER X

FLACCUS WORKS A COMPLEXITY

Near sunset the following day the alabarch appeared in the porch of the proconsul's mansion,—an incident which would speedily have spread wildly over the Brucheum had not the shrewd Lysimachus come in Roman dress, unostentatiously and hidden by the dusk. The slave who conducted the visitor to the master's presence was suspicious, but he did not lapse from courtesy. If he had prejudices they had to await a popular uproar for expression, and popular uproars at present against the Jews were manifestly in disfavor with the proconsul.

Flaccus received the alabarch in the great gloom of his atrium. The torches had not been lighted, the cancelli admitted only dusk. The shadowy shape of the proconsul, relaxed in his curule, alone and immovable, thus surrounded by meditative atmosphere, suddenly appealed to the alabarch as out of harmony with the legate's blunt nature.

As the Jew drew near, he saw rolls and parcels of linen and parchment, petitions and memorials, scattered about on the pavement, as if the Roman had let them roll off his table or drop from his hand unconsciously. His elbow rested on the ivory arm of his curule, his cheek on his clenched hand. The undimmed gaze of the Jewish magistrate detected lines in the hard face that he had never seen before.

But Flaccus stirred and drew himself up to attention.

"Come up, Lysimachus," he said. "There is a chair here, for thee."

The alabarch advanced and dropped into the seat that Flaccus had indicated.

"This," he observed, nodding toward the dark torch at the proconsul's side, "would lead me to believe thou art inventing rhymes."

"Or conspiracies. Plots and poetry demand the same exciting dusk. Well, has the Herod sued?"

"Not he, but his lady."

"His lady! By Hecate, the mystery is solved. Thus it is that he hath been able to borrow every usurer poor from Rome to Damascus!"

"He wins upon her virtue; but withhold thy interpretation of my words until I show thee what they mean. She is beautiful and virtuous; a Herod and married—a conjunction of circumstances in these days so rare as to be out of nature—therefore, phenomenal. So we toss our yellow gold into her lap in recognition of the entertainment she hath afforded—being unusual."

"Virtuous; that means, faithful to the man she married. No woman is faithful except she loves her love. A just procession in the order of the Furies' reign. The warm of heart, unrewarded; the unworthy, anointed and worshiped."

"This melancholy twilight hath made thee morbid, Avillus. You Romans take womankind too seriously."

"When womankind or a kind of woman can drain the world's purse, methinks she is a serious matter. What sum does she want?"

"Three hundred thousand drachmæ."

"O Midas; give her the touch! Let all her possessions be gold! Didst advance it to her?"

"If thou wilt remember, it was thy command that I consult thee, first."

"Temperate Jew! To remember a consular suggestion, while a lovely woman, and a Herod at that, besought thee for the contents of thy purse. Oh, thou art an old, old man, Lysimachus!"

The alabarch laughed and frowned the next moment.

"Beshrew the jest! Men who make light of virtue deserve incontinent wives. And there is this one thing apparent, which should make me serious. The Herod is absolutely penniless, and I can not turn that tender woman and her babes out of doors to take the roads of Egypt."

"Rest thee in that small matter. Thou and I can spare her sesterces enough to ship her back to Judea."

Lysimachus was silent for a moment.

"She would not be satisfied," he said at last. "She wants three talents, though she never had afterward a crust of bread. It seems that they permitted a free-born man to pawn himself for that sum in Ptolemais and accepted the money from him!"

"Shade of Herod!" the proconsul exclaimed.

"It seems also that the man is in peril of the authorities, having placed himself in jeopardy to save Agrippa from Herrenius Capito, who had run Agrippa to earth for a debt he owes to Cæsar—"

"O, that is the way of it! I know of that man! Well, then, perchance it is not so much because she loves her husband as because the debt to the pawned one chafes. I hear that he is young and comely."

"Forget the slanderous jest, Flaccus; I am ashamed of it. What shall I do in this matter?"

"Lend her three talents."

"She would buy the man's freedom, but what then? She would still be here in Alexandria as penniless as ever."

"The consular suggestion, it seems, only held thee a moment in abeyance," the proconsul said slyly. "She will get the three hundred thousand drachmæ, yet!"

"She will not," the alabarch declared, "First, because I have it not; next, because I am not eager to pay a Herod's debts."

"Or, chiefly, because thou shouldst never see it again."

The alabarch tapped the pavement with his foot and looked away. The attitude was confession to a belief in the proconsul's convictions.

"What sum couldst thou lend by pinching thyself?" Flaccus asked presently.

"Two hundred thousand drachmæ—but not to a Herod. I could lose five talents without ruin."

"Give her five talents, then; give it—do not slander a gift by calling it a loan."

"What! Toss an alms to a Herod? They would throw it in my face!"

"Jupiter! but they are haughty!"

The alabarch made no answer and Flaccus looked out at the night dropping over his garden.

"Why not hold the lady in hostage, here, for five talents?" he asked after a while.

The alabarch looked startled; it was Roman extremes, a trifle too brutal for him to dress in diplomacy. He demurred.

"Not brutal, Lysimachus," Flaccus said earnestly. "Herod can not use her well; it will be a respite from her long wandering and poverty. Thou canst say to her that the five talents are all thou canst afford. Tell her that it will do no more than beach them penniless in Italy; that thou hast a crust for Agrippa—will she starve him by eating half of it, herself?"

Flaccus laughed at his own words, but perplexity came into the alabarch's face.

"But why?" he asked.

"Why? Is it not plain to you? Keep her so that Agrippa will in honor have to redeem her if ever he become possessed of five talents!"

Now the alabarch laughed. "I am not so sure. Is it native in a Herod to love his wife so well? It would be a bad mortgage for me to foreclose—one cast-off female whose chief uses are for tears!"

"No, by Venus! She is too comely to play Dido. But try my plan, Alexander. It is well worth the experiment."

The alabarch arose and stepped down from the rostrum. "It—it is—" he hesitated. "But then, I should have them on my hands, under any circumstances."

He took a few more steps, and paused for thought.

"Well enough," he said finally, "we shall see."

With a motion of farewell to the proconsul, he passed out and disappeared.

Flaccus dropped back into his curule, and lapsed again into gloomy meditation. The night fell and obscured him. He seemed to be waiting, but not with marked impatience.

Again the atriensis bowed before him.

"A lady who says she was summoned," he said.

"Let her enter. And bid the lampadary light the torch, yonder, not here—and only one."

The atriensis disappeared, and presently a slave with a burning reed set fire to the wick in one of the brass bowls by the arch into the vestibule, and Junia appeared.

"Hither, and sit beside me, Junia," Flaccus called to her.

He drew the chair closer, which the alabarch had occupied, and Junia, dropping off her mantle and vitta, sat down in it.

"What a despot one's living is!" she exclaimed. "But for the fact I owe my meat and wine to thy favor, thou shouldst have come to me, to-night, not I to thee!"

"I came often enough at thy beck, Junia! It were time I was visited!"

"Thou ill-timed tyrant! I am expected at a feast to-night, and my young gallant doubtless waits and wonders, at my house."

"Let him wait! I was his predecessor, and his better. Methinks thou hast reduced thy standard of lovers of late."

"No longer the man but the substance," she answered. "In the old days it was muscle and front; now it is purse and position."

"The first was love; the second calculation. Why wilt thou marry this obscure young Alexandrian—whoever he be?"

"To be assured of a living—to cast off the hand thou hast had upon me, thus long."

He leaned nearer that he might look into her face.

"So!" he exclaimed. "Does it chafe, in truth?"

She laughed. "No," she said. "Why should I prefer the provision of one man above another's? Young Obscurity's authority over me, his wife, would be no less tyrannical than Flaccus'—my one-time dear."

Flaccus took her hand and run his palm over her small knuckles.

"*Eheu!*" he said. "I shall not be happy to see thee wedded—"

"Nor shall I; like the fabulous maiden who weeps on the eve of her marriage, I shall in good earnest heave a sigh over the days of my freedom. Alas! the mind grows old young, that learns the fullness of life early. There are as many ashes on my heart as there are in this bulging temple of thine, Avillus."

"Dost thou love this—boy? Beshrew him, let him have no name!"

"How? Dost thou love the usurer that lends thee money, Flaccus?"

"What dost thou love, at all?" he asked.

"Sundry old memories; perchance the image of a consul, less portly, less purple, less stiff—and less imposing!"

"Pluto! am I like that?" he demanded.

"To one that was thy dear in younger days. To one who does not remember the sprightlier man, thou couldst be less charming."

"Younger? Now, how much younger? Six years at most! Thou hast not changed in that time; why should I?"

"O Avillus; between the stage of the sun at noon and the previous hour, there is no appreciable change. But mark the difference an hour makes at sunset. But why this inquisition? Has Eros pierced thee in a new spot?"

"Pierced me twenty years ago and his arrow sticketh yet in the wound it made!"

"What! Spitted on an arrow during all those days thou didst love me?"

"But Eros has arrows and arrows, of many kinds, and two diverse barbs may with all consistency find lodgment at once in a heart. But of myself we may speak later; at present, I am moved to labor with thee for thine own welfare. Why wilt thou marry this boy, for his purse, when there are men in pain for thy favor?"

She studied him a moment. "I can not take thee back, Flaccus; love's ashes can not be refired though the breath of Eros himself blew upon them."

"Impetuous conclusion; hast thou forgotten the twenty-year-old wound which I confessed just now? I am this moment only an arbiter for my better—my betters—"

"I shall keep the twenty-year-old barb in mind," she said. "Methinks it is that which pricks thee into activity for me."

"A wiser surmise than the first. But curb thy frivolous spirit; I am weighted with the business of the great. What dost thou here, O divinity, away from Rome and the arms of Cæsar?"

"Dost thou forget that we were invited away, because of my father's unfortunate preference of Sejanus, during the days of Sejanus' greatness?"

"O Venus, can not the ban be lifted? Behold,"—stretching out his muscular arm, "Flaccus is a strong man."

"Even then, is Tiberius thy better in comeliness? Perchance he would not please me."

"I speak, now, to thy sordid self; but if thy maiden love of grace still lives in thee, there shall another serve thee. Have I not said I indorse two?"

"Two!"

"Two. Of Cæsar first. His part in the bargain is really the smaller thing. Thou, who couldst dint Flaccus' heart in Flaccus' stonier days, who upset Caligula's domestic peace, put gray hairs in Macro's forelock—all these in their doughty prime, methinks my poor doting ancient in Capri will fall like a city with a thousand breaches in its wall."

"Oh, doubtless," she admitted; "but what of myself? If thine impurpled countenance—for all it is as firm as cocoanut flesh—if thine impurpled countenance does not suit my Epicurean tastes, how shall I content myself with the toothless love-making of a mumbling Boeotian?"

"Thou canst comfort thyself with a comely bankrupt on the gold of the toothless one."

"It is complicated; too much duplication and detail," she objected.

"Thou hast done it before," he declared. "Thou art right expert."

She laughed and leaned back in her chair.

"Name me the comely one," she commanded.

"Agrippa." There was silence, in which she lifted her lowered eyes very slowly and faced him. Amusement made small lines about her eyes, and in her face was worldly wisdom mingled with a sort of friendliness.

"And now," she said in a quiet tone, "for the twenty-year-old wound. Is it the Lady Herod?"

His gaze dropped; emotion put out the half-humor which had enlivened his face. Presently he scowled.

"I have twitched the barb," she opined; "the wound is sore."

"Sore!" he brought out between clenched teeth. "Sore! I tell thee, that though it is twenty years since I stood and saw her bound to him by the flamens, I have not ceased day or night to suffer!"

Junia looked at him with frank amazement on her face; the proconsul was declaring, with passion, a thing which she could not believe possible. Such love as she knew, by the carefulest tendance, would have burnt out and resolved into cold ashes in half that time. That it should endure years, suffer discouragement, bridge distances and surmount obstacles, all uncherished and unrequited, was fiction, pure and simple. Yet to reconcile this conviction with the honest suffering of the bluff man at her side was a task she could not attempt.

"Flaccus, I never pained thee so," she murmured. "Perchance the Jewess dropped madness from a philter in thy wine. And for simple cruelty, too, for she is fond of her graceful Arab."

The proconsul raised his head and looked at her with such speechless ferocity, that she shrank away from him, remembering former experiences. But he dropped his head into his hands and did nothing.

She watched him for a moment then ventured discreetly:

"Is it thy wish to win him from her, or her from him?"

"Both!" he answered. "The one accomplished, the other follows!" With a sudden accession of emotion, he laid his short, powerful fingers about her smooth wrist and bent over her.

"Help me, Junia!" he besought. "Weigh what I offer against the portion of any Alexandrian. By the lips of Lysimachus, the richest man in the city, I know how little even he may waste—two hundred thousand drachmæ—the cost of a single necklace Cæsar might put about thy throat. I never failed Tiberius; his esteem of me is great. I have only to ask and the decree of banishment, or the sentence against thy father, shall be lifted. Thou shalt return in honor to Rome; thy father shall be one of Cæsar's ministers, and thou shalt take thy place among the first of the patricians. And Tiberius lays no bond of fidelity upon his ladies. I saw thee, last night! I saw thee run thine eyes along the Herod's sleek length—curse him, it was that which undid me! I saw thy fancy incline toward him. It will be a new and pleasant game for thee, Junia—a game in which thou art skilled—but it is my life—my very life to me!"

She frowned at the jewels on her fingers. There was no reason why she should not lend herself to Flaccus' schemes when her enlistment in his cause assured to her the realization of the highest ambitions of her kind. But enough of the creature impulse toward perversity, admitting that his gain would be as great as hers, restrained her. She was uncomfortable, uncertain, peevish. Meanwhile, the proconsul's gray-brown eyes, large, intense, demanded of her.

"Wait!" she fretted at last. "Thou art hasty! And perchance thou dost only make place for this mysterious fugitive for whom she was so solicitous last night!"

He remembered his own jest with the alabarch, and added thereto the impatient surmise of this penetrative woman. Could such a thing be possible? He sprang to his feet, all the intensity of his emotion concentrated in a spasm of fury and menace.

"Let him come!" he said between his teeth. "Let him come!"

She worked her hand loose from him.

"Wait," she repeated. "Thou hast built gigantically on no foundation. Let something happen. And if I am pleased to follow thy plans, I may; but be assured if I am not, I will not. My debt to thee is less than thy demands, Avillus."

She arose and put on her mantle, while he stood watching her every movement.

"I shall wait," he said presently, "only a little time."

She made a motion of impatience and withdrew from the atrium.

He stood motionless for a long time; then he called his atriensis.

"Send hither the chief apparitor," he said.

The captain of the proconsul's personal guard appeared and saluted. Flaccus, in the meantime, had searched through the documents on the floor and by the dim light identified one.

"Take this," he said, handing the apparitor the parchment, "and make search for the man herein described. Seek him in Ptolemais, wherever a Nazarene warren hides, in Jerusalem, in Alexandria—meet every incoming ship, spend the half of my fortune, wear out my army—but find him, or lose thy life!"

The chief apparitor looked unflinching into the proconsul's gray-brown eyes.

"I hear," he said.

The proconsul waved his hand and the soldier withdrew.

CHAPTER XI

THE HOUSE OF DEFENSE

Meanwhile Marsyas lay on his straw pallet at the house of Peter, the usurer, in Ptolemais, night after night and made calculation.

By fair winds, Agrippa should reach Alexandria in so many days. Allowing time to begin and complete the negotiations for a loan, so many more days should elapse. Then the same number with a few allowed for foul weather would be required to return to Ptolemais. About such a day, so many weeks hence, he told himself he should be ransomed.

Six weeks is a long time for a free man to be enslaved. He sighed and turned again on his pallet and trusted in the God who does not forget prayers.

It was a strange, sordid bidding of time for Marsyas. The man he served was the first of the kind he had ever known. The ascetic refinement of the white old Essene, the simple purity of Stephen, the polished rigor of the Pharisee Saul, the naïve sophistication of the Romanized Herod had constituted his social horizon, and he had come to believe that the world's manner was either cultured or simple.

But he went into the usurer's counting-room to meet the borrowing world, to be amazed and shocked and finally to fortify himself to control it.

It was not to change his nature; it was to develop latent powers in him that were the fruit of long generations of Judaism. At night his fingers were soiled by contact with the coins, the counting-room had become noisome with the day's heat and the unhappy humanity that had come and gone through the busy hours. But he summed up, not what he had sacrificed in soul-sweetness and optimism, for that was a loss he did not realize, but his triumphs in achieving whatever he had been bidden to do, in his mastery of men and things and in the thoroughness of his workmanship. However loudly his mind declared that he was out of place, he felt no great repugnance to his duty.

After the newness of his experience wore off, as it did in a very short time, the days began to go with wearing deliberation, as all days go that are counted impatiently. His sorrow and his wrongs were his only companions; as his anxiety for his liberty and Agrippa's success increased, his healthy indifference to his unwholesome atmosphere began to decline rapidly, his resentment against his oppression to grow. The six weeks ebbed out and passed. His anxiety flowed into his bitterness and his bitterness into his anxiety until they were one. Troubled about his liberty, he clenched his teeth and thought on Saul; thinking of his impotent position against the powerful Pharisee, he watched the harbor from the counting-room and trembled whenever a sail crossed it.

Inactivity became eventually unbearable, for an unemployed moment was a miserable moment. He could not devise a way to liberty, nor further aid his one ally into power, so he turned to his own resources against Saul.

Continuing cautiously to visit the proseuchæ by night, he learned something, which he heard casually at the time, but which eventually developed into a matter of importance. He heard that the Nazarenes were flying from Jerusalem in great numbers, scattering in bodies from Damascus to Alexandria, and from Jerusalem to Rome. The rabbis of Ptolemais were concerned to discover that there was a community hiding in the city, because they feared the evils of a persecution, established in Ptolemais, as much as the influence of the apostasy upon the faithful.

When Marsyas admitted casually to himself, after he had heard the tidings, that the apostasy must have numbers of followers, he was carried in his thinking to the realization that numbers meant strength and strength meant resistance. Why, then, should not these people turn on the Pharisee? Here, in a twinkling, he believed that he had discovered abettors, allies whom he could instantly enlist in his own cause.

But before he could deduce resolution from this electrifying admission, events began to mark his days.

Late one afternoon, after the time for his ransoming was out, a man approached the opening in the grating. The shadows in the badly-lighted chamber made client and steward and all the appointments in the dingy counting-room imperfect shapes to the eye. The new-comer leaned down to the opening and peered at Marsyas as he pushed a fibula of gold through the opening.

"I am in need," the man said. "Canst thou not give me the value of this in money?"

The voice was resonant and strangely familiar to Marsyas. In the gloom the great lifted shoulders of the man, bending from his height, brought back on a sudden the chamber in the college at Jerusalem. The young Essene came closer to the grating and looked at the applicant.

There was a mutual start of recognition; in Marsyas perhaps the chill that a fugitive feels who finds himself detected. The man was the Rabbi Eleazar.

"Thou! Here, with them?" the rabbi exclaimed in a suppressed whisper.

"I am here, Rabbi," Marsyas replied, "but alone."

Eleazar looked at him, but the examination under the difficulty of the gloom was not satisfactory; besides, there was the stir of others who had come in behind him and were able to listen. Marsyas swept the fibula into one of the coin-baskets and passed a handful of silver to the rabbi.

"Meet me without at the end of the first watch to-night," the rabbi added, as he thanked Marsyas. "Do not fear me, for I am also a victim of thine enemy."

Marsyas saluted him, and the rabbi disappeared. A figure in armor stepped up to the place where Eleazar had stood. He was helmeted and greaved and had a line of purple about the hem of his short tunic. He applied for a loan and yielded as indorsement the favor of Cæsar and the family name of Aulus. Marsyas withdrew hastily into the overhanging shadow of the grating, received the officer's note, counted out the gold and drew in a free breath when another stepped into his place. It was Vitellius' legionary.

"Am I run to earth?" Marsyas asked himself.

At the end of the first watch that night he prepared to follow Eleazar's suggestion, if only to discover what to expect. That he was not filled with confidence nor resigned to suffer what might befall him was evident by his slipping a knife into his belt when he made himself ready.

He went out into the unlighted street and looked about him for Eleazar. The tall figure of the rabbi emerged from the darkness a moment after Marsyas appeared and approached the young man.

"Have no fear," the rabbi said. "We are common victims of the same unjust suspicion; let us not be suspicious of each other."

"Thy words are fair, Rabbi, but I do not know thee. Whom I most trusted hath failed me of late; it must follow then that I am not sure of strangers. Tell me first thy business with me."

"I am Eleazar, the rabbi, who sat with Saul in the college that day when Joel, the Levite, came with news of Stephen of Galilee."

"I know that; also that thou knowest that Saul oppresses me. Thou art a rabbi and zealous for the Law. Art thou sent for me on Saul's mission?"

"No, brother."

"Or the proconsul's?"

"I know nothing of the proconsul; I am here, driven from Jerusalem by Saul who charged me with apostasy because I would not aid him in his oppression."

For a moment Marsyas was dumb with amazement.

"He is mad!" he cried when speech came to him.

"Is it madness when he persecutes others, but villainy when he oppresses thee?" Eleazar demanded.

"I pray thy pardon," Marsyas said quickly, "if I seem to miscall his work. It might follow in reason that he should accuse me, but thou—thou a rabbi, accepted before the Law and clean-skirted before all Judea—that he should accuse thee of apostasy seems to be the work of no sane man."

"But it is! He layeth plans keen as Joshua's who warred under God's banner, and he striketh with the strength of an army. Unless he is stayed he will devastate to the end!"

Marsyas came close and laid a hand on the rabbi's shoulder.

"What of Stephen?" he asked with stiffened lips. "How did it come to pass?"

For a moment there was silence, and then the rabbi drew up and shook himself.

"It will not help thee, young brother," he said, with an impatience which was only fortification against feeling. "It is ill enough to take a blasphemer and deliver him up to punishment; ask no more, for it wrenches me to think of it."

Marsyas stood frozen; he did not want to hear more, after the rabbi had spoken, but when the reviving current of life stirred in his veins, it was turned to a fever for vengeance. Now! Not to wait for safety, or for circumstances or for men or things. It seemed that he should not eat or sleep till his work was done.

Eleazar, seeking to turn the current of the young man's thoughts, which he believed, being unable to see his face, must be sorrowfully retrospective, asked presently:

"Art thou here with—them?"

"With whom?"

"The Nazarenes."

Marsyas seized the rabbi's shoulder with a fresh grasp.

"Where are they?" he demanded.

"Dost thou—in truth, dost thou not know?" he demanded.

"Accused though I am, I am a good Jew, Rabbi. Never until now have I wished to know where they house themselves. But even were it the powers of darkness which alone could help me, now, I should not hesitate! Where are these apostates?"

"Here, in Ptolemais. What wilt thou have of them, Marsyas?"

"Were not heathen and idolaters instruments for the Lord's work? Have not even the beasts of the fields served His ends?"

"What dost thou meditate?"

"Saul's undoing!" Eleazar heard him thoughtfully and answered after a silence.

"So be it, then; if thou choosest that spirit, it must serve. Thou hast a dead friend to avenge and I, the guiltless oppressed to justify. So the one end, the prevention of Saul's work, be attained, what matter if the spirit be mine or thine!"

"Well enough; the means, then! Where are these Nazarenes?"

"They—they meet on the water-front, nightly, since the oppression hath been instituted against them," Eleazar answered reluctantly, as if he doubted the propriety of betraying a knowledge of the apostates' habits.

"Nightly!" Marsyas repeated. "So then to-night! Where is the place? We will go there!"

Eleazar stood undecided and debated with himself. But the pressure of the young man's impelling firmness assumed material force against him and he yielded doubtfully.

"Come, then," he said, and his hesitation melted in the face of the other's decision.

Marsyas put himself at the rabbi's side and together they tramped through the dark streets toward the poorer districts of Ptolemais, along the harbor. It was poor indeed; the houses were the smallest in the city, low, square boxes of sun-dried earth little higher than a man's head and mere stalls for space and comfort. Each, however, had a numerous tenantry, and wherever doors were opened the two men saw within, now Jews, now Greeks or Romans. Although uproar and disorder common in the lower walks of the city went on in the environments, the particular passage Marsyas and the rabbi walked was quiet though not deserted. But it was a veritable black well, that maintained a swift slope for many rods and indicated the proximity to the water.

"How found you them, in this hole?" Marsyas asked, astonished, in spite of his intent thoughts, at the black labyrinth.

"I, too, was in hiding for my life's sake," Eleazar answered.

The brooding cornices of the houses, visible against the strip of starry sky, rounded suddenly and closed in upon the passage. Marsyas saw that they were nearing a blind end, when a door opened in the cul-de-sac, disclosing several other men preceding Marsyas and the rabbi.

"Haste!" Eleazar whispered, and, seizing Marsyas' hand, ran so that they reached the lighted doorway before it closed again.

They entered with the others, and the bolts were shot behind them.

CHAPTER XII

SCATTERING THE FLOCK

They were in a single large chamber, rough, barren and barn-like. The gray drapery of cob-webs was sown with chaff; there was the fresh smell of grain with the mustiness of dust contending for prominence; the floor was dry packed earth that had not tasted rain for a century. High above the few resin torches burning on the walls, huge cedar beams traversed the ceiling which was tight, that no moisture nor the consuming rays of the sun should enter. It was an abandoned grain house, builded just without the reach of the highest storm-wave on the water-front.

There were two or three benches, but not seating capacity for the number gathered there. So the youths, women and children sat on the earth along the walls and left the benches to the older men of the assembly.

Marsyas glanced at the gathering. He saw there not one, but many races, however Jewish in predominance. In most of the number he found a common expression, which made him think. It was a certain delineation of fortitude, a brave patience that does not forswear persistence, however seriously the heart fears. In others, there were curiosity and expectation; in still others, apprehension and suspicion. These, he noted, seemed not to wear that look of uplift; intuitively, he knew them to be investigators, more or less convinced, at the moment. Others, he saw, came with bundles of belongings as if prepared for a journey.

Eleazar selected a place by the door and signing to Marsyas that he would sit and await the young Essene's will, dropped down on the packed earth, and, drawing up his powerful limbs,

clasped his arms around them. The torch above his head threw the shadow of his projecting kerchief over his face and hid his features.

There was space between him and the next sitter, a young woman wearing the dress of a Jewish matron. She glanced uneasily at the huge stranger and drew closer to a man of her own age, on the other side. Marsyas, seized with a new interest, sat down between the rabbi and the woman.

At the farther end of the building a man arose. He had a pilgrim's scrip at his side; he put away a staff as he gained his feet, and the heightened color of the brown on his cheek-bones and his nose showed that he had but recently come from a long journey.

He raised his arms over the assembly, and each of those gathered there bowed his head and clasped his hands.

"O patient Bearer of the Cross," he prayed, "let us not faint thus soon—we who are driven on! Let Thy footsteps be illumined that we may go Thy way, even though they lead unto Calvary! Teach us Thy submission, quicken us with Thy love, clothe us with Thy charity, that they who oppress us may see that submission is stronger than rebellion, that love is more enduring than hate, that charity is broad enough for our enemies. And if it be Thy will that we should love the spoiler of Thy Church and the destroyer of Thy saints, teach us then to love that enemy!"

This of a surety was not what Marsyas had expected to hear. Undoubtedly the praying man spoke of Saul. The prayer continued.

"Lo, Thou hast tarried thus long away from us, and evil already gathereth thick about Thy people. In those days, when we asked and were answered, voice unto voice, we did not grope. Now, O Lord, we ask and there answers but the speech of faith left in us, and that in grievous hours—doth not bid the cup to pass from us!"

Marsyas' chin sank on his breast; somehow the faltering sentences fell on some keenly sensitive spot in his soul, for in spirit he winced, and listened intently, in spite of himself.

"Yet, judge us not as wavering, O Lord; we but miss Thee from our side, who loved Thee, O Christ!"

The sentence ceased suddenly at the edge of a break in the voice. It seemed that human sorrow had broken in on an inspiration, and the sound of a sob arose here and there from the bowed circle of Nazarenes.

Marsyas suddenly saw the dark trampled space without Hanaleel, the falling night, the still figure of Stephen stretched on the sand, the three humble mourners who of all Jerusalem were not afraid to sorrow for him, and the young Essene choked back a cry to the praying man,

"I know thy pain, brother!"

For that instant bond of sorrow it did not matter that, according to Marsyas' lights, the praying man blasphemed and besought another than the one Lord God as divinity. The Nazarene had loved a friend and lost him from his side; the voice had ceased and, in place of the warm content, only agony and emptiness abode in the heart.

"Show us Thy will; let us see and we shall follow; above all things quicken our ears that Thy loved voice may still be sweet in them across the boundaries of Death and through the darkness which embraceth our heads. Lo, Thou art with us alway even unto the end, we believe, we believe!"

There was too much human suffering, self-examination and beseeching in the prayer for it to help any who heard it. It was not like Stephen's prayers, which had seized upon Marsyas' spirit because of their unshaken confidence and beatification, and had terrified him, as assaults upon his steadfastness. In those moments, he had been afraid of the Nazarene heresy; now, he was stirred to pity for the heretics. The sensation added to his resolution against Saul.

Another voice roused him, by reason of its difference from that of the first speaker. It was not loud, but it carried and penetrated every dusty corner of the great space, with the strength and evenness of a sounded horn. The temper as well as the quality was different; it was triumphant, eager, glad.

"It is the hour of fulfilment, beloved; the accomplishment of the prophecy, for by persecution shall we who are witnesses to the truth be scattered into all the world that the gospel may come unto every creature. The flesh in us which crieth out and feareth death shall be the instrument whereby fleeing to save ourselves we shall go quickened into distant lands and testify. Wherefore let not any soul lament this day nor denounce the circumstance which sendeth him into strange places and unto the Gentile. Ye were not charged to save your flesh but to save your souls. And whosoever saveth his soul hath Christ in his bosom and Christ on his tongue; wherefore the Redeemer is not dead and buried, nor even passed from among you, but living and preaching numerously, by many tongues. Doubt not ye shall have your Gethsemane and your Calvary, yet likewise ye shall arise from the dead and enter into Paradise. The oppressor shall persecute, the rod hang over you, the Cross be set up, but though ye go forth unweaponed ye shall level walls and throw down tyrants by the power of love; ye shall conduct peace and mercy through the flights ye make from oppression, and Life everlasting shall begin where your hour is accomplished and ye die.

"If there be any among you who are timid in flesh that say in their souls, 'Let us find a secure place and live secretly and in godliness away from the abominations of the wicked,' verily I say unto such, if the world were precious enough unto the Son of God that He suffered death to save it, it is not too evil for the habitation of them who were in sin and ransomed by His sacrifice.

"If there be those among you given to wrath and vengeance who shall say, 'Let us fall upon the oppressor and put him to death,' verily I say unto such if the Son of God, who was despised and rejected of men, who raised the dead and cleansed lepers, directed not His powers to punishment and havoc, how shall ye, who are but lately lifted out of sin and damnation?

"Ye are ministers of peace and love and humility. Go forth and testify to these things in His name, and I who stand before you, elected of Him whom ye follow to speak His word, I say unto you that if ye testify faithfully, no persecutor shall triumph over you, no power shall overthrow you, no evil shall prevail against your souls!"

This was not the spirit Marsyas would select to aid him in his punishment of Saul; it was an alien doctrine opposed to nature; but he did not doubt the preacher's sincerity. His utterances were not strange to the ears that had listened with such fear to Stephen. But it seemed that one in the assembly was not satisfied.

"Yet the saints perish by the persecutor," the man spoke. "Behold Stephen is martyred already in Jesus' name."

Marsyas' eyes sought out the speaker; he was one of the unconvinced who sat apart and had become perplexed.

"O my brother, when was it said unto thee by the teachers of Christ that death is the end? I saw Christ on the cross; on the third day I saw Him living in the council of the apostles. The powers of evil pursued Him only to the tomb; there began the dominion of God, and He ascended unto Heaven and to eternal life. Believest thou this? Thy face sayeth me 'yea'; is it not written that they who believe on Him shall share each and all of His blessings? Wherefore, though Stephen died, he liveth triumphant over his enemies; so shall ye, who are faithful unto the end."

"But—but," the man objected, troubled, "is the Church to perish, thus, one by one? If we die in this generation, who shall gather the harvest of the Lord?"

"'Whoso would save his life shall lose it,' said the Master. Is it part of faith to fear that evil will triumph? Wilt thou hold off Life eternal that thou mayest bide a little longer in such insecurity as this life? And I tell thee that the fear of the adversary is awakened, and the strength of his forces is aroused. We measure by his rage against the elect his fear of Christ prevailing. No man leadeth forth an army with banners against that which is weak and which he fears not. Jesus, on whom thou believest, said, 'I have overcome the world.' Know then that the Church can not perish; that the persecutor rageth futilely; that the oppressor fighteth against the Lord. Doubt no longer, lest thy doubt become a fear that an enemy shall overthrow God!"

The young man who sat by the woman at Marsyas' side spoke next.

"I am submissive, Rabbi; yet, how far shall we fly? I am the bridegroom of Cana at whose marriage the Lamb was. When He changed water into wine He turned my heart into wondering, and from wondering into belief. But the sentence of wandering hath driven me out of Cana, out of Galilee, out of Judea into Syria. How far shall we flee, Rabbi?"

"We, too, are driven," many broke in at once. "Few here are citizens of Ptolemais; we have left our homes and have fled far. How long must we go on?"

"As far as God's creatures fare; as far as the Word hath not penetrated," was the answer.

The faces of many fell, tears stood in the eyes of others, and still others murmured wearily. The sun-browed pilgrim who had prayed and who had leaned with a shoulder and his head against the wall, while the teacher spoke, raised himself.

"My heart goeth out in pity for you," he said sorrowfully. "Behind you the consuming fire, before you the overwhelming sea. I am newly come from Jerusalem; I know what awaits you if ye fly not. Even the Gentile can not be worse than he who breathes out threatenings and slaughter against you, in the name of the Law. Fare forth; the world can not be worse; it may be kindlier."

Marsyas observed this man; in him was more promising material for his work than in the preacher. But the preacher looked over the congregation, by this time bowed and filled with distress.

"It is your Gethsemane," he said, turning the pilgrim's declaration into comfort, "but He sleepeth not while ye pray."

Marsyas looked over the congregation and saw here and there strong faces and bold, to whom the ordinance of submission must have been a bitter ordinance. He arose.

"I behold that this is a council, in which men may speak," he said. "I take unto myself the privilege, as one akin to you in suffering if not in faith."

His voice commanded by its Essenic calmness. Every eye turned toward him. They saw the habiliments of a slave covering the stature and dignity of a doctor of Laws. The preacher looked interested, and the congregation stirred toward the young man.

"By the words of your teacher," he continued, "I see that ye are summoned here to be banished. I see your reluctance; I know your sorrow, for I, too, have been driven on, even by your enemy."

"Who art thou, young friend?" the preacher asked.

"I am an Essene."

"An Essene!" many repeated, stirred into wonder at knowledge of the new apostleship.

"As was John the Baptist!" one declared.

"Nay, then;" a voice rose out of the comment, "thou shalt be kin to us in faith so thou acceptest Jesus of Nazareth."

"Let us lay aside the discussion of doctrine, in which we can not agree," the young man went on, "and unite in our cause against Saul of Tarsus."

The kindly eyes of the preacher became paternal as he gazed at the hardness growing in the young man's face.

"Our cause," he said gently, "is not Saul of Tarsus, but Jesus Christ."

"Are ye sincere in your boast that ye will not defend yourselves?" Marsyas demanded.

"What need, young brother? God defends us."

"Well enough; but what of the persecutor?"

"God will overtake him."

"When? When he hath desolated Israel, stained the holy judgment hall with tortured perjury, slandered the Jews before the world as slayers of the innocent? Your talk is all of the life hereafter; I, too, expect to live again; yet I am here to come and go at God's will, not Saul's! Even ye, in all your infatuation, will not call Saul's work God's work! I will not be driven and desolated by Abaddon!"

He did not wait for the preacher, who seemed prepared to speak.

"I was the friend of Stephen, of whom ye spoke with love to-night. Saul consented unto his death in spite of my prayers for him, and before I could save him. When I rebuked Saul for his bloody zeal he denounced me as an apostate and set the Shoterim upon me so that I am obliged to flee for my life. For mine own wrongs I do not care, but the blood of Stephen cries out to me, the spectacle of his death rises to me in my dreams, and the infamy of it fills my hours with anguish. Ye say he was one of your saints, a martyr in the name of your Prophet, a teacher and a power in your church. Ye claim that ye loved him. Yet ye make timid preparation to flee before the oppressor who brought him low, and lift no hand to avenge his death! Are ye men? Have ye loves and hearts? Do ye miss him—"

The pilgrim pressed his palms together and looked at the young man with passionate grief in his eyes. Marsyas turned his words to him.

"Was ever his touch laid upon you, warm with life and tender with good will? Did ever his eyes bless you with their light? Can ye take it idly that his hands grasp the dust and the tomb hath hidden his smile?"

The pilgrim covered his face with his hands.

"These be things that philosophy can not return to me!" Marsyas drove on. "I can not pray Stephen back to my side; I can not hope till his voice returns to my ear; I can not flee till I find him! And by the holy and the pure who have gone down into the grave before him, I know that ye can not! Is it no matter to you that his memory is held in scorn? Are ye not stabbed with doubts that he died in vain—even ye who believe thus firmly that he was right? And I, being a Jew and an upholder of the Law, can I be content, knowing he was cut off in heresy?"

The congregation began to move as he went on; men rose from sitting to their knees, as if prepared to spring to their feet. The preacher circled the room with a glance, but the eyes of the people were upon the young man.

"Your Prophet and my Stephen! And ye fly! There are certain of you that are strong men, and Stephen was as delicate as a child. There is blood and temper and strength and numbers of you, but Stephen went forth alone—and died! Where were ye? What of yourselves, now? Are ye afraid of the weakling Pharisee?"

There was a low murmur and men sprang to their feet, with flashing eyes and clenched hands. The pilgrim flung up his head and drew in his breath till it hissed over his bared teeth. Eleazar stood up by the young Essene and gazed straight at the preacher, as if holding himself in check until the leader declared himself. But the preacher put up his hands and hurried into the center of the building.

"Peace, children!" he said kindly but firmly. His hands lifted higher as the stature of his authority seemed to tower over the people. In the sudden silence those that had stood up sank down again, the pilgrim lowered his head and only Marsyas and the rabbi at his side seemed to resist the quieting influence of the pastor. The extended palms dropped and the Nazarene looked at the young Essene.

"Vengeance is mine and I will repay, saith the Lord. Eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth is of the old Law and is passed away!"

"There, O strange pastor of a human flock, our ways part. I am a Jew, thou a Nazarene—our laws differ. Yet if, as ye preach, the God of Moses is also the God of your Prophet, ye are delivered sentences and punishments for evil-doing. Wherefore, if ye evade them, ye evade a divine command!"

"We do not punish; we correct. Punishment is God's portion."

"Are ye not instruments?" the young man persisted.

The preacher did not answer at once; his eyes searched Marsyas' face for some expression by which he might select his line of argument.

"Bethink thee, young brother," he said finally. "How would Stephen answer thee in this?"

Marsyas' demanding eyes wavered and fell; his lips parted and closed again; he frowned.

"Whom then wouldst thou please in this vengeance? Not Stephen! Then wilt thou comfort thyself with bloody work, while the tomb stands between thee and Stephen's restraining hands?"

Marsyas threw up his head defiantly, shaking off the influence of the argument.

"Do ye in all truth follow the doctrine that bids you suffer without requital?" he demanded, even while feeling that his logic was impotent.

"God directs all things; if it be His will that we shall suffer or escape, God's will be done!"

"It is cowardly!" Marsyas declared with flashing eyes.

The preacher came closer. "I believe that thou art determined and sincere. Suppose Saul fell into thy hands, as an evil-doer, and the Law was ready for his blood, and God bade thee withhold thy hand. Would it be easy?"

"No, by my soul!"

"Look then at me and answer. Is it easy for me, who hath suffered exactly thy sorrows, to stand still and wait on God?"

Marsyas looked at the preacher. He was tall, spare and old, his hair and his beard were so white that they shone in the torch-light, and his face was so thin and colorless that he seemed already to have put off the flesh. But his eyes glowed with fire and youth. Here of a surety was no weakness to call into account.

"No," he answered again.

"Then, O my son, which of us is truly subject to the Lord?"

"Ye crucify yourselves to an unnatural doctrine! It is not human to bow to it!"

"When thou canst do as we strive to do, my son, thou shall know that it is divine."

Marsyas looked at Eleazar, and the rabbi, who had his eyes fastened on the preacher, spoke for the first time.

"That is sweet humility, while ye are oppressed," he said, in a voice almost prophetic. "But will ye remember it, when ye come into power?"

Power! Had any of that congregation a hope for power? The word startled them. They looked at the rabbi's garments, clothing a huge frame, the strength of the Law typified, and wondered at his words. Even the preacher had no ready answer. The intimation of the Nazarenes in power on the lips of an expounder of the Law was not conducive to instant comment.

"So ye were in the Jews' place, what would ye do?" he asked again. Marsyas looked at the rabbi in surprise, but meanwhile the preacher answered.

"Christ's doctrine suffereth no change for rank or power."

"Watch; forget it not!" Eleazar turned to Marsyas. "I have seen, my brother," he said. "This is not the method. Let us wait; our time will come."

Contented to go, Marsyas turned with the rabbi and together they passed through the gathering to the door. But before they went out, Marsyas spoke again to the silent congregation.

"Rest ye," he said, "we are not informers." They went forth.

CHAPTER XIII

A TRUST FULFILLED

Marsyas came forth moodily convinced by Eleazar's words. No; it was not the method. Revenge would have to come through another medium than the Nazarenes. Stephen had told him before that the privilege of taking vengeance had been removed from the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. At that time Marsyas had not believed it of the whole sect; but now he was not too much irritated to be convinced.

"Is there any doctrine too mad to get it followers?" he said.

"O brother," Eleazar said, with his chin on his breast, "it is a period of change. The world wearies of its manner from time to time. Surfeit of good is not less common than surfeit of evil, but it is deadlier. Men tire of their gods as they do of their women, and thou, being an eremite and unfamiliar, may not know that death is much more desirable than enforced toleration of satiety."

Marsyas heard; satiety was only a word to him and the rabbi's earnestness carried no conviction for him.

"It is the time for change; rest under old usages is no longer possible. But Israel hath endured a long, long time in one habit."

"Give me thy meaning, Rabbi."

"Thou and I are good Jews, Marsyas, yet I can not say that of a surety of any other man in Judea. I have come from Jerusalem, David's City, the rock of Israel, but the hosts of schism possess it from the Ophlas to the uttermost limits of Bezetha!"

"Rabbi!"

"I have seen; I have seen. Saul hath set for himself a task of emptying the sea. In Jerusalem they come singing to torture and death, but armies of them go fleeing into the rest of Judea and all the world. And, hear me, thou true son of Israel, the pastor of the apostates we heard this night declared at least one truth. The Pharisee hath diffused an influence; he hath scattered a pestilence."

Because it was a new charge against Saul, Marsyas accepted it.

"Is there no help against him?" he exclaimed.

"Marsyas, there stirreth a dread fear in me that he is the instrument of the time. If not he, then another would have been called by the spirit of change—"

"There is no such extenuation in me!" Marsyas broke in.

"Might promises no allegiance to its ministers," the rabbi replied.

Marsyas recalled his history for evidence to corroborate this hope that Saul's calamitous work might recoil upon him. From Prometheus to Augustus, the declaration was sustained. He lost sight of the rabbi's actual concern. Saul covered his horizon; he could not know that Eleazar looked upon the Pharisee as only a detail in an immense stretch of grave possibilities.

The young man made no reply. A hope had been snatched from him that night before his sense could grasp its reality, but the disappointment had not weakened his intent. His hope, for the moment centered upon the Nazarenes, turned again upon Agrippa. He did not permit himself to speculate on the prince's possible failure.

At an intersecting street they parted, without further plan than that they should meet again.

But the next morning when Marsyas came with little spirit into the sunless counting-room, his first visitor was Agrippa's lugubrious old courier, Silas.

With a cry, Marsyas wrenched open the wicket and seized the old man's shoulders.

"Dost thou bring good or evil news?" he cried, unable to wait on the slow servant's deliberate speech.

"Perchance either, or both," the courier answered, fumbling in the wallet for his written instructions. "Perchance that which thou already knowest, and that which may be news. At least, I fetch thee a ransom."

"God reward thee for thy fidelity," Marsyas replied, "and forget thy sloth! Here, let me help thee to thy message."

He put away the servant's inflexible fingers and wrested the parchment from the wallet. It was wrapped in silk and sealed with wax. It was directed to Marsyas. He ripped it open hastily and read:

"To Marsyas, the Essene, to whom Cypros the Herod would owe a greater debt, greeting and these:

"It hath come to us here in Alexandria that Vitellius pursues thee with a mind to punish thee for helping my lord away from his difficulty in Judea. The legate hath sent couriers broadcast over the Empire to seek thee out, but the noble Flaccus, Proconsul of Egypt, though forewarned and required to deliver thee up, hath promised thee asylum in Alexandria. Wherefore, if it please God that thou art preserved until my servant Silas reaches thee, do thou return to this city, secretly and with all speed.

"That thou care for thyself and that thy despatch be assured, I add further that there is much thou canst do for me. Delay not if the same good heart which suffered for us in Ptolemais still beats within thee.

"Thy friend,
"CYPROS."

Within were three notes of a talent each, signed by Alexander Lysimachus, the Alabarch of Alexandria. Six weeks before, they would have been mere strips of parchment to Marsyas; to-day, with the commercial knowledge of a steward, Cæsar's gold would not have commanded more respect in him. But he crushed them in his hand and turned his face, suddenly grown pale and tense, toward the east and Jerusalem. They meant the beginning of the destruction of Saul!

Presently he signed to Silas to follow and led the way to old Peter, who sipped his wine in his sleeping apartment. On the way, they met a slave whom Marsyas despatched to the khan for Eleazar.

"But," objected Peter, with the querulousness of an old man, after the first flush of satisfaction over the return of his three talents, "I took thee in hostage, young man, because I wanted thy service as steward, not because I wished to please Agrippa."

"But I have summoned my better to take my place," Marsyas assured him. "Thou shall not be without an able steward, who will serve thee for hire."

And thus it was arranged when Eleazar arrived, that the rabbi should take Marsyas' place as steward and Peter, grumbling, but no less mollified, put on his cloak and repaired to the authorities to make the young Essene's manumission a matter of record.

By sunset all the negotiations were completed and Marsyas, with Silas, passed out into the twilight and proceeded toward the mole.

As they went, others were going; the freighter which was the first to sail for Alexandria bade fair to be crowded with passengers. Curious that so many wished to depart, Marsyas looked critically

at the people as they moved toward the water-front. He saw that many of them had been with him in the Nazarene meeting the night before. They were obeying the command to move on.

Suddenly one of them, a young man in advance of two, old enough to be his parents, stopped and pointed with an outstretched arm.

Marsyas glanced in the direction the youth indicated.

The lower slopes of the immense western sky over the placid sea were delicate with the pale shades of a clear, cold, spring sunset. The point where the sun had sunk, alone glowed with a sparkling, golden brilliance. And set against that, far out in the bay, was a frail dark mast, crossed by a faint yard—a fragile crucifix sunk in a glory!

The elder man did not speak; the younger looked at the thing he had discovered, but as Marsyas hurried in agitation by the woman, he heard her speak softly:

"But it is bright—beyond!"

CHAPTER XIV

FOB A WOMAN'S SAKE

The sails of the freighter had fallen slack in the breathless shelter of the Alexandrian harbor. It was night, and only by daylight could the seamen pull the vessel by oar through the devious, perilous lanes between the fleets and navies packed in the greatest port in the world. The freighter would lie to until morning. The passengers would land in boats.

Its anchor rumbled down and plunged into a sea of stars.

It had been a ship of silence, manned by barefoot, cowed slaves, captained by a surly, weather-beaten Roman and freighted with a strange, sorrowful company. Now that the journey was at an end, there were no shouts, no noisy haste, no excited preparation. When the wash of the disturbed bay settled over the anchor and the reflected stars grew steady again, there was silence.

Marsyas stood in the bow and looked ashore. Over the whole arc of the southern heavens, he saw long, beaded strands of infinitesimal points of fire, tangles, cross-hatchings, eddies and jottings of light—the lamps of Alexandria. Right and left of him and embracing much of the bay, the confusion of stars swept, culminating in the towering flame surmounting the Pharos to the east, and failing in featureless obscurity to the west. It might have been a congress of fireflies tranced in space. But there came across the waters, not appreciable sound, but the mysterious telepathic

communication of animate life. Marsyas sensed the heart-beat of the great invisible city under the *ignes fatui* swung in the purple night.

He did not contemplate it calmly. The mystery of impending destiny was written over it all.

The silent company of Nazarenes was put ashore an hour later at the wharf of the Egyptian suburb, Rhacotis, and together Silas and Marsyas passed up through the easternmost limits of the settlement toward the Regio Judæorum.

They had not progressed beyond sight of their former traveling companions, before the cluster of Nazarenes seemed to huddle and recoil, and presently turn back and flee over their tracks.

As they rushed down upon the two Jews, the body seemed to have increased greatly in number. The accessions were men, women and children; some were very old, all apparently very poor, so that the one small, female figure, in fine white garments showing under a coarse mantle, was conspicuous among the rough dark habits.

Marsyas had time to note this one out of the many when the flying company rushed about him; after it a body of city constabulary, at the heels of which followed a howling mob of rabid Alexandrians. In an instant, Marsyas and Silas were in the thick of the tumult. The fugitives, demoralized by the attack of the constabulary, rushed hither and thither; the mob closed in upon them and a moving battle raged in the night on the square.

Events followed too swiftly for Marsyas to grasp them as they happened. He had a heated sensation that he defended himself, defended others, struck gallantly, received blows, snatched up a small figure in white from the attack of a vindictive assailant, and then the running fight swept by and away in dust.

He came to himself, panting and enraged, under a lamp, with a girl in his arms. Confronting him with a stone in his hand was Eutychus, petrified with amazement and apprehension. At one side, groaning and bent double with kicks and blows, was Silas. At the other, a silent, brown woman peered at the insensible girl. Up the street receded the sounds of riot.

Marsyas permitted his angry gaze to fall from Eutychus' face to the stone the servitor held. The fingers unclosed and the missile dropped. Then Marsyas looked down at the girl in his arms. He drew in a full breath. The hill bird in the broken wilds of Judea whistled again; the incense from the blooming orchards breathed about him, and the flower face that had looked back at him from the howdah rested now, white and peaceful against his breast. Her long lashes lay on her cheeks, the pretty disorder of her yellow-brown curls was tossed over his arm. He was strangely untroubled for all that.

The brown woman watched him from the gloom.

Silas meanwhile had straightened himself and was gazing with stupefaction at the insensible face on the Essene's breast.

"It—it—" he began, stammering before the rush of recognition and astonishment. "It is the alabarch's daughter—hither, fellow!" to Eutychus; "see this face! See whom thou wast pursuing."

Eutychus looked and fell immediately into a panic.

"I did not know her!" he cried. "By my soul, I did not know her! I was only visiting vengeance on the apostates, with the people! How should I expect to find her here!"

Marsyas broke in on his avowal.

"Do we go now to her father's house?" he asked of Silas.

"Even now!"

"Lead on, then. Eutychus! Follow!"

Silas looked at the brown woman in the shadows, who beckoned and, turning, took roundabout and deserted passages toward the Jewish quarter, so that the extraordinary party proceeded unseen to the house of the alabarch. Once or twice, Eutychus attempted to press up beside Marsyas and excuse himself, but he was bidden to be silent. Then, on missing the charioteer's footfall, Marsyas turned to see him slipping away. Immediately Silas was despatched to bring him back; and so, placed between the two, he was dragged on to the house he had attempted to injure.

Remembering Eleazar's statement concerning the breadth of the schism, Marsyas was prepared to discover the alabarch a Nazarene.

"O Israel! after triumph over the oppression of the mighty, is this your overthrow?" he said bitterly to himself.

Long before he reached the alabarch's house, the figure in his arms stirred and made a little questioning sound. But against her manifest wish, the promptings of his Essenic training and the admission that she had been overtaken among apostates, something in him locked his arms about her and brought a single word to his lips. The gentleness of his voice surprised him.

"Peace," he said, and she lay still.

After he had said it, a sudden rage against Eutychus seized him. The charioteer's part in the pursuit of the fugitive apostates assumed a brutality and an enormity many times greater than it had originally seemed. He took savage pleasure in anticipating turning over the culprit to Agrippa for justice.

He was led presently into a dark porch and admitted into a hall. The startled porter glanced at him, and, seeing Lydia in the stranger's arms, the serving-man cried out. The brown woman answered with a guttural sentence or two, and by the time Marsyas, following the lead of the

agitated porter, entered a beautiful chamber, people were running in from brilliantly-lighted apartments beyond.

The spare and elegant old figure in the embroidered robes and cap of a Jewish magistrate hurried toward him with terror written on his face.

"Lydia! What hath befallen thee? Is she dead?" he cried.

Back of him came a rush of people. Foremost was Herod Agrippa; behind him, Cypros. With the growing group, Marsyas ceased to note the details of their identity and remarked at random that one was a man who wore a fillet and that the other was a woman and beautiful.

The number of servants increasing, the babble of questions and exclamations creating a great confusion, none who made answer was heard. But Marsyas looked at the master of the house. He saw this time, not the magistrate's alarm, but his character, his nationality, his religion. In that aristocratic old countenance there was nothing of the Nazarene. Marsyas let his eyes fall on the face against his breast. By the brighter light, he saw now that which he had not seen under the smoky street-torch. In the folds of her white dress, beautiful and rich enough for a feast, reposed a small cedar cross, depending from a scarlet cord.

The young Jew with the fillet about his forehead sprang forward to take Lydia from Marsyas' arms. But with the instinctive feeling that none must see but himself, he disengaged one hand and stopped the Jew with a motion.

"I will put her down," he said calmly.

Classicus drew himself up to his full height, but Marsyas had already turned toward the divan. With a quick movement, he slipped the crucifix from about the girl's neck and thrust it into his tunic.

Out of the babble about him he learned that the girl had supposedly gone to attend a maiden gathering in the Regio Judæorum with the brown woman as an attendant. Catching with relief at this bit of foundation for a story, he stood up prepared to tell anything but the truth.

Meantime, attendants and a house physician bent over the girl with wine and restoratives, and the company's attention was directed toward her recovery. Presently she put aside her waiting-women and sat up.

Marsyas glanced from her to the brown woman, who hovered on the outskirts. The handmaiden's great, mysterious, olive-green eyes were fixed upon him, half in appeal, half in command. Before he could understand the look the Jew in the fillet turned upon him.

"Come, we are learning nothing," he said in a voice that silenced the group. "Thou," indicating Marsyas with an imperious motion, "seemest to show the marks of experience. Tell us what happened."

Marsyas' mind went through prodigious calculation. If he frankly told the truth, he betrayed the girl to much misery and peril. If he evaded, Eutychus, wishing to justify himself and to escape punishment, might wreck a fabrication by a word. But the young man made no appreciable hesitation in answering. He caught the charioteer's eye and held it fixedly while he spoke.

"I know little," he said. "From the ship we came up a certain street, where we met tumult between fugitives and pursuers. So disorderly the crowd and so extensive its violence that whosoever met it on the street was instantly caught in its center and mistreated as much as the guiltiest one. Thus I and Prince Agrippa's servant were caught; thus, the lady.

"We defended ourselves and should have escaped scathless, but that we stayed to save the lady from the rioters. This done we came hither. That is all."

"Who were the fugitives?" the Jew in the fillet demanded.

The thick lips of Eutychus parted and he drew in breath, but the lower lids of the black eyes fixed upon him lifted a little and he subsided.

"Sir, one does not stop to identify passing strangers when one fights for his life," Marsyas explained calmly.

Eutychus lost his air of trepidation, and his taut figure relaxed.

"Where was it?" the beautiful woman asked of the charioteer.

Marsyas answered directly.

"Lady, one does not locate himself in the midst of turbulence."

Lysimachus came closer to Marsyas.

"Who art thou?" he asked. "I met thee once, it seems."

"That," Agrippa broke in, "by every act he hath done since I knew him, is the most generous of Jews, Marsyas, an Essene, by his permission, my friend and companion. Know him, Alexander; it is a profitable acquaintance."

Marsyas flushed under the prince's praise, and Cypros, drawing closer, took his arm and pressed her cheek against it.

"Thrice welcome to my house," the alabarch said with emotion. "Blessed be thy coming and thy going; may safety be thy shadow!"

Marsyas, coloring more under the comment, thanked the alabarch and cast a beseeching look at the prince. The prince smiled.

"Let us supplement blessings with raiment and thanks with wine," he said to the alabarch. "This is an Essene to whom uncleanness is as great a crime as a love affair."

"Thou recallest me to my duty," the alabarch returned, at once. "Stephanos,"—signing to a servitor,—"thou wilt take this young man to the room which hath been prepared for him and give him comfort. If he hath any hurts, the physician will wait on him. Remember, brother, I am at thy command."

With these words, he bowed to Marsyas, who inclined his head to the company and followed Stephanos.

But at the arch leading into the corridor, there was a low word at his hand. Lydia, with the rough mantle dropped from her, stood there in her rich white garments.

"I owe thee my life," she said, in a little more than a whisper. "Aye, even more—a greater debt which I can not make clear to thee now."

He looked down into her lifted eyes, pleading for pity and forgiveness.

"I made thee traffic with the truth," they said. "Thou who art an Essene and a holy man!"

Something happened in Marsyas; a quickening rush of rare emotion swept over him. He took her small hand and held it, until, shyly and reluctantly, she drew it away.

He went then through broad halls, flooded with lights from costly lamps, past whispering fountains and motionless potted plants, through arches relieved by silken draperies which adorned without screening, up a broad flight of stairs to his own chamber.

This was all very beautiful and restful with its occasional whiffs of incense, or the musical drip of the waterfall or the soft murmur of distant voices. His lot had fallen in splendid places, he told himself, and, though opposed, by teaching, to the difference men make in each other, he was glad that he was not to live as a manumitted slave under the roof of the alabarch's house.

As he stepped into the chamber which Stephanos told him was his own, Drumah appeared. Startled at first sight of a man bearing marks of ill-usage, she stopped and cried out as she recognized him.

"I am not hurt, Drumah," he said, to quiet the rush of questions on her lips. "I was caught in a riot. It is nothing."

"But I see marks on thy face," she persisted, coming near him; "and thy garments have bloodstains on them. Thou dost not know that thou art hurt. O Stephanos," she cried to the servitor, "fetch balsam and volatile ointment. Eutyclus, art thou there? Run to the culina and get wine! Where is the physician?"

The charioteer, who had appeared in the upper story for the express purpose of seeking Drumah to tell the details of the day's excitement, stopped short and scowled.

"I thank thee," Marsyas said to her. "I am not in need of assistance. The physician is with the master's daughter. I can care for myself. Pray, do not give thyself trouble."

He stepped into the apartment and dropped the curtain upon himself and Stephanos.

He had given himself up to the servitor's attentions, when it occurred to him that he had let slip a chance to deliver a telling and a much-needed warning to Eutychus. The more he considered his neglect, the more serious it seemed. At last he hurried his attendant, and, getting into fresh garments, descended again to the first floor. He despatched Stephanos in search of Eutychus and stopped by the newel to await the charioteer's coming.

As he stood, the brown waiting-woman came to him, gliding like a sand column across the desert. Coming quite close to him, she dropped on her knees at his side and touched her forehead to the ground.

"I am a Brahmin," she said in Hindu, "and I owe thee a debt. I shall not forget!"

Rising, she flitted away.

Marsyas looked after her in amazement. It was the same slave-woman whom he had helped at Peter the usurer's.

Cypros, with her head drooping, a delicate forefinger on her chin, came slowly and sorrowfully into the hall. As Marsyas looked at her, she seemed to him to be half-woman, half-child. But when she saw him, her face lighted, her eyes glowed. With extended hands she came toward him.

"Nay, nay," she said, seeing that thanks were on his lips. "Do not shame me with thy thanks, Marsyas, for I had a selfish use in releasing thee."

"But I know, nevertheless, that I should have had freedom at thy hands though I never saw thee again."

"Oh, be not so filled with confidence and sweet believing, else I fear for myself," she said earnestly. "Nay, if I were wholly unselfish, I should come to thee, this hour of thy honor, to bring thee praise. Yet I come with mine own interest, to charge thee anew!"

"Command me; thou hast purchased me!"

"Not so; but thou hast purchased my husband, with the extreme of thy sacrifice for his sake!"

"Lady, I did that thing for myself—for mine own ends!"

"Nevertheless, it was my husband who profited. Thou must learn that much hath transpired here in Alexandria. The alabarch had not the three hundred thousand drachmæ to lend—"

Marsyas' forehead contracted; was not his work against Saul of Tarsus progressing?

"—but he gave my lord in all readiness five talents, with which we ransomed thee. It was all the good alabarch could afford, but it is not enough for me and my babes. Wherefore Agrippa goes to Rome without us. There, infallibly he will obtain money from Antonia, discharge his debt to Cæsar and settle Vitellius' vengeful search after thee. There, he shall be restored to favor with Cæsar and come into possession of his kingdom!"

"How thou liftest my bitter heart!" Marsyas exclaimed. "Go yet further and say that, thereafter, I shall have my requital, my hunger after vengeance satisfied!"

"All that shall be," she said with gravity, "on one condition!"

"What?" he besought earnestly.

"That he who hath Agrippa's welfare deepest in his heart shall ever be near my lord to protect him against himself!"

"O lady, even thou canst not wish thy husband successful with greater yearning than I!"

"So I do believe! But hear me. Thou seest my husband; thou knowest that he plans only for the moment, risks too much, is over-confident and too little cautious! In the beginning he believes that he is right, and thereafter and on to the end he acts, chooses friends, and makes enemies as his conviction directs him. Thus he ruined himself thrice over from Rome to Idumea. None but one so eager for his success as I, but abler than I, can govern him! And thou must be his keeper, Marsyas!"

"Thou yieldest me a welcome charge, lady," he said quickly. "Thou knowest that I would not have him fail; wherefore, I yield thee my word!"

"Be thou blessed! Yet there is more!"

In spite of her preparation, her face flushed, and she hesitated. Then as if forcing herself to speak, she said:

"Thou—thou wilt keep my lord's love for me, Marsyas?"

"I do not understand," he said kindly.

"Thou didst not say such a thing when my lord asked thee for twenty thousand drachmæ. Thou didst get the drachmæ; keep now my husband's love for me. As thou didst offer thyself for his purse, offer thyself for his soul—if need be!"

He frowned at the pavement and then at her. He had evolved enough from her words to believe that her call aimed at his spiritual welfare and he remembered that he was an Essene.

"Be his companion," she hurried on, "be more; be his comrade, his abettor, even; sacrifice much; thy prejudices, even some of thy spotlessness, but make thyself desirable to him. Then thou canst control him. Promise, Marsyas! Oh, thy hope to overthrow Saul is not dearer to thee than this thing is to me! Promise!"

"Be comforted," he said hurriedly, for there were steps approaching from the inner room. "I shall do all that I can. More than that, one less than an angel can not promise!"

She, too, heard the footsteps and passed up the stairs.

Looking up from his disturbed contemplation of the pavement, Marsyas saw Classicus in the arch leading into the hall. If the young Essene had been a cestophorus upholding the ceiling, the philosopher's gaze could not have been more indifferent. He passed on and disappeared into the vestibule.

Hardly had he passed, before the dark end of the corridor leading in from the garden gave up the stealthy figure of Eutychus, running, bent, purposeful and a-tiptoe, to overtake Classicus. Evidently he had not seen Marsyas, for he passed without faltering and disappeared the way Classicus had taken.

Instantly and as silently Marsyas followed.

At the porch, the alabarch bade his guests good night, and when Marsyas brought up, he found Classicus just departing and Eutychus nowhere to be seen. Surmising that there was a humbler exit for the servants, out of which the charioteer had taken himself, Marsyas passed out directly after the philosopher.

His surmises were not wrong, for the instant Classicus planted foot on the earth without, Eutychus came out of the darkness and bowed.

"Good my lord," he began, "the story truly told is this—" but his words babbled off into stammers and inarticulate sound, for Marsyas, large in the gloom, stood over him.

"Thy master hath need of thee, Eutychus," he said in a soft voice. The charioteer gulped and slid back into the door that had given him exit.

"Peace to thee, sir," the Essene said to Classicus, and bowing, returned into the house.

"The truth of the story is this," said Classicus as he stepped into his chair and was borne away, "the Essene is no Essene!"

At the farther end of the corridor within, Marsyas saw Eutychus lurking. Silent and swift the young Essene went after him. The charioteer, fearing for cause, fled and Marsyas followed.

Agrippa, on the point of ascending to his chamber, saw them flit noiselessly into the dusk. His wonder was awakened. Drumah, with a laver under her arm, was emerging from the kitchens when she caught a glimpse of them. The prince stepped down and followed; Drumah slipped after.

At the door leading into the colonnade of the garden, Marsyas seized Eutychus.

"Thou insufferable coward!" he brought out. "Thou blight and peril under a hospitable roof! I know what thou wouldst have said to the master's guest!"

Eutychus paled and struggled to free himself, but Marsyas forced him against the wall and pinned him there.

"If so much as a word escape thee, concerning the alabarch's daughter, if by a quiver of thy lashes thou dost betray aught that thou knowest to any living being, or dead post, or empty space, I shall kill thee and feed the eels of the sea with thy carcass!"

Fixing the charioteer with a menacing eye he held him until he was sure his words had conveyed their full meaning.

"I have spoken!" he added. Then he threw the man aside and turned to go back to his room. But in his path, though happily out of earshot of his low-spoken words, stood Agrippa; behind him, Drumah. Not a little disturbed, Marsyas stopped. Eutychus saw the prince and expected partizanship.

"Seest thou how thy servant is used by this vagrant?" he demanded.

But Agrippa laid his hand on Marsyas' arm.

"I do not know thy provocation," he said, "but I know it was just. Go back! It is not enough. Teach him to respect thy strength. Thou hast merely made him dangerous!"

But Marsyas begged Agrippa's permission to go on and the prince, still declaring that the Essene had made a mistake, turned and went with him.

Drumah, with her head in the air, passed Eutychus without casting a look upon him.

CHAPTER XV

THE FALSE BALANCE

Marsyas did not sleep the sleep of a man worn with exertion and excitement. Instead he lay far into the night with his wide eyes fixed on the soft gloom above him. He had many diverse thoughts, none wholly contented, many most unhappy.

The instance of apostasy under the roof troubled him; not as apostasy should trouble one of the faithful, but as an impending calamity. He had strange, terrifying, commingling pictures of Stephen's dark locks in the dust of the stoning-place, and the pretty disorder of yellow-brown curls thrown over his arm. His purpose against Saul of Tarsus seemed to magnify in importance, by each succeeding momentous event. He remembered Cypros' charge and bound himself to keep it, again and again through the dark troubled hours. It was a long way yet until he could triumph over the powerful Pharisee, and the stretches of misfortune that could ensue, in the time, were things he drove out of his thoughts.

When at last he fell asleep, he dreamed that he stood on Olivet and watched Saul and Lydia seeking for him in the trampled space without Hanaleel, while a crucifix, instead of the moon, arose in the east.

The old Essenic habit was strong in Marsyas. In spite of his long wakefulness, the dark red color in the east which announced the sunrise yet an hour to come was as a call in his ear.

He arose while yet the night was heavy in the halls of the alabarch's house and the whisper of the sand lifting before the sea-wind was the only sound in the Alexandrian streets.

The stairway was intensely quiet and he hesitated to descend. But at the end of the upper corridor a slight dilution in the gloom showed him a loft let into the ceiling. He went that way and came upon another stairway leading up and out into the open. He mounted it and found himself on the roof of the house.

At the rear was a double row of columns, roofed, and hung with matting which inclosed an airy pavilion where the dwellers of the alabarch's house could flee from the heat closer the earth. It was furnished with antique Egyptian furniture, taborets of acacia, seated with pigskin, a diphros and divan, built of spongy palm-wood, but seasoned and hardened by great age, and grotesquely carved by old hands, dead a century.

The young man entered and, seating himself, awaited the day and the arousing of the alabarch's household.

The Jewish housetops toward the east made an angular sea, broken by parapets and summer-houses in relief against the red sky, and the pavements in gloom. Strips of darker vapor meandering among them showed the course of passages leading with many detours into the great open, where was builded the Synagogue of Alexandria. It was of tremendous dimensions, yet so majestically proportioned as to attain grace, that most difficult thing to reconcile with great size. The type of architecture was Egypto-Grecian,—repose and refinement, antiquity and civilization conjoined to make a sanctuary that was a citadel. Here, the forty thousand Jews of Alexandria could gather, nor one rub shoulder against his neighbor. Marsyas looked with no little pride at

the triumph of the God of Israel in this stronghold of paganism. What a reproach it must be to them that had departed from the rigor of the Law!

He became conscious of the little cross. He drew it forth from its hiding-place and looked at it. It was made of red cedar, slightly elaborated, and the cord passed through a small copper eyelet at the head. To his unfamiliar eye, it was a dread image, at once a suggestion of suffering and retributive justice. He had not seen one since his last talk with Stephen.

The acute wrench the reflection gave him now incorporated a fear for Lydia. Saul of Tarsus should not lay her fair head low! He braced his fingers against the head and foot of the emblem to break it, when suddenly a bewildering reluctance seized his hand. At the moment of destruction, his hand was stayed. Stephen had loved it and died for its sake, and Lydia—

His resolution dissolved; slowly and unreadily he put the crucifix back in his bosom, over his heart.

At that moment, a little figure, on the brink of the housetop, was projected against the glowing sky. It was firmly knit and outlined like an infant love. The apparition brought, besides startlement, a prescient significance that made his heart beat. Synagogue and Alexandria dropped out of sight. He saw only the rosy heavens with a beautiful girl marked on them.

He arose, and the new-comer turned toward him and approached. And Marsyas watching her, in a breathless, half-guilty moment, told himself that never before had the fall of a woman's foot been a caress to the earth.

He saw that she carried over her arm a many-folded length of silk, in the half-dusk, like a silvery mist, very sheeny and firm. Here and there he discovered flame-colored streaks in it. One of the morning-touched vapors in the east, pulled down and folded over the girl's arm, would have looked like it. At the threshold of the summer-house, she let the arm fall which carried it, dropped the many folds and with a sudden uplift and deft circle of her hand, partly cocooned herself in the silken vapor. Her eyes, lifted in the movement, fell on Marsyas. With a little start, she unfurled the wrapping and doubled it over her arm.

"I pray thy pardon," he said, with a sincerity beyond the formality of his words. "I am an intruder. But—the Essenes do not keep their beds long."

"Neither do all Alexandrians," she said, recovering herself. "Thou art welcome, for I would speak with thee."

She put up one of the mattings by a pull at a cord, and sat down on a taboret. She laid the silk across her lap and folded her hands upon it.

"I pray thee, be seated. I have not said all that I would say concerning last night. Art thou well—unhurt?"

The morning lay faintly on her face and he saw that she was paler and sadder of eye than was natural for one so young and so round of cheek. He was touched, and his answer was a tender surprise to him.

"Thou seest me," he said, making a motion with his hands, "but thou—I would there were less of last night in thy face!"

"I am well," she said, as her eyes fell. "For that I give thee thanks, and for the security of my fame among my friends—and—the sacrifice thou madest to preserve it!"

She meant his evasions that had kept the true story of her rescue secret. He was glad she touched so readily upon the subject. It gave him opportunity to relieve his soul of part of its burden.

"I was glad," he assured her. "Now, that thou art still safe, I pray thee, lady, preserve thyself. None in all the world is so able to understand thy peril as I!"

She looked at him, remembering that Agrippa had told them that he had been accused of apostasy.

"Are—are these—thy people?" she asked in a whisper.

"No; but dost thou remember why I went with such haste to Nazareth?" he asked.

"To save a life, thou saidst."

"Even so, I failed."

She caught her breath and her eyes grew large with sympathy.

"I failed," he continued. "I went to save a friend who had gone astray after the Nazarene Prophet. But they stoned him before mine eyes."

Her lips moved with a compassionate word, more plainly expressed in all her atmosphere.

"They cast me out of Judea," he went on, "because I was his friend. Wherefore I have tasted the death and have died not; I have suffered for their sin, yet sinned not!"

He had never told more of his story than that, but her eyes, filled with interest, fixed upon him, urged him to go on. Believing that he might deliver her if he told more, he proceeded, but the sense of relief, the lifting of his load that followed upon the course of his narrative were results that he had not expected in confiding to this understanding woman. At first he felt a little of the embarrassment that attends the unfolding of a personal history, but ere long the fair-brown eyes urged him, with their sympathy, and consoled him with their comprehension. He left the outline and plunged into detail, and when he had made an end, the glory of the Egyptian sunshine was flooding Alexandria.

At the end of the story, Lydia's eyes fell slowly, and the interest that had enlivened her face relaxed into pensiveness. She was oppressed and sorrowful, almost ready to be directed by this man of many sorrows.

But he leaned toward her.

"Henceforth, therefore," he said, "I am not a man of peace, but one burdened with rancor and vengeful intent. I go not into En-Gadi, but into the evil world to use the world's evil to work evil. I am despoiled and blighted and without hope. Is that the inheritance which thou wouldst leave to them who love thee?"

She drew away from him, half alarmed.

"I—I am not a Nazarene," she faltered.

"Do not go to them, then!" he urged eagerly. "Do not listen to their teachings; for whosoever listens must die!"

"I went yesterday for a different cause," she said finally, "but before, of interest."

"But thou art a faithful daughter of Abraham; be not led of any cause. Remember yesterday!"

"Yesterday?" she repeated quietly. "Why yesterday? Only the faith of the oppressed was different. We of Israel's faith in Alexandria know many of yesterday's like, and worse!"

"Suffer, then, the sufferings of the righteous! Be not cut off for a folly!"

She fell silent again, and smoothed the silk on her lap.

"Justin Classicus told me of them," she began finally, "and their very difference from other philosophies, new or old, the simple history of their Prophet attracted me. I sought them out, and learned that an Egyptian merchant who traded in Syria had passed through Jerusalem at the time of the Nazarene Prophet's sojourn in the city, and had become converted to His teaching. He returned to Egypt and planted the seed of the sect in Rhacotis. And of power and attraction, he gathered unto him men of his like. Finally he carried his teaching into the lecture-rooms of the Library and all Alexandria heard of the Nazarenes. Reduced in its frenzy, his faith had a burning and unconsumed heart to it. Many searched and many accepted it. I went once—with my handmaiden—and heard his preaching. And I saw in it a remedy for the sick world."

Marsyas looked away toward the Synagogue, glittering purely against the dark blue waters of the bay. He felt a recurrence of the old chill that possessed him, when he had failed to shake Stephen in his apostasy. But she went on.

"Since there is but one God there can be but one religion. I do not expect a new godhead, but a new interpretation of the ancient one. Bethink thee; all the world was not Rome, in the days of Abraham or Moses or Solomon or David. This is the hour of the supremacy of one will, one race.

Man does not fear God so much when he does not respect his neighbor at all. Therefore, Rome, being autocrat of the earth, is an atheist. She hath set up her mace and called it God. There is no hope against Rome unless we hurl another Rome against it. That we can not do, for there is only one world. Sheol will not prevail against Rome, for Rome is Sheol. Only Heaven is left and Heaven does not proceed against nations with an army and banners. There is only one untried power in the list of forces, and the Nazarene hath it in His creed."

Marsyas knew what it was; Stephen was full of it.

"It is a difficult vision to summon," she continued, "but it may fall that a dove and not an eagle shall sit on the standards of Rome and that the dominion of God and not of Cæsar shall prevail on the Capitoline Hill."

She paused, and Marsyas, waiting until he might speak, put out his hand to her.

"I heard another building such fair structures of his fancy and his hopes," he said, with pain on his face. "Even though they were realized to-morrow, he can not see it; I, being broken of heart, could not rejoice. And Lydia—for they call thee by that name—I can not see another in the dust of the stoning-place!"

Her face flushed and paled and he let his hand drop on hers, by way of apology.

"Then, thou wilt give over the companionship of these people?" he persisted gently. She hesitated, and finally said in a halting voice:

"I—went—I knew that—by thy leave, sir, thou camest to them as a peril. Thou wast expected of the authorities, being doubly charged with apostasy and an offense against Rome, and they were permitted to go thither, by the legate, even by this household, in search of thee, when I and all under this roof knew that thou wast not among them. I—went to give them—warning—"

"Then, the call hath been obeyed," he said kindly. "Shut thy hearing against another. I thank thee, for the Nazarenes. Thou art good and wise and most generous—too rare a woman for Israel to surrender."

She arose, for sounds were coming up the well of the stair, which told of the awakening of the alabarch's household. She wrapped the silk in a closer roll and let the folds of her full habit fall over it. After a little hesitation, she extended her hand to him, and he took it.

Under its touch, he felt that his hour of mastery had passed. The gentle, thankful pressure had put him under her command.

When she disappeared into the well of the stairs, Marsyas, glancing about him, saw on the housetop next to him Justin Classicus. The philosopher was choicely clad in a synthesis to cover him completely from the chill of the morning air, while yet the warmth of his bath was upon him. His locks were anointed, his fillet in place. Even in undress, he was elegant. He rested in a cathedra, and contemplated his neighbor as distantly as he had the night before.

Not until after he had broken his fast with the alabarch and his daughter and returned again to the housetop did he see any other of the magistrate's guests. Junia's litter brought up at the alabarch's porch, and presently Agrippa came up on the housetop.

"How now?" he exclaimed, seeing Marsyas. "Is it the air or the sense of superiority over the sluggard that invites thee up at unsunned hours?"

"Both," Marsyas replied, giving up the diphros to the prince, "and the further urging of an old unsettled grudge. My lord, when dost thou proceed to Rome?"

"Shortly; after the Feast of Flora, which is to be celebrated soon."

"Nay; I pray thee, let it be directly," Marsyas urged; "for my bitterness unspent bids fair to rise in my throat and choke me!"

"*Proh pudor!* Cherishing a pulseless rancor with all fervor, when thou art here, in arm's reach and in high favor with that which should make back to thee all thou hast ever lost in the world! Oh, what a placid vegetable of an Essene thou art,—in all save hate!"

"I am to go to Rome with thee, my lord."

"Of a surety! My wife sees in thee a kind of talisman which will insure me favor with emperors and usurers, ward off the influence of beautiful women and give me success at dice!"

Marsyas glanced away from Agrippa and his face settled into uncompromising lines. Agrippa continued.

"Nay, thou goest to see that I make no misstep toward getting a kingdom. Welcome! Be thou hawk-eyed vigilance itself. But my pleasure might be more perfect did I know that thine and our lady's determination to crown me were less selfish!"

"Thou shalt not complain of more than selfishness in me," Marsyas answered calmly. "But by my dearest hope, thou shalt live a different life than that which hath ruined thee of late. I know that thou canst win a kingdom by a word; but thou shalt not lose it by a smile. For, by the Lord God that made us, thou shalt not fail!"

Agrippa turned half angrily upon the young Essene, but the imperfectly formulated retort died on his lips. He met in the resolute eyes fixed upon him command and mastery. Words could not have delivered such a certainty of control. In that moment of silent contemplation the contest for future supremacy was decided. Agrippa frowned, looked away and smiled foolishly.

"Perpol! Did I ever think to lose patience with a man for swearing to make me a king? But mend thy manner, Marsyas. Thou'lt never please the ladies if thou goest wooing with this rattle and clang of siege-engines!"

Junia appeared on the housetop. She came with lagging steps and sank upon the divan, gazing with sleepy eyes at Marsyas.

"I emancipated myself," she said, "from the study of new stitches, the neighbor's dress and the fashion in perfumes. A pest on your rustic habit of early rising! Here we are aroused in the unlovely hours of the raw dawn to achieve business, ere the sun bakes us into stupidity at midday!"

"A needless sacrifice to these Egyptians," Agrippa declared. "They are all salamanders. I saw a serving-woman in this house pick up a flame on her bare palm and carry it off as one would bear a vase."

"Vasti? Nay, but she comes from India; fled from servitude to the Brahmin priesthood to take service with the man who had pitied her once."

"The alabarch?"

"Even so. He bought the gold and onyx plates that he put on the Temple gates, in India, where he saw her and pitied her. So, she fled her owner and sought the world over till she found the alabarch to enslave herself anew."

"So! Small wonder, then, she is annealed like an amphora. Yet I had believed she was a bayadere."

"A bayadere?" Junia repeated.

"A Brahmin dancer, having the peculiarities of an Egyptian almah, a Greek hetæra, and a Pythian priestess, all fused in one. But now that she hath repented, she is rigidly upright and a relentless pursuer of evil-doers."

"Alas!" sighed Junia, still watching Marsyas, "is it not enough to grow old without having to become virtuous?"

Agrippa lifted his eyes to her face, and the look was sufficient comment. But Marsyas had been plunged in his own thoughts and did not hear.

"What is the Feast of Flora?" he asked.

The Roman woman smiled and answered.

"A popular expression of the world's joy over the summer. That was its original motive, but it has been conventionalized into a feast formally celebrating the reign of Flora. It was pastoral, but the poor cities walled away from the wheat and the pastures adopted it, in very hunger for the feel of the earth. It falls in the spring under the revivifying influence of awakening life and the loosed spirit of the populace grows boisterous. We become a city of rustics and hoidens. Pleasure is the purpose and love the largess of the occasion."

Agrippa smiled absently. These two remarks of diverse character were tentative. She was sounding Marsyas' nature.

"I shall not sail till it is done," Agrippa declared.

"A rare diversion to tempt a man from his ambitions," the young Essene retorted quickly. Junia had made her sounding. She persisted in her latter rôle.

"It is," she averred. "Flora is elected among the beautiful girls of the theaters; she typifies universal love; she runs, leaving a trail of yellow roses behind her, which lead the multitude on to the delight she means to take for herself—and that is all. It is merely a pretty feast, but the world is made of many well-meaning though blundering natures; and the revel does not always reach the high mark of refinement at its highest."

Agrippa's eyes on the Roman woman expressed intensest amusement and admiration, though they lost nothing of their cool self-possession.

"My lord," Marsyas observed coldly, "there are as choice evils in Rome."

Junia laughed.

"Evil! Tut, tut! How monstrous serious the little world takes itself! How great is its problems, how towering its philosophies, how bad its badness! See us wrinkle our little old brows and smile agedly over the creature impulses of children and forget that the gods sit on the brink of Olympus and smile at us. How we deplore the Feast of Flora—and out upon us! None—save perchance thyself, good sir, and thy rigid order—but goes reveling after pleasure and chooses a love or casts a stone at an offender—and soberly calls it a crisis or a principle! Philosophy! Discovering the obvious! Badness! Only nature, more or less emphatic! All a matter of meat and drink, shelter and apparel and the recreation of ourselves! Everything else is merely an attribute of the simple essentials. Is it not so, good sir?"

Marsyas shook his head. For the first time in his life he had heard the world forgiven and the sound of it was good. He could not help remembering Lydia's words, in contrast. But he was not convinced.

"It is not from the place of the gods that we feel, do and believe," he said. "The child's difficulties are heavy to it; it can not imagine them to be greater. So if thy reasoning hold, lady, perhaps the higher God smiles at the rage of Jove and the threats of Mars and the loves and pains of Venus. But Jove and Mars and Venus do not smile at them; nor does the child at his fallen sand-house or his ruined bauble. It is therefore a serious world for worldlings."

Junia lifted her white arms, and, dropping her head back between them against the divan, smiled up at the roof of the pavilion.

"I thought thee to be large and far-seeing," she said. "But go follow Flora, and thou shall either be driven mad with astonishment, or persuaded to look upon the world henceforward with mine eyes!"

CHAPTER XVI

A MATTER HANDLED WISELY

Flaccus Avillus, Proconsul of Egypt, held audience in his atrium. He received a commission of three from the Jews of Alexandria. One was Alexander Lysimachus, who came with a civil petition; the other two were despatched from the congregation with a hieratic memorial.

The three were stately and deliberate in manner, handsome even for their years, and as courtly as Jews can be when they bring up their native grace to the highest standard of culture. They were bearded, gowned in linen, covered with tarbooshes, and as they walked their indoor sandals made no sound upon the polished pavement of the atrium.

One wore on his left arm a phylactery, the last clinging to the old formality which had separated his fathers' class in Judea from the others, as a Pharisee. The second was an Alexandrian Sadducee. The third had over his shoulders the cloak of a magistrate.

Flaccus did not rise from his curule as they approached, but he returned their greetings with better grace than they had formerly expected of a Roman governor.

"Be greeted," he said bluntly. "And sit; ye are elderly men!"

Lysimachus took the nearest chair and the others retired a little way to an indoor exedra.

Flaccus thrust away parchments and writings to let his elbow rest on his table, ordered the bearers of the fasces to withdraw to a less conspicuous position, and looked at Lysimachus.

"Thou lookest grave, Alexander," he said. "Art thou commissioned with a perplexity?"

The alabarch, being a magistrate and therefore recognized by Rome before the synagogue, answered readily.

"Not so much perplexed, good sir, as troubled. I come with a petition, not in writing, but nevertheless most urgent."

"Let me hear it," Flaccus said.

"Nay, then; thou knowest that a certain celebration of the Gentiles in this city is approaching. It is a feast of much magnitude and of much lawlessness. Thou knowest the temper of the city toward my people, and after three days of drunkenness, Alexandria will love the Jew no more, but much less. Thou rememberest, as I and my people remember with mourning, that last year, the excited multitude, that followed Flora's trail of yellow roses through the Regio Judæorum, fell upon the Jews by the way and slaughtered and sacked as if it had been warfare instead of festivity. It was a new diversion for the multitude, and one like to be repeated. But we, who are led to believe by thy recent good will that thou dost not cherish Rome's ancient prejudice against our race, come unto thee and hopefully beseech thee to forbid the Flora to lead her rioters upon our peaceful community."

"I have already warned the prætor," Flaccus responded, "that Flora is not to run through the Regio Judæorum this year."

"The prætor dare not disobey thee," Lysimachus said, with a tone of finality in his voice.

Flaccus smiled grimly.

"Nor Flora," he added.

"Thou hast our people's gratitude and allegiance; mine own thankfulness and blessings," Lysimachus responded heartily.

Flaccus waved his hand, and glanced at the other two, sitting aside.

"And ye?" he said. "Are ye but a portion of the alabarch's commission?"

"Nay, good sir," the Sadducee answered, "we come upon a mission for the congregation."

Lysimachus arose, but the Sadducee turned to him with a bow.

"Pray thee, sir, it concerns thee as well. Wilt thou abide longer and hear us?"

The alabarch inclined his head and sat down. Flaccus signified that he was ready to hear them.

"Thou didst ask our brother, the alabarch, if he were commissioned with a perplexity," the Sadducee continued. "Not he, but we come perplexed. Were we Jews in Judea, the method would be laid down to us by Law. But in Alexandria we have grown away from the method, while yet we have the same object to achieve."

"We lose in guidance what we gain in freedom," the Pharisee added.

"In Judea," the Sadducee continued, "they are still bound by the usages of the Mosaic Law. An offender against the Law is stoned. We do not stone in Alexandria; yet we have the offender, and suffer the offense. What, then, shall we do to cleanse our skirt and yet offer no violence to our advanced thinking?"

"Give me thy meaning," the proconsul said impatiently.

"Perchance it hath come to thee that there is a sect known as the Nazarenes, followers of Jesus of Nazareth, which are spreading like a pestilence on the wind over the world. So full of them is Judea, even David's City, that the Sanhedrim, in alliance with the Roman legate, is proceeding against them with extreme punishment."

"I have heard," Flaccus assented.

"But the numbers have grown so great and so far-reaching that the Sanhedrim hath achieved little more than to drive them abroad into the world."

"So the legate informs me," Flaccus added.

"Perchance then thou knowest that Alexandria hath its share."

"I do."

"Even the Regio Judæorum."

"Strange," Lysimachus broke in. "Strange, if they be such law-breakers, as they are reputed to be, that they have not been brought before me for rebellion and violence, ere this!"

The Pharisee put his plump white hands together.

"Thou touchest upon the perplexity, brother," he said, addressing himself to Lysimachus. "We are warned by the scribe of Saul of Tarsus, who leadeth the war against the heretics, that they are invidious workers of sedition; whisperers of false doctrines and pretenders of love and humility. They do not persuade the rich man nor the powerful man nor the learned man. They labor among the poor and the despised and the ignorant. Saul, himself, though first to be awakened to the peril of the heresy, did not dream how immense an evil he had attacked until he found the half of Jerusalem fleeing from him. Wherefore, brother, we may be built upon the sliding sands of an evil doctrine; the whole Regio Judæorum may be going astray after this apostasy ere the powers know it."

Lysimachus stroked his white beard and looked incredulous.

"The Jews of Alexandria will not tolerate a persecution," he said emphatically.

"So thou dost grasp the perplexity wholly," the Sadducee said. "What shall we do?" he turned to the proconsul.

"I am to advise, then?" Flaccus asked indifferently.

"Thou wilt not suffer them to lead our men-servants and our maid-servants and our artisans into heresy?" the Pharisee asked.

"We do not persecute in Alexandria, thou saidst," Flaccus observed.

"No," declared Lysimachus. "If all the Regio Judæorum were as we three, the apostates might come and go, strive their best and die of their own misdeeds, unincreased in number or in goods. But the clamoring voice of the mass—nay, even Cæsar hath harkened to it! Those that have not followed the Nazarenes demand that they be cut off from us. But we can not kill, and not even death daunts a Nazarene. Commend thyself, Flaccus, that thou didst call my brothers' mission a perplexity."

"So you have come formally to me with your people's plaint and expect me to solve a question that you yourselves can not solve," Flaccus said. "*Poena!* But you are a helpless lot! I shall pen the heretics in Rhacotis forthwith, and command them neither to visit nor to be visited! Is it enough?"

The three Jews arose.

"It is wisdom," said the Sadducee.

"It will serve," the Pharisee observed.

"I shall ferret them out," Lysimachus said.

"Thanks," the three observed at once. "Peace to all this house."

Flaccus waved his hand and the three passed out.

CHAPTER XVII

A WORD IN SEASON

The summer waxed over Egypt. The Delta, back from the yellow plain which fronted the sea, was in full flower of the wheat. The happy fellahs lay under the shade of dom-palms and drowsed the morning in and the sunset out, for there was nothing to do since Rannu of the Harvests had laid her beneficent hand upon the fields. Across the Mediterranean, nearer the snows, the wheat flowered later and the Feast of Flora held in celebration of the blossoming fields would arrive with the new moon. Egypt could have given her celebration in honor of Flora weeks earlier, but she preferred to wait for Rome.

These were not uneventful days in the alabarch's house, for Cypros, with Drumah at her feet, fashioned with her own hands Agrippa's wardrobe and prepared for his departure, while the

prince idled about the alabarch's garden, apparently oblivious to the call of his need to go to Rome, in his enjoyment of Junia's fellowship. And Marsyas, daily more grave, gazed at him askance and furthered the plans for the trip, tirelessly.

His patience might have continued unworn, but for a single incident.

Late one night, when oppressed by the crowding of his unhappy thoughts, he arose from his bed to walk the streets in search of composure, and, descending into the darkness of the alabarch's house, he heard the doors swing in softly. Expecting robbers, or at least a servant returning by stealth from a night's revel, he stepped down into the gloom and waited till the intruder should pass.

Softly the unknown approached and laid hand on the stair-rail to ascend. At the second step the figure was between him and the window lighting the stairs. Against the lesser darkness and the stars without, he saw Lydia's outlines etched. Noiselessly, she passed up and out of hearing.

In his soul, he knew that she had been to the Nazarenes!

"To-morrow," he said grimly to himself, "I prepare the prince's ship! There passes a stiff-necked sacrifice to Saul of Tarsus, unless I can bring him low!"

The next morning, Justin Classicus received a letter, by a merchant ship from Syria. He retired into his chamber and read it:

"O Brother," it said, "that dwelleth among the heathen, this from thy friend who envieth thy banishment:

"I delayed opening thy letter three days, believing it to come from him who lined my threadbare purse while in Alexandria, asking usury, long since due, but at the end of that time, I received his letter of a surety. So I made haste to open thy slandered missive, and greater haste to answer it by way of propitiation.

"I read much of thy letter with astonishment, some of it with rancor, some with congratulation. By Abraham's beard, it is almost as good to be fortunate as it is to be single; wherefore in answer to thine only question, I say that I am neither. Thus, am I led up to comment on the facts thou offerest me.

"I remember the little Lysimachus, a bit of Ephesian ivory-work, that I augured would go unmarried, seeing that she was so hindered with brains. But naught so good as a dowry to offset the embarrassment of sense in a woman. Prosper, my Classicus! For if thou art the same elegant paganized son of Abraham thou wast in thine old days, thy debts are as many as thy usurers are scarce. Half a million drachmæ; demand no less a dowry than that, my Classicus!

"But here, below, thou writest that which hath cut my limbs from under me and set me heavily and helpless on the carpet! A manumitted slave, a cumbrous yokel of an Essene, hath given thee troublous nights, because the lady's eyes soften in his presence! Thou scented son of Daphne; Athene's darling; Venus' latest joy! To let a Phidian colossus, with a face high-colored like a comic mask, outstrip thee!

"Thou camest upon them once, the lady's hand in his! Again, she stammered under his look! And yet a third time, he wrapped a cloak about her, and lingered getting his arm away! And all these things thou didst suffer and didst take no more revenge than to write thy plaint to me, eight hundred miles away!

"By the philippics of Jeremiah, thou deservest a wife with a figure like a durra loaf, and dowered with nine sisters for thy support!

"Thou opinest in a lady-like way, that he is a Nazarene! Thou addest, with a flurry of spleen, that the proconsul of Egypt hateth him! Thou offerest a womanish suspicion that he fled from difficulty here in Judea! Now, any blind dolt could see substance in this for the overthrow of a rival. Lackest thou courage, Classicus, or hast thou money enough to last thee till thou findest another lady?

"Is it not a sufficient cause against him that he is a Nazarene? Or perchance thou dost not know of them, which astonishes me more, since Pharaoh in the plagues was not more cumbered with flies than the earth is of Nazarenes. But read herein hope, then, against thy suspected rival.

"These heretics are persistent offenders against law and order, rebellious and otherwise unruly. One Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus, proceedeth against them, for the Sanhedrim. Whether he is an instrument of a political party or an immoderate zealot, is not for me to say; perchance he is both. At any rate he rages against the iniquity of the apostasy as a continuing whirlwind. He is not applying his methods locally, only. He reaches into neighboring provinces, and it is his oath to pursue the heresy unto the end of the world and bring back the last to judgment. Vitellius is assisting him in Judea, Herod Antipas in Galilee and Aretas in Syria. I expect hourly to hear that Cæsar hath lent him a strong arm, because the rebels are particularly rabid against Rome.

"Of course, the members of the congregation are divided, but thou knowest that even a small number of zealous defenders of the faith can set a whole Synagogue by the ears. Even so tepid a Jew as I should not care to rub shoulders with a Nazarene.

"Do I give thee life, O languid lover?

"Of thyself, I would hear more and oftener. Await not the rising of a new rival to write to me. Fear not; I shall not ask to borrow money of thee—until thou hast wedded the Lysimachus.

"All thy friends in Jerusalem greet thee. Be happy and be fortunate. Thy friend,

"PHILIP OF JERUSALEM."

At this point Classicus composedly doubled the parchment, broke it lengthwise and cross-wise and clapped his hands for a slave. A Hebrew bondman appeared.

"This for the ovens," said Classicus, handing it to him.

When the servant disappeared, the philosopher descended into his house and was dressed for a visit. An hour before the noon rest, he appeared in the garden of the alabarch.

There he found Lydia and Junia, Agrippa, Cypros, the alabarch and Flaccus, idly discussing the day's opening of the Feast of Flora. He had given and received greetings and merged his interests in the subject, when Marsyas appeared in the colonnade. He had taken off the kerchief usually worn about the head, and carried it on his arm. As he passed the spare old alabarch, the heavy

purple proconsul and the exquisite Herod, not one of the guests there gathered but made successive comparisons between him and the others. Junia gazed at him steadily, under half-closed lids, but Lydia followed him with a look, half-sorrowful, half-happy, and wholly involuntary.

Cypros glanced at his flushed forehead and damp hair.

"Hast thou been into the city?" she asked with sweet solicitude.

"To the harbor-master," he answered, "I have been making ready thy lord's ship."

Agrippa overheard the low answer, and turned upon him irritably.

"I have said that I do not depart until after the Feast of Flora," he remarked.

"The men of the sea do not expect fair winds before three days," Marsyas replied, "wherefore we must abide until after the Feast."

"But my raiment is not prepared," Agrippa protested.

"Thou goest hence, my lord, to Rome, to be dressed by the masters of the science of raiment," Marsyas assured him.

Classicus raised his head and addressed to the Essene the first remark since the memorable night of Marsyas' arrival in Alexandria.

"What a game it is," he opined amiably, "to see thee managing this slippery Herod!"

Agrippa flushed angrily, but Marsyas did not await the retort.

"My brother's pardon," he said, "but the Herod has fine discrimination between cares becoming his exalted place, and the labors of a steward."

Agrippa's face relaxed, but Classicus broke off the swinging end of a vine that reached over his shoulder and slowly pulled it to pieces.

Junia sitting next to Marsyas turned to him.

"So thou wilt follow Flora?" she asked.

"No."

"Why?" she insisted, smiling. "Thou must go to Rome, where Flora runs every day. Wilt thou turn thy back upon Egypt's joy and see only Italy's?"

"Is Rome so much worse than Alexandria?"

"Not worse; only more pronounced. There is more of Rome; the world gets its impulse there. So much is done; so many are doing. And, by the caprice of the Destinies, thou art to see Rome more than commonly employed."

"How?" he asked. By this time, the others were talking and the two spoke unheard together.

"Hist! I tell it under my breath, because the noble proconsul is burdened with the great responsibility of declaring the emperor's deathlessness, and I would not contradict him aloud. But Tiberius is old, old—and Rome casts about for his successor. But chance hath it that interest hath uncoupled the two eyes so that the singleness of sight is divided. 'Look right,' saith one; 'look left,' saith the other, and each looking his own way reviles his fellow and creates disturbance in the head. But it behooves thee, gentle Jew, to bid thine eyes contemplate Tiberius, to do oriental obeisance and say as the Persians say; 'O King, live for ever!'"

"But yesterday, thou didst cast a kindly light over the world's hardness. Tear it not away thus soon and frighten me with the fierce power against which I must shortly go and demand tribute," he protested lightly.

She took down her arms, clasped back of her head, to look at him.

"Light-hearted eremite!" she chid. "Never a Jew but believed that all the happenings in the world happen in Jerusalem—that there is nothing else to come to pass after Jerusalem's full catalogue of possibilities is exhausted. But I tell thee that, compared to Rome, Jerusalem is an unwatered spot in the desert where once in a century a loping jackal passes by to break its eventlessness."

"Lady," he said with his old gravity, "Judea is a Roman province. Is Rome harsher to her citizens than she is with her subjugated peoples?"

"Thou art nearer the executive seat; under the eye of Power itself. Icarus, on his waxen wings, was unsafe enough in the daylight; but he was undone by soaring too close to the sun!"

"What shall I do, then?" he asked.

"Attach thyself to a power; get behind the buckler of another's strength!"

"Power is not offering its protection for nothing; what have I to give in exchange for it?"

Almost inadvertently, she let her eyes run over him, and seemed impelled to say the words that leaped to her lips. But she recovered herself in time.

"It is a generous world," she said, "and such as thou shall not go friendless; depend upon it!"

When Marsyas glanced up, his eyes rested on Lydia's, and for a moment he was held in silence by the faint darkening of distress that he saw there. Something wild and sweet and painful struggled in his breast and fell quiet so quickly that he sat with his lips parted and his gaze fixed until the alabarch's daughter dropped her eyes.

"I heard thee speak of Rome," she said. "After thy labor is done, wilt thou remain there?"

"No," he answered slowly, "I return to En-Gadi."

"En-Gadi," Junia repeated. "Where is that and why shouldst thou go there?"

"It is the city of the Essenes, a city of retreat. It is in the Judean desert on the margin of the Dead Sea."

"After Rome, that!" Junia cried.

But Lydia said nothing and Marsyas, gazing at her in hope of discovering some little deprecation, some little invitation to remain in the world, forgot that the Roman woman had spoken.

Classicus, who had been a quiet observer of the few words spoken between the Essene and the alabarch's daughter, drew himself up from his lounging attitude.

"To En-Gadi?" he repeated, attracting the attention of the others, who had not failed to note his sudden interest in Marsyas. "Why?"

"I am an Essene fallen into misfortune; but once an Essene, an Essene always," Marsyas answered.

"An Essene?" the philosopher observed. Then after a little silence he began again.

"In Alexandria, we live less rigorously than in Judea, even too little so, we discover at times. Wherefore it is needful that we watch that no further lapse is made, which will carry us into lawlessness."

"Ye are lax, yet wary that ye be not more lax?" Marsyas commented perfunctorily.

"Even so. From Agrippa's lips, we learn that thou hast led a precarious life of late; an eventful, even adventurous life: that thou hast been accused and hast escaped arrest. Thou wilt pardon my familiarity with thine own affairs."

"Go on," said Marsyas.

"In Alexandria—even in Alexandria, of late, the Jews have resolved not to entertain heretics—"

"In Alexandria, the extreme ye will risk in hospitality is one simply accused."

"I commend thy discernment. But we separate ourselves from the convicted."

"So it is done in Judea. But continue."

Classicus waited for an expectant silence.

"Thou carryest about thee," he said, "an emblem which none but a Nazarene owns."

Marsyas contemplated Classicus very calmly. He had been accused of apostasy before, but by one whose every impulse had root in irrational fanaticism. He had not expected this Romanized Jew to become zealous for the faith; instead, he knew that Classicus would have pursued none other for suspicion, but himself. Why?

He glanced at Lydia. Alarm and protest were written on every feature. Classicus saw that she was prepared to defend Marsyas and his face hardened. Then the Essene understood!

A flush of warm color swept over his face.

Without a word he put his hand into his robes and drew forth and laid upon his palm the little cedar crucifix.

Cypros uttered a little sound of fright; Agrippa whirled upon Marsyas with frank amazement on his face. After a moment's intent contemplation of the Essene's face, Junia settled back into her easy attitude and smiled.

Lydia sprang up; yet before the rush of precipitate speech reached her lips, there came, imperative and distinct, Marsyas' telepathic demand on her attention. Tender but commanding, his dark eyes rested upon her.

"Thou shalt not betray thyself for me!" they said. "Thou shalt not bring sorrow to thy father's heart and disaster upon thy head! Thou shalt keep silence, and permit me to defend thee! I command thee; thou canst do naught else but obey!"

She wavered, her cheeks suffused, and her eyes fell. When she lifted them again, they were flashing with tears. A moment, and she slipped past her guests into the house.

The alabarch broke the startled silence; he had turned almost wrathfully upon Classicus.

"It seems," he exclaimed, "that thou hast needlessly broadened thine interests into matters which once did not concern thee!"

"Good my father," Classicus responded, "thou hast lost two sons already to idolatry and false doctrines. And thy lovely daughter, thou seest, is no more secure from the seductions of an attractive apostasy than were they!"

"Well?" Marsyas asked quietly.

"It is not needful to point the man of discernment to his duty," Classicus returned.

"Methinks," said Marsyas, rising, "that the sharp point of a pretext urges me out of Alexandria, as it did in Judea. Thou hast had no scruples," he continued, turning to Agrippa, "thus far in accepting the companionship of an accused man, so I do not expect to be cast off now."

"But," Agrippa protested, stammering in his surprise and perplexity, "acquit thyself, Marsyas. Thou art no Nazarene!"

"No charge so light to lift as this, my lord," Marsyas answered. "Yet even for thy favor I will not do it!"

Agrippa looked doubtful, and the alabarch exclaimed with deep regret:

"What difficulty thou settest in the way of my debt to thee! Thou, to whom I owe my daughter's life!"

"Yet have a little faith in me," Marsyas said to him. "And for more than I am given lief to recount, I am thy debtor!"

He put the crucifix into the folds of his garments.

"I am prepared to go to Rome, even now," he added to Agrippa.

"But—I would stay until after the Feast of Flora," the prince objected stubbornly.

Cypros was breaking in, affrightedly, when Flaccus interrupted.

"Come! come!" he said, with a bluff assumption of good nature. "Thou art not banished from the city, young man! I am legate over Alexandria, and a conscienceless pagan, wherefore thou hast not offended my gods nor done aught to deserve my disfavor. Get thee down to Rhacotis among thy friends—or thine enemies—till the Herod hath diverted himself with Flora, and go thy way to Rome! What a tragedy thou makest of nothing tragic!"

"O son of Mars," Marsyas said to himself, "I do not build on finding asylum there. Never a pitfall but is baited with invitation!"

But Cypros turned to the proconsul, her face glowing with thankfulness under her tears.

"Is it pleasing to thee, lady?" the proconsul asked jovially.

"Twice, thrice thou hast been my friend!" she cried.

"I shall go," said Marsyas. "Remember, my lord prince, these many things which I and others suffer add to the certainty that thou shalt be called to pay my debt against Saul of Tarsus, one day! Three days hence, thou and I shall sail for Rome!"

He saluted the company and passed out of the garden.

"Perchance," said Flaccus dryly, with his peculiar aptitude for insinuation, "an officer should conduct him to this nest of apostates."

"He will go, never fear!" Cypros declared, brushing away tears.

"By Ate! the boy is spectacular," Agrippa vowed suddenly. "He is no Nazarene! I know how he came by that unholy amulet. It is a relic of that young heretic friend of his, whom they stoned in Jerusalem!"

But Junia found immense amusement in that surmise. Presently, she laughed outright.

"O Classicus, what a blunderer thou art! Right or wrong, thou hast brought down the ladies' wrath, not upon the comely Essene, but upon thine own head for abusing him!"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE RANSOM

Marsyas passed up to his room to put his belongings together. The sound of his movements within reached Lydia in her refuge, and, when he came forth, she stood in the gloom of the hall without, awaiting him.

Moved with a little fear of her reproach, he went to her, with extended hands.

"What have I done?" she whispered.

"Thou hast done nothing," he said quickly. "I blame myself for keeping the amulet about me, when I should have destroyed it. But I could not—I have not yet; because—it is thine!"

"But I kept silence—I who owned the crucifix—"

"I made thee keep silence!"

"But what have they said to thee; what wilt thou do?" she insisted.

"I go without more obloquy than I brought hither with me; I was accused, before; I could stand further accusation, for thy sake! They have said nothing; done nothing—I go to Rhacotis, to await the departure of Agrippa, who goes to Rome at the end of three days—nay; peace!" he broke off, as a momentous resolution gathered in her pale face. "Thou wilt keep silence, else I do this thing in vain!"

"I will not slander myself!" she cried. "I am not afraid to confess my fault—"

"But thou shall not do it!" he declared. "The punishment for it would not be alone for thyself! Choose between the quiet of thy conscience and the peace and pride of thy father! Bethink thee, the inestimable harm thou canst do by this thing! Be not deceived that the story of thy lapse would be kept under thy father's roof. That ignoble pagan governor below has no care for thy sweet fame! He would tell it; thy maidens would hear of it and fear thee or follow thee! Thy father's government over his people would be weakened; the elders of the Synagogue would question him—Lydia, suffer the little hurt of conscience for thine own account, rather than afflict many for thy pride's sake!"

Her small hands, white in the darkness of the corridor, were twisted about each other in distress. Marsyas' pity was stirred to the deepest.

"How unhappy thou hast been!" he said, touching upon her apostasy. "Give over thy wavering and be the true daughter of God, once more! Let us destroy this evil amulet!"

He plucked the crucifix from his tunic and caught it between his hands to break it, when she sprang toward him and seized his wrists.

"Do not so!" she besought, her eyes large with fright.

He had forced her to defend it, and she had stood to the breach; he had proved the gravity of her disaffection for the faith of Abraham.

"Why wilt thou endanger thyself for this social drift?" he demanded passionately. "Lydia! How canst thou turn from the faith of thy fathers?"

"I—I am not worthy to be a Nazarene!" she answered. "They are forbidden to enact a falsehood!"

"Let be; I do not care for their philosophy; it is like the Law of Rome.—an empty armor that any knave can wear. But I urge thee to behold what misery thou invitest upon thyself! What will come of it? Immortal as thou art in soul, thou canst not keep alive the single spark of wisdom in the ashes of their folly; thou canst not save them against the combined vengeance of the whole world! But thou canst be disgraced with them, persecuted with them, and die with them! Unhallowed the day that ever Classicus spoke their name to thee! Cursed be his words! May the Lord treasure them up against him—!"

"Hush! hush!" she whispered.

He became calm with an effort.

"Lydia," he began after a pause, "it is a poor intelligence that can not foresee as ably as the augurs. One successful life gives opportunity, to all that spring from it, to be successful; a failure scatters the seed of misfortune through all its blood. Choose thou for thyself and thou chooseth for a nation which comes after thee. I see thee radiant, crowned, worshiped; and if they who

come up under thy guidance walk as thou dost walk, Lydia shall give queens unto principalities and rulers unto satrapies. These be days when women of virtue and women of remark; women of wisdom are remembered women. And thou, virtuous, wise and noble—the empresses of coming Cæsars will assume thy name to conceal their tarnishment under a badge of luster! This on one hand. On the other thou shalt flee from the stones of the rabble, come unto the humiliation of thy womanhood and the agony of thy body in the torture-cell, and die like a criminal!"

She shrank away with a quivering sound and flung her hands over her ears. He caught her and drew her close, until she all but rested on his breast.

"Lydia, naught but mine extremity could make me speak thus to thee," he said tremulously and in a passion of appeal. "If the words be hideous, let the actualities that they mean warn thee in time!"

"But—thou dost not understand," she faltered, drawing away from him.

"I do understand; through anguish and rancor and suffering, I have learned. Must I give all to the vengeance of God, who visiteth apostates for their iniquity? Lydia, depart not from the righteous religion, I implore thee. Behold its great age," he went on, speaking rapidly and with quickened breath, "behold its history, its monuments, its achievements, its great exponents, its infallibility! The rest of the world was an unimagined futurity when an able son of thy race was minister to Pharaoh and lord over the whole land of Egypt. The godly kings of thy people were poets and musicians when Pindar's and Homer's ancestors were still Peloponnesian fauns with horns in their hair. Before Isis and Osiris, before Bel and Astarte, thy God was molding universes and hanging stars in the sky. And lo! the sons of the Pharaohs are wasted weaklings, fit only for slaves; the Chaldees are dust in the dust of their cities; Babylonia is hunting-ground for jackals and the perch of bats; Rome—even Rome's greatness hath returned into the sinews of her hills, but there is no decadence in Israel, no weakness in her God! Aid not in the perversion of her ancient faith—thou who art the incarnation of her queens—"

He halted, but only for an instant, in which he seemed to throw off recurring restraint and drove on:

"David did not seek for one more lovely, nor Solomon for one more wise! Truth, even Truth demands dear tribute when it takes a life. For a mere scintillation of verity, wilt thou die?"

"I—I fear not," she answered painfully. "I—who could be affrighted out of telling a truth!"

Not his prayer, but the Nazarene's teaching had weight with her, at that moment!

"All thy hazard of life and fame for their vague philosophy," he cried, "and not one stir of pity for me!"

There was a moment of complete silence; then she lifted her face.

"Thou knowest better," she said, "thou, who labored in vain with Stephen, who loved thee!"

His heart contracted; for a moment he entertained as practicable a resolve to stay stubbornly under the alabarch's roof until he had broken the determination of this sweet erring girl to destroy herself. He drew in his breath to speak, but the futility of his words occurred to him. Again, he had a thought of telling the alabarch privately of his daughter's peril, but instantly doubted that the good old Jew could move her. While he debated desperately with himself, she drew, nearer to him.

"Be not angry with me! If thou leavest Alexandria in three days, it may be that I—shall not see thee again—"

"So I am dismissed to know no rest until I have brought Saul of Tarsus low, for thy sake, as well as for Stephen's!"

He knew at the next breath that he had hurt her, and repented.

"I shall see thee once more," he said hurriedly, feeling that he dared not make retraction. He took up the pilgrim's wallet containing his belongings, and put out his hand to her. She took it, so wistfully, so sorrowfully, that a wave of compunction swept over him. Bending low, he pressed his lips to her palm, and hastened, full of agitation, out of the alabarch's house.

The preparations for the Feast of Flora had been brought to completeness. The funds for the lavish display had come out of the taxes upon provinces, the flamens managed it, the patricians and the rich patronized it and all Alexandria, whether rich or poor, free or enslaved, plunged into its celebration with recklessness and relish.

The dwellers of the Regio Judæorum took no part in the celebration, but Marsyas saw that a spirit of interest invaded the district, even to the doors of the great Synagogue. Mothers in Israel put aside the wimples over their faces when they met in the narrow passages or the market-places to talk of the recurring abomination in lowered voices and with sidelong glances to see if the velvet-eyed children, who clung to their garments, heard. Fathers in Israel, rabbis and constabularies were abroad to make preparation against the local characteristic which tended to turn every popular gathering into a demonstration against the Jews. The bloody uproar of the preceding year was fresh in the fear of the people, and though Lysimachus had spread abroad the promise of the proconsul, the Regio Judæorum had cause to be doubtful of the favor of a former persecutor.

But as the young man entered the Gentile portion of the city, he saw that, from the Lochias to the Gate of the Necropolis, Alexandria was no longer a city of normal life and labor but a playground for revel and lawlessness. The two main avenues which crossed the city toward the four cardinal points were cleared of traffic and the marks of wheel and hoof were stamped out by crowds that filled the roadways. The crowding glories of Alexandrian architecture which lined these noble highways—temples, palaces, theaters, baths, gymnasia, stadia and fora, high marks of both Greek and Roman society—were wreathed, pillar and plinth, with laurel and roses, lilies and myrtle, nelumbo and lotus.

Fountains gave up perfumed water; aromatic gums in bowls set upon staves fumed and burned and were filling the dead airs of the Alexandrian calm with oriental musks; everywhere were the reedy shrilling of pipe, the tinkle of castanet, the mellow notes of flutes and the muttering of drums. Wine was flowing like water; immense public feasts were in progress, at which droves of sheep and oxen were served to gathered multitudes, which were never full-fed except at Flora's bounty. Processions were streaming along the streets, meeting at intersections to romp, break up in revel and end in excess. Tens of thousands with one impulse, one law, frolicked, fought, drank, danced, sang, piped, wooed, forgot everything, grudges and all, except Flora and her license and bounty. The citizens were no longer the descendants of Quirites, remnant of the Pharaohs or the Macedonian kings, but satyrs, fauns, bacchantes, nymphs, mimes and harlequins.

Marsyas kept away from the crowds and went by deserted paths toward Rhacotis.

He knew without inquiry where to find the Nazarene quarter. It was marked by the strange, strained silence that hovers over houses where life is not secure, by poverty, by orderliness, by the patient faces of the humble dwellers, by the brotherly greeting that the few citizens gave him as he approached. He saw many of the garrison loitering about, but they permitted him to pass without notice.

The roar of the merrymaking without swept into the quiet passages like a titanic purr of satisfaction. The young man had grown away from his toleration of solitude. His Essenic training had suffered change; its usages, at variance with his nature, had become difficult as soon as the opportunity for more congenial habits had presented itself. Only a few weeks before, he could voyage the giant breadth of the Mediterranean, excluding himself from the contaminating Nazarenes, without effort. Now, he asked himself how he was to live among these people for three days.

He found the quarter absolutely packed with people, and realized then how many followers of Jesus of Nazareth there were in Alexandria, and how thoroughly Flaccus had weeded them out of the rest of the city.

He looked about him, grew impatient, and, with the ready invention of a man who has lived only by devices for the past many months, made up his mind to house himself elsewhere than in the crowded Nazarene quarter.

"I will go to the ship," he said to himself. "It is victualed and ready for the prince's arrival to weigh anchor. No one but my seamen need know that I am there, and they will be too intent on Flora to speak of me abroad in the city!"

He turned promptly and made his way down the quarter toward the harbor. Within sound of the waters lapping on the wharf piling, a soldier of the city garrison stepped into his way.

"Back!" he said harshly.

Marsyas stopped.

"Why may I not pass?" he demanded.

"None passes from this rebel's nest hereafter!"

CHAPTER XIX

THE DELIVERANCE

There followed time for diverse and earnest meditation for Marsyas: He criticized himself sarcastically, for permitting himself to be so easily entrapped, and cast about him for means of escape. He found by successive trials that the siege was perfect. Half of Alexandria's garrison had been posted about the district. The more he considered his predicament, the more an atmosphere of impending danger weighted the air of the Nazarene community.

He did not seek the hospitality of the Nazarenes, because he had not come to the point of admitting that he was to remain among them. At nightfall, while the roar of the reveling city without swept over the community, he hoped to find some unguarded spot in the Roman lines, but his hope was vain. With his attention thus forced upon the people penned in with him, he began to wonder if there might not yet be some profit in counsel with his fellows, hemmed in for some purpose by Flaccus.

He found the inhabitants gathered in a broad space in one of the streets, where at one time a statue or a fountain might have stood, but after a few minutes' listening, he heard only prayers and words of submission to the unknown peril threatening them. Angry and disappointed he flung himself away from the gathering, to spend the night in the streets.

But after the first gust of his anger, it was brought home to him very strongly, that these people were gifted with a new courage, the courage of submission—to him the most mysterious and impossible of powers. Led from this idle conclusion into yet deeper contemplation of the Nazarene character, he found himself admitting astonishing evidences in their favor. He had known not a few of them. Stephen had been beatified, the most exalted, yet the sweetest character that he had ever known. Lydia, wavering and hesitating between Judaism and the faith of Jesus of Nazareth, struggled with fine points of conscience, and persisted, in the face of terror,—the most potent controlling agent, Marsyas had believed, over the spirit of womanhood. The Nazarene body at Ptolemais had displayed before him a humanness in subjection, that, in spite of his own resolute disposition, seemed triumphant, after all. They had preached peace, and had maintained it in the face of the most trying circumstances. On ship-board, he had been shown that they were long-suffering. About him now, while Alexandria rioted and reveled in excess, their order and decorum were highly attractive. These were excellences that he did not willingly see; circumstances and environment had forced their recognition upon him.

At a late hour, he was sought and found by their pastor, the tall old teacher, whom he had come to consider as a man whom, for his own spiritual welfare, he should shun.

"Young brother," the pastor said, "thou art without shelter here, and imprisoned among us. I respect thy wish to be left to thyself, yet we can not see thee unhoused. I have a cell in yonder ruined wall; it is solitary and secluded. Do thou take it, and I shall find shelter among my people."

Marsyas felt his cheeks grow hot, under the cover of the night.

"I thank thee," he responded, "but I am here only for a little time. I am young and hardy; I will not turn thee out of thy shelter."

"If thy time with us is stated, thou art fortunate. Alexandria hath not set her limit upon our imprisonment. Yet, I shall find a niche in the house of one of my people; be not ashamed to take my place."

Without waiting for the young man to protest, the Nazarene signed him to follow, and led on through the dark to the place indicated—the remnant of an ancient house—a single standing wall of earth, sufficiently thick to be excavated to form a shallow cave. There was room enough for a pallet of straw within, and a reed matting hung before the opening. The pastor bade the young man enter, blessed him and disappeared.

Marsyas sat down in the cramped burrow, and, resting his head on his hands and his elbows on his knees, said to himself, in discomfiture:

"Beshrew the enemy that permits you to find no fault in him!"

It was not the last time in the memorable three days of imprisonment that he frowned and deprecated the excellence of his hosts.

He accepted their simple hospitality in moody helplessness, and spent his time either hovering on the outskirts of their nightly meetings, or vainly searching for a plan to escape. He noted finally that they stinted themselves food, but gave him his usual share; water appeared less often and less plentiful. The pastor was not less confident, but more withdrawn within himself: the elders became more grave, the people, oppressed and prayerful. At times, when the gradual growth of distress became more apparent, Marsyas walked apart and chid himself for his resourcelessness.

"I am another mouth to feed, among these people," he declared. "And by the testimony of mine own instinct, I am not the least cause of that which hath thrown this siege about them! I will get out!"

He began at sunset the second day to discover the extent of the besieged quarter and sound every point for the strength of its particular blockade. He found that the Nazarene portion of Rhacotis stretched from the landings of the bay inland to a series of granaries where Rhacotis, in its smaller days, had built receptacles for the wheat which the rustics brought for shipping. To the

west it ended against a stockade for cattle, upon which mounted sentries could overlook a great deal of the quarter. To the east, the limit was a compact row of well-built houses, remnants of the Egyptian aristocratic portion in Alexander's time. The streets intersecting the row and leading into pagan Rhacotis were each closed by a sentry. After his investigations, Marsyas felt that here was the weakest spot in the siege.

Central in the row was a tall structure, with ruined clay pylons, blank of wall and, except for supporting beams, roofless. It had been a temple, but was now a dwelling, a veritable warren since the Nazarenes were all driven to occupy a portion which could shelter only a fifth of the number comfortably.

Upon this structure, Marsyas' eye rested. Either it would be closely watched from without or not at all. It depended upon the features of the wall fronting on the street at the rear, in which the sentries were posted.

For once he blessed a Nazarene night-gathering, when he saw family after family emerge from the tunnel-like doors of the temple-house and proceed silently toward the meeting of their brethren in the street below.

A long time after the last emerged and disappeared into the dark, Marsyas crossed to the doors and knocked. For a moment after his first trial, he listened lest there be an answer. He knocked more loudly a second time, and, after the third, he opened the unlocked doors, and, putting in his head, called. The heated interior was totally dark and silent.

He stepped in and closed the doors behind him. When at last his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, he saw that he was in a single immense chamber; the entire interior of the old temple was unbroken by partition of any kind. Above him, he saw the crossing of great palm-trunks, bracing the walls, and over them the blue arch of the night. At the rear, the starlight showed him the wall abutting the street of the sentries. It was absolutely blank and fully thirty feet in height.

Marsyas sighed and shook his head. Though he made the leap in safety, he could not alight without noise enough to attract the whole garrison to the spot. But, determined to make his investigation thorough before he surrendered the scheme as hopeless, he felt about the great chamber and stumbled on a rude ladder leaning against a side-wall. He climbed it, to find that it reached to a ledge, where the deeper lower half of the wall was surmounted by a clerestory just half its thickness. He found here rows of straw pallets where the overflow of Nazarenes took refuge by night. He pulled up his ladder, set it on the ledge and climbed again, finding himself at the uppermost rung within reach of one of the palm-trunks. He seized it, tried it for solidity and drew himself up on the top of the wall.

Fearing detection by the sentries more than the return of the householders, he crept with caution to the angle at the rear, and looked down into the street.

He located two sentries, but no nearer the back of the temple than the two streets opening into the other several yards away to the north and south. He lay still to note the direction of their post and found that, in truth, they turned just under him. At a point half-way between either end of

their walk, they were more than two hundred paces apart. But Marsyas looked down the sheer wall. He could not possibly accomplish it without injury or discovery or both.

With a heavy heart he retraced his steps, descended into the old temple and made his way toward the doors. Before he reached them, he frightened himself by stumbling upon a huge light object that rolled away toward the entrance. He followed cautiously, and touched it again while fumbling for the latch. He felt of it, and finally, swinging the door open, saw by the starlight that it was a huge hamper of twisted palm-fiber, tall enough to contain a man and wide enough for two. He set the thing aside and went out into the night.

To-morrow was the last day of his confinement, but he did not expect liberty. He did not doubt that the city meditated the destruction of the Nazarenes, nor that Flaccus would permit him to be overlooked in the general slaughter. Not the least of his fears was that Lydia might be thrust among them at any moment, to share the fate he had striven so hard to avert from her.

He returned to his cave in the ruined wall, and lay down on his matting, not to sleep, nor even to plan intelligently, but to submit to his distress.

At high noon the third day, on the summit of the Serapeum in Egyptian Rhacotis, there appeared a slender figure in the burnoose of an Arab.

Five hundred feet distant, in the beleaguered Nazarene settlement, a woman stood in her doorway to pray, that the earthen roof might not be between her supplication and the Master in Heaven. She saw the microscopic figure on the pylon of the Temple, but daily a priest came there to worship the sun. She saw the figure lift and extend its arms, presently, but that was part of the idolatrous ritual, she thought. She dropped her eyes to the crucifix in her hands and her lips moved slowly.

At that instant, at her feet, as a thunderbolt strikes from the clouds, an arrow plunged half its length into the hard sand, and leaned, quivering strongly toward the tiny shape on the summit of the pylon.

The Nazarene woman dropped her crucifix and shrieked.

The slow fisher-husband appeared beside her, and, seeing the fallen cross, picked it up with fumbling fingers, muttering an exclamation of remonstrance.

"Look!" the Nazarene woman cried, pointing to the half-buried bolt, still quivering.

The fisherman gazed at it.

"Whence came it?" he asked.

The trembling woman shook her head and clasped and unclasped her hands.

"An affront from the heathen," the man said. "It was despatched to murder thee. The Lord's hand stayed it; blessed be His name!"

He plucked the arrow with an effort from the sand, and looked at it.

"It is a witness of the Master's care; let us take it to the pastor," he suggested.

The trembling woman followed her husband as he stepped into the street and raised her eyes to give thanks. She saw that the figure on the summit of the pylon was gone.

The two found the leader of their flock, sitting outside an overcrowded house, bending over a half-finished basket of reeds. Beside him was one complete; at the other hand were his working materials.

"Greeting, children, in Christ's name," he said.

"Greeting, lord; praise to God in the highest!"

The Nazarene woman dropped to her knees, and her husband, extending the arrow in agitation, stumbled through their story.

"May His name be glorified for ever," the woman murmured at the end.

But the pastor took the arrow and examined it. It was uncommon; the story was uncommon, and he believed that there was more than a wanton attempt at murder in its coming. The bolt was tipped with a pointed flint, and feathered with three long, delicate papyrus cases, one dark, two white. The pastor felt of one of the white feathers, and presently ripped it off the shaft. It opened in his hand. Within was lettering.

After a little puzzled study of it, he shook his head and put it down. He loosened the other from the transparent gum and opened it. Written in another hand were the following words in Greek:

"To the Nazarene to whom this cometh:

"Deliver the arrow unto the young Jew, Marsyas, who dwells among you, but is not of your number."

The pastor took up the arrow and the papyrus and arose at once.

"Verily, a sending, but it is not for us. Abide here until I deliver it to him that expects it."

He turned toward the ruined wall where Marsyas secluded himself.

The pastor knocked on the dried earth wall without the cave, and the matting was thrust aside. The young Jew stood there.

"I bring thee a message from without," the pastor said at once. "Peace and the love of Christ enter thy heart and uphold thee."

He put the arrow into the young man's hand and saluting him with the sign of the cross, went his way.

"What blind incaution," Marsyas said, after he had stared in astonishment at the things delivered him. "A message! How does he know that he does not bear to me treachery against his people, and his undoing!"

But he sat down and undid the white case.

"That is Agrippa's writing!" he declared after he had read it.

He took up the other. The writing was in Sanskrit.

"O white Brother:" it ran; "this by an arrow from the strong bow of thy lord Prince. Him I compelled. Come forth from among the Nazarenes! Deliver thyself, by nightfall, in the pure name of her whom thou lovest! Come ere that time, if thou canst, but fail not, otherwise, to be in the forefront of Flora's followers! Be prepared to possess her!

"Fail not, by all the gods!

"Vasti, by the hand of Khosru, priest to Siva."

Marsyas seized the writing with both hands and sprang up; reread it with straining eyes; walked the two steps permitted him in his cave over and over again; or leaned against the earthen wall to think.

In the pure name of her whom he loved! Lydia? He felt his Essenic self dissolve in a flood of glad confusion, for the moment; instead of self-reproach, he felt more joy than he ever hoped to know in a life devoted to vengeance; instead of guilt, an uplift that separated him for an instant from even his terror for the rapture of contemplating Lydia.

Then the grave alarm that the bayadere's letter aroused possessed him. A rereading filled him with consternation. The unrevealed peril that he was to avert, the intimation that Lydia was endangered, the practically insurmountable obstacles in the way of his escape, shook him strongly in his self-control. He made no plans, for desperate conditions did not admit of formulated action. To pass outposts of half a cohort of brawny guards offered success only by a miracle, and the miraculous is not methodical.

Presently, he burst out of his burrow and tramped through the bright hours of the afternoon, cursing the sun for its deadly haste to get under the rim of the world, and dizzy with the pressure of terror and anxiety.

Near the softening hours of the latter part of the day, while the awakening revel roared louder in the distance, he stopped before the ancient temple. The great hamper stood without the heavy

entrance with three little Nazarene children tying ropes to the interstices between the fibers to pull it after them like a wagon. Marsyas looked at the hamper, glanced with intent eyes at the front wall,—a duplicate, except for the entrance, of the rear one,—and then rushed away in search of Ananias, the pastor.

He found the pastor sitting outside the house that had given him refuge, cutting soles for sandals from a hide that lay by his side.

The Nazarene raised a face so kindly and interested that the young man dropped down beside him and blundered through his story, in his haste to lay the plan for escape before the old man.

"At sunset," he hurried on, "or when the night is sufficiently heavy to hide us, I can be let down in the hamper by the rear wall of the old temple—if thou wilt bid some of thy congregation to help me! I pray thee—let not thy belief deny me this help, for the life of my beloved, or mayhap her sweet womanhood, dependeth upon my escape!"

He clasped his hands, and gazed with beseeching eyes into the pastor's face. He did not permit himself to think what he would do if the old man denied him.

"It is manifest," Ananias said, after a pause for thought, "that only Nazarenes are to be confined herein. And thou, being a Jew, art here under false imprisonment. We shall not be glad to have thee suffer with us."

"Yes, yes!" Marsyas cried. "I am falsely accused, and thou wilt avert an injustice—nay, by the holy death of the prophets!" he broke off, "if I could bear you all to refuge after me, I would do it!"

"It is the spirit of Christ in thee, my son; nourish it! Yet be not distressed for our sake; He who holdeth the world in the hollow of His hand is with us."

Marsyas awaited anxiously the old man's further speech, when he lapsed into silence after his confident claim of divine protection.

"Give us the plan, my son, and we will help thee," he said at last.

Marsyas took the old man's hand and lifted it impulsively to his lips.

While yet the Serapeum was crowned with pale light, but the more squalid streets were blackening, Marsyas, led by Ananias, came to the old temple-house, and briefly unfolded his plan to three stalwart young Gentiles, who had turned their backs upon Jove and assumed the grace of Jesus in their hearts. The hamper with which the children had played all day was brought. Three troll-lines, each forty feet in length and borrowed from the fisher Nazarenes who lived along the bay, were securely knotted in three slits about the rim of the basket. Then, waiting only for the rapidly rising dusk, Marsyas, the three young Gentiles and the pastor climbed cautiously to the top of the side-wall of the old structure, and pulled up the hamper after them.

At the angle in the rear, Marsyas, who led the way, stopped. Below it was already night, and he could hear the steps of the sentries in the echoing passage. He had not planned how he should pass them after his descent, but the houses opposite were dark and he did not look for interference, if he took refuge among them.

He stepped into the hamper, and the three young men laid hold on the ropes. The pastor spread his hands in blessing over Marsyas' head, and when the sound of the sentries' footsteps was faintest, the hamper, with little sound and at cautious speed, was let down the steep wall.

It touched the sand with a grinding sound. Marsyas leaped out, jerked one of the ropes in signal and the hamper sprang aloft.

With a muttered blessing on the heads of the apostates, Marsyas leaped across the narrow street, to the shadows of the other houses. Creeping from porch to porch with the sheltering shade of overhanging roofs upon him, he passed guard after guard, until the row finally ended and the open space between him and safety on the bay showed up a line of soldiers guarding the water-front.

The distance was not great, and success thus far had made Marsyas strong. With a prayer to the God of those who help themselves, he burst from the passage into the great open of the docking and sped straight for the bay.

Instantly a howl went up, a pilum launched after him, shot over his shoulder, the rush of twenty mailed feet came in pursuit, swords, spears and axes flew and fell behind him, but panting and unfaltering he rushed straight to the edge of the wharf and dropped out of sight into the bay.

The guards came after him, and hanging over the wharf looked down for him to come up. They saw the circles of water widen and widen, grow stiller and stiller, and finally cease to move, but the head for which they looked did not rise.

Meanwhile Marsyas, native of Galilee and lover of her blue sea, arose between sleeping boats far out into the bay. He caught a chain and clung while he drew breath and rested. Not a vessel was manned; every seaman, officer and passenger had gone ashore to follow Flora.

Presently, he looked about and took his bearings. There through a darkening lane of water, a hundred feet long, he made out the ornate aplustre of Agrippa's ship.

He let himself down into the water again, and, swimming around to port, away from land, climbed by her anchor-chains and got upon deck.

The ship was wholly silent and deserted. None was there to ask why he came so unconventionally aboard.

He went to the cabin prepared for the prince's reception, and with steward keys still fast to his belt let himself in and prepared to return to Alexandria.

CHAPTER XX

THE FEAST OF FLORA

Marsyas had assumed pagan dress, bound a scarlet ribbon for a fillet about his head, and flung a scarlet cloak over his tunic, and so, identified with the revelers, he safely entered the city.

Of the first he met on the brilliantly lighted wharves, he inquired, as a stranger, where he should find the night's celebration. The citizens he addressed, intoxicated with revel, smote him with palm-leaves or thyrsi and hailed him with them, as their fellow, seeking Flora.

They skirted the Regio Judæorum toward the northwest and swept him along toward the Serapeum. Ever the streets opened up, more brilliantly lighted, more thickly crowded, more boisterously noisy; ever the nucleus of the crowd that had encompassed him increased and thickened and spread, until he was in the heart of a hurrying multitude. Ever they shouted their indefinite anticipations, boasts of their favor with Flora, hopes that the run would be diverting, threats that were half-jocular, half in earnest. And some of them, drunk with anarchy, made hysterical, inarticulate, yelping cries, like dogs on a heated trail. And so, with their silent fellow among them, they went, started into an easy trot, and unhindered, like waters turning over a fall.

The strange, half-mad revelry did not make for reassurance in Marsyas. His unexplained fears swept over him from time to time like a chill, and an unspeakable hatred for the unwieldy host about him, as well as the protest of his caution against the quick pace they had set, moved him to separate himself from them as soon as he might.

Flora was to begin her flight from the Serapeum, but because the grove was most beautiful and the Temple most rich, the aristocrats of the city had repaired thither to separate themselves from *hoi polloi*, and had builded for themselves the City of Love.

Marsyas knew that superior advantages were always for the rich man, and he, who had to be in the forefront of Flora's van, had to gather unto himself the most propitious opportunities. So while the riot of plebeians into which he had been absorbed streamed contentedly on to its own lowly place, Marsyas worked his way out of the crowd and approached the City of Love.

The glow of its lights, breaking through low-hanging branches and pillared avenues of tree-trunks, reached Marsyas with its music, its shouts and its tumult, but its inhabitants were shut away behind foliage, that their doings might be screened from the unqualified.

The young man looked here and there for a way to enter, but the cunningly extended grove reached from street to street and blocked his passage. Drawing closer he saw that a cordon of soldiers from the city garrison had been thrown around the grove for protection during revels.

At that moment, some one whispered in his ear.

"Thou art in time, white brother. Continue and fail not!"

He looked to catch a glimpse of Vasti, the bayadere, at his side. She was wrapped from head to heel in a murky red silk, like a fire-illuminated tissue of smoke. He exclaimed to himself that this was no old woman, nor yet one young. There was too much lissome grace in the sinuous figure, and too much unearthly wisdom in the dark mysterious face.

An instant and she had disappeared like a spirit.

A little dazed he turned to follow his approved course, but stopped, seeing that many humbler folk who had preceded him were halted and driven away. The benefits of the grove were distinctly for those who came with a following and in chariots. The cars of the rich were constantly passing through the line of guards; the numbers were greatly increasing, and presently became congested. The shouts of the impatient waiting ones, the pawing of the horses and the calls of the slaves running hither and thither, added uproar to the lines which closed in around him, until finally he could go neither forward nor backward.

While he turned this way and that for an avenue of escape, he found that he stood beside a shell of a chariot, with Junia and Justin Classicus seated within. Classicus was not given readily to seeing people afoot, and Marsyas stepped hastily out of view. But the Roman woman had already discovered him. He saw her speak to Classicus, and, while he waited in resentment to be pointed out, Classicus leaped lightly out of the car, and, forcing his way through a crush of slaves, got up beside another, whom Marsyas saw to be Agrippa.

Then Junia leaned down to him.

"Come up; thou art safe," she said. "I will not betray thee. What was it, reason or repentance that freed thee?" Her eyes sparkled and her breath came and went quickly between her parted lips.

"An errand," he answered, "and the soldiers will not let me pass."

"An errand? Flora's errand? Nay, but thou art an Essene. Come up, I say. The soldiers must pass thee if I bid them."

With thanks on his lips he stepped in beside her and was presently driven without further interruption through the line of sentries, to the circle of abandoned chariots within. There, alighting, the young man found himself deftly thrust into the crowd by Junia to avoid meeting the proconsul or Justin Classicus. She lost herself with him, and entirely obscured from any he had ever seen before, they proceeded.

"I have delivered thee an evil charge," she said, and there was a note of regret in her voice. "Yesterday and the day before they would have been less objectionable, and seeing them hour by hour thou shouldst have become gradually accustomed to their aberration. But suddenly exposed to this night's work, thy soul will be covered with confusion."

Marsyas smiled awkwardly. The woman could not understand that nothing short of the motive that had actuated him could have moved him to follow Flora; neither did he wish her to rest under the self-blame that she had urged him.

"I do not go of mine own will, nor even thine," he answered. "I was summoned."

"What! has Flora summoned thee?" she cried, gazing at him in unfeigned astonishment. "Fie on her boldness! Only the Floras of Rome do such a thing!"

"A new evil in Rome?" he responded, smiling. "O lady, I can not go thither unless thou promise me protection!"

She laughed and waved him a warning hand.

"Behold how thou acceptest my counsel here in Alexandria! What obedience need I expect in Rome?"

Without waiting for his answer, she turned him out of the open into the grove.

No extensive vista greeted him. No lamps, only their lights were visible. No green-and-gold walled aisle led far in a straight line. The woodland screening of leaf and branch prevailed everywhere. The music, the shouts, the tumult seemed to be in another direction than the one toward which they were tending. Marsyas went uncertainly; he had been bidden to be in the forefront of Flora's van, and ahead of him was falling silence. The splendid creature at his side held her peace, and moved rapidly. Gradually, the people thinned out, and when Junia turned him into another aisle they were alone. She seemed to be conducting him away from the music and noise.

Only for a moment, he hesitated at a loss, and then with an apologetic smile, he said to her:

"We will go this way,"—and, turning at right angles, led back toward the tumult.

"Marsyas," she said, with more impatience than reproach, "and thou art an Essene! How I reproach myself!"

But he smiled uncomfortably, and kept on.

The wail of instruments, wild and discordant, the blowing of horns, the pulsation of drums, seemed suddenly to unite as they approached. Above the clamor and squeal of cymbals and pipes, voices were lifted, loud and strained as if striving to be heard above the uproar. Some of them merely shouted, most of them were singing, not one but many songs; shrieks and laughter

shrilled through it all, and once in a while the musical tone of a rich throat triumphant above the noise bespoke the presence of gift with frenzy.

The tumult was not now distant, and Marsyas did not wish Junia's further aid. His search after Flora was not a thing to be published abroad. He glanced at the lights, looked about for a less circuitous route, and, with a word to her, plunged through the brake toward the revel.

Before she had thought to protest, the forefront of a procession penetrated from the side of the aisle and, streaming across, broke through the green on the other side.

The first were flamens, Greek, Roman and Egyptian, robed in the pallium and carrying the lituus—first, if the order of procession had been observed, but before them, and about them bounded a harlequinade of baboons, centaurs, goats, swine—loose, ill-fashioned disguises that only robbed their wearers of human form and did not achieve the animal semblance. Among them were slighter figures of lizards, snails on active pretty limbs, toads, beetles—glittering, sinuous things that surpassed the heavier figures in agility and boldness. After them came a great cornucopia of gold, banded with spiral garlands of roses, studded with jewels and drawn on low ivory wheels by snow-white mule-colts. Out of the shell-tinted mouth of the great horn, and luxuriously bedded on a gauze of gold cast over the flowers and fruits, was the rosy figure of a little boy, with pearly wings bound to his shoulders.

Thus Eros proceeded to Flora.

Only thus far was any semblance of order distinguishable in the procession. The wave of uproar suddenly assumed overwhelming proportions; the aisle was inundated with frenzy.

Marsyas moved forward, Junia moving with him, and the tumult drawing its bulky length across the aisle swept in now by multitudes. He was caught; Junia clung to him determinedly for a moment, but was torn away; he permitted himself to be swallowed up and pitched along by the flood.

He attracted no consecutive attention. Mænads flung themselves upon him because his cheeks were crimson and his figure notable, but other youths with glowing cheeks drew the mænads away, now and again. Satyrs, fauns and bacchantes saluted him, tumbled him, buffeted him: one snatched off his scarlet fillet and crowned him with a wreath of grape-leaves, while a second thrust a thyrsus into his hand. Some clung about his shoulders and bawled into his ear; others reached him flagons of wine and did not notice that others snatched the drink away. These things were single events that stood up out of the daze of astonishment and shock that confounded him.

The noise roared louder at every step: the thousands about him augmented. The grove opened more; the lights became more scattering and presently he found that he had been swept through another circle of chariots and outpost of soldiery into the city again. Hurriedly glancing at the buildings on each side of the street into which the procession poured, he saw a sufficient number of familiar marks to inform him that he had been borne out on the Rhacotis side of the city. Then the blood within him chilled. This half-maddened, half-murderous multitude was upon the trail of Flora, and was driving toward the settlement of the Nazarenes!

An unshakable conviction possessed him, that Lydia stood between!

Meanwhile the army of rabble joined the procession of aristocrats. From every avenue fresh multitudes poured in and added to the thousands. Except for the bounding mimes about them the flamens kept the front of the horde, following with downcast eyes the trail of yellow roses which, Marsyas now knew, led the procession.

In the midst of the gigantic hurly-burly he saw with strained eyes and a laboring heart that the light-footed goddess had made a long, deviating flight: that over and over again she doubled on her tracks, but that the detours led with deadly sureness toward the Nazarenes. Impelled now by desperation, he began to work his way toward the front.

But he had not reckoned on the immense length of the procession, nor how far he had been absorbed into the heart of it. Only when he was rushed over a slight rise in the street did he know that ahead of him for a great distance was a sea of tossing heads and moving shoulders, and on either side a compact wave wholly filled the two hundred feet of street and washed up against the walls of the houses.

The street opened up into an immense square, the last stadium which marked the limit of the Roman influence in the Egyptian settlement. Beyond that, on the water-front, were the streets of the Nazarenes!

Praying and struggling, Marsyas hardly noticed the increase of noise beginning at the front and extending back to him and passing until the wild clamor resolved itself into a stunning shout that shook Alexandria and rippled the face of the bay.

"Flora! *Dea maxima!* *Solis filia!* Give us joy; give us joy!"

The trail of roses had been broken off. Flora had been found.

But another roar went up, here and there from the great body there were cries of protest and disappointment: the voice of looters and brawlers that had been deprived of sacrificial blood. There were hisses, shouts of derision and cries to the populace to press on.

But the flamens stopped; the great concourse halted by rank and rank until the slackening and final cessation of movement imprisoned the dissenters that were resolved to go on. The main body continued its greetings to the goddess, above the cry of the dissatisfied.

At the far side of the open was a tiny squat temple, hardly more than a shrine, to Rannu, the Egyptian goddess of the harvests. On the top of the cornice with the blush lights of the City of Love upon her, stood a girl. Thus lifted into the night sky, her features could not be distinguished, and Marsyas believed that she was mummied, face and figure, in wrappings.

He continued to press forward. The small figure on the summit of the Temple stirred, turned half about and slowly raised her arms with a motion that seemed half-command, half-salute to the great expectant crowd below.

Then wing-like mists, taking into themselves the sunset flush of the fires of the City of Love, rose up and fluttered about her. Long, flaming, melon-colored tongues licked in and out of the illusion: distended convolutions of tissue tinged with rose floated and drifted above her, beside her, before her; shivering streamers of silver reached up and failed and dissolved; jagged streaks and reduplications of fiery jets stood out and up and all about her. When the clouds of pearly vapor lifted and eddied about her head, girdled her with circles or framed her with rosy wheels, the center of all this motion was distinguishable only as a snow-white spindle that whirled with dizzy rapidity. And presently it was noted that the shape was losing the mummy form, that more and more the outlines of a beautiful body were blossoming out of the impearled mists: that petaline wings opened out, fold on fold, as a rose-bud would blow, and each successive disclosure gave the entranced vision a clearer image of the dancer at the heart. Ever the motion seemed slow and stately as do all great and graceful things maintaining splendid speed; ever the crimson light from the City of Love lent its illimitable range of shade to the motion of the mists.

Below the great multitude, with its face lifted to the midnight sky, passed from uproar into silence and from silence into thunders of applause. The immense voice was the voice of admiration, for the cooling hand of wonder pressed back the crowd's passion for a let to its reason. They forgot their disappointment, their bloodthirst, their hate of the Nazarenes, and stood to marvel that the goddess burned but was not consumed.

But Marsyas, patiently working his way forward, pressed by a tall black man who was saying over and over to himself in Hindu:

"It is the bayadere dance, for the glory of Brahma! A sacrilege!"

The rest of Flora's program meanwhile was proceeding. Slowly and mightily, magnificent young athletes, for only such could drive their way through so solid a pack of humanity, were working toward the portico of the Temple. These were candidates for Flora's favor. Among them were black-eyed Roman youths with laurel around their heads; golden-haired Greeks, crowned with stephanes; lithe, bronze Egyptians with ribboned locks at the temple which were the badge of princehood. And after them came one, crowned with grape-leaves, with a thyrsus in his hand, but he had shining black curls, the silken beard and the crimson cheeks of a Jew. The eyes of this one glittered, not from excitement of fancy, but from desperate resolution and astounded recognition. The pagans were far in advance of him.

Now the crowd understood where they were bound and shouted to them; now the youths forced themselves past the cornucopia, the mimes, the flamens, and ran into the open space before the Temple. In poses characteristic of their captivation and intent, they looked up at the dancing fires and cried aloud to the goddess.

Meanwhile the morning-tinted mists whirled in a circular plane about the girl; suddenly they began to tremble and rise,—up, up until the ripple and shiver of the shaken silk took on the action and appearance of an illuminated cataract. Through it, the beautiful outlines of the dancer were distinguished, veiled as a Nereid beneath waters, leaping, running. Thousands below instinctively raised their arms to catch the figure which inevitably must leap through the

inspired cataract and over the parapet of the Temple unless the rosy element pent her within its bosom.

The flight gradually changed from a simple step into the entanglement and intricacy of a dance. No gossamer adrift on the wind was more a creature of the air, no tranced ephemera more the genius of motion. The roar of the multitude failed in a vast suspiration of surprise and bewildered delight. Flora had invented, not a new wantonness, but a new grace.

But the young men shouted: each sprang to a column which upheld the portico upon which Flora danced, and began to climb, helping themselves by the incrusted garlands of stone which ran up the pillars from base to capital. It was a contest in climbing, and the best of the contestants was not long in proving himself. He was one of the golden-haired Greeks and the multitude, for ever partizan to the strongest man, roared and thundered its encouragement to him.

He went up with an ease and swiftness almost superhuman; now, he drew himself across the outstanding corner of the architrave, and stood with delicate foothold on its molding while he reached up past the frieze and caught the cornice with his hands.

The dancer caught the flash of light on his golden stephane and wavered.

"*Habet! Habet!*" roared the multitude. "Evoe, Ionides!"

And Ionides, lazily lifting himself to the top of the portico, lingered a moment on one hand and knee to contemplate his prize.

The cataract sank; the flying feet halted, the glory of fire and motion was lost in lengths of silk which the dancer began hastily to wind about her head and body. Sufficiently covered to hide her face, she paused and looked to see his further move.

The Greek, with shining eyes and smiling lips, began slowly to raise himself.

Then the one with the black curls and silken beard tore himself from the foremost of the crowd and rushed toward the portico.

The dancer saw him come. She moved toward the edge of the cornice. The Greek leaped: the other below flung up his arms, but the roar of the multitude swept away the cry that came from his lips.

The dancer, eluding the triumphant Greek, rushed over the brink of the portico and dropped like a plummet entangled in gossamer into the upreached arms of Marsyas below.

Both fell like stones. But Marsyas sprang up with his prize in his arms, and fled up the steps through the black porch and the stone valves into the Temple of Rannu.

[Illustration: Marsyas sprang up with his prize in his arms (missing from book)]

Outside, the multitude, having seen Flora flout her rightful possessor, fell for a moment silent. Then, a part having but one desire to choose for itself, fell to its own choosing; but the rest, already cheated of blood and spoil, howled their disapproval, fought their way through disinterested masses in order to reach the refuge of the capricious Flora, met resistance and precipitated warfare, and in an incredibly short time, bedlam reigned in the square before the Temple of Rannu.

The public celebration of the Feast of Flora was at an end. Meanwhile there was a trail of yellow roses, beginning abruptly in the Nazarene community and leading around every household and out and on toward the west. The roses lay untouched and wilting through the night and were shoveled up and carted away by the street-cleaners the next morning. And on the summit of the Gate of the Necropolis, a painted beauty sat in jewels and flowers and little raiment, and wondered why she was not sought and found and why her followers stayed and roared before the Temple of Rannu.

CHAPTER XXI

THE FINING FIRE

As Marsyas leaped into the Temple of Rannu, a figure started up beside him. He sprang away from it in alarm, but a word in Hindu reassured him.

"It is I, Vasti."

With the bayadere following he raced through the cloyed musk of the temple toward the square of lesser darkness at the rear, which showed the exit into the court. He flung himself across the pavement of the inner inclosure and down its aisle of sphinxes, through the gate in the rear wall and out into a black passage.

Behind, the roar of the contending host of Flora followed him. Though, for a second time this day he had run with peril on his track, the threatened identification of the precious burden he bore was more terrifying than death had been at sunset.

It was a long alley, the single outlet for a jam of humble houses surrounding the temple, and it opened into a street deep in the Egyptian quarter. Though Marsyas ran splendidly, he carried no little burden, and the way was black, unpaved and treacherous. He had begun to fear that he could not reach the end before pursuers, so minded, could hem him in, when almost as if the thought had invited the actuality, he saw a figure appear at the mouth of the alley. With a furious but repressed exclamation, the unknown plunged at the Essene.

Determined to defend Lydia's identity as long as he might, Marsyas swung her behind him, and with a whisper to Vasti to hide Lydia, made ready to fight fast.

With the dim illumination of the city behind him, Marsyas was better able to see his antagonist. As the solid body projected itself at him, like a springing beast, he met it with a raised left arm and a ready right hand. Instantly the two closed and for a brief, fierce moment, fought savagely. But Marsyas discovered that he was far more agile, taller and apparently younger than his assailant, and for a space he had only to fight away the knife that glinted and darted hungrily at his throat. Then, seizing upon his antagonist's first imperfect guard, he delivered a stunning blow over the heart. The heavy body staggered, quivered and collapsed.

Expecting to find the passage before him filling with ruffians, Marsyas was astonished to see the way clear and vacant. Without waiting to catch breath Marsyas sprang back in the alley, and, whispering the bayadere's name, found Lydia and the serving-woman only a pace from the spot.

Catching Lydia up again, in spite of her protests, he was about to spring over the prostrate body that all but blocked the passage, when his eye fell upon the upturned face. The dim light of the city fell on it.

It was Flaccus!

For a single moment of surprise and bewilderment, Marsyas stood still. Then very surely it penetrated through his brain that the proconsul had recognized him at the moment of Flora's drop into his arms, and had come to capture him—or to identify the Dancing Flora!

He knew that he had not struck a fatal blow and the proconsul's knife lay near. He picked it up.

It was bloody.

Startled and aghast, he flung the weapon away, and, leaping over the unconscious Roman, fled out of the alley. A torch of pitch, burnt down to a charred knot, with a feeble flame playing over it, was set upon a staff hardly ten paces from the mouth of the passage. It was a dark street, and deserted. The roar of the populace still centered about the square of the Temple of Rannu. Marsyas turned toward the torch, and, as he ran, he saw under its sickly light the figure of a man stretched on the earth. At another step, he tripped over a second fallen body. It moved and groaned.

Marsyas put Lydia down. Carrying her through a street cumbered with prostrate men might mean bodily injury for both of them. With a reassuring word, he led her between the head of the

obscured man and the feet of the one under the torch, and stumbled at his second step on a contorted shape.

Marsyas stopped, to ask himself if the deadly hand that had brought these men low might not await him and his dear charge farther on. Vasti leaned over the one under the torch. Then she sprang up.

"Come! Look!" she whispered in excitement.

Marsyas hurried to the man, and met at that instant the last conscious light in the eyes of Agrippa.

The young Essene dropped to his knees without a word, thrust his hand into the embroidered tunic and felt for the prince's heart. It beat but slowly. Vasti, meanwhile, snatched the torch from the staff and beat the charred pitch knot on the ground till the still inflammable heart broke open and ignited afresh.

By its light Marsyas examined Agrippa. Between the prince's shoulders, his hand touched chilling blood.

"Ambushed!" he said grimly. "Stabbed in the back!"

Marsyas looked at the prince's right hand. It was still clenched, and the flesh on the knuckles was abraded, the second joints swelling fast.

Vasti, with suspicion in her olive eyes, carried the torch over to the contorted shape. Then she made a sign to Marsyas. He looked. It was an Egyptian wearing the livery of Flaccus. The prince's Arabic dagger was neatly buried to the hilt in the servitor's breast. Vasti examined the second prostrate form. By her torch Marsyas saw that it was Eutychus, conscious but benumbed. His left ear, cheek and eye were swollen and black.

"It seems," said Marsyas, stanching Agrippa's wound, "that the prince disabled his own support!"

But Vasti, by deft twitches of ear and hair and threats in Hindu, significant in tone if not in speech to the charioteer, finally got Eutychus upon his feet.

"Take up the prince," she said to Marsyas. "The slave may follow or lie as he chooses. I shall attend my mistress."

Marsyas lifted the Herod and, following Vasti, hurried on again into the darkness. The bayadere made toward the sea-front, not many yards distant, sped across the wharf and over the edge apparently into the water. Marsyas, by this time ready to follow the brown woman into any extreme, plunged after her. He landed abruptly in the bottom of a punt. Lydia followed, and Eutychus, with an alacrity not expected of one who groaned so helplessly.

Vasti severed the rope that tied up the boat, and, with a strong thrust of her hands against the piling, pushed the boat away from the wharf. But she did not take up the oars. She left them to Marsyas, trained on the blue waters of Galilee.

In a moment he had pulled out into the black expanse of the bay, and, with the prince's ship in mind, rowed among the sleeping shipping.

"How came the prince in this plight?" Marsyas demanded of Eutychus.

The charioteer, with his head in his hands, groaned and murmured unintelligibly. Lydia dipped an end of the wonderful silk that enveloped her into the water and pressed the wet corner to the charioteer's temples.

Marsyas frowned blackly.

"Nay, but thou canst answer, Eutychus," he said shortly.

After further murmurings, the charioteer brought out between groans an avowal that he was completely mystified.

"How came Agrippa in the street?" Marsyas insisted.

"He was with Justin Classicus; I attended him. When Flora danced and chose her lover, and the two fled into the Temple of Rannu, the Alexandrian cried to my lord that there was another passage into the Temple, by which they could go in, or the Flora and her lover come out. And he proposed for a prank that he and the prince go thither and discover Flora and her lover. We were on the roof of a bath and could get down at once, so we ran through private passages, my lord and I, outstripping Classicus, whom the crowd swallowed. And when we got into this dark street, two fell upon us without warning and killed us both!"

"But it was Agrippa who struck that blow," Marsyas declared.

The man murmured again.

"Some one struck me," he said finally; "mayhap the prince, not knowing friend from foe in the street."

"Of a surety, this stiff old Roman took chances," Marsyas averred after thought, "with but one apparitor to aid him against Agrippa, palestræ-trained and this young charioteer! Art sure thou didst not play the craven, Eutychus?" he demanded.

"Or should I be blamed," Eutychus groaned, "when it was three against me, with the prince striking at his single defender?"

Marsyas fell silent. It was not like Agrippa to be confused under any circumstances.

He pulled up beside Agrippa's vessel, roused the watchman and had the prince and Eutychus taken aboard; but Vasti and Lydia he left in the borrowed punt, out of sight of the crew that had returned.

He followed the injured men on deck and hurriedly dressed Agrippa's wound, restored him to consciousness and left him in the charge of the captain of the vessel. He ordered one of the skilled seamen to attend Eutychus and hurried back to the women in the boat under the black shadow of the ship.

He pulled straight for the sea, rounded Eunostos point and skirting the tiny archipelagoes in the broad light of the Pharos, brought up at a small indented coast between two sandy peninsulas. Here the residence portion of Alexandria came down to the ocean. The locality was dark and wrapped in sleep.

As he lifted Lydia from the boat, Marsyas turned to Vasti.

"Why didst thou not prevent her in this thing?" he asked in Hindu.

"The white brother forgets that I am a handmaiden," she replied.

"But what if I had not come?" he persisted, growing more troubled by his perplexities.

"I had prepared a path for escape; I was armed, and watching!"

"Did—did she expect me?" he asked after silence.

"No."

Then she had done this thing for him. Oh, for the safe refuge of the alabarch's musky halls that he might harken to the sweet distress in his soul and tell her of it!

Without further event, they reached the alabarch's house and the bayadere, producing keys, let her charges into the servant's entry beneath the porch. Lydia instantly disappeared, but Vasti in obedience to a word from Marsyas conducted him through the well-beloved chambers to the corridor lined by the sleeping-rooms of the servants.

Before one, she stopped.

"Herein is the prince's other servant," she said, and quickly disappeared.

Marsyas opened the door and entering aroused Silas. With a bare explanation that the prince would sail the instant the courier got aboard, he urged the grumbling old man into activity, and went back to the alabarch's presiding-room.

He had a moment of waiting—at last a moment to think!

He realized that an extreme of some nature had been reached; all his purposes had been brought up to a climax. There was no lingering in Alexandria possible for Agrippa, wounded or well, for Marsyas knew that Flaccus had the Herod's undoing in mind. If Lydia were a Nazarene, Marsyas had now, of a surety, though all Heaven and earth intervened, to bring Saul of Tarsus to death before the Pharisee's dread hand fell upon Lydia for apostasy! For that purpose, he must go to Rome—and leave Alexandria—to return? For his love's sake? He, an Essene?

Silas came, bowed, and was dismissed to wait in the street for the moment. And still Marsyas stood. The house was silent and dark. The slumber that overtakes those relieved from a three days' strain enwrapped all under the alabarch's roof. Presently he thought of Cypros, in his search for an excuse for lingering. A lamp on the alabarch's table was ready to be lighted, and, finding the materials for fire-making in the drawer, he lighted it.

"Sweet lady," he wrote on a parchment at hand, "the winds favorable to thy lord's departure blow, and he will not awaken thee to the pain of a farewell. Be comforted, be brave, be hopeful; for when he returneth, he bringeth thee a crown. I remember my pledge to thee.

"Be thou blessed.
"MARSYAS."

It was the first letter he had ever written to a woman; he did not dream that he had written so tenderly.

He rolled the parchment and addressed it to the princess.

There was nothing more to be done.

Was he not to see Lydia again?

Filled with rebellion and fear, he hurried toward the hall; in the semi-dark, cast by the lamp within the larger room, he saw a small figure slip quickly behind a hanging.

She had been waiting to have a stolen look upon him as he went!

He caught her in his arms and drew her out into the light. Under its revealing ray, he saw her lovely face smitten down with shame, but he lifted it, to kiss her eyes, her temples and her lips.

"Lydia! Lydia! I fear to leave thee!" he whispered.

She let her eyes light upon him, to catch his meaning, and when she saw terror for her apostasy and amazement for the thing she had done for the Nazarenes, a sudden misery leaped into her face. She tried to put him back.

"Lydia, Lydia!" he begged, feeling the repulse, "dost thou not love me, then?" His tone urged, his eyes pleaded.

For a moment, she was silent; then she said, with infinite pain:

"Marsyas, I broke off the trail of roses through Rhacotis, and held back the multitude from the Nazarenes. But thou art an Essene, and a Jew; wherefore, in thy sight I can not be justified. Forget not these things for my sake! Go, ere thy teaching hath cause to reproach thee."

"No, no!" he agonized. "Do not say that to me! Say rather that thou wilt turn away from this heresy and be led no more by it into transgression! Better thy sweet life and thy sweet fame than all the truth in the world!"

The word he used caught her. She waited and seemed not to breathe. He swept on.

"Art thou, beyond saving, a Nazarene?"

Her face fell, and her soft red lips were parted with a heavy sigh.

"From this night henceforward, Marsyas! I have purchased the blessing dearly."

She took the hands about her and undid them.

"Go!" she whispered. "Farewell, and the one God, that loves us all, shield thee from harm all the days of thy life!"

A moment and she was gone.

After a while he turned and walked with stumbling feet into the new dawn on Alexandria.

CHAPTER XXII

"IN THE CLOAK OF TWO COLORS"

Marsyas turned on the gilded couch, threw off the light covering and sat up. A Syrian slave thrust aside the heavy drapery over the cancelli, which had been drawn in the atrium while the young man slept.

In the brilliant light of the Roman mid-afternoon, Marsyas looked sleepily at the slave that bowed beside him, and the courier that stood near by.

"A message for thee," the slave said.

Marsyas put out his hand and the courier laid in it a package wrapped in silk. Marsyas broke the seal and read the contents.

"O MARSYAS:

"Gossip hath it now that thou art no longer confused when a woman addresses thee: wherefore I write with less trepidation and more confidence.

"I am in Rome these seven days, under my father's roof, for a little space before we are commanded to join Cæsar in Capri. In this time I have not seen thee nor thy lord.

"If not myself, then perchance the news I bring from Alexandria may urge thee to accept the invitation I extend.

"There exists no greater claim than thine upon my hospitality.

"Come thou, and make me welcome in mine own city.

"JUNIA."

Marsyas sprang up, the last of the languor gone from his face.

"Thou shalt conduct me," he said to the messenger.

He disappeared in the direction of his cubiculum.

In a time longer than he had consumed in his old Essenic days to prepare himself for the streets he came again into Agrippa's atrium.

It was hard to recognize in him the picturesque Jewish ascetic that had bent over the scroll in the great college of Jerusalem. He had permitted the blade to come at his hair and beard; the kerchief had been replaced by the fillet; the cloak and gown by the scarlet tunic and mantle, the daylight had been let in on his fine limbs, and there was the fugitive glitter of jewels on his fingers and arms. He had assumed perfumes and polishes, had laid aside all his oriental habit and had become not only a Roman but an exquisite. The change was not all in his dress; the indefinable something that marks the man of experience was upon him and the ascetic blankness was gone from his brow.

He signed to the messenger to follow, and passing out of the house and down the long banks of marble steps which led up to Agrippa's magnificent eyrie on the brink of the Quirinal, entered a lectica that awaited him in the streets.

Years are not time enough to weary one of Rome.

Marsyas had come into the capital with a spirit benumbed by a great shock, so that the first day he walked the imperial streets he was less conscious of their wonders than he was at this hour.

He was borne through narrow lanes that were like clefts between heights of marble, under arches, chronicling the solemn consummation of triumph, along crowding pillars that arose out of the ravines between the seven hills, and, catching the sunlight on their white capitals, cast it down in the gloom of the depressions. Glories clambered up the bosom of the Esquiline; templed sanctity crowned the Aventine, and might in marble and gold sat on the Palatine. Between were splendor and squalor, confused, for only beauty stood up above the miseries and defilement that made Rome hateful in its unsunned ways.

The feebleness of unwieldy and disunited multitudes cumbered the Carinæ, along which he passed. Starvation and the excess of plenty, power and abject subjection, unspeakable depravity and innocence met and passed. The slaves preceding the young man's litter made way for it with staff and pilum, or again it made way for slaves bearing fasces and maces. He did not proceed unnoticed. Albucilla, widow of Satrius Secundus, in a litter with Cneius Domitius, turned from the languid senator at her side to cast a bewitching smile at the young Essene; Ennia, wife of Macro, the prætorian prefect, leaned from her litter to cry him an invitation.

"To Tusculum! Come with us!"

"Many thanks: yet I would the invitation came to-morrow!"

"It shall," she said in answer and was borne on. Running slaves pushed by him to overtake her chair, and Marsyas knew without looking that the lectica they bore contained Caligula, Cæsar's grand-nephew. Agrippina, a young matron in a chair, with a month-old babe in her arms, cast a sidelong glance out of her black eyes at the young man as he approached. Stupid old Claudius, clad in a purple-edged toga and stumbling as he walked, acknowledged the precedence Marsyas gave him with a smile and a greeting. As the young Jew was borne on he did not realize that he had made room for three coming Cæsars in the Carinæ. After them streamed a great number of patricians in chairs, all proceeding to the races at Tusculum, but Marsyas' bearers turned off the Carinæ and began to mount the Esquiline. In a few minutes he was set down before a small, newly-erected house as classic as a Greek temple, as compact as a fortification.

The messenger bowed him into the hands of the atriensis, who led him into the vestibule and left him for a moment. Presently, a soft-footed, scantily-clad boy bowed gracefully beside him and begged him to follow. He was led into Junia's atrium.

The Roman woman, who had been lounging in a chair at the cancelli, turned languidly, and sprang up in feigned surprise. But honest feeling came into her face as she looked at the changed man that stood before her.

"Welcome!" she cried, hastening to meet him. "Would thou wast a god! Perchance there would be despatch about answering prayers!"

"Give the gods as welcome a supplication, and the answer would come riding upon Jupiter's thunderbolts!" he responded.

She laughed and shook her finger at him.

"How hopeless a ruin thou art! A Jew speaking of the gods!" He led her to a chair, and, drawing one up beside her, sat. With bright eyes and a little changing smile she inspected him for a moment.

"It is true!" she cried at last. "And I do not like to see it! Thou art indeed changed; no longer the sincere Jew that I met in Alexandria."

"A Jew, lady, nevertheless," he answered. "But tell me of thyself, and after that of them that remain in Alexandria."

"No: thou canst not avert the preachment I have ready for thee. All thy misdeeds are known to me. When I forewarned thee of the various attributes of Rome, I did not add that Rome talks! I have heard how thou hast put chaplets on thy head, reclined at feasts and upset half a score of merry running courtships in the capital. I see thee, how thou hast put off thy sober habit and got into raiment that makes thee thrice and four times more deadly to the hearts of women. And thou an Essene! Prayerfully hoping to return into the peace and inertia of the salty desert of En-Gadi—some time! Overshadowing the Herod till in very despair he hath taken to racing and left the triclinia and the atria to thee! Fie and for shame, Marsyas!"

The young man smiled a little bitterly. Cypros' charge had not been difficult, since his Essenism had been the obstacle which lay between him and that love he would have, though it cost him his soul!

"But Rome enlarges," he protested. "Agrippa chaseth the elusive bubble of Fortune: and I—having a purpose to be achieved in his success—I speed him—in mine own way. But enough of ourselves. Tell me of Alexandria!"

"But wait! I have not done. The charm of beauty hath lost its potency here in Rome, where it is the business of every one to be beautiful. The charm of riches is debased because of its great prevalence, since every one hath his honor to sell, and honor commands the highest price. The charm of rank is dissolved, for there is no rank with a centurion's son bearing the ægis, and freedmen dispensing hospitality in the mansions of the ancient Quirites! Wherefore there is only one rare, unpurchasable charm—newness—and Roman society speedily dulls the luster of that, if one stoops to flourishing socially. Beware, my Marsyas!"

He remembered that she had always been concerned for his uprightness, in a strangely unspiritual way. He had heard of upright atheists; somehow she seemed to belong in that category with her moral, but irreligious chidings. Now, she was bearing him welcome testimony that he had changed.

"Be neither frequent nor democratic. Saith Agricola, the pleb, 'Brutus, the senator, is nobody; he speaks to me!' By Castor! I had rather endure the contempt of the great than the approval of the small. Wherefore, save thyself, as a rare wine, fit for only imperial feasts. And lest thou be lonely meantime, let me amuse thee."

"How can I expect it, when thou wilt not tell me now what I wish?" he complained.

"But this is trial of thy gallantry: I have as great a curiosity as thine. So thou wilt wait for me. Thou hast been in Rome four months. Tell me what happened in that time."

Marsyas slipped down in his chair and clasped his hands back of his head.

"None leads a droning life who associates with Agrippa," he said. "I have not seen a restful hour since I met him in Judea. Nay, then; hear me. He landed at Capri, on the invitation of the emperor, and repaired to the palace where, with the same grace that hath made me and others his slaves, he won back in a single audience all the favor that he had forfeited in twenty years. He came away radiant and under promise to return the following night, and dine with the emperor. But the next morning, who should drop anchor in the bay but Herrenius Capito, livid with wrath because he had been outwitted at every turn by Agrippa. One would think it were he whom Agrippa owed, so indecent his fervor in reporting him. What followed but that the same imperial hand which had been stretched in welcome to the prince one day, was, the next, extended in banishment over him."

"What misfortune!" Junia exclaimed, half in sympathy, half in irony. "Ate, herself, must be the patron genius of the Herod."

"Hot upon Herrenius' heels came Vitellius' contubernalis, with a warrant for me, but we, meanwhile, had taken ship and sailed for Ostia. And hear me, when I say, that some rabid foe had dropped the information of our whereabouts, in Judea! I repaired to Rome, borrowed three hundred thousand drachmæ of Antonia, the *univira*, and despatched messengers to Cæsar and Herrenius Capito telling that the debt so long overlooked had been paid, before my pursuer reached Rome. So we laid the ghost of our debts. But feeling unhappy owing no man, I immediately borrowed a million drachmæ of Thallus, Cæsar's freedman, repaid Antonia, and established ourselves magnificently on the Quirinal. Hence, being in debt and in favor again, we have nothing to trouble us but the serious pursuit of our respective ambitions. But—!"

He stopped abruptly.

"O prescient contingent!" she said softly. "Does the Herod dally with his opportunities?"

"Worse: he affronts them! Worse: those opportunities are not alone for him! Part of them are mine!"

Her lips shaped an exclamation, but he went on.

"Listen; it is a proper sending on thee, for insisting on plunging me into narrative. An oriental story-teller and a circle make no end. Even as thou saidst to me in Alexandria so many weeks ago, Rome looketh two ways for a new Emperor. Here is the little Tiberius, Drusus' son, and there is Caligula, Cæsar's grandnephew. Now Cæsar seeth in the little Tiberius a successor. Fatuous dotage! The prætorians are stubbornly attached to Caligula, because forsooth he wore miniature boots like theirs when he tumbled about in the peplus of an infant. The reason is good enough to be a woman's! Be it as it may, that lean, sallow, gluttonous Caligula is brow-marked for the crown!"

"*Hercl*! but thou art as good an image-maker with words as Phidias was with a stone!"

"Patience! On a certain day, Agrippa and I went without the Porta Esquilina to get into our chariots and drive to Tusculum. Many were going, as many go every day. We had mounted our car, with Eutychus—would he were at the bottom of the Tiber!—as charioteer, when young Tiberius came and mounted his, and Caligula came and mounted his. After them directly followed a cohort of prætorians. Their bright armor, their noise, their steady undeviating advance, frightened little Tiberius' horses, which backed into Caligula's chariot and frightened his pair. The four bolted at once; the chariots upset and both princes were spilled on the ground directly in front of the advancing cohort.

"The tribune hastily brought up the column and Tiberius and Caligula were helped to their feet. The lad withdrew to the roadside, but Caligula turned upon the soldiers and flung camp-jokes at them, so broad, so bold, so rough, that, at first chuckling, then roaring, the whole cohort burst into a great shout in honor of their favorite.

"Meanwhile, Eutychus had permitted his horses by bad management to become unruly. Agrippa seized the lines away from him and lashed him across the shoulders once or twice, to the great rage of the charioteer. I had in the meanwhile to alight and quiet the animals. Agrippa then drove toward Tiberius to offer him the hospitality of his chariot, while the slaves were pursuing the runaways. The boy saw him coming, understood the prince's intent and handed his cloak to a slave preparatory to mounting Agrippa's car, when the cohort began to cheer Caligula.

"What did Agrippa, then, but wheel his horses, drive over to the soldiers' favorite and take him into the car!"

"What! Did that thing openly?"

"Deliberately! The boy paled, flushed, and whirling about, stalked back inside of the walls, before I could invent an excuse to cover Agrippa's slight. And after him rushed a crowd of senators and ædiles—his umbræ—to feed his hate of the Herod!"

"What did Agrippa, then?" Junia asked after a dismayed silence.

"He was long gone up the road to Tusculum with Caligula by that time."

"It is not hard to guess how he lost Fortune before," Junia declared.

"He plays at legerdemain with Cæsar's favor," Marsyas said, annoyed at his own narrative. "Tiberius, most solemnly commended the boy Tiberius to Agrippa's care and companionship. Cæsar will hear of this!"

"Inevitably! Tale-bearing is a fine art in Rome and Tiberius is its patron. And thus he conducts himself in the face of Cypros' peril, who gave herself in hostage for him that he might succeed!"

"Cypros' peril!" Marsyas repeated, with startled eyes.

"Of Flaccus!"

Marsyas' astonishment was not pleasant.

"Why of Flaccus?" he asked.

"What! Hath Agrippa kept his counsel, thus long? Dost thou not know that Flaccus hath an eye to the timid Cypros and Agrippa, discovering it, all but killed Flaccus in a passage back of the temple, on the night of the Dance of Flora?"

Marsyas looked at her steadily.

"How much dost thou know of this thing?" he demanded.

"Can I know too much of it?" she asked plaintively.

"No!" he answered penitently.

"Then I know all of it, cause, process and result," she declared.

"Tell it me, then!"

"Nay, then; Flaccus was in love with Cypros in Rome, when she was sent here twenty years ago to marry Agrippa. So much he loved her, that twenty years after, when next he met her, his old passion was revived—stronger, less submissive and more dangerous than that of his youth. Whether or not he spoke of it to Agrippa, or simply betrayed himself, the night of the Feast, is not patent; nevertheless the proconsul was discovered half-killed, in an alley back of the Temple of Rannu, and the Herod had sailed suddenly and without farewell to Cypros, in the night."

"How didst thou learn of this?"

"O simple youth! Is it then so common in Judea for powers to be discovered with their hearts stunned, that no comment is made upon it? Or perchance thou givest Flaccus credit for suffering in silence? That is better. Know, however, that he was discovered by the constabulary, and straightway such an outcry was never heard in Alexandria. But the proconsul aroused and cut it off in full voice. And there he made an error. He was made to be a straightforward man; he is too

cumbrous to be a knave. So speculation ran abroad in whispers, till the true cause was unearthed."

"And Cypros?"

"Cypros? Now canst thou, knowing Cypros, ask of her expecting any change? Beautiful statues do not change. What they express when they are finished they express until they are broken. When she came from under the sculptor's chisel, she was made to love her husband, and her babes, to believe whatever is told her, be beautiful, simple and good."

"So much the more Flaccus must have distressed her!"

"She does not suspect him!"

"What!"

"Amazement, at times, gentle sir, is reproach; wherefore since I am the author of this device, thou wilt be less astounded and, so, more complimentary. I knew that Cypros, being sweet, simple and guileless, would do no more than treat the proconsul with bitter disdain thereafter, and precipitate a climax, which in my opinion would entail twenty diverse calamities. I know Flaccus, I have sent the plummet to the bottom of his oceanic nature. I also know that the Lady Herod is an anomaly in her family, clean, faithful and loving. So with Agrippa out of reach, the proconsul may conspire all he pleases to alienate the princess from her Arab, in vain. Wherefore I permitted the good alabarch in all innocence to go in his magisterial robes to the proconsul's mansion and express his indignation, concern and anxious hopes, and to say that Agrippa had taken advantage of favorable winds to depart for Rome. I can see the smoldering eyes of the proconsul study the white old face of that perfect diplomat and discover no guile thereon. So apparent the alabarch's sincerity, that after due lapse of time in which the proconsul plucked up courage and front, Flaccus resumed his visits to the alabarch's house. And for all outward signs, it was another and not Agrippa that dented the Roman's chest!"

Marsyas leaned his elbows on his knees and a line appeared between his level brows, marking the growing change from the thought of youth to the thought of man.

"Lady," he said gravely, after a pause, "it was Flaccus and not Agrippa that did the bloodthirsty deeds back of the Temple of Rannu; and it was I—and not Agrippa, that dented the Roman's chest!"

"What?" she ejaculated, springing up to lay hand on his arm. "Thou!"

"Flaccus led Agrippa into a trap and stabbed him in the back," he went on, "and I struck the blow that laid Flaccus low. And Agrippa was taken aboard his ship that night, with a knife wound between his shoulders, wholly ignorant of the identity of his assailant—until I told him—three days out at sea!"

After a long silence, she said softly:

"And that was thine errand—for Flora!"

Without a tremor he inclined his head in assent.

"Nay, then," she began again, after another pause, "what more dost thou know? How much of this tale thou heardest so deceitfully is incorrect history?"

"Enough of Flaccus," he parried, smiling. "Tell me of—Classicus."

Junia leaned back in her chair and laughed a little at his evasion.

"Classicus? Classicus is a knave, one lacking invention, but not executive ability—wanting cunning, not courage. Now he leads us to believe that he examines a new religion—that same heresy for which he plunged thee into the Rhacotis peril. Some one put him up to it—mark me. Thus, he hopes to recant his fault against thee, for which the little Lysimachus was most unbending to him!"

"And Lydia?" he asked in a low tone.

Her softened eyes, steadily contemplating the yellow light on the leaves of a huge plantain growing near her, narrowed.

"Lydia?" she repeated thoughtfully. "Oh, Lydia dances and studies and makes ready for her marriage with Classicus."

One of those utter silences fell, which mark the announcement of critical news. After it, Marsyas arose.

"I have profited by my visit," he said, in that soft and silken voice which she had never heard before and did not understand. "I thank thee for thy counsel—and thy news."

He extended her his hand, and she looked at him, feeling that it was not steady.

"And thou wilt come again before I go?" she went on. "We are summoned to Capri where my father hath been recently made a minister to Tiberius. Come again, and let me lead thee back to thine old self."

"Perchance," he said evenly, "I have uselessly troubled myself to change."

He pressed her hand and passed out.

At the threshold of her portals, he met Agrippa.

"Perpol!" the prince cried. "Hast thou supplanted me here, too?"

But Marsyas smiled painfully and went on. Agrippa looked after him.

"Nay, now: the boy is as pale as ivory!" he ruminated. "That is an honest youth, and Junia must let him alone."

CHAPTER XXIII

A LETTER AND A LOSS

When Agrippa returned to his house that night, he found old Silas sitting in the vestibule, opposite the place of the atriensis, his hands on his knees, his dull face uncommonly animated and expressive.

It was long past the hour when the household servants had retired, and the porter at the door was drowsy, but the instant Agrippa set foot on his threshold Silas started up and bowed in excitement.

"An evil day," he said. "Thy wardrobe hath been entered and much fine raiment is gone."

"But thou hast made an evil night of it, Silas: thou shouldst have withheld thy calamitous recital until the morning. Hast discovered the thief?"

Silas bowed again. "I have: yet, I have been restrained from taking him."

"O pliable Jew! None but Cæsar can steal my wardrobe unmolested. Who protects the thief?"

"Marsyas."

"What! Marsyas? Save thou art too unimaginative to be a fictionist I should say thou makest thy story. Why does Marsyas protect my pillager?"

"He says we are well rid of the knave."

"Not if he carried off so much as a sandal-lace. I am a Jew and therefore jealous for my own property. Marsyas, as an Essene, is given to dividing without protest with thieves. I remember the Greek who helped himself to Marsyas' patrimony on Olivet. But who is the thief?"

"Eutychus."

"Eutychus! By Hermes, he could not help it with that face! But go on; what is the circumstance?"

"He took," Silas continued, "the umber toga, embroidered with silver, much of thy Jewish vestments, the gazelle wallet which contained thy amulet, and drachmæ and bracelets of gold. He is rich!"

"Of a surety: the knave hath only the more attached himself to me. What a pity! Otherwise we were well rid of him. And Marsyas bade thee let him go?"

"The young man was disturbed. According to instructions, he sent a messenger to thy stables, without the walls, to bid Eutychus have thy car ready to-morrow for thy visit to Tusculum. But the messenger presently returned with the information that Eutychus had not been seen about the stables that day. At the same moment, I discovered the losses among thy apparel. And Marsyas instantly suspected Eutychus. He sent two slaves in search of him. They returned in an hour saying that he had been discovered in Janiculum in a wine-shop, robed like an Augustan in thy umber toga, and making merry with wine that could only tickle a Samaritan's throat. When they tried to bring him, he objected, saying thou shouldst not miss him, seeing that thou hadst learned the pleasure of walking in thy less fortunate days."

Agrippa's forehead darkened.

"Even for that I should hand him over to the lictors!" he exclaimed.

"It is not all. When the two slaves then tried to fetch him by force, they were attacked by him and the wine-shop keeper and others, and obliged to flee for their lives. I besought Marsyas, then, to permit me to inform the authorities and have him taken, but he opined that the charioteer's insolence was new and sudden, wherefore full of meaning. Seeing that it was Eutychus' intent to enrage thee, thou wast better not enraged; to wash thy hands of him and bless the day that he departed."

Agrippa yawned.

"To-morrow we shall search for him and have him taken. It is improvident to have so much philosophy as Marsyas. But what had the knave of a charioteer against me? It is Marsyas who hath enchanted Drumah, and who took him by the throat in the alabarch's house. I shall speak with Marsyas to-morrow."

He took himself with increasing effort up the stairs along the corridor toward his rest. With the facility which characterized many of Agrippa's troubles, the offender had already dropped out of his mind.

He had fenced with Caligula that morning, he had feasted with Macro that night. At midday he had slighted Piso, the enemy of both. Caligula had had him draw a sketch of Judea on the wax of the gymnasium floor and designate the possessions of the old Herod; Macro, in his cups, had asked confidentially if Caligula approved him. Altogether the day had been filled with tokens presaging success. He smiled sleepily, remembering Silas' extravagant concern over the robbery.

"Calamity is all in the mark on the scale of Fortune," he opined. "A year ago to lose a handful of drachmæ would have ruined me."

As he passed Marsyas' door, he stepped back suddenly and stopped. The long curtain dragged on the floor at one side had given him an interesting glimpse of the lighted interior. Within, Marsyas, seated at a table, had at that moment flung away his stylus and dropped his head on the writing. Almost immediately he sprang up, and, seizing the parchment, thrust it into the blaze of the lamp at his hand.

Astonishment gathered on the Herod's face.

In the blaze the writing curled, the flame eating into the slow-burning parchment, burned low, but surely, reaching toward the fingers that grasped it. Presently Marsyas dropped it. Then the night-wind, rising from the sea, swept in through the cancelli with a shriek, put out the lamp instantly and swept the long dragging curtain against the Herod standing in the dimly-illuminated corridor. He got out of sight hurriedly.

After the first gust, the wind dropped, sending long streams of impelling draft through cancelli, doorway and hall. Before it, along the pavement, something came skittering out of Marsyas' cubiculum. Agrippa looked at it. It was a roll of parchment, charred and crushed by the tense grip of fingers.

Agrippa waited. After a slight movement within, silence fell again, and was not thereafter broken. The prince's eyes fell on the charred writing. It was almost at his feet. His fine head dropped to one side, then to the other; he put his fingers into his hair, smiled a little and picked up the parchment. A moment later, in his own apartment, he unrolled it by his lamp.

Only a word here and there, at the end held in Marsyas' fingers, was legible, but Agrippa gathered from these the tone, the purpose and the identity, as he thought, of the one addressed.

"— me for loving thee — my punishment —. Yet — sin against my teachi — Willingly for thy sake — but to pretend — continue my — against — which threatens thee. Have I lost — soul for a caprice — and beseech levity — to lov — me? the pointing finger — of sel — scorn! An outcast from Heaven — truant from hell, haunting earth in search of thee for ever!—SYAS."

Agrippa's eyes sobered.

"Junia is a brand of fire," he said to himself. "I shall make an end of this!"

CHAPTER XXIV

THE DIGGED PIT

Junia raised herself hastily.

"Call the slaves," she commanded the servant who had announced Marsyas, and, in a moment, half a score of house-slaves rushed in from various openings leading into the atrium.

"Away with this and that and that," she exclaimed pointing to the statue of a bacchante, that had not been visible in the chamber on the occasion of Marsyas' expected calls; a tray of wine and a tablet with a list of charms and philters sent recently from a haruspex. "Bring me a shawl—close around my neck: curse thee for a blunderer, Iste; thou shalt pay for that scratch! Here, unwind the scarf about my hips and fold it less closely; the amulet, take it off! By Ate! Here: Caligula's note, spread open! Into the brazier with it. Do I smell of wine? Fetch hither—that fresco! The Pursuit of Daphne! Draw the arras over it! Quick! The unguentarium, I said, snail! The one with the attar. Now, look about. Is there anything in sight to disturb a vestal? If I find it afterward, twenty lashes for you all!"

Mistress and slave looked anxiously over the chamber, but nothing unseemly greeted their eyes. Junia sank back on her couch, not now so recumbent, but at ease.

"Go fetch the Jew," she said, the languor of her manner combatted by the fire in her eyes.

A moment later Marsyas appeared in the archway.

She arose and came to meet him. When he took her extended hands, she led him to the light of the cancelli and inspected him.

"Sit," she said, drawing him down on the divan under the casement. "And speak first. Only a word, so I may see if the prologue is indeed as tragic as the mask."

"Let the mask suffice," he answered, "the prologue might be insufferable."

"*Proh pudor!* Thy friend the Herod hath just been here with pagan oaths upon his lips about thy dullness. I tell thee it is hard enough to make him walk as he should, but a groaning comrade is a gravel in his shoe. If thou wouldst manage him, be merry. Remember we have this Herod to crown, though he stood on the Tarpeian Rock and sang sonnets in dishonor of Cæsar."

"By the certainty of Death, I have," he said sententiously.

She looked at him and waited for him to go on, but he seemed to forget her, in his preoccupation.

"I am a generous woman, Marsyas," she said softly. "I do not resent thy lack of confidence in me!"

"Nay!" he exclaimed. "My lack of confidence, lady? What meanest thou?"

"In thy bosom, gentle sir, thou keepest thine own counsel, and wearest signals of thy self-containment on thy brow. Wherefore, I am informed thou hast thoughts that I may not know!"

"But I spare thee my sorrows, my cynicism, my hopelessness," he protested earnestly, "my disbelief in humankind."

"O Marsyas, wert thou not Jewish, I should call thee unmanly. Listen!" She laid a warm hand, colored like a primrose, upon his.

"Thou wast an anchorite; thou didst attain manhood's stature and mind as an anchorite; into the world thou camest with all an anchorite's slander of the poor world in thee. The eye is a spaniel; the tyrant Prejudice controls even its images. I warned thee in Alexandria. I confess that there is evil in the world, but it is more the work of an elementary impulse rather than calculation. Flaccus is bad, but because he is in love. Agrippa does foolhardy things, because he is ambitious. What? Did the preachment afflict thee which I delivered the other day upon thy levity and riotous living?"

He shook his head.

"Nay, but this moment's preachment crosses me," he said. "Thou offerest pardon for all the wickedness in the world, and I, sworn to punish one evil deed, am thus constrained, if I harken unto thee, to hold off my hand."

"Now, thou approachest the deep-hidden secret which I may not know. Whom wilt thou punish? Flaccus or Classicus?"

He hesitated. His vital hate of Saul of Tarsus, his fear for Lydia, his love and its deep wound, were things too close to the soul for him willingly to bring forth and display to this woman who acknowledged only a mind, and not a spirit. Yet it seemed unfair to withhold anything, however sacred, from one who had unbosomed so much to him.

"I lead a selfish life and an unhappy one. I am stricken in my loves; one dead, one a murderer, a third faithless; a fourth I use to speed me in mine intents concerning the other two. If I avenge the death of one, I displease his spirit! If I visit punishment on his murderer, I make it possible for the destroyer of my love-story to go on. If I withhold my hand, I give another, much beloved, unto death. And him I help, I help for mine own use. My life is at cross purposes; my right hand worketh against the left!"

"Thy love?" she repeated softly, with a question in her tone. But he did not answer it.

"A hopeless tangle," she said at last, "from which our ruling philosophers, degenerate imitators of Pyrrho, offer but one escape. Turn from it, cease to trouble over it, leave it, cast off all thought and memory of it—and begin anew!"

He shook his head, his eyes on the pavement, his hands clasped before him. But the primrose hand found his again.

"Thou canst not, by the choicest revenge, force Thanatos to yield up thy dead; thou confessest the evil thou workest in revenge as equal to the satisfaction; thou complainest that thy love is faithless—what else? So many thy pains, I can not remember them all; but in them all there is not the worth of one of thy sleepless nights. If thou canst not be a Spartan, be a Stoic; if not an avenger, then a forgetter; if not a lover, then a gallant! Above all things, harken unto a pagan truth: love's a lusty wight and can suffer forty mortal wounds and love again. None but an ostrich loves but once! Perchance I was right at first; thou shouldst have begun thine education in the first of Flora's celebration."

He winced, but presently raised his head.

"What didst thou when the procession carried me away that night?" he demanded, searching her face.

"When thou didst go away with the procession?" she laughed. "I went with them—of a necessity."

"And how didst thou escape?"

"When they all departed after Flora danced."

Thus beyond doubt assured that she had witnessed the dance of Flora, he was afraid to inquire further, lest he betray Lydia. But he wanted mightily to know if she had recognized the alabarch's daughter.

The disturbing reflection diverted his line of thought. Many of the night's events which the greater one had overshadowed came back to him. He saw again the miraculous dance of Brahma on the roof of the Temple of Rannu, fled again with Lydia in his arms into the musky shrine and thence into the city; strove hard to convince himself that if he, sharpened of sight by love, had not recognized Lydia except for the bayadere's note and his acquaintance with Lydia's apostasy and her former defense of the Nazarenes, others could not have done so. Again he fought with Flaccus and discovered Agrippa in the dark and abandoned street in Alexandria. And now the image of Eutychus became particularly distinct.

His brow blackened suddenly and he sprang to his feet.

"It is solved!" he cried, striking the palm of one hand with the other. "By the wrath of God, he is Flaccus' emissary. He turned on Agrippa in Alexandria when Flaccus ambushed the prince! He

was part of the conspiracy! It was no blind blow that Agrippa struck. And the soul in me nourishes a lie or he meditates more work for the proconsul in this!"

Throughout his intensely confident accusation, Junia had watched him with changing eyes. She had had to feel her way frequently in this last hour.

"What?" she asked finally.

In a few and rapid words, Marsyas told her of Eutychus' theft and flight, but his ideas hasted from his narrative to more testimony in favor of his conclusion. He remembered Eutychus' jealousy of Drumah, his ruffian mistreatment of Lydia when the prætor moved against the Nazarenes, his attempt to expose her to Justin Classicus because, his jealousy of Marsyas revived, he had no other way of retaliating; and finally of his humiliation at Marsyas' hands before Agrippa and Drumah.

"Bitter fool that I was not to understand him in time!" he cried. "In my soul, I know that we follow him to a pitfall in this matter!"

Junia slipped her fingers along the gilt grooves in the arm of the divan. Flaccus was a clumsy villain, of a surety! What overt conspiracies he evolved! A wild boar of the German forests would not make more clamor at its attacks! A wonder he had not exposed her, ere this. But for his influence, which made her a place in Cæsar's house, she had given up his service long ago. Her lips curled with disgust and perplexity.

"Forewarning," she said gloomily, "is a torture when forearming avails naught."

He caught the depression in her tone and turned to her quickly.

"Agrippa hath been here, Marsyas," she continued. "Yet he was not to be stopped, I thought, then, that it was only the knave's playing for time!"

"What dost thou mean?" he demanded. "Tell me!"

"Agrippa was here. Eutychus hath been caught, but Piso notifies the Herod that the prisoner hath appealed to Cæsar, claiming to have information against Agrippa which concerns Cæsar's life and welfare!"

Marsyas seized her arm.

"What sayest thou?" he cried.

"And since thou hast uncovered Flaccus' hand supporting the villain, Agrippa is in greater peril than I had supposed!"

For a moment the two looked at each other: Junia with uneasiness on her face, and Marsyas transfixed. He saw his plans against Saul of Tarsus tumbling; he saw the Pharisee triumphing over Lydia!

"It may still be hoped," she ventured, "that the knave lies!"

"Junia, thou knowest Agrippa! It is my terror lest the knave be armed with a truth!"

"Out with it all," she went on desperately. "The Herod is convinced that he is innocent—this time—of any ill-will against Cæsar, and he came here and spent the greater part of an hour, beseeching me to use my influence to hasten Cæsar's hearing of Eutychus!"

"In God's name, answer! Did you refuse him?"

"I did! I besought him to let Cæsar follow his own way, since the emperor is notably slow in hearing charges in these later years. I assured him that Cæsar might be more displeased, urged against his inclination to hear a stupid slave, than the slave's charge could make him. But the Herod is more stubborn than the classic steed of Judea. He demanded haughtily of me, if I expected him to treat with a slanderer or beg a truce with a lie. Then I refused him my offices. Wherefore he hath posted off to Antonia!"

"She will not harken to him—!" he cried with sudden desperation.

"O Marsyas, this day I should be exorcised as a fury, bringing evil happenings. But better the sorry truth than a fair lie. Antonia hath lived out of the world for the last decade, as hast thou. But her seclusion hath achieved the opposite harm, that is hatched by solitariness. She retired, full of years and honor; the world, approaching her door, comes in fair garments, bringing tokens of esteem, talks of ancient triumphs, the virtues of Antonia and the great respect Cæsar hath for her. Wherefore, kindly treated by the world, remembering nothing but the good of the old days and believing in her sweet dotage that she crushed evil when she crushed Sejanus, her natural strategic sense hath been lost in a great, all-enveloping charity. Her natural nobility hath outgrown the wariness which aids youth, and her dimmed sight sees things of stature, only, or of high relief. She will see in the prince's desire only a desire to clear himself of a charge and she will honor him for it! She will do his bidding!"

Marsyas snatched up his cloak and sprang toward the archway.

"Let me to her!" he cried.

"Wait!" Junia cried. "Be prepared against defeat, though it never come! What wilt thou do, if she be immovable, or already gone—for Cæsar is in Tusculum to-day?"

Marsyas stopped and his face grew ashen. He saw Lydia again, among the stones of the rabble, and murder leaped into his heart.

"Kill Eutychus!" he declared desperately.

"It would be fatal for Agrippa," she protested.

His hunted ideas turned then upon Cæsar. Suddenly he rushed back to Junia and seized her hands.

"Thou art close to Cæsar," he said rapidly and with great supplication in his voice, "and thou art in Cæsar's favor! Beseech him and right Agrippa's mistakes, I implore thee! Help me, Junia! Be my right arm! Promise me thine intercession!"

Her face suffused, and she waited a moment before she could trust her voice.

"For thy sake, Marsyas," she answered. "I give thee my word!"

He pressed her hands to his lips and ran out of the house. She dropped back on her couch and put her fingers to her temples.

"Save Agrippa, to kill Saul, to save Lydia, for this Judean vestal's sake?" she speculated to herself. "And where doth Junia profit? Ah! I shall get him in debt, and extort mine own price! Jew or Gentile, he will not think it exorbitant, for under it all, he is a man! But to Tusculum!"

She clapped her hands and ordered her litter.

CHAPTER XXV

THE SPEAKING OF EUTYCHUS

The imperial ruin drooped in the gilded lectica, now comatose, now animate. Under the purple robe the long, old, wasted limbs vibrated and the gems, quivering on the gnarled fingers, scintillated incessantly. Now that the rich winds from the gardens of Tusculum breathed on him, he cursed and groped for his mantle; again, when the inimitable sun of the Alban Hills smiled on him, his face purpled with suffusions of heat. Now that his wrinkled blue lids drooped half-way, Euodus, who walked by his side, told himself that he looked on death; but when the sunken eyes unclosed, he had to say that the will therein was immortal.

It was a great, withered, tall, old frame, diseased and fallen into decay. Life seldom of its own accord clings with tenacity to so ancient and utter a ruin. Mind stood in the way of the soul's egress and penned it into its dilapidated shell. It was a habit Cæsar's mind had of blocking people, things and himself. A creature of contradicting impulses, affectionate, sensitive, soldierly, immeasurably capable, with harsh standards of uprightness for others, stoic, enduring, ruggedly simple for the time, he was on the other hand one of the bloodiest and most unnatural

monsters that ever disgraced the throne of the Cæsars. Moody, taciturn, perverse, superstitious, unspeakably sensual and cruel, yet withal an admirer of honor, the inalienable friend of the inalienable servant, he was a Roman emperor in every phase of his many-sided nature. It is not recorded that any ever loved Tiberius; neither is it recorded that any ever failed to respect him.

He was finishing his twenty-fifth year as Emperor of the World, but of late, Macro's capacities as prætorian prefect had been enlarged to those of vice-regent, and Cæsar returned from Capri, his retreat from the trying climate of Rome, only on occasions.

Beside him walked eight prætorian guards, picked, not for appearance but for age and integrity. There walked Gallus who had followed Augustus, thirty years before; Attius Paulus, who had one hundred and thirty-nine wounds on his huge hulk; Severus Vespasian, who had been a soldier forty years and had twice refused to be retired; Plautius Asper who had been surnamed Leonidas, because he and a handful had held a German defile in the face of a whole barbarian army—and lived to refuse to be knighted. If Cæsar spoke to one, the answer came in monosyllables and with a touch of the helmet. Flattery never passed their lips, but if one lent his arm to the tall old emperor it was done with a rude tenderness that even the most polished courtier could not have improved. And Tiberius, being blunt and impatient of pretenses, walled himself away from the rest of his following with this bulwark of dependable ruggedness.

After his lectica came another, borne by four Georgian youths. Within lounged the latest of Tiberius' favorite ladies, Euodus' daughter, the Lady Junia.

They had passed the corner of Cicero's villa when a litter approached from an intersecting avenue and was set down.

A woman stepped out. White her hair, her dress the ancient palla and stola of white and purple, her jewels, amethysts. The rheumy emperor saw her imperfectly.

"Stop!" he ordered his bearers.

The woman approached and made obeisance.

"Humph! Antonia," he muttered in some disappointment. But he drew his old frame together and inclined his head respectfully.

"Greeting, sister," he said. "The gods attend thee."

"Thou art good, Augustus. Welcome to Tusculum once more," she replied. She took the hand he extended and raised it to her lips. The old man gazed at her with a wavering eye.

"Come closer. Art so gray?" he asked.

"White, Cæsar."

He took the hand from hers and put back the vitta that covered her hair. There were the sorrows of seventy years, in its absolute whiteness, and the Roman duskiness of skin was brought out very strongly in contrast. But her eyes were still full and bright, even tender, her thin lips lacking nothing of the color of her youth. Age had not laid its withering touch on her stature or even on the fullness of her frame, but the hand, Time's infallible tally, was the worn-out hand of seventy years.

She was the noblest woman of her age, *univira*,—the widow of one husband, dead in her youth, the mother of statesmen, generals and emperors, a scholar and at one time a diplomat,—in all things, the ancient spirit of the First Republic, solitary, rugged, irreproachable in the vicious age of the Cæsars.

"Eh! White, wholly white," he assented, running his fingers through her locks with a movement that was almost tender. "And I am thine elder. Yet," he drew himself up and defiance hardened his face, "I am not a dead man, Antonia!"

"Nay, who says it, Cæsar? And it is not age that hath blanched me. I was gray at forty—much more gray than thou art now."

"No, no! Not age! Truly a woman's protest. But then, perchance not. Thy husband's death undid thee. How thou didst love him! Save for thine example I should say that Eros himself is dead!"

After a little he muttered to himself:

"Alas! What a name to conjure death! My son Drusus, thy spouse Drusus, and thy son Drusus, the Germanicus. Dead! All! and in their youth. The very name hath a sinister look."

The old man shook his unsteady head and knuckled his sunken cheek. The widow's saddened face wore also some surprise.

"Canst thou speak of thy son Drusus, now?" she asked. "Not in these many years have I heard thee name him."

"No!" he answered shortly. "I speak of dreams; new dreams, which I mean to have the soothsayers interpret."

"Tell me of them, Augustus," she urged.

"There is one, and it comes nightly. It is a Shade from Thanatos, which approacheth. I put the ægis into its dead hands, crown its death-dewed brow, do obeisance before a pale ghost that melts again into the Shades—and after it passes all Rome, and the Empire of the Cæsars."

The widow's eyes showed unutterable sadness, which was unrelieved by tears. The unanointed Cæsars that had passed into the Shades had gathered unto their number no nobler one than the gallant young Germanicus, and the last remnant of the ancient glory of Rome had passed with him. But she put off the encroaching lapse into retrospection.

"One of the departed cometh to ask that his offspring be thine heir," she suggested.

The old emperor nodded eagerly. "It may be, it may be," he assented. "I have been pondering long upon the matter."

A silence fell and the two gazed absently across the shimmering vision of Rome, below them, three leagues to the west. About them were spread the villas of the rich in retreat, the very essence of repose, the birdsong and the murmur of laurels in the breeze; in the distance was the apotheosis of power, but their thoughts overreached the things seen and questioned after things unknown. In their philosophy, life was all. After it was Shadow, an inevitable obliteration in which the just and the unjust were immersed eternally. But no youth, looking forward to the long, eventful days to come, experienced the grave wonder that these expended on the time after things were expected to end. The awe of the unexplored Hereafter—what a waste of universal, earth-old, intuitive awe, if there be no Hereafter!

Tiberius muttered, as if to himself:

"There is another—yet another dream. I cast dice with Three; three grisly hags, and I lose, though the tesseræ were cogged. But let be, let be; the soothsayers shall read me that one!"

He sat up.

"Came you of a purpose to speak with me, Antonia?" he asked.

"I did," she said, "but it seems that the time is not propitious."

"Any hour is propitious for thee, Antonia."

"Thou art a kind man, Cæsar. I came to speak of Agrippa."

"Agrippa!" the emperor exclaimed, a sudden transformation showing in his voice and manner.

The woman in the litter behind stepped out, but paused without advancing. She made no attempt to conceal her attention to the talk between the widow and the emperor.

Antonia studied the face of the old man; it was significant, when, after his lapse into the softened mood of retrospection, he should return to his old manner. She felt her way.

"Agrippa ceases not to be interesting. Thou and I remember him as the faithfulest friend thy son Drusus had; to this day of all who knew Drusus it is only Agrippa who still hath tears for his name."

The emperor's wrinkled mouth was set, his face absolutely without telling expression.

"He hath had years of want and humiliation," she continued. "He hath walked under clouds and suffered from ill report, until he is soulsick of it. Now, the favor of his emperor and the peace of

good repute restored to him, are things that he would not willingly let go from him again. The inventions of an enemy have risen against him in Rome; even hath the ill-favored sire of the story been discovered, and Agrippa, conscious of his integrity toward thee, is restive. He wants to be examined; his innocence proven and thy good will toward him firmly established."

"Well, well!" Tiberius said.

"I shall await your happier mood," she said, gathering her robes about her.

"Any mood is happy enough for the Jew," was the retort.

Antonia unmistakably eyed the old man.

"Say on, good Antonia," he urged uncomfortably. "I have not forsworn justice."

"Agrippa asks nothing more. His charioteer robbed him, and when he was captured and in danger of punishment, he claimed that he had information against Agrippa which concerns thy welfare. It is simply a device to put off punishment. He hath appealed to thee and thou hast not yet heard him. The Herod is eager that the matter be settled and begs that the slave be heard at once."

"Eh! what a fanfare of probity!" the emperor mumbled. "Leave it to a Jew to flourish his righteousness. If he is innocent, he can wait; if he is guilty, we shall overtake him soon enough. I owe him a sentence of uncertainty for his slights to my grandson, the little Tiberius."

"And thou hast but this moment said that thou hadst not forsworn justice!" Antonia exclaimed.

"Jupiter, but thou art provoking!" he fumed. "Hither, Euodus!"

Junia made a slight movement as if she meant to step between her father and the emperor, but was suddenly reminded of her part. She stopped again.

"How my sentimental heart cries out against my obligation to Flaccus!" she said to herself. "Here must I stand idly by, while this new Penelope to a dead Ulysses works the Herod's ruin!"

Euodus bowed beside Cæsar.

"Bring me the Jew's slave that hath a charge for me to hear. Bring him hither, and haste!"

The old man turned to Antonia.

"Go tell thy valiant Herod that he shall have justice. Justice! Say that. It may not please him so much to have that message."

The gilded lectica moved on. The widow went back to her litter and was borne away. Junia remounted her chair and followed the emperor.

"O lady," she said, looking after Antonia's litter, "it may be very superior to live aloof from the world, and ignorant of its intrigues, but it is fatal for thy friends, I observe."

At the brink of a precipitous descent into the valley west of Tusculum, Euodus returned with Eutychus, whom Piso, at Agrippa's defiant instigation, had been forced to send to Tusculum to be available in event of Cæsar's summons.

Junia looked at Eutychus, livid with fear in the presence of the unspeakable might of the emperor, and held debate with herself. She had not agreed that Agrippa should be other than alienated from his wife. She was human enough not to wish the death of any man to whom she was indifferent, and for a moment she seemed about to alight from her chair. Even Flaccus' power over her for the time seemed to lose its effect, for a picture of Marsyas' suffering was a more distinct image. But one of the causes of Marsyas' concern, nay, the chief cause—the protection of Lydia to be achieved by the Herod's success—occurred to her in an evil moment. She turned her face away from the colloquy between Cæsar and the charioteer and studied the summer-green Alban Hills that shouldered the sky behind her.

Eutychus collapsed to his knees at sight of the emperor.

"Speak, slave," Euodus ordered.

"O Cæsar," the charioteer panted when his voice would obey him, "once I drove the Herod and Caligula, the Roman prince, to the Hippodrome in this place and they talked of the succession. And Herod said that he wished that thou wast dead and Caligula emperor in thy stead."

The emperor's eyes glittered.

"What else?" Euodus demanded.

"Somewhat about the young Prince Tiberius which I did not hear," Eutychus trembled.

"And what said Caligula to that?"

"That the Herod had his own making and not Caligula's to achieve!"

"A Roman's answer," Junia said to herself.

"Is there nothing more?" the questioner insisted.

"Nothing, lord!"

Euodus bowed to the emperor and waited.

"Give him ten stripes and turn him loose," Tiberius said. Two of the prætorians led Eutychus away.

"*Eheu!*" Junia sighed. "I could have stared the knave between the eyes and made him discredit himself in a breath! Ai! Owl-faced Lydia! thou art a destroyed peril, but at what a price!"

The bearers stood patiently under the glow of the morning sun, waiting their royal burden's humor to go on. But Tiberius shrank into the relaxation of thought. He had outlived every plot to assassinate him; he held in his hands consummate might; he was surely approaching the Shades; but the example of his infallible fortune, the fear of his merciless hand and the fact that he would not stand long in the way of ambitions, had not quieted the fatal tongue which bespoke him evil! He was sick of blood and torture, tale-bearing and intrigue, because he was surfeited with it all. But here, now, was this precarious Herod, barely escaping disaster which had pursued him for twenty years, wishing brutally and incautiously that he might die! Tiberius was at a loss to know what to do with the man. The thought wearied him. He wished now that he had ordered a hundred stripes for Eutyclus instead of ten. What an officious creature Antonia had become!

Euodus folded his arms and waited; the patricians, approaching in chairs of their own, alighted, bowed, passed out of the path and went around, remounted their chairs and disappeared. The birds in the trees about, hushed by the talk below them, twittered and flew again. Euodus, casting a sidelong glance at the emperor, nodded at the nearest bearer.

"To the palace," he said.

The slaves turned back up the slanting street and the motion of the *lectica* aroused Tiberius.

"Whither?" he demanded irritably.

"To the palace, Cæsar," Euodus answered.

"Did I command thee? To the Hippodrome, slaves!"

The bearers turned once more and began the ticklish descent of the paved roadway to the valley below, where the Circus of Tusculum was built.

The huge elliptical structure stood out in the plain, alone and solid except for the low, heavy arch of the vomitoria which broke the round of masonry. The trees about it were dwarfed in contrast, the columns shrunken, the *viæ*, approaching it from all directions straight as arrows fly, curbed and paved with stone, were as mere taut ribbons. But in the great slope of the Campagna, under the immense and sparkling blue of the Italian sky, it was only a detail in rock.

Rome had long since outgrown her walls and ceased to contemplate them except as landmarks and conventionalities, useless but as significant as Cæsar's *paludamentum*. Inns and mile-stones along the *viæ* proved them once to have been things distinctly suburban, but the city crying for room had passed the walls and built its own characteristics—temples, tombs, villas, circuses, fora and arches as far as Tusculum along the roads.

Lovelier beyond comparison than Rome's loveliest spots, it was small wonder that to fill their Augustan lungs with the freshness of the Campagna, the idle were borne out of the contained airs

of the city, which were of such seasonal peculiarities that temples in propitiation of Mephitis and the goddess Febris had been erected.

So daily groups of patricians collected at the Hippodrome of Tusculum, with laughter and badinage, the flashing of jewels and the glittering of cars, the flutter of lustrous silks and the tossing of feathers, to spend the bright hours of the day watching the races that proceeded in the arena below.

The races had not begun, the crowds had not assembled. The gilded lectica was borne through the tunnel-like entrance up the stairs, not to the amphitheater but to the arena. Slaves with blanketed horses and clusters of betting patricians were here and there over the sanded ellipse within. The bustle of preparation slackened at the approach of the august visitor.

The eyes of the emperor opened and closed dully. Nothing was here to interest a man worn out with seventy years of change and excitement. Nothing new could have aroused him, for his attention rebelled against the call.

Presently, during one of the intervals that his eyes were open, he saw, within touch of his hand, Agrippa and Caligula side by side, talking to a gladiator. The emperor scowled and looked away. The bearers plodded on, rounded the upper end of the ellipse and, passing down the side, neared the mouth of the cunicula.

Agrippa and Caligula had moved from their position and were there, with a notary taking down the terms of a wager.

Apart from them stood a small but important man, frowning over a waxen tablet which a slave had cringingly handed him.

Tiberius looked at him, then at Agrippa. His brows lowered more, this time with irritation. It seemed that action had been formulated by circumstance and that the emperor was not to avoid a tiresome prosecution.

He put out his hand as the bearers bore him by and it touched the Roman on the shoulder. The man turned on his heel, but seeing who was near bowed profoundly. If he meant to speak to the emperor he was not given opportunity.

"Bind that man, Macro," Cæsar said, nodding at Agrippa.

The lectica moved on. As it passed up the opposite side Macro crossed to it and, puzzled and disturbed, bowed again.

"Cæsar's pardon, but whom am I to bind?" he questioned.

"That man," Tiberius replied irritably, pointing to the Herod.

"Agrippa!" the astonished prefect exclaimed.

"I have said."

The lectica went on, up and around the curve of the ellipse, and back again to the cunicula. The few within the walls of the Hippodrome had gathered there in an interested and excited group. In the center stood Agrippa with manacles on his wrists and ankles. The charm and sparkle in his atmosphere were gone; even as Tiberius looked, he saw the cold, evil, vengeful countenance of the Asmonean Slave, the Terror of the Orient, Herod the Great, appear, like a face putting off a mask, behind the graceful features of his grandson. Tiberius was grimly satisfied; he felt the first interest in the arrest; he was always by choice a preferer of noble game.

On either side of the prisoner stood a Roman soldier; aloof and passive was Macro, but the earth had apparently opened and swallowed Caligula.

As the lectica approached, the crowd gave way and his captors permitted Agrippa to come nearer the emperor.

"At Cæsar's command, I am arrested," he said evenly. "Will Cæsar grant me the prisoner's privilege and tell me why?"

"Thy charioteer hath spoken, Agrippa," was the response. "The slave swears that on such and such a day he drove thee and Caligula to this place. Instead of horses you talked of kings, instead of bets, the succession. And thou madest moan that I was not dead so that Caligula could reign in my place!"

The jaws of many round about relaxed in horror. Agrippa's muscles made an involuntary start, but his face retained its calm. But the emperor caught the start.

"Forgot that unctuous bit of tittle-tattle when thou didst make Antonia bearer of thy boasts, eh?" he piped.

"My words have been distorted," Agrippa spoke, though he seemed to hate himself for offering a defense.

"Ah-r-r! Wilt thou snivel and deny?" Tiberius snarled.

The prince's manacled hands clenched and a glimmer of hate showed in his eyes. Cæsar nodded; that was better.



The prince's manacled hands clenched

Page 308

The prince's manacled hands clenched

"Agrippa, the king-maker!" he went on, "late mendicant from Judea; heir presumptive to the ax! Eh? Take him away! Macro, come thou to the palace to-night, and I'll deliver sentence!"

The gilded lectica moved on.

Twenty minutes later, Marsyas, white to the lips, his eyes enlarged and dangerous, sprang from a clump of myrtle by the roadside, after the litter had passed up toward Tusculum and, thrusting a hand into Junia's chair, seized her arm.

"See that Tiberius forgets his audience with Macro to-night," he said to her. "See that he yearns after Capri, and returns to-morrow—or thou bringest upon me the pain of killing."

Terrified for the first time in her life, Junia shrank under the crushing grip.

"Him or me!" she told herself. "I promise!" she whispered to Marsyas. "But acquit me of blame. What could I do?"

"I have shown thee, now!" he said intensely, and was gone.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE ARM MADE BARE

Lydia went up on the housetop into the shade of the pavilion with the writing her father had put into her hand, and drawing the hangings on the east side of the pavilion to shut out the morning sun, sat down to read how Marsyas had revealed the evil tidings to the alabarch.

It was the first moment of rest she had had since the messenger had arrived at daybreak with the letter which had flung Cypros into paroxysms of suffering and desperation. Now that the unhappy princess had yielded to the benign influence of a narcotic simple, Lydia had time for her own thoughts.

It was not the same Lydia that had danced on the Temple of Rannu. Spiritual change as infallibly marks the countenance as physical change. The last of the half-skeptical, half-philosophical tolerant equanimity was gone from her face; the self-reliance had been transformed into a look of faith and believing, and a certain tranquillity, no less sweet and unshaken because it was sorrowful, no less patient because its hope was faint, made her forehead placid.

She read:

ROME, Kal. Jul. X, 790.

"TO THE MOST EXCELLENT ALABARCH, ALEXANDER LYSIMACHUS, GOVERNOR OF THE JEWS OF ALEXANDRIA, GREETING:

"It is my grief to inform thee that at the command of Cæsar, my lord and patron, Herod Agrippa, hath been confined in the Prætorian Camp awaiting sentence for utterances pronounced treasonous to Cæsar.

"Immediately after the prince's arrest, one of the ladies of Cæsar's train was stricken by an illness, resulting from the malarious airs of the Campagna, and the emperor ordered the immediate return to Capri.

"Inquiry among the emperor's ministers discloses the fact that he left no explicit instructions concerning the execution of a sentence upon Agrippa. It is noted in Rome that, owing to the multiplicity of his duties and the weariness of his mind, the emperor forgets readily, and is not pleased to be reminded of that which he hath forgotten to perform. Wherefore, if it please God to erase Agrippa from his mind, it shall be seen to, here in Rome, that no one recall the unfortunate prince to Cæsar's attention.

"Canvass among the fellows of Agrippa conducted by certain powers in the state reveals that the movement against the prince did not have its inception in Rome; however, many were not unwilling to have it come to pass because of the prince's aggressive political preferences. But now that he is at the edge of ruin, the insignificant activity in the capital hath fallen inert; those who contributed to it are alarmed, for the accomplishment of Agrippa's death will inevitably revert upon the heads of them who endangered him, should Caius Caligula be crowned.

"The movement against the prince, consummated by the charioteer Eutychus, had its inception, as I have said, not in Rome. The man stole of his master's wardrobe and ran away. When he was apprehended he claimed that he had information against Agrippa which concerned the life and welfare of Cæsar. Piso, city prefect, bound the man and sent him to Tusculum, where, by the solicitations of Antonia, who was commanded by Agrippa, the emperor heard the charioteer's charge.

"Thou and I know, good my lord, that Eutychus is too clumsy a villain, too much of a coward, to invent and push this bold work himself, without support. Wherefore, I and others are convinced that he must have been inspired and aided by some secret and shrewd enemy outside of Rome. If the proconsul of Egypt is not yet informed of this disaster, do not trouble him with the information!

"It may assist thee to know that Eutychus, given ten stripes as earnest of Cæsar's respect for him, and turned loose, eluded mine and Caligula's vengeance and immediately took ship for Alexandria. Expect him in the Bruchæum.

"Know this, also. If Cæsar forget and Agrippa live on, this enemy will grow restive and bestir himself again, wherefore it is the duty of them who love the prince to watch for any coiling which prepares for the stroke.

"For thine own comfort and for the comfort of his unhappy princess, I add here, though in peril to the prince's benefactor and to myself, that Agrippa's prison discomforts are alleviated, and kind usage secured him by the generous distribution of gold among them who surround him. It is not a difficult matter to secure him comparative comfort.

"Silas and I daily come to him with fresh clothing, and abundant food: he hath his own bedding and his daily bath. Through the influence of the prætorian prefect, obtained at great price by Antonia, none is permitted to pronounce Agrippa's name outside the camp, on pain of extreme punishment—a clever pretense at abhorring a traitor which aims only at his defense.

"Thy part is to quiet, within thy powers, any work in Alexandria which may lead to Cæsar's remembering Agrippa.

"I have closed the prince's residence, dispersed his slaves among the families of his friends, and with Silas I am living under the roof of Antonia, in whose care I am permitted to receive letters. The Lady Junia is at Capri at my solicitation, pledged to do a woman's part in the protection of Agrippa.

"May the God of our fathers arm thee.
"Peace to thee and thine.
"MARSYAS."

Lydia sighed and let the writing drop into her lap.

"I can not hope, my Marsyas," she said to herself, "if thou art schooled in the understanding of women by Junia!"

The Roman tincture was patent in the letter, but the Jewish manner, Jewish penetration, and the Essenic coldness were strong and unaltered. His well-beloved and unchanged hand had pressed all the surface of the parchment, but she did not lift it to her lips. There had been no word beyond the general greeting to her as the family of the alabarch, and proud, even in her sorrow and the new-found humility, she saved her endearments.

After a moment of further thought, she was aroused by the rattle of wheels which came to an end before the porch of her father's house. She arose and going to the parapet looked over. Justin Classicus' chariot stood there. She caught the last flutter of his garments as he disappeared under the roof of the porch.

She went back to her place and waited for a servant to announce the guest. But Classicus lingered. The alabarch was not like to be telling him the account of Agrippa's latest misfortune.

She put away Marsyas' letter and gazed at the Synagogue immersed in the golden flood of Egyptian sunshine. She had not ceased to love it, nor to attend it with all maiden fidelity since she had followed Jesus of Nazareth, but it seemed to love her less, to throw a shadow darker, but less benign, over her, as she approached its giant gates. Saul of Tarsus whom she had feared for Marsyas' sake was a hidden menace now in its great angles, a threat in its rituals, a brooding danger held up only so long as she hid in deceit. She felt unutterably lonely and friendless.

Presently Classicus came up unannounced. She knew at a glance that he had learned from some source of Agrippa's misfortune, and wondered for a moment if her father had forgotten Marsyas' charge.

"Alexandria hath heard of Agrippa's disaster," he began, as he seated himself beside her, "and I came to offer my consolation and my aid."

Then Flaccus already had the news!

"I would thou couldst aid us, Justin. Not now is anything more precious than help, and nothing less possible."

"And to say lastly," he continued, looking into her face, "that I deplore that haunted look in thine eyes, Lydia. What does it mean?"

"That I grow older, wiser, sadder—and less fortunate."

"Thou shouldst study the philosophy of the Nazarenes," he declared. "I find that much of their teaching, stripped of its frenzy and reduced to the dignity of pure language, hath much comfort in it."

"Does it promise that sorrow will not come to them who espouse it?" she asked, looking away.

"Nay, but it preaches universal love. Could I teach thee that, sorrow should never approach thee or me henceforth!"

"I fear thou dost not understand them," she said dubiously.

"Not wholly," he admitted. "I have not yet been able to agree with them, that I, Justin Classicus, scholar and Sadducee, should find it in my heart to love a crook-back shepherd that speaks Aramaic, rejoices on conchs, relishes onions and is washed only when the rains wet him."

He smiled, and Justin Classicus' face was helped by a smile. Mirth possessed him entirely, cast up a transitory flush in his cheeks and lighted torches in his eyes. But Lydia looked across the Alexandrian housetops.

"Why dost thou seek this new philosophy, Justin?" she asked.

"To see if it be safe enough heresy to teach thee," he returned. "If it be, thou shall learn it, for in its creed of universal love, I put mine only hope that thou shalt come to love me!"

"Learn the universal love for thyself, Justin: learn to love the shepherd and thine enemy—learn it in all truth, and thou mayest be content with that, and no more!"

"The Lord forbid!" he cried. "If that should come to pass, learning this new philosophy, I pause, even now!"

"Enemy?" he repeated, after a little in a gentler tone. "Save another hath possessed thy heart, I have no enemy—the Nazarenes recommending that one leave them out of one's catalogue of fellows!"

"Canst thou not hold off thy hand, even from an enemy? Hath thy search after their philosophy taught thee so much?"

He looked at her face, and saw thereon something to follow.

"I can—be bought," he answered softly.

She remembered his part in the ambushade the night of the Dance of Flora, and her face paled a little.

"It is not the Nazarene way," she replied unready.

"Nay, but if the demand be great enough, any method must serve. Shall I name my price?" His voice was clear and illuminating.

She arose and moved over to one of the columns, and leaning against it gazed across toward the blue sparkle of the New Port. She felt the strength of his fortification, the extent of his power over her. Not any of the many things she had hidden from all but Marsyas were unknown to him!

She turned to him with appeal in her eyes, but he laughed very softly, and wrapped the kerchief skilfully about his head. His composure terrified her. He held out his hand.

"Think," he said, "and to-morrow or the next to-morrow, but soon, thou wilt tell me. Meanwhile I shall tell thy father that I have spoken with thee."

He took her fingers and kissed them.

"Farewell. And let the Nazarenes persuade thee, if I can not!"

A long time after she heard the wheels of his chariot roll away from before the alabarch's porch. Then with slow, weary steps she went down into the house. She would seek out her father, and discover what to expect from Flaccus and if disaster could be averted from the beloved head of Marsyas and the unhappy Herod. Not until then would she entertain the suggested sacrifice which Classicus had so deftly demanded.

But when she reached the inner chamber, with the arch opening into the alabarch's presiding room, she saw within the proconsul.

She hesitated, surprised and alarmed, but presently her father, raising his eyes, saw her and signed to her to enter.

The proconsul stopped in the middle of a sentence to greet her, not from courtesy, but because she was a consideration. She took her place on an ivory footstool at the foot of the alabarch's chair and seemed to efface herself.

Lysimachus trifled with a stick of wax and heard Flaccus to the end of the sentence. The old tone of assumed cordiality was gone. Flaccus had ascended again to the plane of a legate speaking with a Jew.

"So I shall pay thee thy five talents and release the lady, that she may be sent to Rome," he concluded.

"The gossip of the lady's arrival in Rome would work havoc, sir. She would be there engaging Antonia's attention, which should be devoted without lapse, in other directions."

"The Herod's lady need not arrive with the blare of trumpets," was the cool retort, "and since thy talents are returned to thee, Lysimachus, thou art not asked to carry thy concern into Rome."

The thin cheeks of the alabarch grew pink and Lydia raised a pair of somber eyes to the proconsul's face.

"It is not a matter of my loan," the alabarch answered without a tremor in his melodious voice, "but it is that I held her in hostage in the beginning."

"At my suggestion. Then thou canst release her at my suggestion—and if the loan sits roughly on thy conscience we shall call it a gift at this late day."

"If it please thee, good sir, we have left the discussion of the talents. It is the lady who concerns us now. I would be plain with thee; I should reproach myself did I let her proceed out of my house."

"Call the lady," Flaccus commanded. "We will lay the matter before her."

"She sleeps," Lydia said.

"I bring her more relief than sleep," was the blunt reply. "Bring her hither."

"On one promise," Lydia said.

"What?"

"That I and my servants alone shall accompany her to Rome."

Flaccus gazed straight at the alabarch's daughter. Lysimachus sat without movement. He knew that his daughter had seen at once that which he had instantly divined—that Flaccus had no intention of sending Cypros to Rome.

"Bring the lady," Flaccus insisted, "and we shall lay our plans thereafter."

Lydia sat still; she knew Cypros' believing nature; that she would see nothing but a generous offer in the proconsul's intent; that to prevent the simple woman from consenting to destroy herself the whole villainy of the proconsul would have to be uncovered to her—doubtless before Flaccus, with unimaginable results. The alabarch looked down on his daughter's fair head, away from Flaccus' threatening gaze and waited for her answer.

"My lord," she said composedly, "we have complicated our associations with thee and this unfortunate family long enough. Perchance we erred. At best it may no longer be maintained. Though the Lady Cypros is uninformed, I and others know why thou hast been tolerant of our people of late; what deed thou didst attempt in the passage back of Rannu's Temple on the closing night of Flora's feast; what disaster overtook thee there; why Agrippa, now, is undone and what thou meanest in truth to do with his princess."

There was silence. Then the alabarch's hand dropped down on Lydia's curls.

"Daughter, thou art weaponed with testimony new to thy father; thou hast kept thy arms concealed. Yet I will take them up, now." He raised his eyes to Flaccus.

"Perchance thou wouldst explain to me my daughter's meaning?"

After a dangerous dilation of his gray-brown eyes, Flaccus seemed more than ever composed.

"Is my favor worth aught to the Jews?" he asked.

"Jews," the alabarch replied, "do not purchase immunity at sacrifice of the honor of their women."

"I am not enraged, Alexander," was the reply. "I am only diverted. But the Herod under sentence of death and the Alexandrians loosed upon the Regio Judæorum, it seems that the Lady Herod will soon be without a protector or a roof-tree. She had much better go—to Rome!"

He strode out of the presiding-room and into the street before the alabarch could conduct him to the door.

Lysimachus and his daughter looked at each other. Their thoughts reached out and gathered in for contemplation all the details and the results of the climax. Then the alabarch opened his arms to his daughter and she slipped down on his breast.

"Tell me what thou knowest against Flaccus, and why I have not learned of this?" he urged.

It was a sore trial to Lydia's conscience to leave out her own part in the story she told, but the alabarch was less attentive to the source of her information than to the information itself.

"I did not tell it sooner, because, in ignorance thou wouldst not be constantly hiding from Flaccus a distaste, distrust and watchfulness that infallibly would have controlled thee hadst thou known his hands were red with the blood of a man of whom he spoke fair and whom he pretended to love, before the world!"

"What shall we do?" she asked after a long silence, for the press of many evils had stunned her resourcefulness.

"Tell the princess first," the alabarch responded.

"And then?"

"Fight! He can invent twenty excuses to take Cypros from me by law and against her will."

"Then we must hide her and speedily!"

The alabarch thrust his old waxen fingers into his white locks.

"Now who will imperil himself by giving her asylum?" he pondered.

Lydia looked up after a little thought.

"The Nazarenes," she ventured timidly.

"What! The apostates! The community is the most perilous spot in Egypt!"

"Here in Alexandria, of a truth," Lydia hurried on eagerly, "but thou knowest by report that they have spread abroad among rustics and shepherds as a running vine. Many are living about over the Delta. One of them will shelter her, I know. She will go when we have told her what threatens, nor fail to flourish on their rough fare, since she hath made her bed by the roadways, and had her bread from the hands of wayside mendicants!"

The alabarch arose and set her on her feet.

"Haste, then, Lydia; no time is to be lost!"

But before she reached the threshold of the archway she turned back and came slowly to him, closer and closer, until she raised her arms and put them about his neck.

"Father!" she whispered, "we need have fear of Classicus."

The pallor on the old man's face quivered like the reflection of a shaken light.

"He is jealous," he answered, "of Marsyas! Hath he cause, my daughter?"

Lydia dropped her head on the alabarch's breast.

"Marsyas is an Essene!" she whispered, and the alabarch smoothed her curls and was filled with pity.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE PROCONSUL'S DELIBERATIONS

Before sunset that day, Flaccus had received two messages. One was brought by a Jewish slave. It read:

"TO FLACCUS AVILLUS, PROCONSUL OF EGYPT, GREETING:

"I have departed.

"CYPROS."

The other came by a Roman courier, who had landed an hour before from one of the swift-going triremes which had left Ravenna three days later than the passenger boat that had brought Marsyas' tidings.

The message also was written in a woman's hand and was no less enraging than the other:

"ROME, Kal. Jul. X, 790.

"This bulletin to tell thee, O my raging corybant, that thy cause hath ceased to prosper for the past three days. Mine own part was well performed as was thine other minion's, the bewitching Eutychus, but desperate work hath been done which bids fair to upset thee and me and preserve thine enemies.

"First and above all things, thou wilt remember that it was not in the pact that I should do more than lead the Herod out of the path of domestic uprightness and hold off my hands. This hath been already done, but the Parcæ have grown weary of yielding thee favor, so read, here, following, disaster!

"Herod and his friend, the Essene Marsyas, who had become a dangerous Roman, filled with a Jew's cunning and the boldness of a wolf-suckled Romulus, till misfortune cut him down—this same fallen Herod and his friend have dropped out of sight, except as Death may bare its arm and reach down to cut off the head of the one and the income of the other. This much in three days; but Rome hath taught herself to forget in a twinkling.

"But Cæsar hath been for many days troubled of a dream. He telleth it thus, in no more words, no fewer: 'I cast dice with Three; three grisly hags, and I lose, though the tesseræ were cogged!' His collection of soothsayers, the completest in the world, offered as many readings as there are numbers of them in the court. But Tiberius drew his lip and bared his teeth at them and called them pea-hens and cockchafers. Even Thrasullus, he lampooned—Thrasullus, whom once he feared.

"Whereupon, the store of haruspices and augurs that feed upon superstitious Rome were brought in—only to furnish mirth for the court and victims for Tiberius.

"Then Macro, rummaging about in musty and alien-peopled corners of the Imperial City, brought forth a wonder!

"It—and would I could call the sex of the creature—came hither from the Orient. On that naked fact, Rome is left to build its biography, describe its looks and fathom its purpose. For it came before Cæsar, and stood, a column in white—hooded, mummied, shawled, veiled in white! The court hath had spasms, since, fearing that it might have been a leper, but I say that there was no sick frame within those cerements! It had the stature and brawn of a man, but it managed its garments with the skill of a woman. It came, heard Cæsar's dream, plucked off a husk of its wrappings, produced pigment and stylus and wrote thereon.

"Then it vanished quite away.

"A hundred courtiers rushed upon the wrapping that it left, and Cæsar, pallid even under his wrinkles, screamed to them to pursue the Thing and fetch it back. But it was gone; vanished into thin air.

"Then Macro plucked up courage and, taking up the cloth, fetched it to Cæsar to read.

"And Cæsar, ashamed to show fear in the face of his court, snatched the linen away and read—to himself!

"Now, whether the writing assured Tiberius that he was the comeliest monarch on the earth, or unfolded this scheme which is to follow, no man knows. But that which was written contained persuasion which worked on Cæsar's mirth, for he smiled, as he hath not smiled since Sejanus tasted death.

"Go forth and search out that soothsayer,' he commanded Macro, 'that I may give him whatsoever thing he would have!' But Macro hath not discovered the soothsayer unto this day.

"Meantime Cæsar cleared his audience-chamber, but despatched a slave to bring me back to him.

"And when I came I was bidden in whispers to take Caligula to the deepest hidden villa on Capri, and entertain him until I was bidden to return.

"An hour later, I met my father, the simple Euodus, who told me after many charges to keep it secret, that he had been bidden to fetch at daybreak the coming morning, whichever prince, Caligula or Tiberius, who stood without the emperor's door to give him greeting.

"And yet another hour later, the little Tiberius' tutor was summoned to the imperial bed-chamber and came forth some minutes later with a face as blank as a Tuscan sherd.

"Now, though I saw not the cloth of revelation, nor heard the emperor's plans, I knew then, as I know now, that the mysterious soothsayer wrote that the dream meant that Cæsar and the Destinies should choose the coming emperor, and bade him proceed by these means.

"And I, dutiful lady to an engaging prince, took Caligula, nothing loath, and went privately into the interior of the island to that small wasp-nest palace clinging to the side of the cruelest precipice in these bad hills of Capri.

"But in the night, while yet Caligula lingered at the board, because forsooth the slaves had carried me away first, there came the thunder of hoofs without, sentries and servants, asleep or drunken or afraid, fell right and left, flying feet rang upon the pavement, and before any could resist, Caligula was snatched up, rushed out and away into the night—and not any one saw the face of his abductor.

"But when my father duly emerged from the emperor's bed-chamber there stood without, not little Tiberius, but Caligula, drenched as if he had been soused in a horse-trough to sober him, with immense dazed eyes and trembling like an aspen.

"When he was led within, Cæsar started up and glared at him with baleful eyes.

"I was sent by a Dream,' Caligula whispered. 'What wilt thou have of me?'

"And Tiberius, struggling with an apoplexy, fell back and made no instant answer. But presently he said,

"Perpol! I cogged the dice for myself, but it was the Destinies who threw them! Oh, well, it was written, and had to come to pass!"

"Where was the little Tiberius? Being assured that naught should prevent his election, he lingered for his breakfast. O fatal appetite of lusty youth! He lost an empire by it. For Cæsar, still afraid of the mysterious Thing from the Orient, ratified the choke of the Destinies.

"But Caligula hath discovered the identity of the Dream that fetched him; which being very substantial and human stands in high favor with the prince imperial. And so, through him as well as through the Herod's own claim on Caligula, Agrippa's hopes are brighter.

"Wherefore thy campaign against the obstacle between thee and the maker of that twenty-year old wound in thy heart must be cautious, no longer overt, and above all things not of such nature as may recoil upon thee. Hear for once a woman's reason. If thou accomplish the Herod's end, remember that Caligula succeeds Tiberius and will not fail to visit vengeance on those who ruined his friend!

"Be wise, be covert, be wary! If thou hast made mistakes, correct them! Make no new enemies, and turn old ones into friends. I will help thee, here, in Rome, except to the point of exposing myself.

"If thou wilt work, be rapid, for Cæsar declines. We go hence as soon as he may be removed, to Misenum. But it is only animal flight from death; he seems to turn like a wounded jackal and snap at his heels. Matters of state, beyond the satisfying of a multitude of grudges, are entirely given up to Macro. But daily the dullness on his brain shifts a little, so that the light of recollection penetrates to it, and he remembers forgotten animosities. Herein lies thy hope. I will not suggest Agrippa to him; Caligula would cut my throat before daybreak, for the eaves-dropping Macro would know what I did.

"Calculate for thyself; get others to do thy work and to shoulder the peril.

"Meanwhile Venus prosper thee, and may the Parcæ repent.

"JUNIA."

"Oh, well I know that mummied mystery, that Dream, that unseen abductor!" Flaccus raged, gnawing his nails. "It is that villain Essene to whom I owe torture and death! He, to direct the imperial succession!"

Then he fell to considering his obstacles. Caligula as prince imperial and friend to the Herod would permit no persecution of the Jews. That method of coercing the alabarch had to be abandoned. Next, he re-read the single line from Cypros. She had not gone to Rome; she had hidden herself. That was what the line meant. They had told her, so she hated him. But he did not wince so much under her hate, as he raged over his bafflement.

Then he thought of Classicus, and with the thought his hope revived. Finally he sprang up, and, summoning slaves, scattered them broadcast over Alexandria in search of the philosopher.

He would go to Rome! He would bear to Cæsar an appeal from Flaccus to command the alabarch to produce Cypros, Herod Agrippa's wife, who had been abducted.

The plan unfolded itself so readily and so helpfully, that the proconsul's face grew radiant with anticipated triumph.

In an hour, a slave returned with Justin Classicus.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE STRANGE WOMAN

Cæsar left Capri and roved along the Italian coast in his splendid barges, or approached by land close to Rome, even to spend the night just without her walls, or in Tusculum, Ostia, Antium or Baiæ. He dragged his court with him, by this time deserted of all upright men, and circling, slinking, making sorties and retiring, he brought up at last in the villa of Lucullus on Misenum with all his unclean party.

Macro in attendance upon Cæsar had left a tribune in Rome as a post of despatch from which necessary information could be communicated to the prefect in Misenum. The tribune, a sour old prætorian, with more integrity than graciousness, charged to protect Agrippa's interests for Macro's sake, now that Caligula was prince imperial, was empowered with not a little of the prefect's authority, which he administered with a kind of slavish awe of it.

So, when a young Alexandrian Jew, giving the name of Justin Classicus, bearing a letter of introduction from the Proconsul of Egypt, applied for a tessera which would give him admission to Misenum, the tribune refused, declaring that the visitor must be indorsed by a Roman of rank and in good odor with the emperor. Classicus took his departure, assuring the tribune that he would go to Baiæ where young Tiberius lived in his father's villa, and get the indorsement of the lad, to whom Flaccus was notably a partizan.

As soon as Classicus had departed, the tribune rushed a messenger to Marsyas, with Macro's signet which would command horses at posts between Rome and Misenum, and informed the young man what menaced the Herod.

Marsyas did not tarry for preparation. He knew that Classicus would go by the common route, by sea from Ostia, and that the overland route was only, by the luckiest of circumstances, the speedier.

Before the messenger had returned to the tribune, Marsyas was on the road to Misenum.

A day later, he passed the picket thrown out a hundred paces from the actual precincts of the villa of Lucullus, but when he offered his tessera to the prætorian posted at its inner walls, the soldier did not lower his short sword. Marsyas, who had come to know many of the prætorians, looked in surprise at the man.

"Turn back, good sir," the man said. "None enters the lines to-day."

While he knew that it was useless to ask the sentinel why the arbitrary order was in force, the question leaped to his lips before he could stop it. His voice was eager.

"What passeth within?"

The soldier shook his head. Marsyas drew away a space and thought. He knew that the little Tiberius was an exception to every law laid down by Cæsar; Classicus could not have armed himself with a more potent name. Caligula's friends, even Macro's friends, might be barred, not the friends of the little beloved Tiberius.

The obstruction was dangerous.

He knew that he had to deal with Classicus.

The bitterness in his heart rose up and smothered his distress: for the moment he lost sight of Agrippa's peril, his hope against Saul of Tarsus and his fear for Lydia, in the all-overwhelming rancor against the man who was setting foot upon all the purposes in the young Essene's life.

While he stood wrestling with a mighty impulse to kill Classicus, a courier in a well-known livery bowed beside him.

"The Lady Junia sends thee greeting and would see thee in her father's house."

Marsyas turned readily and followed the servant.

He had come to look upon the Roman woman as a counselor, of whom he had some serviceable ideas out of the many he had not adopted. He knew that if he crossed her threshold to find distressing tidings within, he was sure of finding an attempt at alleviation at the same time. He might come forth vexed with all his friends, hating more hotly his enemies, but less amazed at sin in general. He had not learned to apologize for the world, nor even to believe in it; he had simply come to accept it as a necessary and irremediable evil. The general condemnation of his skepticism had not left her untouched, but he felt, nevertheless, that no one was so bad that another much worse could not be found. Junia, therefore, occupied a position of lesser blame. She was charitable and amiable, and whatever she had done that failed to measure up to his Jewish standard of virtue had been overshadowed by her usefulness.

He was led toward a little inclosure of lattice-work and vines on the summit of a knoll, from which the imperial demesnes were visible.

Between the screen and the brink of the eminence was earth enough for the foothold of an olive, and its dark crown reached over and shaded the space within. There was a single marble exedra with feet and arms of carven claws, and through the interstices of the vinery and the farther shade and foliage of the new spring, the insula of Euodus arose white and graceful. The sunshine lay in brilliant mosaics over the thick sod, and above, lozenges of blue showed where the light had

entrance. The breeze from the warm bay went soft-footed through the trees, and for the moment Marsyas felt that all the friendliness which the world held for him had been caught and pent in the little garden.

Junia was there, luxuriously bestowed in the cushions of the stone seat. She made room for him beside her, but he took one of the pillows and, dropping it on the grass, sat at her feet.

He looked at her with expectancy in his eyes.

"O my Junia," he said, "why dost thou wear that eager, uninformed look, as if thou wouldst say, 'Tell me quickly what news thou hast!' when thou knowest invariably I bring no cheer!"

"Hear him!" she cried. "Shall I look thus: 'Here comes Marsyas, bearing evil tidings and craving comfort, for he does not care for me except when I may do something for him?'"

"Of a truth, dost thou not say that in thy heart?" he insisted.

"No! I say this: 'Yonder young man is much in debt to me, but my requital when I ask it will be equal to his debt.' Wherefore, I shall serve on till the sum is equal."

"Thou speakest truly when thou sayest I am in debt to thee, but if thou hast in thy heart something which thou wouldst have me do, command me now!"

"Perchance when I see what brought thee to Misenum, to-day," she smiled.

"If thou canst help me, Junia, I shall owe thee a life!"

"Thy life, Marsyas?"

"No; Agrippa's—or the life of Justin Classicus!"

"How now!" she cried, and there was more genuine interest in her soft voice than she had previously shown. "What hath stirred thee against Classicus?"

At that moment an indistinct shout of great volume, as of many men cheering behind walls, interrupted him. He turned his head quickly in the direction of the palace.

"What passeth within?" he asked; "why will they not admit me?"

"Nothing, nothing," she said hurriedly, "or at least only an important ceremony which none but Cæsar can perform; Macro does not wish him to be interrupted. Go on with thy story!"

"Flaccus hath sent a messenger to the emperor—a messenger that commands the favor of the little Prince Tiberius."

"Who told thee?" she asked.

"Well?" she inquired.

He studied the look on her face and felt that it was strangely composed for the assumed eagerness in her voice.

"The tribune refused him the tessera which he must have to approach the emperor's abode, and required that he produce the indorsement of some notable Roman before he return again. The messenger went away boasting that he would get it of the little Tiberius."

"He will!" she assented, "for little Tiberius is not on the promontory to-day, and the sentries without dare not refuse the lad's signet!"

Marsyas frowned and looked down: he was perplexed that she did not help.

"Is there no way to shut him out of Misenum?" he asked.

"Cæsar's passport is as much a command as Cæsar's denial—when the little Tiberius delivers it," she repeated.

"But can I not reach Macro?"

"No," she said decisively. "Macro's powers pale before the lad's."

Was she at the end of her ingenuity, or her willingness, he asked himself.

"He will get to the emperor, then, if he start?" His desperation grew under the lady's easy irony.

"Unless thou or some other of Agrippa's friends disable him permanently with a bodkin, or a storm deliver him up to the Nereids."

Marsyas' hands clenched: he moved as if to rise, but she slipped her hands through the bend of his elbow and let them retard him, more by their presence than by actual strength.

"Is there something thou canst do?" he asked.

She hesitated; something seemed to fill her eyes; her lids quivered and dropped; speech trembled on her lips, but the momentary impulse passed. After a little silence, she lifted her eyes, composed once more.

"I told thee, once upon a time," she said, "of the world. I have counseled with thee for thine own good, and sometimes thou didst heed me, but on the greater number of occasions thou hast chosen for thyself. What hast thou won from thy long battle for the stern purposes which have engaged thee? What hast thou achieved in controlling this Herod, or in working against Saul of Tarsus? What?"

He frowned and looked away.

"Nothing," she answered, "save thou hast gathered perils around thee, forced thyself into sterner deeds, and there—"

She laid a pink finger-tip between his eyes.

"—there is a blight on thy comeliness."

"Dost thou urge me to give over mine efforts? If so, speak, that I may tell thee I can not obey!" he declared.

"No? Not even if thy work maketh another unhappy—whom thou wouldst not have to be unhappy?"

He looked at her: did she mean Lydia? Or was she concerned for Classicus?

"Art thou defending Classicus?" he asked.

"Nay," she smiled, "but I defend myself!"

This was puzzling, and at best irrelevant. He had come, burdened with trouble and concern for Agrippa's life, and she was leading away into less serious things. It was not like her to be capricious. Perhaps there was more in her meaning than he had grasped.

"I pray thee," she continued, "mingle a little sweet with thy toil!"

He arose and moved away from her.

"O Junia, how can I?" he demanded impatiently.

"Nay, but I am asking payment of the debt thou confessest to me!"

"Help me yet in this danger of Classicus, and I shall be thy slave!"

She arose and approached very close to him. Her face was flushing, her hands were outstretched. He took them because they were offered. "Marsyas," she whispered, her brilliant eyes searching his face, "I shall not cease to be thy confederate, but I would be more!"

With a little wrench she freed her hands from his and drew a packet from the folds of silk over her breast.

"See! I have here thy letter, which Herod brought and bitterly reproached me for mine enchantment of thee. And I kept it, till this hour!"

She put into his hands the scorched and broken letter that he had written to Lydia and had believed that he had destroyed so long before. While he looked at it, stupefied with astonishment, she slipped her arms about his neck.

"I do not ask thee to marry me," she whispered, a little laugh rippling her breath. "Eros does not summon the law to make his sway effective. For thou art an Essene, by repute, and no man need surrender his reputation for his character. Wherefore, though ten thousand dread penalties bound thee to celibacy, they do not dull thine eyes nor make thy cheeks less crimson! Be an Essene, or a Jew, Cæsar or a slave—that can not alter thy charm! And I shall not quibble, so thou lovest me!"

Marsyas stood still while he searched her changing face. It was not a new experience for him who had brought picturesque beauty into Rome, but the source was different, the result more grave. On this occasion the seductive enumeration of his good looks awakened in him something which was affronted; whatever thing it was, it possessed an intelligence which comprehended before his brain grew furious, and, flinging itself upon his soul, buffeted it into sensitiveness.

With a rush of rage, he understood all that her act had accomplished for him.

The world of helplessly-impelled children that she had pictured to him, the world of innocence and forgivable inclinations, little warfares and artless badness, play or the feeding of primitive hungers, or of building of roof-trees—all that with which she had partly enchanted him was suddenly stripped of its atmosphere, and the glare of realities, fierce passions, deadly hates, shamelessness and blood stood before him. In short, he had been instantly precipitated into his old Essenic misanthropy now directly imposed upon the heads of individuals, which before in his solitary days had been heaped without understanding upon the heads of strangers.

He did care because that the creature had simply betrayed her true self; more dreadful than that, she had wrested from him the charity his experience in the world had yielded him—for Lydia!

Blind fury maddened him; her offense called for a fiercer response than a blush; she had robbed his heart wholly and was burning its empty house.

He put forth his strength, undid her arms and flung her from him. For a moment he felt a bloodthirsty desire to follow her up and break her over the stone exedra, but remnants of reason prevailed.

Springing through the exit, he was gone without uttering a word in answer to her.

Junia heard the last of his footsteps on the flagging leading out of her father's grounds, and for a moment wavered between screaming for her own slaves to pursue him, or delivering him up to the prætorian guards.

"For what?" Discretion asked. "To have him tell, under torture, thy part in sheltering Agrippa? At thy peril!"

But he had flung her away; he had rejected her; he had escaped after all her pains, her pretensions, her plans! For him, she had left Alexandria and endured Cæsar. For him, she had forgone seasons of conquest in Rome! For him, she had neglected Caligula, and now Caligula would be emperor. For him she had sacrificed everything and had lost, at last. He, a Jew, a

manumitted slave, a barbarian! She, a favorite of emperors and consuls, a manipulator of affairs, fortunes and families! And he had rejected her!

There were muffled flying footsteps on the sod without, and Caligula, pallid and moist with terrified perspiration, dashed into the inclosure as if seeking a place to hide.

When he saw her, he sprang back, but halted, on recognizing her.

"Ate and the Furies!" he said in a strained whisper. "What hath happened but that Cæsar revived while the guards were hailing me as Imperator!"

A hater of pork, a wearer of gowns, a mutterer of prayers, a bearded clown of a rustic! And she, it was, whom he had rejected!

"Stand like a frozen pigeon!" Caligula hissed, "while I tell thee of my death! He knew what the shouts meant! He showed his teeth like a panther, transfixed me with his dead eyes and signed for wine! When he hath strength enough to order it, and breath enough to form the words—"

And she had not urged the Herod's death for his sake, and thereby imperiled her own living with Flaccus; she had sent him a passport to Capri and one to Misenum, and rescued him from the admiring eyes of other women, to make sure of him—and he had flung her away, at last!

"He will starve me to death: drown me in the Mamertine!" Caligula raged under his breath. "Starve me, I say! Speak, corpse! What shall I do!"

Her rage by this time had so filled her that it meant to have expression or have her life.

"Kill him!" she hissed through her teeth.

It was Marsyas' sentence, but it fell upon Tiberius.

Caligula ceased to tremble and stared at her with a strange look in his bird-like eyes.

"How?" he asked.

She seized one of the pillows and brought it down over the seat of the divan, and held it firmly as if to prevent it from being thrown off.

"Thus!" she said venomously.

"But the nurses and Charicles, the physician," Caligula protested, fearing nevertheless that his protest might hold good.

"Put them out! Will they dare resist the coming emperor? Have Macro aid thee, so he dare not tell upon thee."

She was becoming cool. It would be good to vent her murderous impulses on something. Caligula gazed at her with fascination in his face.

"Come, then, thou, and see it done! Neither shalt thou talk," he said suddenly.

She stepped to his side, but before she reached the exit of the inclosure, she stopped and looked squarely into his eyes.

"Herod hath a slave who hath wronged me," she said.

"Which one?" he demanded.

"The Essene!"

"Nay, take vengeance on some other, then, for He is my friend! I have vowed him favor!"

"Why?" she demanded.

"Nay; do not stop—thou art to see this thing done! Why do I promise the Essene favor? Because, forsooth, he made an emperor of me! Come!"

CHAPTER XXIX

IN EXTREMIS

Marsyas left the promontory at once. He had hired one of the public passenger boats to cross from Baia to Misenum and the boatman had waited for the return of his fare.

Many went as he was going, but they were patricians singly and in groups that passed him, with sober faces and without a word to each other. He recognized senators, ædiles, consuls, duumvirs, prætors, legates all hurrying toward the landing. All noble Misenum seemed suddenly to have determined on an exodus. An anxious and distressed company they were, and had Marsyas' own brain been less hot with anger, he might have meditated on the meaning of it all.

By the time he reached the bay, the sunset-reddened water was covered with light-running coasters, by the signs on aplustre or vexillum, a fleet of patrician craft making across the bay to Neapolis, or scudding for the open sea and Ostia. He saw one or two vessels approaching Misenum, hailed by departing ones, and, after a colloquy, turned back.

Vaguely wondering whether Cæsar's latest whim was to drive his court from him, Marsyas got into his own highly-painted shell and told his oarsman to take him across to Baia.

As he sat at the tiller and moodily watched the Italian night come up over the sea, the capes, the hill-slopes and finally cover the somber head of the unsuspected Vesuvius, he was afraid that his long ignored Essenic rigor would assert itself. He was ashamed of himself, and for the moment looked upon the life he had led in Rome with revulsion. But he put off his self-examination with a kind of terror. There was yet much that was harsh and unlawful to be done, and he dared not hold off his hand. Lydia's life and good name, the avenging of Stephen, Agrippa's life and Cypros' happiness were weighed against Classicus and his own soul in the other balance. He could not hesitate now.

When he set foot in opulent Baia the night had fallen and with his return to the city, which he knew sheltered Agrippa's most active enemy at that hour, all his energies turned toward the purpose that had originally brought him to Misenum. He believed that if Classicus had insinuated himself into young Tiberius' favor, doubtless the prince's hospitality had been extended to him. He turned his steps toward the range of villas built between Baia and Puteoli, overlooking the bay.

He had in mind the method of his last resort, and he went as one goes when desperation carries him forward—swiftly and relentlessly.

But, crossing the town by the water-front, he met a handful of slaves bearing baggage toward the wharves. With his old Essenic thoroughness he halted to examine them to make sure that Classicus had not outstripped him finally. By their particularly fine physique and diverse nationality Marsyas knew them to be costly slaves of the familia of no small patrician.

He heard the ramble of chariot-wheels on the lava-paved streets; the master was following. As the vehicle passed under a lamp a few paces away, Marsyas distinguished the occupants as Classicus and the young Tiberius.

He felt a chill creep over his heart; the hour had come.

He moved after the slaves toward the wharf.

Baia's beauties extended out and waded into the waves. The landings of marble had to be fit masonry for the feet of the Cæsars and their train when they asked the hospitality of the sea. Luxury, not commerce, came down to the water's edge and gazed Narcissus-like at its lovely image in the quiet bay. Here were no Algerian hulks with their lateen sails, no evil-smelling fishing fleets, or docks or warehouses, or city cloacas. Baia was a city of dreams and warm baths, of idleness and temples and villas, of gardens and fragrance and beauty and repose. Now, the velvet winds of the starry Italian night rippled the face of the bay; the last faint luster of a set moon showed a bar of white light, low down in the southwest, and against that, blackly outlined, a splendid galley was driving like the wind into port.

A dozen yards from the end of the pier lay a passage-boat, with a light on its mast and a soft glow in its curtained cabin, Marsyas wondered if Tiberius meant to accompany his guest to Misenum.

But while he thought, Tiberius set Classicus down, took leave with an apology and a reminder that guests awaited him at home, and drove rapidly back into Baiæ.

A small rowboat lay under shadow at the side of the landing and the two couriers loading the baggage awaited now their passenger.

But Marsyas emerged from the dark and stepped before Classicus. A glance at the tidy countenance of the philosopher sent a rush of heat through Marsyas' veins. Classicus was not feeling the spiritual combat within him, for the work he meditated, that racked the young Essene. That fact acknowledged helped Marsyas in his intent.

"A word," Marsyas said.

Classicus stopped, a little startled.

"Who art thou?"

"Marsyas, the Essene."

The young man had not helped his cause by the introduction.

"Out of my path," Classicus said coldly. "I have nothing to say to thee!"

"I have somewhat to say to thee, Classicus. If thou must be hard of heart, be not foolish and injurious to thyself."

"Suffer no pangs of concern for my welfare," the philosopher said. "Preserve them, lest thine own cause find thee bankrupt in tears!"

"My cause will not need them: thou mayest. I know why thou art here and whither thou art going and for what purpose. I know who sent thee, why and what thou wilt accomplish. I know how feebly thou art aided and how much imperiled. Above all things I know what will happen to thee unless thou hearest me!"

"What a number of door-cracks hath yielded thee information! Stand aside before I call my servants to thee!"

Marsyas folded his arms. The green blackness of the bay threw his solid outlines into relief. The threat he had made suddenly appealed to Classicus as ill-advised.

"Jewish brethren," Marsyas answered, his voice dropping into the softness which was premonitory, "do not speak thus with each other. This was taught thee in the Synagogue. If thy lapse into evil hath let thee forget it, I care enough for thy manner to recall it to thee.

"First and above all things, know thou that I am not here to satisfy the hate of thee because thou hast wrested from me my beloved! Next, that I am here to stop thee in order to save her life, more than any other's. Now, for thyself. Thou goest to accomplish a deed that would recoil upon thine own head. If thou be tired of living, Classicus, choose another way than to perish for the entertainment of him who duped thee."

"For thy peace of mind, O sage fool," Classicus observed, "know that I come bearing a petition to the emperor to seek for Agrippa's wife, who hath been abducted!"

"If thou present a petition which in any way favors Agrippa or his wife, Tiberius will test the cord on thee to be sure it is strong enough to strangle Agrippa. And I tell thee, Classicus, the Charon of the heathen Shades will not push off with the Herod; he will save himself a journey and await thy arrival!"

"Still threatening, still trembling for me! If I call these slaves to remove thee thou mayest tremble for thyself!"

"I am large, Classicus, strong and determined. I could kill thee before thy stupid slaves ran three paces!"

Classicus turned his eyes to the level line to the southwest. The luster on the horizon was gone. The great galley, broadside now as she hunted her channel, loomed large on the outskirts of the sheltered water. Once, the deck-lights flashed on a bank of her oars, rising wet and slippery from the sea.

"Listen, brother," Marsyas continued. "Thou shall proceed with me to the maritime harbor at Puteoli, and get aboard the vessel there which sails for Alexandria. Thou shall leave Italy: thou shalt discontinue thy work against Agrippa—or have the knife, now! Decide!"

The hiss and protest of plowing waters came now on the breeze; the regular beat of many oars, working as one, broke the hiss into rhythmical bars: an invisible pennant, high up in the helpless shrouds where night covered canvas and mast, was caught suddenly by a vagrant current of wind and fluttered with rapid pulsations of sound. Long lances of light reached out on the water and began to stretch broadening fingers toward the pier. Humming noises like blended voices came with the rattle of chains.

Marsyas knew that Classicus was awaiting the arrival of the galley for the advantages of the interruption and to secure Marsyas' arrest.

The young Essene stepped close to Classicus.

"I shall wait no longer for thy answer," he said softly.

The philosopher's voice rang out, clear and unafraid.

"Hither, slaves!"

Marsyas was not unprepared. He seized Classicus and forced him back into the black shadows of the clustered columns with which the inner edge of the landing was ornamented.

The two couriers came running, but Marsyas spoke authoritatively.

"Good slaves, if ye come at me ye will force me to kill this young man!" he said.

"Take him!" Classicus cried.

The two servants sprang forward, but Marsyas, seizing Classicus by the hair, thrust his head back and put the point of the knife at his throat.

The two halted, tautly drawn up as if the point of the blade touched their own flesh. Instinctively they knew that the silky quiet in the voice was deadly; Marsyas had them.

Meanwhile the galley was delivering up her passengers to the land. The first ship's boat that touched the landing carried four patricians. The soft sound of heelless sandals on the pavement drifted down from Babe. Some one of the citizens was coming to meet the arrivals.

The four stepped out, and the ship's boat shot back into the darkness.

"Ho! Regulus," one of the four cried.

"Coming!" the citizen answered from the street. "What news?"

"Cæsar is dead!"

Clasicus relaxed in Marsyas' grip; the slaves stood transfixed; the young Essene, holding fast, stilled his loud heart and listened.

"Old age?" the citizen ventured.

"Perchance; yes, doubtless," one of the four answered in a lower tone, for the citizen had come close and was taking their hands. "Smothered in his silken cushions—died of too much comfort! Dost understand? Well enough!"

Marsyas' hands dropped from Classicus.

By the time the Alexandrian aroused to his opportunity, Marsyas had disappeared like a spirit into the night.

CHAPTER XXX

THE EREMIT IN SCARLET, AND THE BANKRUPT IN PURPLE

Lydia came upon Vasti, the bayadere, returning to the culina with a flaring taper in her hand. The brown woman's eyes were fixed on the flame and she whispered under her breath, till the licking red tongue of the taper flickered and wavered back at her as if speaking in signs.

"What saith the Red Brother?" Lydia asked, in halting Hindu, for she had begun to learn her waiting-woman's tongue.

"He keeps his own counsel, who is fellow to the Fire," was the answer. "Thy neighbor, the philosopher, awaits thee within."

Lydia went slowly on.

When she entered the alabarch's presiding-room, Classicus arose from a seat beside a cluster of lamps and came toward her.

"Thy servant at the door tells me that thy father is not in," he said. "I came to speak with him of thee: but perchance it is better that I tell thee that which I have to tell, before any other."

Lydia sat down on the divan, and Classicus sat beside her.

"I come to submit to thy scorn or thy pity," he said, "either of which I deserve!"

"What hast thou done?" she asked, feeling a vague sense of fear.

"I have been Flaccus' fool!" he vowed.

Lydia's eyes grew troubled.

"What didst thou for him?" she asked in a lowered tone.

"I permitted him to catch me up in the city and rush me to Rome with a memorial to Cæsar, beseeching the emperor's aid in seeking the Lady Cypros, who had been abducted."

Lydia's level brows dropped.

"Charging us with abduction?" she remarked.

"Charging no man with abduction, but declaring that she was missing from thy father's roof!"

Classicus' face filled with contrite humiliation under her gaze.

"Why so late with the story?" she asked. "Why didst thou not come to us before thou wast persuaded to go!"

"Charge me not with more folly than I did commit!" he besought. "I was caught by his servants in the Brucheum and haled before him, where, in all excitement, he told that the Lady Cypros was missing, and that I, as the safe friend of the alabarch and the proconsul, had been commissioned to enlist Cæsar's interest in her cause! The vessel ready for Puteoli waited only on the night-winds to sail! I was not given time to change my raiment, or to fill my purse from mine own treasure, much less to take counsel with thy father and learn the truth!"

"And besides Flaccus, we must now take Cæsar into consideration in protecting this unhappy woman!" she exclaimed.

"No!" he cried. "A friend of Agrippa's, whom I met in Rome, stopped me in time!"

She looked away from him and he took her hand.

"Am I pardoned?" he asked plaintively.

"Thou didst no harm; but it should serve to awaken thee to the evil in this dangerous Roman! If only Agrippa would return, how readily the skies would brighten for us all!"

"What wilt thou do if the Herod returns not?" he asked after a little silence.

"Do not speak of it, Classicus," she said hurriedly. "Flaccus is desperate."

"If Agrippa abandon Cypros," he offered, "she can divorce him, and simplify the tangle."

"Oh, no, Justin! Cypros is bound heart and soul to Agrippa. Even if he died, she would not turn to Flaccus! The dear Lord be thanked that we have a virtuous woman to defend!"

"Nay, then, thou strict little rabbin, what shall we do?"

"How slow these ships! The last letter we sent to him can hardly have reached Sicily!"

"He hath had a sufficiency of letters by this time! What was it he wrote thy father, last: 'I come with all speed; but reflect that Cæsar is master over me: his consent is needful!' Ha! ha! Caligula would give Agrippa half his Empire did he ask for it!"

She leaned her cheek in her hand, turning her face away from Classicus.

"Alas! I know why he lingers," she said to herself. "Marsyas hath departed unto Judea, and Agrippa lacks his controlling hand!"

"I appreciate the peril threatening thy father's house," the philosopher added after her continued silence, "and thou knowest thou shall have my help—blundering as it may be!"

There were footsteps in the vestibule, and the alabarch stood in the archway. Lydia sprang up.

"What," she cried, unable to wait for his report, "what said the proconsul?"

The alabarch came into his presiding-room with a slow step; he let his cloak fall on his chair, and stood in the lamplight worn and troubled. Seeing Classicus, he greeted the visitor before he answered Lydia.

"Evil, evil; naught but evil," he sighed, "and threats. And the proconsul's threats are never empty!"

"What does he threaten?" Classicus asked.

"Me—and mine."

"Alas! our people!" Lydia sighed.

"No, daughter! Thee!"

"Lydia!" Classicus exclaimed.

"Why does he threaten me?" Lydia cried.

The alabarch shook his head. "Flaccus betrayed only enough to show that he will concentrate his vengeance against me and thee, or me through thee, but thee of a surety, my Lydia! Yet, he was as dark and ominous as the wrath of God!"

Lydia came close to her father and he laid his arm about her shoulders.

"Lydia, that bat escaped from Sheol, Eutychus, is openly attached to Flaccus' train; once, he abode under my roof, where he could learn many things. Has he any information against thee which Flaccus could use?"

Lydia's answer was not ready. It meant too much to tell that which the alabarch groped after. Already she had surrendered until she was stripped of all but her father's confidence, and her people's respect. She could not cast off these ties to all that was desirable on earth. And Classicus, silent and smug behind her, seemed to be a prepared witness awaiting a confession. Conscience and human nature had the usual struggle, and when she replied she did not raise her head.

"My father, Eutychus will never be at a loss for information. What actualities he can not furnish, he may have from his imagination."

"Alexandria does not wait for charges against the Jews," the alabarch said.

"But what says Flaccus?" Classicus urged after a silence.

"That I have abducted Agrippa's wife; that I have been guilty of insubordination to him, my superior; that thou, my Lydia, art amenable to him and all the people of Alexandria, and that he will proceed as his information warrants, unless I produce Cypros—between sunrise and sunset, to-morrow!"

There was silence.

"What wilt thou do?" Lydia asked in a suppressed voice.

"I can produce Cypros," he answered, torn by the inevitable.

"No!" Lydia cried.

"If Agrippa cares so little for her—" the alabarch began, but Lydia put off his arm and stood away from him.

"This matter is neither thine nor Agrippa's to decide! Cypros is a good woman and she shall be kept secure—even against herself, if need be! Thou shalt not bring her before Flaccus!"

"Lydia, I am brought to decide between her and thee!"

"Thou canst suffer dishonor and peril, even as Cypros," Classicus put in, to Lydia. "We are no less unwilling to surrender thee to the unknown charges Flaccus brings against thee, than thou art to give up Cypros!"

"Flaccus is no arbiter of the virtue of women! He is not Cæsar, beyond whom there is no human appeal! Let him remember that it is no longer the old man Tiberius who is emperor of the world, but the young man Caligula, whose warmest friend is a Jew! Let him touch Cypros at his peril!"

"Daughter, why should Cæsar defend a woman for whom not even her husband cares?"

There was no ready reply to this, and Lydia's face grew white.

"Is it like thee, my father, to abandon the wholly undefended?" she asked.

The alabarch bit his lip and turned his head away.

"Granted, then," put in Classicus in his even voice, "that we shall keep the lady in hiding and treat her to no ungente usage! Now, what will become of Lydia?"

The alabarch raised his eyes, filled with fire and desperation. Lydia drooped more and more, and presently she put her hand to her forehead.

"Is there nothing to be done?" Classicus persisted calmly.

The silence became strained and lengthened to the space of many heart-beats before he spoke again.

"Lydia can be hidden, with the princess," he offered finally.

Lydia raised her head, and looked at Classicus. Not for her the refuge that was Cypros', for if Flaccus held in truth the secret of her conversion to the Nazarene faith, she would only lead his officers straight upon the Nazarenes all over Egypt. Whatever people sheltered her, she would bring disaster and death on their heads. As Marsyas had been under the oppression of Saul of Tarsus, she had become as a pestilence! She wondered if Classicus realized how thoroughly she understood him. His face did not wear an air of respect for his plan.

"It can not be," she said quietly, and the alabarch looked startled at her words. Classicus submitted to her objection at once.

"Then," he said, "there is but one other way that I can invent—and this I offer last, because it is dearest to me. I have lands in Greece and favor with the legate there. Flaccus' power can not extend beyond his own dominions. Wilt thou not come to Greece—with me, my Lydia?"

Lydia's gaze did not falter throughout this speech; she had expected, long ago, that when Classicus had hedged her about, he would offer his hand as her one escape. Drop by drop the color left her face; her lips grew pale, and took on a curve of mute appeal; her eyes were the eyes of suffering, but not the eyes of a vanquished woman.

The alabarch had turned hurriedly away. But Classicus gazed, as if awaiting her reply, at his smooth, thin hands, now stripped of their jewels, incident to the shrinkage in his purse.

The drip of the waterfall in the garden within came very distinctly upon the silence in the room.

A cry from the porter, speaking in the vestibule, brought the alabarch up quickly.

"Master! master! The prince! The prince!"

"The king, thou untaught rustic!" Agrippa's tones, subdued but mirthful, followed upon the porter's cry.

Lysimachus sprang toward the vestibule, but Lydia, transfixed by reactionary emotions, did not move.

But before the alabarch reached the arch, two men appeared in the opening. Except for the fillet of gold set so low on his head that it passed around his forehead just above the brows, Agrippa might have been the same nonchalant bankrupt gambling with loaded tesseræ or hunting loans on bad security.

The other was Marsyas.

Classicus lifted his brows and arose to the proper spirit in which to greet a king.

"Count it not flattery, lord," the alabarch cried, extending his hands toward the new-comers, "that I say that Abraham's radiant visitors were not more welcome than thou!"

"Better the unprepared alabarch," said Marsyas, "than any host who hath expected his guests!"

The prince laughed, and discovering Lydia, bowed low to her.

"No change in thee, sweet Lydia," he exclaimed as she bent in obeisance to the fillet of gold about his forehead.

Marsyas stood a moment aside, his glance roving quickly from her to Classicus. With an effort he put back the rush of feeling that crowded upon his composure and came to her.

"Hast thou not changed, Lydia?" he asked. The hand closing over his did not belie the tremor in her voice.

"A blessing on you both," she said. "You are the redemption of this house of trouble!"

"We have been everything but heroes in our days," Marsyas said. "Welcome the opportunity!"

"Ho! Classicus!" Agrippa cried jovially, "hast thou failed to overthrow the tribute-demanding Sphinx or the Dragon?"

Marsyas gazed at the philosopher standing with inclined head, while he made felicitous answers to the prince, and said to himself:

"Happy phrase, my lord King! There standeth the tribute-demanding Sphinx, even now!"

Agrippa addressed himself to the alabarch, and between Marsyas and Classicus there stood no saving obstruction. Marsyas' nostrils quivered; he had fleeting but perfect summaries of the wrongs the man had worked against him. To find him now a guest entertained under the roof he had striven to injure, brought the Essene's temper up to a climacteric point. But he felt Lydia's presence, pacific, temperate and persuasive, restraining him. Of all the many deceits he had used throughout his precarious life of late, none seemed so impossible of practice as to offer a dispassionate word to Classicus.

He was saved for the moment by an exclamation from the alabarch.

"In all truth, that manifestation of Cæsar's favor?" he cried eagerly.

"A truth!" Agrippa declared. "Rome made a dandy out of Marsyas. Twelve legionaries, before he would stir a step to Egypt! Twelve! All armed; brasses so polished that one looks into the sun who looks at one. None short of three cubits in stature and visaged like Mars!"

Marsyas cut off the prince's raillery with a direct and serious query.

"How is it with our lady?"

"Still in hiding from Flaccus," the alabarch replied.

Agrippa looked in astonishment from one to another.

"Surely," he said earnestly, "you have not carried this delusion to such an extreme!"

"Delusion, lord," Marsyas repeated, facing him. "Let those first speak who are not deluded. Then thou shalt apply the word to him it fits."

"Good friends," the Herod protested, "all wise men cherish a folly. Marsyas, being the wisest of my knowing, hath his own. He hath held fast against flawless argument and solid truth to the delusion that my honest, timid wife hath awakened passion in the heart of this proconsul, who hath all the beauty and wit of Egypt and Rome from which to choose."

"Wilt thou continue further, lord," Marsyas said, "and tell them how thou hast explained this mystery to thyself?"

"What, Marsyas! Make confession here, openly, of a thing which I blush to confess to myself?" the Herod laughed.

"Never fear; thy audience hath already acquitted thee of blame!"

"Nay, then; so assured of clemency, I tell this behind my palms and with the prayer that the walls do not repeat it to my lady's ears! Learn, then, for the first time, that Junia is the cause of my disaster, because, forsooth, she is as fickle and capricious a woman as she is bad. Until the unhappy Herod was blown of ill winds to Alexandria, his single haven, she was Flaccus' mistress. When I appeared, for no other cause than the Mightiness of her fancy, she dropped Flaccus and precipitated all manner of disaster upon my head. There is the true story! Cypros, forsooth! Cypros is an upright Arab, twenty years married and mother of three!"

"Junia!" the alabarch repeated irritably. "Junia constructed more of Flaccus' villainies than Flaccus himself!"

"And will nothing dislodge this wild thing from your brain?" Agrippa cried.

"Name it what you will, lord," the alabarch answered, "but I have a further story to tell than all my fruitless letters told, when I stood in fear of their interception! Thou hast not forgotten the attack on thee on the night of Flora's feast; that, thou canst ascribe to Flaccus' jealousy, but how

wilt thou explain that when the news of thy disaster reached Alexandria, Flaccus put off his amiable front and commanded me to deliver Cypros to him—"

"Commanded you to deliver Cypros to him!" Agrippa cried, the fires of anger igniting in his eyes. "What had she to do with this?"

The alabarch drew himself up, ready in his dignity and authority to justify his deeds.

"If it proceedeth to an accounting, I and mine will bear witness to her innocence and loving fidelity to thee! Yet, remember, lord, she hath the first right to ask why she hath been left without thy care thus long!"

Agrippa flushed darkly, but Marsyas stopped the retort on his lips.

"Let us not try each other! Go on, good sir," he pleaded.

"I refused, and he threatened to hurl the Alexandrians on the Regio Judæorum. But in the meantime, fate or fortune, God knows which, ordered that Tiberius should choose Caligula to succeed him. The news reached Alexandria and stayed Flaccus' hand, for then he stood in wholesome fear of thy friend, the prince imperial. But thou didst tarry and tarry, and the more thou didst tarry, the more his hopes and his desires grew. No longer the Regio Judæorum dared he threaten, but me and mine—Lydia, above all!"

"Lydia!" Marsyas exclaimed.

"And I tell thee, my Lord Agrippa," the alabarch continued, by this time a picture of refined indignation, "at this very hour I was brought face to face with a hard decision between my daughter and thy wife!"

Marsyas turned toward Classicus, but the storm of denunciation that leaped to his lips was checked. What should he win for his exposure of Classicus, but scorn from Lydia, and a misconstruction of his motive?

Atavistic ferocity glittered in Agrippa's eyes.

"It is my turn!" he brought out between clenched teeth, "and I have a long score, a long score with Flaccus! Where is my lady? Let her be brought!"

Lydia broke in before the alabarch could answer.

"In hiding!" she answered quickly, and Marsyas fancied that she feared a too explicit answer from her father. Before whom was she afraid to disclose the princess' refuge, if not Classicus?

"Take four of my prætorians, then," Agrippa commanded, "and lead me to her hiding-place!"

The alabarch bowed and summoned servants.

"Have we, then, delivered this house of peril?" Marsyas asked of Agrippa.

"Flaccus," said Classicus, speaking for the first time, "may feed his thirst for revenge!"

"Get but my lady, first!" Agrippa insisted. "Flaccus hath played and lost! He shall pay his forfeit!"

The servants were ready with the alabarch's cloak; the porter announced chariots waiting, and in an incredibly short time, Marsyas was alone with Lydia and Classicus, in the presiding-room.

"I shall return to the ship and prepare it for voyage," Marsyas said, in the silence that instantly fell. "Since I return to Judea with the King, perchance I should say farewell!"

Lydia's lips parted, and her miserable eyes turned away from him.

"Await my father's return," she said in a low voice,

"Hath he far to go?" he asked.

"Yes—far!"

Clasicus waited serenely for Marsyas' answer. In that composure Marsyas read unconcern, which the Essene interpreted as hopelessness for his own cause.

"So long as we abide in Egypt, we are a peril," he replied. "Even now we have delayed too long!"

He extended his hand to Lydia, and slowly, she put her own into it. The touch of the small fingers played too strongly upon his self-control. He released them hurriedly and strode toward the vestibule.

But at the threshold, indecision and astonishment and acute realization of the meaning of the thing he was doing seized him. He whirled about. Classicus stood beneath the cluster of lamps, his face alight with triumphant superciliousness. Even under Marsyas' eye the expression did not alter. Lydia seemed to have shrunk; her hands clasped before her were wrung about each other in an agony of restraint, but the pitiful appeal in her eyes was all that Marsyas saw.

In an instant he was again at her side, his heart speaking in his face.

"Thou wearest yet the free locks of maidenhood," he said, in a voice so smooth and low that it chilled her, "perchance thou wilt tell me ere I depart if thou art to marry—this man?"

For a moment there was silence; Marsyas heard his mad heart beating, but if Classicus felt apprehension, there was no display of it on his face. Then Lydia raised her head.

"No," she said, in a voice barely audible.

Marsyas turned upon Classicus, and between the two there passed the silent communication of men who wholly understand each other. Then Classicus took up his kerchief, and, with a smile and a wave of his hand, walked out of the presiding-room.

But Lydia was out of reach of Marsyas' arms when he turned to her. Crying and afraid, she motioned him back as he pressed toward her.

He stopped.

"Am I still unacceptable to thee, Lydia?" he asked.

"O Marsyas, thou returnest in the same spirit as thou didst depart from me—unchanged, unchanged! But striving to change—for my sake! Do not so, for me! Not for me!"

The grief and pleading in the black eyes that rested upon her changed slowly. Rebuffed and stung he threw up his head.

"Better the old Essenic shape in which I was bound against thee and thou against me?" he said bitterly. "So! The Essenes seem not to be wrong in their teaching of distrust in women!"

If he expected her to retort, the compassion and gentleness in her answer surprised him.

"Not that, my Marsyas," she said, coming nearer to him in her earnestness. "But change does not consist in the raiment thou wearest, nor in the claim to be altered. Thou canst not in truth believe that I have done right! Thou forgivest me for thy love's sake, but thy intelligence is no less critical! I can not, will not put away the faith of the Master; I can not regret the spirit of the deed I did for their sake. And between us it is as it was the night I sent thee from me, so long ago!"

"But I have changed," he protested hastily. "The world hath taught me much: I can understand; I can extenuate greater errors—I have done so; believe me, it is only for thy sake—"

"But canst thou wholly acquit me—wholly justify me, Marsyas?"

He looked at her with pleading in his eyes, and made no answer.

"No man should wed or worship with a single doubt," she said.

Fearing more than he dared confess to himself, he caught her hands and would not let her leave him.

"Lydia, I have not had the portion which God and women allot to most men," he said almost piteously. "There are delights that should be mine by right, but they are denied me! Other men have their dreams, their moments of tender preoccupation. They can live again through hours between only themselves and one other. They can feel again the touches of a woman's hand upon them, the warmth of her cheek and the love in her kiss. No matter the evil, the sorrows that follow, these things are theirs, to hold in memory! No matter the time or the place, they can

summon it all from a song, drink it from a goblet of wine, or breathe it in from a flower! It is twice living it; once, in the actuality; again, in the dream! But I—I have nothing! My teaching did not permit me to look forward to such a thing—and thou, Lydia—Lydia, thou dost not permit me to look back upon it!"

Her eyes filled with tears, and a rush of tender words trembled on her lips. His gaze, quickened by longing for the thing these signs typified, caught the softening in her young face. He seized upon the hope that it gave him.

"Dost thou love me, Lydia?" he asked.

"I love thee, Marsyas."

He drew her to him, put his arms about her and pressed her to his breast. She did not resist him, for she was tired of contention with herself, tired of distress, afraid of the menace the future showed her, and withal fainting in hope. She dropped her head on his shoulder, with her face turned up to him. Marsyas' soul filled to the full with subdued, bewildering emotions. It was not the first time he had held this sweet child-woman in his arms, but fear, tumult, impetuosity and protest had claimed preëminence in his thoughts before. Now in the quiet and shelter of the alabarch's deserted presiding-room, he found new experience, new feelings. Under the low light of the clustered lamp, he looked down on the face turned to him, smoothed with soft touches the long, delicate black brows; passed light fingers over the bloom of her cheek and saw the faint rose color come again in the white lines the little pressure made; put back the loose curl fallen before her perfect ear and marveled at its silkiness; watched the quiet palpitation in the milk-white throat—sensed, somehow, the repose in herself, the command, even in this momentary surrender, the divinity in her womanliness. He was ashamed of his distrust, startled at his new sensations.

Perhaps she saw the passing of feeling over his face, for she stirred and would have raised herself, but the movement brought him back to reality, and a fiercer rebellion against it.

"Nay, nay, Lydia; I love thee! It is my one virtue; my sinful soul hath been married to thee these many strange months. Thou art become a necessity to my life, as needful as bread and drink, as blood and breath! Thou art the essential salt in my veins—the world to me! Nay, more! Thou art love, for world is a word with boundaries! I have striven for thy sake and I have not failed. I am able now to obtain the quieting of thy chief enemy, the refreshment of the starved heart in me, thirsting for revenge, and of our own security henceforward in the world. Yet, I am not going to Judea with Agrippa. I abide here with thee in Alexandria, until I have won the immediate safety of thy body and thy soul!"

She strove to stop him in his resolution, but he kissed her, and, leading her to the foot of the well-remembered stairs, whispered his good night.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE DREGS OF THE CUP OF TREMBLING

By noon the following day, all Alexandria roared with the news that Agrippa had returned a king!

The Regio Judæorum lost its repose. Certain irrational of the inhabitants displayed carpeting and garlands in honor of the Jewish potentate, within their boundaries. But others, instructed by instinct, closed the fronts of the houses and laid their treasure within grasp.

By the advice of Marsyas, Agrippa had caused his ship to bring to, outside the harbor, and await the dropping of darkness before he came ashore. The few hours he spent in Alexandria had been passed under cover, and none without the alabarch's household was aware of his presence in the city. The newly-crowned Judean king found it difficult to repress his desire for ostentation, and when Marsyas' plan for secrecy miscarried at last, Agrippa was irritated because he had been deprived of a longed-for opportunity to astonish the Alexandrians.

"But who could have told it?" he asked, with ill-concealed satisfaction.

Marsyas' lips curled.

"Classicus," he said.

Before the porch of the alabarch's house groups of people came to stand and discuss the fortunes of the Herod. The sounds, never congratulatory, began to change in temper. As the day grew, numbers began to accumulate and hang like sullen bees buzzing insurrection. Though they themselves were mongrels cast out of twenty subjugated kingdoms and bullied into unspeakable servitude by the tyrant Rome, Prejudice, unarmed with argument and speaking in dialect, arose and rebelled at Alexandria entertaining a Jewish king.

Toward sunset a group of empty curricles and chariots came and stood before a certain house, the last in the Jewish district, facing the Gentile environs of the water-front. Had any cared to remark, it might have been observed that this house could be reached from the alabarch's by abandoned passages and private walks, a series of Jewish courts and stable-yards, without exposing any who went that way to the Gentile eye. After a while, a body of Roman guards emerged from nowhere and arrayed themselves alongside the vehicles. Presently, groups of slaves bearing burdens, followed by a party of high-class Egyptians, mounted the chariots and without hesitation the procession took up movement toward the harbor.

But an angle in the streets brought them upon the Gymnasium. It was built in a square of sufficient size to receive the crowds that usually attended the contests of the *athletæ*, and there thousands were assembled to do Alexandrian honor to a Jew.

The daylight was still on the streets, and Marsyas, in the guise of a charioteer, driving the horses of the foremost car, observed that each of the mass was busy with his own noise, and apparently unsuspecting the coming of Agrippa. So he signed to the centurion in charge of the prætorian squad to make way with as little ostentation as possible.

At the porch before the Gymnasium, the crowd was most packed, loudest and most entertained. A naked, deformed, apish figure stood on a pedestal from which a statue had fallen and had not been replaced. A wreath of rushes had been twisted about the degenerate forehead, a strip of matting had been bound with a tow-cord about his middle; in his hand was a stalk of papyrus with the head broken and hanging down.

On their knees about the base of the plinth were half a score of youths from the Gymnasium, groaning in tragic chorus, the single Syriac word:

"*Maris! Maris!* Lord! Lord!"

Loudly the crowd roared its part, with voices raucous and hoarse from much abuse:

"Hail, Agrippa! King of the Jews!"

Agrippa's chariot, following the way the centurion had quietly opened through the crowd, attracted little attention and the half-light of the twilight did not reveal his features, which he had been led further to conceal by an Egyptian cowl. A long white kamis covered his dress. But his eyes fell upon the idiot; he caught the mockery and its meaning from the crowd.

A quiver of rage ran through his frame. Laying hold of the Egyptian smock, he tore it off and threw it fairly into the faces of those nearest him; the white cowl followed, and he stood forth like a new-risen sun in a tissue of silver, mantled with purple, his fillet replaced by a tarboosh sewn with immense gems.

Defiance and insult and daring could not have been embodied in a more effective act. The continuous tumult burst into a yell of fury. In a twinkling his chariot was hemmed in and blocked and the raving rabble reached out to lay hands on him.

Marsyas, seeing destruction in Agrippa's recklessness, shouted to the centurion, who responded by hurling his prætorians, with broadsword and spear into the mob.

The protection of Cæsar, thus evidenced, beat back the astonished herd as a charge of cavalry might have done, but it fringed the lane opened before the royal Jew and raged.

Thereafter every inch of the way was contested.

Not even a show of interference was made by municipal authorities. Instead, here and there, soldiers of the city garrison could be seen, singly or in groups, as spectators and applauding. The riot began to take on the appearance of a holiday, for groups of upper classes began to appear on housetops, stairs and porches of houses, where they made themselves comfortable and listened to

the demonstration as they were accustomed to watch contests in the stadia. Below in the long way toward the harbor-front, the lawless of any class indulged their love of disorder and amused the aristocrats.

The fugitives were almost in sight of the forest of masts which marked the wharves, when Marsyas detected a change in the tone of the tumult.

Derision and revilement began to lose impetus, flagging in the face of a freshened uproar of another temper, beginning far behind and sweeping down the street after the fugitives. It was savage, bloodthirsty and menacing. Out of the inarticulate volume he caught finally shouts about the Jews and Flora; next, about the dance of Flora; after that the whole declaration, sent thundering, like a sea over winter capes, that the dancing Flora was a Nazarene and the daughter of the alabarch!

Marsyas' face, turned toward Agrippa, was ghastly. The Herod felt the first quiver of terror he had experienced in years. He reached toward the lines, meaning to give Marsyas opportunity to return to the Regio Judæorum. But Marsyas was shouting mightily to the centurion to charge the crowds before them. The prætorian heard and his men presented a double row of spears and rushed. The lesser mob ahead broke, and Marsyas cried back to Cypros' charioteer.

The next minute with desperate mercilessness he had loosed a long plaited whip like a crackling flame upon the necks of his horses.

The terrified beasts leaped; the car lurched and headlong they plunged into the mass before them. Right and left the rawhide played, over faces, shoulders and lifted arms, searing and scarring wherever it touched. With grim satisfaction, the two within the chariot felt at times that the car mounted and toppled over prostrate rioters, like sticks in the roadway. The jam became panic and flight, and the horses took the free passage, mad with desire to get away from the stinging torment that harassed them.

The driver of Cypros' car closed in quickly with its following of curricles, and kept close behind the flying chariot, but the prætorians, out-distanced, contented themselves by following through short ways, and the riot was left behind.

At the wharf the maddened animals could not be stopped until they had been circled again and again. But hardly had the wheels ceased to move, when Marsyas leaped to the ground, and, flinging the lines to a slave, put up his hands to Agrippa.

"As the first debt to thy manhood and to the alabarch forget not this opportunity to help him! Hear them! They want Jewish blood; Lydia's blood! There is none in Alexandria to stay them! Help, my lord! Beseech Cæsar in thy people's behalf, as I beseech thee now! Answer, answer!"

"I hear, Marsyas," Agrippa responded, "and by all that I hold sacred, I promise thee Flaccus' end! God help thee! Farewell!"

Pausing only for the word, Marsyas turned and ran with frantic speed back into the city. He saw, at every step, that which made his heart chill in his bosom. The tide of the riot had turned, and that which was not already pouring in upon the Nazarenes, was rushing into the Regio Judæorum.

CHAPTER XXXII

SANCTUARY

The cluster of vagabonds hanging before the alabarch's mansion stayed no longer after the breezes brought the first sound of tumult which announced a rarer sport elsewhere. In a twinkling the Regio Judæorum was silent and deserted.

Except for the gusts of far-off turmoil, the cooing of pigeons in towers, the clashing of palm-leaves, the creak of crazy gates in the wind, the casual calling of Numidian cranes or the crowing of poultry were the only sounds in the quarter—lonesome, nature sounds, signals of a householder's absence.

But it seemed as if the Regio Judæorum listened and waited.

After Agrippa's departure, the alabarch came into his presiding-room, without purpose and visibly uneasy. Lydia followed him, and, at a look from her father, came close to his chair and mingled her yellow-brown curls with his white locks.

The silence over the quarter had become oppressive and the slightest break would have been no less grateful than distinct, when it seemed that cautious footsteps pattered by without.

The two stirred and listened.

After a moment, they heard others, very swift and soft, as if many were running by a-tiptoe. There were whispers and rustlings, excited words cried under the breath.

The two in the presiding-room looked at each other. Had the vagabonds returned to their place for mischief, outside the alabarch's mansion?

Lysimachus stepped to the windows and listened. But Lydia stood still, dreading without understanding that which he might hear.

East and west, far and near, sounds were drifting in and passing toward the New Port, sounds as if a multitude hastened in one direction. Above these stealthy, fugitive, whispered noises, there

came freshened uproar from pagan Alexandria, swift, high, relentless and carrying like fire on a wind.

As they stood thus, perplexed and alarmed, Vasti appeared like a shadow out of the dusk and caught the alabarch's arm.

"It is come!" she hissed with compelling vehemence. "To the Synagogue! Fly! For the hosts of Siva are upon you even now!"

Lysimachus grasped the grill of the window, and turned slowly toward his daughter.

"Lydia?" he asked helplessly.

The girl came to him, and Vasti began to motion her toward the street.

"What is it? What passeth?" the alabarch insisted, unable to act without perfect conception of the conditions he had to fight.

Lydia's eyes, fixed on her father's face, deepened with misery and widened with suffering. The hour had fallen! She was to be the outcast and the abomination at last.

"They accuse me," she said, "of being a Nazarene; that I committed sacrilege, to hold off the mob from Rhacotis—that I was the Dancing Flora!"

The alabarch put his thin hands to his forehead, as if to ward off the conviction, which all the fragmentary intimation against Lydia, and her own words conjoined, threatened to establish in him.

"Is it so, my daughter?" he asked in a benumbed voice.

Cause was submerged in effect; she felt less fear of the confession than of her father's suffering. In the appreciable interval his figure shriveled; age and the encroachment of death showed upon him. The atmosphere of the magistrate, the courtier and the aristocrat dissolved under the anguish of a father and the horror of a Jew. He had surrendered his two sons, Tiberius and Marcus, to paganism; in Lydia, he had reposed the unwatchful faith, that had permitted his other children to apostasize under his roof. He had believed the more in her, and the shock was the greater, therefore.

"Let it be the measure of my conviction, my father," she said sadly, "that I did this thing in the knowledge that I might forfeit thy love!"

He made no movement; his face did not relax from its stunned agony. Lydia awaited its change with flagging heart-beat.

But the thunder of menace from the Gymnasium square rolled in again through the streets of the Regio Judæorum. The alabarch heard it. Up through the mask there struggled not rebuke and

condemnation, but the terror of love fearing for its own. He caught Lydia in his arms and turned his straining eyes toward the windows. But the bayadere waited no longer for the arousing of his faculties. She seized his arm and thrust him toward the vestibule.

"Awake! Get you up and be gone! Will you wait to see her perish?"

She did not stop until she had pushed them through the porch into the streets.

"To the Synagogue!" she commanded last, and disappeared as she had come.

All the Regio Judæorum, as far as the Brucheum on the south and the tumble and wash of the Mediterranean on the north, was pouring through the streets toward the New Port.

The alabarch's own servants went hither and thither, knocking at doors, from which other servants presently issued to speed with the alarm over the yet unwarned sections nearer the Synagogue.

After a moment's waiting until the light airs cleared the daze that enmeshed his brain, the alabarch took Lydia under his cloak and fled with his people toward their refuge.

As he went, doorways about them were giving up households, bazaars and booths were emptying of their patrons and proprietors; workshops, their artisans and apprentices; schools, their readers and pupils; the counting-room, the rich men and the borrowers; the squalid angles, the outcast and the beggar. The oppression of terror and the instinct for silence weighted the darkening air; the twilight covered them, and hostile attention was yet far behind them.

So they came: the slaves with marks of perpetual servitude in their ears, and ladies of the Sadducees that had rarely set foot upon the harsh earth; figures in Indian silks and figures in sackcloth; fugitives to whom fear lent wings and fugitives to whom flight was bitterer than death; families and guilds by the hundreds, hurrying together; companies of diverse people separated from their own; sons carrying parents and neighbors bearing the sick; friends forgetting attachments and foes forgetting feuds—until the streets became veritable rivers of running people. And so they went, crowding, pressing, contending, but passing as silently as forty thousand may pass, toward the Synagogue, which was sanctuary and stronghold for them all.

The keepers of the great gates were there, and the huge valves stood wide. The alabarch's old composure reasserted itself, as, amid the panic of his people, he realized their want of leadership. He stepped to one side of the nearest gate, and stood while he watched each and every Jew rush into the darkness and disappear under the great pylons of the Synagogue. Lydia, whom he would have sent in at once, clung to him, and together they stood without.

Meanwhile, out of the distant Brucheum, there came a snarl of monstrous and terrifying proportions. The mob was gaining strength.

The last of the Jews fled praying through the giant gates and pressed themselves into the shelter of the Synagogue. The keeper looked at the alabarch. He lifted his arm, and Lydia and the keeper and he, shutting away, as best they might, the noise of the threatening city, listened, if any belated fugitive came through the dark.

The sound of footsteps approached; a body of people, strangers to the alabarch, appeared; Lydia made a little sound, and moved toward them.

"We also are beset," the foremost said, "can we enter into the protection of the Synagogue?"

"Haste ye, and enter!" the alabarch answered.

And after the hindmost, he and Lydia passed into the sanctuary.

The keepers swung the great valves shut, and the last sound they admitted was a ravening howl, as Alexandria hurled itself into the empty streets of the Regio Judæorum.

Until this time, Lydia had been a part of the unit of terror and self-preservation, but the hurry of the flight had ceased and the wait for events had begun. Then ensued moments for individual ideas. Thus far she had heard no murmur against her. Fear of the Alexandrians had outmeasured the Jews' indignation, or else they had believed the informer to be the father of lies.

There was the never-failing lamp on the lectern, but its light penetrated no farther than the immediate precincts of darkness. The interior was so vast that its great angles melted into shadow. The immense area of marble pavement was cumbered with an army of huddled shapes, and when portentous red light began to sift down through the open roof it fell upon uplifted faces, ghastly with fear, upon bare arms, white and soft or lean and brown, upstretched in supplication. But neither moan nor murmur arose among them who waited upon siege.

Meanwhile the roar of violence encompassed and penetrated all portions of the quarter. Great lights began to mount and redden the sky as torches were applied to houses looted of their riches. The invasion had met no obstacle and the whole region was a-swarm.

Presently, close at hand, the full bellow of freshly-discovered incentive arose, mounting above all other noises until even the Jews, imprisoned within walls of granite, heard it.

"The Jews! the Jews! The Synagogue!"

Involuntarily there arose from the lips of the forty thousand a great moan, muffled, unechoing and filled with terror.

The alabarch stood by Lydia, with his thoughts upon the strength of the Synagogue and the hardihood of the prisoners. But the weight of culpability was heavy upon Lydia; in her great need and longing for the comfort of his confidence, she crept closer to her father and clung to his arm.

"Naught but a ram or ballista can force these gates!" he said. "And we are forty thousand. Alas, that the spirit of Joshua the warrior was not mixed with the spirit of Moses, who gave us the Law!"

The mob came on, now in distinct hearing of the imprisoned Jews. Tremendous trampling without on the stone flagging and dull, fruitless hammering on the valves announced the assault.

The Jews nearer the gates pressed away.

Without, indecision and tumult wrangled among innumerable voices. Great bodies began to shout as one, with mighty lungs:

"Bring out the woman! Give up the Dancing Flora!"

Lydia felt the alabarch tremble and presently the arm to which she clung withdrew from her clasp and passed around her, drawing her close.

"Impius! Insiidiis! Succuba! O dea certe!" roared the mob.

But work was doing at the gates. There arose blunt pounding, slowly and heavily delivered as if a multitude wielded a ram. But the reports were too solid to indicate any weakness in the gates, and the keeper of the one attacked watched the sacred stone with a glitter of pride in his eyes.

Presently the hammering ceased.

"Yield us the woman!" the mob roared in the interval. "Give us the woman and save yourselves!"

Those about the alabarch, hearing the demand of the mob, turned great terror-strained eyes upon Lydia, and she hid her face in her father's shoulder.

The smell of burning pitch penetrated the interior; pungent smoke assailed the nostrils of the keeper, who smiled grimly, assuming that the mob hoped to burn the Synagogue.

But there followed an explosion of steam, split by a sharp report, and followed by a howl of exultation. The keeper with wild eyes sprang at the valve. Immediately the hammering of the ram reverberated through the gloom.

The alabarch understood. They were cracking the stone with fire and water and beating in the fractures with a ram.

Then the forty thousand within realized their extremity. The murmur increased to an even groan of terror, and here and there, as some more acutely realized the desperate straits, frantic screams would rive through the drone of misery.

Above it all the ram beat its sentence of doom upon the gate.

Splintering rock began to fall on the inner side of the assaulted portal. The keeper put his hands over his ears and turned away from the sight. Let but a breach be made wide enough to admit a hand to undo the bolts and hideous death would pour in upon the shuddering captives within.

Without, above the noise of the ram, the roar of the multitude continued:

"Give up the woman ere it is too late!"

Under the light of fires falling from above, hundreds of white faces in the mad mass turned toward Lydia.

A lozenge of stone large enough to admit a man's body shaped itself in the gate under the ram, and the next instant shot out and fell near the keeper. With it came a hoarse roar of triumph, drowning a scream of despair.

A dozen arms came through the opening and fumbled for the bolts.

The keeper seized the fragment of stone and hurled it at the intruding arms. It struck fair and with vicious force. Howls of pain went up.

The limp arms were dragged out and as others came in the keeper bounded to the gate and catching up his missile beat madly upon flesh and bone until the besiegers abandoned their search for the bolts.

The thunder of assault began again, for the gate could not hold long. The trapped victims shrieked and out of the mass fingers pointed at Lydia.

Suddenly, she stood away from her father's arm. Walking to one of the keepers of the unassaulted gates, she said to him:

"I am she whom they want without! Let me forth!"

A tall spare old man, one of the strangers who had entered last, approached her. But the girl motioned him aside and he made the sign of the cross over her.

Her father, watching her, did not realize until the keeper undid the bolts which held the wicket, or subsidiary gate in the large one, that Lydia meant to pass out into the night.

With a cry, he sprang after her.

A hush fell in the Synagogue.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE DREGS OF THE CUP OF FURY

The great stars were further withdrawn into the immeasurable arch of blue night; the winds had fled away into the ocean; the bay was angry with fire for leagues. The space before Lydia was open as far as the reader's stone of the proseucha, for the attacking party had demanded room for their proceedings. Beyond that was the front of the besiegers, a sea of bodies lighted by torches, tunics bloody with murder which had been done, mouths open, teeth shining, and eyes filled with the fury of bloodthirst.

As yet she was unnoticed, because the attention of the multitude was engaged with the assault upon the easternmost gate.

Lydia's mind did not direct her. It had sunk long ago under the stress of womanly terror. Only an involuntary obedience to an impulse conceived during the last conscious suggestions of her Nazarene faith, moved her toward the reader's stone, straight in the face of the multitude. She went as all young and tender martyrs have gone, with the spirit already lifted out of the body.

She mounted the rock; the alabarch, unable to reach her in time, unable to make her hear him, gave up with a groan of despair, and followed her.

Then the multitude saw and understood.

A yell of fury went up; a mass of innumerable heads and shoulders lurched toward her. Even the assailants at the gate dropped their ram to come.

Then up and out of it Marsyas leaped!

Lydia saw him, and a great light swept over her face. He had come to die with her, to sweeten the bitter martyrdom with the faithfulness of his love.

After Marsyas, the bayadere bounded, as if pitched from the front of the wave. Between the murdering front and the three on the stone she interposed herself, a creature of primal fury, terrible and ferocious. A torch was in her hand, the badge of eligibility, which had let her to the forefront of this mob, that received none but destroyers. But the sibilant utterance of the crimson flame, raking the air, and taller by half than the screaming fury that whipped it before her, was turned upon them that had kindled it.

She carried by its bail a great copper kettle filled with bitumen, but, as she planted feet upon the stone, she dropped her torch and, whirling upon the wave of fury, swept the full contents of the giant pot over every face and garment for yards about her. She caught up her torch; the looping flame uncoiled itself like a springing snake and shot down into the pack. Instantly there was a

running flash, the rip of explosive ignition, and the breast of the riot turned, each a great towering flame, and drove itself into the heart of the oncoming thousands behind!

The rabble in cotton tunics had absolutely no defense against one another. The riot of bloodthirst turned instantly into panic and a revel of terrible death. The sound, the scene were indescribably awful.

In the hideous uproar that ensued, events followed swiftly. Vasti and her tall torch, in fearful fellowship, shrilled and spun on the rock in a frenzy of heathen triumph. Marsyas, for the instant stunned and scorched, flung his arm over his face, to shut out the horror. But the Jews, the instant the ram was dropped, realizing that their citadel was hopeless with breaches in its gate, and seeing a respite in the riot's attention upon Lydia, broke from the sanctuary and poured like a sea in flight into the open. The miraculous intervention of the bayadere gave them the opportunity to save themselves. But when Marsyas came to himself and sprang to take up Lydia, the inundation of fleeing Jews had swept over the reader's stone behind him, and Lydia was gone!

CHAPTER XXXIV

CAPTIVES OF THE MIGHTY

The second night after the riot about the Synagogue, one of Flaccus' sentries, posted about the small cramped portion of the Regio Judæorum, into which the forty thousand Jews had been driven, brought his spear at guard and called "Halt!"

But the object approaching spun on toward him noiselessly, passed the lines, and disappeared up the dark, sandy roadway, into the night on the beleaguered quarter.

"Ha, ha! Ho, ho!" roared the next post, who had heard his challenge, "challenging sand-columns, Sergius? Flaccus should know of thy thoroughness!"

The discomfited sentry muttered and shouldered his weapon.

But the column of sand disintegrated before a hovel, and became a snaky woman-shape that disappeared into the dark door of the house.

Within, she stumbled over prostrate bodies, sleeping on the earthen floor, and, muttering in Hindu against the darkness, stopped finally.

"Master!" she called softly, in her native tongue.

There was instant reply.

"Thou, Vasti! The Lord God be praised! What news?"

The woman felt her way to the voice, and, encountering the alabarch's outstretched hands, began at once, in a whisper:

"I have come, but not to abide," she said. "The Nazarenes took Lydia, and fled with her unto Judea!"

"Unto Judea! Away from me?" the alabarch said piteously.

"Nay, but Egypt hath risen against her. The Roman hath put forth all his soldiery to look for her. If she remained in Alexandria she would surely die!"

The alabarch moaned. The last of his fortitude had gone with Lydia, and helpless, disgraced and old, he was beginning to surrender. The bayadere put her hands on him.

"Be of hope," she insisted, "for the white brother departed at sunset to seek for her, and to get protection from the Herod!"

"Judea!" the alabarch repeated miserably. "There she entereth into equal danger, for there it is death to be a Nazarene!"

"But the white brother is sworn to kill the leader of the persecution," she said grimly. "Speed him with thy prayers, for he is weighted with no little mission. I come unto thee with cheer. Listen, and be of hope! The city of the Jews, here, is all but destroyed, but I buried thy moneys, thy drafts, thy money-papers and thy jewels. Though they burn thy house, thou art still rich!"

"Buried them?" he repeated.

"In the earth of thy court-yard, ere the Herod departed, for the flame on the altar of Mahadeva burned crimson and murky! And I took certain of thy moneys and gave them to certain of the Nazarenes and bade them be prepared to care for her, who had cared for them! They went unto the Synagogue! They rescued her from the stone, after the sending of Vishnu upon the rabble! They went unto Judea with her—and I, Vasti, I did it, as Khosru, the Mahatma, bade!"

"Be thou blessed, Vasti; blessed be the day that I held up the hand that would have fallen on thee, in the markets of Sind! But—but—Marsyas—what manner of vessel carryeth him? How long! Alas, how wide the sea!"

"But the vengeance of the Divine hand is loosed! Sawest thou the destruction of the host, before thy people's Temple? The bay was black with them this morning and the vultures come even from Libya. Knowest thou the evil mouth that spread sayings against Lydia? I was in the city and beheld it! It was the charioteer, Eutychus! Him I kept in my sight, while I ran at the forefront of

the riot with the white brother, and when we stood upon the rock, I saw him! This morning, I sought for him before the Synagogue, and I found him!"

She brought her teeth together with a click.

"I burned incense for the purification of the fire, straightway," she said sententiously.

"Canst thou endure?" she asked after a silence.

"All—so that Lydia be saved!"

"Thy spirit may be tried," she said. "The Roman hath commanded that ye be pent here until Lydia is found, believing that imprisonment and hunger and torture may persuade the Jews to give her up if she be hid among them. But I shall come to thee with comforts and such tidings as I may learn."

She touched his hands to her forehead and moved away, calling back:

"The time is not long; the Jewish king will not lag in his own requital! Be assured! I abide without these lines, since I can not help thee within! Farewell!"

At the door she stopped, but, reconsidering her impulse, went out without speaking.

"It would not be seemly to tell, now, that I saw Classicus' green and gold garment exposed in a usurer's shop."

A sand-column passed before the wind, by the sentry at the upper end of the street; but he did not attempt to halt it.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE APPROACH OF THE DAY OF VISITATION

Marsyas sought through the Nazarene settlements in Joppa, Anthedon and Cæsarea, but the people could not tell him of fugitive Alexandrians, who had with them a maid with yellow-brown hair. He went then to Ptolemais, and there, after days of patient search, discovered that three strange women, two men and a maiden of gentle blood, who were children in Christ, had passed through the city, from Alexandria to Jerusalem.

He did not pause to inquire after his former master, Peter the usurer, nor Eleazar, his steward. Instead he took the road, over which he and Agrippa had come long before, and hastened toward the City of David.

Within sight of the Tower of Hippicus, and the glittering Glory on the summit of Moriah, he came upon a group, in abas and talliths, sitting on the soil while they ate. He would have passed around them, without speaking, had he not seen the elder among them lift his hands and beseech the blessing of Christ upon the bread and water set before them.

Marsyas stopped, and waited with as much grace as possible until the meal was finished and the Nazarene thanks returned, before he approached.

"I behold that ye offer supplication to the Nazarene Prophet," he said to the elder, "and though I come unto you a faithful follower of the God of Abraham, I pray you, remember the charity ye assume, and give me aid!"

"We are children of Christ," the elder responded, "and brethren to all; wherefore speak, and if we can help thee, we dare not deny thee."

"I perceive that a bond of common acquaintance unites all of your belief; perchance certain Alexandrian Nazarenes with a maiden, who fled hither from the wrath of the Proconsul of Egypt, have come unto you for hospitality in Jerusalem."

"Save for the few apostles of the Church in Christ, who have hidden themselves, there are no Nazarenes in Jerusalem," the elder answered.

"No Nazarenes in Jerusalem!" Marsyas exclaimed, remembering Eleazar's estimation of the host of schism in the Holy City. "Yet, two years ago, they possessed the city from Ophlas to Bezetha."

"They have been scattered into far cities by the oppressor, or have passed through the dust of the stoning-place into the Kingdom of God!" he answered in awed tones.

The young man made a gesture as if he drew his hands quickly away from blood-stains, and a look of intense horror passed over his face.

"And Saul continueth to rage, unchecked?" he exclaimed, his old impatience with the passivity of the Nazarenes making itself felt once more.

"In the Lord's time, in the Lord's time, my son," the elder said mildly.

"I can not wait upon the Lord!" Marsyas cried. "The Lord gave me heart, feeling, intelligence and invention, for me to use to mine own aid! I have labored for two years to this end, and Herod, the king, will help me!"

"Not so, my son!" the Nazarene said gravely. "Build no hope for us, upon Herod the king, for he hath joined himself with the Pharisees, and he will not hinder the oppressor!"

"What?" Marsyas cried, growing black.

"A truth, my son!"

"But I crowned him!" Marsyas cried, clenching his hands. "I held off the hand of death from him, and despoiled my soul for his sake! I sold myself for him! By the Lord, if he help me not, I shall have back the life that I preserved to him!"

The Nazarene crossed himself quickly, and shook his head.

"Peace! Peace! young brother. Even the Law, for which thou art zealous, forbids thee to kill! Behold the vanity of laying up confidence in man! If thou hadst so built for the Master's favor, thou hadst not been forsaken, to-day!"

"Neither the God of Abraham, nor thy Prophet has shielded thee from the oppressor," he declared passionately. "Remember thy own words. But I will bring him down!"

"Build no hope upon Herod," the Nazarene continued, as if eager to stay Marsyas. "Whatever he promised thee, he knows that Saul standeth high among the Pharisees, whom the king would propitiate! He hath difficulty and prejudice to overcome, this grandson of an execrated grandsire—so build nothing upon the Herod!"

Was it possible that, after all his months of patient work and long-suffering, he had brought up at the point at which he had left off two years before? Was his punishment of Saul to be done, at his own risk, at last? He would see this altered Agrippa and learn for himself!

"I shall see this king and discover!" he declared.

"The king is not in Jerusalem," the Nazarene said. "He hath continued unto Antioch to despatch a petition to Cæsar!"

The young man's rage changed into dismay, but he made a last appeal.

"I seek my beloved," he said finally, in a helpless way. "She is a Nazarene and pursued by the powers of Rome! Even besides her peril of Saul, she is sought after by the mighty who would destroy her. If thou knowest of her—even where she might be in hiding, I pray thee, tell me, in the name of thy Prophet!"

"Who is she?" the Nazarene asked at once.

"She is Lydia Lysimachus, daughter to the alabarch in Alexandria."

"I turned such a maiden, and her protectors, away from the gates of Jerusalem, seven days ago. They were bidden to go to Damascus."

Marsyas pressed the Nazarene's hand to his lips, because his gratitude would not be expressed otherwise. Safe, then, for the moment, and out of reach of Saul of Tarsus!

"Do ye fare thither? even now?" Marsyas asked, eager to attach himself to the body of apostates, if they led him on to Lydia.

"Nay, we are certain of the faith on watch, lest any ignorant of the peril besetting the brethren should approach the city."

"Ye are close unto the oppressor," Marsyas said seriously.

"We abide in the will of the Lord."

Marsyas sighed. He had seen another, believing in the promise of the Lamb, go down unto death. The recurring thought of Stephen, never wholly forgotten, awakened in him another impulse. He would not go straightway to Damascus, and continue to retreat from Saul. The hand of the Lord had led him unto the Pharisee, and he would do that which lay nearest him.

"And when I come unto Damascus, how shall I find her?" he asked of the Nazarene.

"Go unto Ananias, a brother in the Lord, and tell him thy story. Lo, he is keeper of the Lord's flock, and filled with the Spirit. Thou wilt not ask in vain!"

"Thou hast my thanks, and my blessing!" Marsyas said. "And the forgiveness of the Lord cover you all!"

"Peace, young brother, and the love of Christ be with thee ever more!"

Marsyas went through the amber light of the late afternoon, toward the might of Hippius and the majesty of the City of David.

He found, by inquiry among the Jews, that Agrippa had not lingered in Judea, having passed through Jerusalem to give commands concerning the preparation of his palace, to receive the homage of the people and to propitiate the Pharisees, before he went on to Antioch. It was readily told that the king was despatching messages to Caligula craving the punishment of Flaccus.

"But could not the king have despatched these messages from Jerusalem?" Marsyas asked.

The Jews smiled and laid fingers alongside their noses.

"He is a Herod, and not ashamed of display. He was ill-treated in Antioch, by the proconsul, there, in the days of adversity. Wherefore, in his purple and gold, with the favor of Cæsar behind him, he taketh advantage of an excuse to abash his old insulters!"

It was like Agrippa! But Marsyas was glad, even in the tumult of his sensations, that the Herod was pushing his work against Flaccus! At least, Alexandria should be safe for the alabarch. But to his mission!

It was still night in the City of David and the watcher on the pinnacle of the Temple had long to wait before the morning shone and the sky was lighted even unto Hebron. The greater stars sparkled like jewels in the cold heavens, and there were already many people in the blue-misted streets below. They were of all classes, but of one nation, one direction.

Straggling numbers joined the main body from each narrow passage which intersected the marble-paved roadway leading toward the splendid Tyropean bridge. It was a host, an army numbering thousands. But, foot planted on the solid masonry that accomplished the ravine by flying arches two hundred feet above the dark abyss, conversation left off. The company passed silent, except for the multitudinous and soft rustlings of garments and the chafing of feet upon rock. Far ahead the foremost were rising, an undulating sea of heads and shoulders, as the cyclopean stairs, a cold bank of white marble, broad and gentle of slope, climbed toward the Royal Porch.

As soon as the Tyropean bridge was passed, the Temple was shut off from view by the intervening cornices of the porch; and when the gate was reached, the stream of worshipers entered into the demesnes of the Holy House.

Tunnel-like and drafty, the open gate revealed an immense length of gloom, raftered and roofed with beams and vaults of darkness, upheld by double rows of dim columns of enormous girth. This, the Royal Colonnade, cloistered the Court of the Gentiles, through which the worshipers fared next.

It was a great quadrangle, paved with sun-colored marbles, open to the sky and having about it the characteristic exhilarating airs which inhabit the heights. Herod the Great spent princely sums upon this portion allotted to the Gentiles, for the simple purpose of flattering the pagan. Perhaps for no other reason than an expression of their displeasure did the Jews commit the sacrilege of commercialism in this spot. Here the money-changer, vender of sacrificial beasts, birds and wines made a busy market daily, for the indignation of the Nazarene Rabbi had driven them away for only so long as He watched. They returned when He had vanished, like flies to a honey-pot.

Here also awaited the Temple servitors to receive the unblemished offerings, the Shoterim to preserve order, the Levites of the gates and perchance the priests of the killing-pens and of the wood-chambers. Through the throng of attendants or venders, the worshipers continued, an uninterrupted stream of pilgrims, souls in distress, Pharisees and souls under vows, and all the class and kind that would be diligent for the Lord in the restful hours before daybreak. And the

number was not large, in comparison to the host of Israel, for the Temple was builded to contain the voice of two hundred and ten thousand.

North of the center of the Court of Gentiles, the Temple stood. A rail set it off austere from contact with the uncircumcised. Its relentless command of exclusion and its threat were set forth on stone, forbidding the admission of a Gentile on pain of death. But beyond, in mockery, rose the black bulk of Roman Antonia, the majesty of masonry upreared and prostituted to eavesdropping and espionage. Yet none who visited the Temple was instantly to be led away from its glory to meditate on its humiliation.

The worshipers passed around the angle of the structure to the east where the Gate Beautiful was hung.

There was a momentary slackening in the movement, for the gate was yet to be opened. But, preceding the foremost, twenty Levites passed up the flight of steps, and under the direction of a captain, laid shoulder to the valves and threw all their strength against them. There was a flash as the light of the coming dawn, concentrated and intensified, shifted across the Corinthian brass, and the Gate Beautiful swung inward.

At the head of the column a young man, in ample robes, with his kerchief skirts hanging close about his face, stepped aside from the line of advance. The crowd took up motion and went on.

Marsyas had washed himself in obedience to the Law; he had brought in his hand his trespass offering, and in his soul he was a Jew. But he stood now, and watched the flocks of people climb the steps abreast, with no mood in his heart that a man should carry into a sanctuary.

Series after series passed under his sharp scrutiny—extremes of rank, of reputation, of calling and of kind. Minute after minute the long, silent procession tramped by him and was swallowed up in the gigantic gloom within. Ever the alert gaze, bright even under the obscuring shadow of the kerchief, slipped from rank to rank, and never once lingered in doubt. No one looked at him; every eye was down, for though, since the eighth day after his birth, no man in the long stream of worshipers had been ignorant of the Temple, it never failed to be a place of awe, half-love, half-terror.

The hindmost appeared at the angle of the Temple, moved in turn after their fellows, climbed the steps and disappeared.

Stragglers followed, in groups and singly, and finally Marsyas turned up the steps and followed the last within.

Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee, would have been among the earliest to arrive. Perhaps by special dispensation he had entered before the multitude and by another gate.

The keeper at the Gate Beautiful glanced at the young man's snow-white Essenic garments and at the stamp of Jewish blood on his face, and passed him without a word.

The Temple from the city had been a great glittering unit. But on approaching its details, they became bewildering.

Within was a tremendous inclosure, floored with agate, galleried with immense chambers which were screened with grills of beaten brass. The army of worshipers was reduced, in comparison to the space they entered, to a mere handful of pygmy, indistinct shapes, prostrate, kneeling, upright, silent, infinitesimal, moveless. At the extreme inner end of the men's court was a flight of fifteen semicircular steps which led up to the Gate Nicanor, now wide. It was hung in the middle of an open arcade—an altar screen no less a grace to the Temple because it might have embattled a fortress. Beyond it as the eye pierced the holy gloom, was a second tier of courts, less spacious than the first, but no less magnificent; after it, yet a third, and then a massive pile of ancient brass, stained and smoked, arose above all else before it. A tongue of clean blue unilluminating flame wavered in the center of its summit.

Beyond that, Marsyas' gaze did not travel.

Spiritual subjection surrounded him; from behind the lattice which screened the women's court in the lofty galleries, there came no sound. The twilight of early morning and the hush of a sanctity were supreme.

He crossed his hands upon his breast and let his head fall as the elders had taught him.

Others came to stand beside him, the order of worship proceeded, and the singing Levites ranged themselves on the steps before Nicanor, but he was plunged in his spiritual difficulty and oppressed by the care for himself and his own.

Finally there came a long, rich trumpet note above middle register; the voice of a brazen tongue singing through a horn of silver. It was not sudden. Beginning as the sound of wind on a fine wire, it ripened in tone as it grew in volume till it achieved the color, the shape of harmony, the very fragrance of music. As it diminished, those who listened caught the sound of a second note—the voice of a twin trumpet, save that the tones issued in the molds of enunciation. It was one singing among the Levites, as impossible to discover as to pick out the inspirited pipe in an organ.

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein—"

It was the voice of a young enthusiast, with the faith and spiritual uplift of patriarchal years, housed in a frame of youth—the voice of a creature of trance and frenzy, a martyr-elect from birth.

But as he clung to his final syllable in a vibrato of fervor, a second singer, duplicating the note in barytone, took up the second verse, and carried it with the ease and repose of one filled with content, health and the ripeness of years, of one who is the founder of a house, the possessor of goods and a power among his fellow men. And his voice was rich, level as the note of a 'cello, tender because it was strong, persuasive because it was believing:

"For he hath founded it upon the seas and established it upon the floods—"

Wresting the word from him, the tenor again on his altitudes of ecstasy flung out the inquisition:

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?—"

He made answer to himself with the barytone, but there was a third now singing, and his voice arose out of their attendance as a great, white, solemn, night-blooming flower might rise out of leafage.

"He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully."

The young fanatic might sing with the fervor of his bigotry, the contented man from the comfort in his heart, but this one, making answer, now, sang as one who was experienced and understood as the others could not. It was deep bass, too deliberate to be flexible, too profound to be hurried, and withal a great bell booming in a dome. And like a bell in travail under each stroke of its hammer, each word, in the full poignancy of its meaning, fell from the lips of him who had been tried by fire.

The voice of the one hundred and fifty on the steps of Nicanor, picked for beauty from a singing nation, burst about the trio, an eruption of great harmony, overwhelming the echoes of the Temple, flooding the purlieus of the Holy Hill, mounting the morning winds to float across the hollow, reverberating ravines, to resound on the bosom of Zion, to penetrate the dark vale of Kedron, and to fail and be one with the reedy rushing of airs through the cedars of Olivet.

"He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity nor sworn deceitfully;

"He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation!"

Marsyas found himself coming under the influence of the psalm. It seemed that the modifiers, describing the elect, had become lofty, solemn attributes not to be assumed by a simple claim to them, not to be had after the commission of deeds not specifically interdicted, not to be obtained by the harkening to one's own will; nor yet to be had did one fix himself in a chrysalis of form, wrap his soul in clean linen, and bury it in a remote spot, and keep hourly watch over it to keep it white—white but wizened. He seemed to understand that he had not understood these things in the days of his Essenism, nor in the days of his worldliness. And, remembering the meaning of his presence in the Temple, he felt peculiarly accused in his soul. What right had he, who had brought with him the spirit of murder, in the Holy Hill?

He could not shake off the self-accusation, but his resolution was unweakened. He would depart!

The hand of one who stood beside him dropped upon his shoulder and lingered. He looked and saw beside him a great man, in the garments of an artisan, that covered him, figure, head and

face against identification. But Marsyas had known Eleazar under more effective disguise; the rabbi was not concealed from him now.

Perhaps he could learn from Eleazar the whereabouts of Saul of Tarsus, so he dropped his head again, and stayed.

The sun blazed on the spear-points, finishing the pinnacle of the Temple with glowing embers; the variegated marble of the Court of Gentiles was yellow as the gold of Ophir, and the morning radiance trembled over the City of David, lying in the valley two hundred feet below or rising up the slopes beyond the ravine. The long winding stream of worshipers flowed from the Gate Beautiful, left, through the well of the stairs to the level where entered the Gate of Akra, down the long flight of steps into the vale of Gihon, and, dispersing, lost itself in the crowded passages of the Lower City.

Before they were out of the morning shadow of the giant retaining-wall, Marsyas spoke.

"Where is our enemy?"

"He is for a time gone hence, and my soul is escaped as a bird out of a snare of the fowlers. I can come now without much fear unto the Holy House."

"Hence?" Marsyas asked uneasily. "Whither?"

"I shall tell thee. Know thou, first, that I am here, since several weeks, abiding among the weavers of Bezetha, and laboring with them; for Peter, the usurer of Ptolemais, is dead and his servants scattered abroad. Since Jerusalem hath been purified of the heresy, there is little search after the Nazarenes, so, as the robbed house is more secure than the one as yet unentered by thieves, I am unmolested in Bezetha. Yet, until this morning, I have not dared venture into the Temple."

"But Saul?" Marsyas urged impatiently.

"I am coming unto Saul. Jonathan, the High Priest, exhausted the patience of Vitellius in ten months. The Roman's endurance wore through and snapped on a sudden like an overstrained cord. On a certain day, in the Feast of Tabernacles, Jonathan was High Priest; ere nightfall some respected Jew complained to the legate; the next day, Theophilus, brother to Jonathan, was clothed in the robes of Aaron.

"Saul was brought up for the instant, but thou knowest that he is no cautious weigher of conditions. He did that which hath proven him not the unforeseeing time-server of a bloodthirsty man, but a follower of his own conscience and the servant of his own zeal. He went to the new High Priest while yet the robes retained the shape of Jonathan, and spake unto him: 'O ruler of my people, is the purification of the faith to be given over, seeing that it was the way of thy brother and abhorred of the Roman? Servest thou Vitellius or Jehovah?' It is not told abroad among the people what answer was given, what further asked, except that the chastening of the

heretics was continued unabated, until all Judea was cleansed. And yesterday, Saul was given letters to Jews in Syria, permitting him to carry his examinations into Damascus and—"

"Damascus!" Marsyas cried, seizing the rabbi's arm.

"Yes; and to bring the offenders to Jerusalem for trial."

"Is he gone?" Marsyas demanded in a terrible voice.

"He passed out of the Damascus Gate at sunset last night."

"Come! Go with me! Let us overtake him! He shall not go on!"

"For revenge, Marsyas?" Eleazar asked mildly, but with reproof in his eyes.

"To cut him off from desolating me wholly!" Marsyas declared.

Eleazar looked away over the hollows and gentler hills covered with houses, toward the summit of Olivet, golden in the sun.

"Then I shall not dissuade thee, Marsyas; but I can not go with thee," he said.

"Why?" Marsyas demanded, with a flush of feeling.

"I have suffered from oppression in the name of the Lord; it is the Lord's will. I have changed in the days of my misfortunes."

Marsyas came close to him.

"Art thou a Nazarene, Eleazar?" he asked in a low tone.

"Nay, I am a good Jew, a better Jew, for I have become a Jew, again, through understanding."

But Marsyas was not willing to wait for the rabbi's philosophy; he moved restlessly as he stood, and finally put forth his hand to say farewell, but Eleazar held it.

"Wait, but a moment," he said, "and let me speak. Thou sayest thou wouldst secure thyself from devastation at the Pharisee's hands; since nothing can stop Saul, and nothing stop thee, there is death at the end of thy doing. I do not know what moves thee now; perchance it is more than the vow sworn to avenge Stephen. But thou goest to help thyself; and—to assist in convincing the heathen that Israel is an oppressor in the name of God!"

"It is!" Marsyas cried passionately.

But the rabbi went on patiently.

"I did not go out after Stephen," he continued. "I was not seen at the crucifixion of his Prophet. I do not urge bloodshed or urge on the work of Saul of Tarsus. So, who is Israel, O son of a shut house and of a hermit brotherhood? Saul, who knoweth no moderation? Certain feeble and forward speakers in the synagogues, whom even an apostate could overthrow in argument? Or the witnesses whom they suborned in revenge? Say, be these Israel, or Gamaliel who discountenanced the persecution? Or the people among whom the minions of the High Priest Jonathan went cautiously to arrest the fathers of the Nazarene faith, lest the people stone the Shoterim? Forget not, brother, that our lofty are the friends of Rome; our lowly, tributaries of Rome; our chief priests, dependent upon Rome—and the greater Israel is the unheard, the unrecorded, the unpampered, the innocent!"

"But is it not just, then, that Saul be overtaken, who hath cast obloquy on Israel, having shed innocent blood and made Judea to be fled by the righteous?"

"Defendest thou the innocent of Israel, Marsyas?"

"By the Lord, the innocent!"

"Wouldst trouble thyself, had the doom fallen on others, instead of thine own, Marsyas?"

The young man frowned and made no answer.

"I shall not answer for thee," Eleazar went on, "but thou and the world accuse the innocent of Israel, when contempt is cast upon the race, as an entirety. But the slander of Israel hath been accomplished, even before Saul, and ye may not run down a lie. So thou and I and our kind have the hard task of upholding the glory of the people, a labor from which there can be no let nor easement! The multitude which crowns to-day and crucifies to-morrow establishes no standard. But they are witnesses to the evil-speaking of the enemy; they are a slander which may not be denied. If thou join thyself with them, Marsyas, for thine own ends, in that much thou ungirdst Israel!"

"Brother, Saul of Tarsus consented unto the death of Stephen, and despoiled me of my one love, as an Essene; he proceedeth, now, against my beloved, as a man of the world! I can not wait on conscience and the welfare of Judea. She will not defend mine own; wherefore I must defend them, at whatever cost!"

Eleazar's face had grown inexpressibly sad during Marsyas' words. His heavily-shaded eyes turned absently away from the speaker. He seemed to see beyond the invincible walls and towers of the Holy City, even beyond the olive-orchards and the meeting of the earth and sky, into the time which would come out of the east.

Perhaps he saw waste and desolate places, lands of destruction and captives of the mighty, dregs of the cup of trembling and dregs of the cup of fury and the hostility of all nations. The sadness in his eyes became fixed.

"Verily," he said, as if speaking of his own visions, "thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel!"

Marsyas heard him with a stir of emotion in his soul. He put out his hand to the rabbi.

"If I and my like be wrong, thou shall prevail, when the day of the just man comes, in the Lord's time!"

"He called us His chosen people," Eleazar continued, suffering Marsyas to take his hand unnoticed, "even the appointed people, the marked people! Marked for His own purposes, how hidden! But what knows the clay of the potter's intent that passes it through fire? Chastening or vengeance, woe, woe unto them, by whom it cometh!"

He turned away, and Marsyas looked after him until the narrow winding streets had obscured him.

Quickly then Marsyas continued toward the Gennath Gate; reared to the Essenic habit of traveling without preparation, he was ready to journey from city to city in the dress he wore on the streets.

He went by the cenotaph of Mariamne, past Phasælus, past the Prætorium, out of the gate, past the might of Hippius, and on to the parting of the road, where he took the way to Damascus.

Presently he met a horseman and, stopping the traveler, bought without parley the beast, and mounted it. He knew that Saul would proceed by the slow mule, and the forbidden, nobler animal, the horse, would soon make up the distance the Pharisee had gained.

So, without relaxing from his fever of determination, Marsyas sped on toward Damascus.

He knew that the hour had come!

CHAPTER XXXVI

ON THE DAMASCUS ROAD

With the solid soil of the ancient Roman road beneath his horse's feet, Marsyas rode north, between the hills of Judea, with the head of Mt. Ephraim before him. The early morning of the second day broke over him, fresh on the long straight road, leading over the border into Samaria, past the Well of Jacob, and through the city of Samaria. At noon the third day he turned at the parting of the ways, and rode east, along the southern edge of the Plains of Esdraelon, until,

through a crevice in the hills, he saw the Jordan sparkling in its valley below. It was an old familiar way, thence, north once more, fording a hundred mountain brooks that fed the river of the Holy Land. The narrow fertile strip that lay between the hills and waters of the Sea of Galilee, unto Tiberias, he accomplished after night. At dawn he entered Magdala, at mid-morning Capernaum, and, leaving the margin of the beautiful lake, he passed north into the rocks, ridges and forests once more. Through marshes and sedge, with the waters of the Jordan in the heart of it, he forded the south arm of Lake Huleh and entered Itrurea.

The country changed but the road did not. It was still the same compact ribbon of stone and soil in the marsh as it was in the hills, as it was in the fertile lowlands. Ahead of him, through the hills it stretched, through the oaks of Bashan, under cliffs surmounted by castles, or hillsides marked by temples. And when the oaks left off, and the hills fell back and the streams dried into dead, sapless beds watered only by infrequent rains, the road continued on.

The fifth dawn, he rode down a pass, through a rocky defile, and the Syrian desert was before him.

He had bought provisions for two days' journey at the last village in the fertile lands; his horse was freshened after a night's feeding on the herbage in the hills, and Marsyas' heart was resolute.

Even the road no longer led him on, but he touched his horse with his hand and passed into the wilderness.

At a huddle of huts for goat-tenders, he found that Saul and his party had passed at noon the day previous. The Arabs there besought him to remain until the evening, for none traveled under a Syrian noonday and escaped evil consequences. But Marsyas wrapped his head in his mantle, watered his horse and pressed on. He had no time to lose.

The Antilibanus, a glaring ridge of chalk, heightened at intervals into peaks that held up their blistering cold winds from the heat-blasted day, and swept them down by night to confound the stunned earth with ice. The shale from their easternmost slopes sprawled out on the desert and scarred it with rock and gravel until the blowing sands buried it. Far to the east, the lap of the desert dropped down into emptiness, marked by a level of intervening atmosphere. Beyond that were bald hills outlined against the horizon.

Between was a cruel waste, tufted here and there by gray-green, scrubby growth, half-buried in sand and rooted in gravel. There was color, but it was the dye of chemicals, not refractions; chalks, not rainbows. The drop of water has only the true range of the spectrum and its merging grades, but sands may be erratic, chaotic. Thus, the wadies, sallow meanderings in the trembling distance, were bordered with dull fawn and dull lavender—ashes of scarlet and purple; wherever hummocks arose there were ground-swells of lifeless gray and saffron—burned-out blue and gold. Over it all were sown burnished fleckings of myriads of mica particles, like white-hot motes from the face of the sun itself. The air was flame; the sky a livid arch that no man dared look upon.

At high noon, Marsyas hid from the deadly sun in a crevice in a narrow canyon; but pressed on while yet the scorching air burned his nostrils. At night, he rode through bitter winds, or broke his fast with the inky outlines of jackals squatting about the rim of the immediate landscape. He met no man, and had no desire for companionship with the burden of his stern thoughts to attend him.

He did not have the murderer's heart in him; he did not go forward in a whirl of passion and fury; it did not once occur to him to ambush the Tarsian; he did not ponder on a plan of action when the moment should arrive; not once did he strike the fatal blow, in his imagination, nor speak with Saul, nor follow himself after the deed was done. His ideas were largely in retrospect, or centered upon the necessity of his work. His love of Lydia, his love of life, his natural impulses toward generous things were put away from him with firmness, as things which had no place at such a time. His composure was almost resignation. He knew then, that which he had never been able to understand,—how men of great souls and previous noble lives could in all calmness kill another by design.

A glittering white ridge had shaped itself out of the pale blue sky of an early morning, while yet he rode in the hills. It was Hermon, with the unmelted snows of the winter covering its crown. Opposite it, he came upon another miserable cluster of hovels, the abode of pestilence, want and superstition, and there found that Saul had passed through the village at high noon that day. Marsyas purchased water for his horse and rode on. Saul was now only a half-day's journey ahead of him.

He had come far, without rest. Even now, with the crisis of his long journey at hand, he labored under prostrating weariness and a torturing desire to sleep. He had periods of mental blankness from which he aroused with a start. But as the night's cold deepened, after the day of withering heat, the sharp change added to the weakening influences. He meditated on the Feast of Junia and the succession of Classicus, until his body became a column finishing the front of Agrippa's palace, at which a mob at Baïæ threw stones. He flinched, and the night on the desert of Syria passed across his vision once more. But it was good to lie down on the couch at the triclinum of Caligula, restful, indeed, if it were sinful. But not for long, because Lydia was beside him, and he spent hours imploring her to give up Jove and pour libations to Jehovah instead, for since Saul of Tarsus was Cæsar, she would be chained to a soldier under sentence in the Prætorium. Even now there approached a decurion with manacles thrown over his shoulder!

Again, he saw the drooping head of his horse before him in the dark, the pallid stretch of sand, and felt the sweep of harsh winds on his face.

But Lollia Paulina had laid her sesterces on this worn-out animal, when she knew that Cneius Domitius' horses were the best in the Circus! Why did the woman insist on sitting with him, when she wanted so much to be with the Roman? But nobody was good. Even Stephen had died in heresy, and Lydia, for whom he had lost his soul, was an apostate! The multitude had her! Classicus turned his back upon her! Flaccus stood within twenty paces of her and leveled a pilum at her breast! And Saul bound his arms! Help! Mercy—

But a brambly desert shrub had caught at his garments, and its sharp dead thorns had pierced him.

The next mid-morning he rode up a chalky ridge and saw the picture that had brought praise to the lips of the prophets of despair, when Israel was a captive with no hope.

It was a vale so enchanting, so perfect, so golden that he doubted his eyes and feared that it was an unreality the desert had fashioned to lure him on to destruction—or another but kindlier dream.

Yellow roadways, slender and winding, wandered hither and thither through emerald oceans of young grain, past ancient vineyards and orchards of olives, and citrons, and groves of walnuts. Yonder was a cluster of palms, pilasters of silver with feathery capitals, and under it was builded a little town—a hive of soft-colored houses, half smothered in delicate green.

Beyond, the roads spread out again, from their convergence in the little settlement, and ran abroad once more between hedges of roses and oleanders, across the River Pharbar, curving midway across the vale like a simitar dropped in the green, through crowding gardens, among low-lying roofs, past spreading villas of the rich, on to a glittering vision of towers, walls, cupolas, white as frost on the head of Mount Tabor in the morning.

At his feet was Caucabe the Star; in the distance was Damascus.

Marsyas drew up his jaded horse and looked, not at the beauty of the scene, for he did not wish to see it now, but down the roads. Over every yellow ribbon his gaze passed until, beyond the limits of the white-towered town, he saw a cluster of small moving figures.

"O rememberer of no wrongs," he said to his horse, "only a little way and thou shall rest and I shall rest!"

He pressed on, past Caucabe the Star, down the hedges of roses between the emerald oceans of young grain and the odorous shade of orchards.

The sun climbed higher, more heated, more merciless; the oleanders gave up their fast fragrance until the night fell again; the vineyards curled, leaf by leaf, the young grain drooped and wilted, the orchards pent in the heat under their boughs, the yellow roads became streaks of brass and the tyrant of the desert stood at its meridian.

Another stadium, and Marsyas drew up his horse sharply.

Sixty paces ahead was a wayside pool, overshadowed by tall trees—an irresistible invitation to the traveler seeking refuge from the sun. A lean, bowed figure in rabbinical robes stood beside a mule that drank of the spring. Half a dozen men in the garments of Levites stood by their own beasts with rein in hand while they drank.

Marsyas felt in his belt for his knife, and curbing his thirsty horse lowered down on Saul of Tarsus. In his association with hardy pagans, athletæ and the exquisite Herod, he had in a measure forgotten the feebleness of Saul.

"He is weak!" he said to himself. "But what mercy hath he shown the weak?"

He recalled the terrible desert, remembered that Saul had sworn to bring back the Nazarenes to Jerusalem for trial—back across that empire of death! And Lydia, gentle and without hardihood, against whom he could not bear to think of the wind blowing strongly, was to go that way!

The Levites watched the Pharisee narrowly; one of them, whom Marsyas recognized as Joel, made tentative movements toward unpacking the supplies from one of the burden-bearing beasts. But the Pharisee drew up the bridle of his mule and led it to the roadside toward a stone by which he could mount. The eyes of the Levites followed him in a troubled manner, and Joel sat down as if to show that he believed the rabbi would not proceed in the noon.

"Up!" said Saul calmly, "we shall continue to Damascus."

The troubled Levites stared at him, and Joel presently objected:

"But—but it is the noon! And the heat is cruel!"

"We can proceed, nevertheless," was the reply.

The stupefied Levite stumbled to his feet, and the party led their beasts out into the sun. Marsyas with a fierce word dismounted and strode toward them.

At his second step he faltered. Silence dropped upon the blazing plain of Damascus—silence so sudden, so absolute that his footfall startled him. He saw that the movement of Saul's party had been arrested. Arm lifted, or foot put forward, stayed in the attitude. The utter stillness seized them as a commanding hand. Then all the noon grew dim, not from the abatement of the sun's light, but by the coming of a radiance infinitely brighter. Descending from above, instantly intensifying as if the source that shed it approached as fast as stars move, a single ray, purer than the glitter on Mount Hermon, and more inscrutable than the face of the Syrian sun, stood among them.

Its presence was not violent but all-compelling. The group at the pool fell down in the dust and lay still.

Silence such as never before and never again lay on the plain of Damascus, brooded about them.

Out of it a single voice issued, low, trembling, filled with fear and reverence. It was Saul of Tarsus, speaking:

"Who art Thou, Lord?"

Presently he spoke again, eagerly, humbly, and still afraid:

"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

[Illustration: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (missing from book)]

After a long time, the hot breeze made a whispering sound in the sand of the roadway; the leaves in the hedge at hand stirred and fluttered. Joel, the boldest of the Levites, cautiously raised his head, and presently got upon his feet. His fellows, taking heart, rose, one by one.

A young stranger in the robes of an Essene was kneeling among them with large dark eyes fixed in pity upon Saul.

The rabbi had made an attempt to raise himself, but had paused transfixed. Humility made an actual light on his forehead; his pinched features were stunned with helplessness.

The terrified Levites crept closer to one another, but Joel finally wet his dry lips and spoke in a half-whisper:

"Rabbi?"

There was no answer in words, but slow tears rose, brimmed over the lids and crept down the sun-burned hollow cheeks.

The young stranger came quickly and knelt beside the rabbi and laid a kindly hand on his shoulder.

"Brother Saul?" he whispered.

The face of the rabbi came round, but the gaze missed its mark and wandered over the men about him. There was no vision in the eyes.

"He is blind!" a Levite whispered.

The young stranger slipped the hand from the shoulder around the bowed figure, and, supporting Saul in his arm, looked down with infinite sorrow and concern at the darkened eyes.

"We will abide here," he said at last, to the Levites, "until the noon passeth."

The Levites looked in a little fear at the spot where they had been so mysteriously overwhelmed, but Marsyas lifted Saul and bore him back into the shade he had left to continue unto Damascus.

All of his own passion and purpose had been swept away, leaving his mind to the tenantry of the sweetest content he had ever known. Though he had seen no man nor heard a voice, he knew that the Lord had visited Saul, and that the eye of the Lord beheld Saul's work.

After that reverent translation of the supernatural event, he troubled himself no more concerning the vision.

Absolute relief possessed his soul; rest of spirit so all-comprehensive that it strengthened his body, peace so whole that it bordered on gladness, and confidence, new, delicious and simple, embraced all his being. The old restless ambition was so stilled and soothed that it seemed to have been fulfilled; the old Essenic cynicism that had slandered all the world, tinctured his friendships with distrust and his love with fear, was dissipated like a distorting illusion; his hates, his thirst for revenge, his impatience with the deliberation of God, and his self-dependence were things unremembered. He did not understand his change and did not seek after its meaning; his feelings did not even hark back to the old love for Saul. Pity and filial solicitude, sensations that on a time he could not have believed possible as shown to Saul, made the strength of his arm gentle and his service reverential. He thought now of Lydia, with worshipful, marvelous homage, as if his soul knelt to her. He had ceased to be afraid for her or to fear that he would not find her. Everything good became possible; the prospering of virtue, the fidelity of Agrippa, the prevention of Flaccus and the favor of Cæsar, even the restoration of his beloved, seemed to be things absolutely assured.

He did not say these things to himself; they were simple convictions that made themselves felt in a tender blending which amounted to perfect waiting on the Lord.

He did not know that his face had become beautiful, or that Joel looked askance at him or that the other Levites wondered if he had come to them in the great light. So when the sun stood three hours above the horizon, he raised Saul from the shade of the walnut grove and passed on to Damascus.

The golden haze reddened over the glorious Damascene plain, the distance became obscured; the purple triumphed; then the royal color over the world began to run out into plum shades, and the sudden night came up from the east.

But before this hour at one of the north gates of Damascus, the halting group of Levites, the stricken man among them, and the silent, kindly young stranger appeared before Aretas' wiry black Arab sentry that held that post.

They did not know the ways of the Pearl of the Orient, and they wished to find Via Recta—Straight Street. There Judas, a Pharisee of wealth and power, expected to entertain Saul.

Though the Cæsars possessed the city's fealty, exacted tribute, installed Jupiter in the temples and the eagle on its standard, it was still the dominion of Rimmon, vassal of Nimrud, high place of the sons of Uz. It had submitted to Alexander of Macedon as placidly as it suffered the wolfish Roman, who would pass, likewise. It notched its calendar by the rise and fall of nations, and marked its days by the sway of kings. It had propitiated Time, hence there was no death for

Damascus; it steeped itself in the oils of the Orient and so was spiced against decay. There were Romanized colonnades along the streets, but the winged bulls of the dromoes, the stucco-work and the tiles, the swaying of carpets from balconies obscured their influence. Architects of Cæsar's extravagances scowled at the giant structures that were old in Baalbec's time and looked their defeat; Chaldean philosophers contemplated the trenches worn in the rock pavements by the feet of men and held their peace; olives, as old as Troy, cast their leaves down on the heads of Greeks who shook them off impatiently, but the sons of Abraham could point to a mound of clay and say: "This was a temple which our father builded unto God, before you all!"

The Jewish tincture had never been abated even, much less worked out.

Therefore, as the agitated travelers from Jerusalem passed through the gate they went with their own kind by legions. The slow mule was there, outnumbering the Arab's troops of horses, which were mettled, nervous creatures, caparisoned like kings; there were Israel's camels, bearing howdahs, rich as thrones; tall stalking dromedaries in tasseled housings and tinkling harnesses, passing as ships pass over ground-swells, with undulations dizzying in their ease; and these, mounted by the sons of Abraham, were more in number than the Hindu palanquins, Roman lecticæ, Greek litters, and Gentiles afoot.

Marsyas glanced about for the eye of a citizen whom he might approach and ask his way, but the turmoil for the moment confused him. Into the gate or out of it passed wealthy travelers, faring in state; itinerant merchants; squads of Aretas' soldiery, and through and among these, eddying and swarming, shouting, hurrying and trading were venders, beggars, carriers, slaves, citizens, Jews in gowns, Arabs in burnouses, Greeks in chitons, Romans in tunics, idlers, actors, scribes, notaries, priests and magistrates—of twenty nationalities, of every rank and age.

Marsyas met face to face a Pharisee of erect and imposing figure, with flowing beard and aggressive features, who drew his spotless linen draperies away from contact with the ceremonially unclean horde at the gate. The man had stopped and was gazing from his commanding height over the rush of pilgrims flowing into the walls of Damascus.

Marsyas approached him.

"I seek Judas, a Pharisee, which dwelleth in Straight Street!"

"I am he," the Pharisee interrupted, examining the young man for some familiar feature which might justify the Essene's initiatory.

"Thou art well-met, sir; we bring unto thee, thy guest, Saul of Tarsus, stricken by a vision on the roads and blind!"

"Even am I here, awaiting him," the Pharisee exclaimed. "Thou bringest me evil tidings! Lead me to him, I pray thee."

The Levites stood with Saul outside the path of the exit to the gateway, and Marsyas led Judas to the stricken rabbi. Hebrew servants followed respectfully after their master.

"Brother Saul," Marsyas said, "I bring thee thy host; he will care for thee."

The sightless eyes of the rabbi turned toward the speaker, and Marsyas thought that a shadow crossed the forehead.

"Woe is me!" Judas exclaimed, "that thou shouldst come thus afflicted, brother! But perchance the vision was a blessing on thee!"

"He does not speak," Marsyas explained. "I do not belong to his party. I joined them to offer aid."

"Then the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob reward thee," Judas said. He signed to his servants, who brought forward a litter in which Judas had meant his guest should proceed to Straight Street. Saul was lifted into it; Judas climbed in beside him; the servants shouldered the litter, and, with the Levites following, bore it away into the city.

Marsyas looked after it until the narrow ways between the high unsightly mud walls hid it.

Then he put his hands together and smiled.

"The Nazarene bade me ask for Ananias!" he whispered.

CHAPTER XXXVII

IN THE HOUSE OF ANANIAS

But Ananias was a favorite name among the Jews of Damascus. Weariness and the desire for slumber after inquiries which brought him twenty diverse directions, sent Marsyas to a khan when the night was old, and Lydia still unfound.

The next morning after refreshing and untroubled sleep, he began to search for Ananias, carefully withholding the explanation that the Ananias he sought was a Nazarene, out of an impulse to protect the protector of his beloved.

He found Ananias, the wine-merchant, and Ananias, the tanner, banished to the outskirts of the city, because of his unclean trade; and Ananias, the priest; and Ananias who was a native of Antioch and of mixed blood, but unalterably a Jew; and Ananias, who was a soldier, drafted into garrison service by Aretas, who had taken the city from Antipas; and Ananias, the steward of Sidon who had robbed his master and was now too rich and powerful to be punished; and

Ananias, who was a reader in the Synagogue. And for two other days, he sought Ananias patiently and with pathetic hope.

At sunset on the fourth day, he saw a woman meet another woman in the street, and between the two there passed a communication with the fingers. To others, not associated with Nazarenes, the sign meant nothing, but Marsyas caught the motion and his heart leaped.

It was the sign of the cross!

He overtook the woman who had passed him.

"I pray thee, friend," he said in a low voice, "canst thou tell me where Ananias, the Nazarene, dwelleth?"

The woman raised, a pair of calm gray eyes to his face. She was a Greek and fair, and her forehead was as placid as a lake in a calm.

"Art thou his friend?" she asked, with a touch of the caution acquired by the unhappy.

"I am a friend to many who have departed into the Nazarene way," he said. "I shall not betray him."

"Seest the house built upon the wall," she said simply, "that hath the white gate, at the end of the street?"

Marsyas assented.

"Knock," she said.

He blessed her with a look and hurried down the darkening passage.

With trembling hands, he rapped on the whitewashed gate, set deep in the thick clay wall, and presently the door swung open.

A woman in the house-dress of a servant stood there; behind her was a walk lined with white stones; cooing pigeons were disappearing into a cupola on the house within; an ipomoea, pallid with bloom, shaded the step; irises were pushing through the rich mold just inside the gate. There was the rainy rustling of leaves from the olive trees at the property wall on each side. And there was a seat of tamarind with fallen leaves upon it.

"Does Ananias, the Nazarene, dwell here?" Marsyas asked with a tremor in his voice. Whither had his courage departed?

"Enter," the woman said.

Marsyas stepped over the threshold of the white gate, that was latched behind him against opening from the outside, and followed the woman toward the bower of ipomoea.

Within a hall, lighted by a single taper, she gave him a seat, and disappeared through a door at the end of the room. A moment later, the tall spare figure of the pastor of Ptolemais and of Rhacotis emerged from the interior.

Marsyas sprang up, but no sound came to his lips. He clasped his hands and gazed with pitiful eyes upon the Nazarene.

Without pausing for the formality of a greeting, after the first movement of surprise, Ananias reopened the door that he had closed behind him and signed to the young man to pass in.

Marsyas stood in a large chamber, with a spot of light in its center under a hanging lamp. There, with her head bright under the rays, sat Lydia.

Her face was toward him when he entered. She flung down the skein of wool she was winding and sprang up. But the look on Marsyas' face arrested her cry. One glance of supreme examination and her large eyes kindled with sudden triumph. She came to him as if more than distance between them and danger had been overcome. Marsyas swept her into his arms and folded her to his heart.

"No more, no more!" he was saying, "from this time for ever more mine own!"

Trembling and smiling, while tears perfect as pearls glittered on her lashes, she put her arms about his neck and drew his head down to her.

"O my Marsyas," she cried, "better to die in the light of thy trust than to live in thy love without it! Blessed, thrice blessed the hour which gave me both!"

"O my Lydia, thou anointest me with thy forgiveness, and clothest me in the holy garment of thy love! Blessed am I and consecrated!"

"I believed in thy wisdom, love!"

"I had no wisdom but love!"

"The Lord heard me, my Marsyas, for I was near mine extremity, and I could not have endured much longer!"

"I had reached my extremity, Lydia, and then the Lord gave me His hand."

She turned him toward the light, and gazed up at his eyes with such earnestness, such penetration on her almost infantile face, that he pressed her closer to him and laughed a low laugh. Her eyes flashed on him a light of new interest.

"I never heard thee laugh till now!" she exclaimed.

"I never was happy till now!"

"Why now, and not before?" she asked.

There was silence; he could not tell her why he had changed, but he could tell what had marked it.

He led her to the chair she had left, and when she had sat, dropped at her feet and crossed his arms upon her lap.

"Listen, and when I have done, know that the Lord loved us, and hath joined us with His own hands."

Beginning at the time when he turned to find her gone from the reader's stone before the Synagogue in Alexandria, he told with simple directness of his wanderings, of his disappointments, of his growing fear that he would not save her from Saul. He had her follow him to the Temple, where he met Eleazar and received the dire news that Saul had departed for Damascus; and thence along the old Roman road through the length of the Holy Land, up past his native hills and the waters of the Sea of Galilee, and the marshes of Lake Huleh, into the desert, and on to the beginning of the beneficence of the Pharbar and the Abana, until he brought up within sixty paces of Saul at the wayside pool. All these things she heard with the sympathetic interest which had won him to her from the talk in the dawn on the housetop in Alexandria. But when he came to the supernatural visit of the great light, and the prostration of Saul and his own arising a man of subdued and sweetened nature, her eyes shone with a repressed excitement that was not usual in her.

"Naught but a miracle could have stopped me then; naught but the same interference could turn me again into the old way!"

She lifted his face and spoke to him with deep seriousness.

"Didst thou hear what the Spirit said?" she asked.

"We heard nothing, except Saul's words, which I told thee."

"And did Saul make thee a promise that he would persecute no more, or beg thy compassion or thy forgiveness for his work against thy Stephen?"

"He did not speak; he did not know me, for he was blind, and as one in a trance!"

"And thou hast withdrawn thy hand from him, and forsworn thine oath against him?"

"I have done that thing, Lydia."

She held fast to her composure, but her face was transfigured.

"Wherein art thou different, then, from the Nazarenes of Ptolemais who showed thee their doctrine of peace, and refused thee when thou wouldst have hurled them against Saul?" she asked.

For a moment there was silence. Then he arose on his knees and raising his hands clasped them on his breast, while the splendor of a divine enlightenment shone in his eyes.

"I know who came unto us there," he whispered. "It was the Christ!"

She laid her fluttering palms over his clasped hands and held them there, while each in his heart kept the silence, which, in such a moment, is prayer.

Then Marsyas withdrew a hand and took from the folds of his garment the little red cedar crucifix, and, kissing it, put it into her hands. The red cord was still attached to it, and, with solemnity on her face, she laid it about his neck and blessed him.

When the ecstasy of exaltation had passed away, for they were young and the spirit of human love was strong between them, Lydia bade him listen, while she told him one other surprising thing.

"At the command of a heavenly vision, Ananias went this day unto the house of Judas the Pharisee, and into the darkened chamber, where Saul lay, blind and dumb. And by the gift of the Lord Jesus, Ananias laid his hands on Saul's head, and the blind man straightway had his sight. So he arose and followed Ananias unto this house—"

"Here?" Marsyas cried.

"Unto this house, where, when he had broken fast and taken strength, he stood up and glorified Jesus of Nazareth, and received baptism unto the Church of the Nazarenes whom he persecuted hitherto unto death!"

Marsyas was silent. More than wonder filled his heart. Presently he said, as if speaking to himself:

"Is this thine hour, O my martyred Stephen? Art thou content? Sleepest thou the better, knowing that I have followed thy testament for Saul, rather than mine own oath against him?"

Lydia left his communings unanswered, but when he put his hands over his face and laid his head in her lap, her own tears fell with his. Feeling presently her touch on his hair, he raised his head to take the hand.

"Give it to me, my love," he said, "for it hath shaped my life anew, pointed me to the way that even the sacred dead would have me walk, and the joy and the comfort of all time to come lieth in the hollow of it! Let me serve it, now!"

"And thou wilt not regret the peace of En-Gadi, in the world that can not fail to be troublous, some time?" she asked, but with the smile of one who does not fear the answer.

"I owe En-Gadi a debt," he said, "for the brethren were as father and mother to me when I had neither. Its teaching and its practices are pure, and its peace is good for them who fear the world. But with the help of Him who made thee strong and Stephen fearless, I shall not want pent-in walls to be happy and upright."

"Let Ananias teach thee, my love; let Saul show thee his heart; and then—"

"Send us back unto Alexandria, with the faith of Christ on our lips and the peace of His love in our hearts. Tell me that I may go with thee, Lydia!"

"I have been waiting for thee since the day we met in the Judean hills."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE REQUITAL

On the third day after his arrival in Jerusalem, Herod the king was in his privy cabinet arranging, with his own hands, the graven gems and articles of vertu, prizes brought from his trip to Antioch. The door was dubiously opened, and Agrippa, without turning his head, knew who stood there, for only one in the palace had been commanded to enter the king's presence without announcement.

"Well, Silas?" Agrippa said, contemplating the elusive tints of a jade goblet.

The old man pulled at the gorgeous uniform of master of horse, that hung from the peasant shoulders and answered:

"A friend of thy unfortunate days is without."

Agrippa's brows lifted and drew toward each other in a manner half-amused, half-vexed.

"The friends of my unfortunate days are the friends of my fortunate days; wherefore, they would liefer be known as friends of Agrippa the king, than of Agrippa the bankrupt. Give them their due and call them the king's companions. And Silas?"

"Yes, lord."

"The king would as lief forget that he ever had a misfortune."

Silas looked perplexed and rubbed his forehead.

"But who is it that stands without?" Agrippa continued.

"The Essene."

"What! Marsyas? By the Nymphae—beshrew me! By the beard of Balaam, I shall be glad to see him! Fetch him hither!"

Silas nodded in lieu of a bow.

"Lord, there is one with him; shall she enter also?"

"Who?"

"The alabarch's daughter."

"Nay! The little Athene! Terpsichore's best! Not so; though, by Bacch—Balaam! she would be a fit jewel for this place. It shall be an audience hour. Go, summon the queen, and have the Essene and his priestess come to us in our hall!"

The master of horse backed away, but, catching Agrippa's smiling eye, turned his back, remembering his privilege, and hurried out, as if he expected an arrow between his shoulders.

The king shut down the lid of the shittim-wood chest upon the priceless trifles still unpacked, locked it, and said the while to himself:

"The Essene hath heard of the Pharisee Saul's apostasy and hath come to demand his punishment of me. Behold me grant it, with kingly gravity. It will attach the extremists to me all the more, for I hear the Sicarii are wanting the heretic's blood! And he fetches the little Lysimachus with him! Aha! En-Gadi hath lost—that which it never had, in truth."

He looked at his hands and at his garments.

"Nay, it will be just as well if the lady sees me looking my best!"

He slammed the door of his cabinet behind him, locked it and hurried away in the direction of the royal wardrobe.

In an hour he ascended the dais in robes of purple velvet with the Pharisee fringes in gold. Cypros, filled with pleasurable anticipations, was beside him in the garments that Mariamne had worn. The king cast an eye over the carpeting, the canopy and the gorgeous dressing of his throne and said to Cypros:

"Perpol! the place reeks with the smell of newness! But be not conscious of it! Perchance none will guess that the hands of the upholsterers are still warm on the fabric."

The genuflexions of the series of attendants at the archway and beyond marked the coming of Marsyas and Lydia. A Jewish chamberlain within the hall bent to the pavement and announced to the king that his visitors approached. Agrippa relaxed even more comfortably in his throne and let his scepter fall into his lap. But Cypros, more conscious of her debt to those who visited her now than of her state, smiled and moved forward and looked down the long chamber for the first glimpse of them.

But it was not the Marsyas and the Lydia she had expected to see. Even to one of her unready perceptions, the change upon the two was strangely marked.

They came side by side, both in the simple white garments of the ceremonially clean, but Marsyas' head was uncovered and Lydia's locks were wholly unbound, after the custom of Jewish brides. Within a few paces of the throne-dais they stopped. With all her former grace, Lydia sank to her knees, but Marsyas, after the oriental salaam, stood beside her.

Cypros, with her eyes shining, and after an eager glance at her lord, arose and stepped to the edge of the dais. Then Agrippa got up, with his purple trailing effectively, and came down from his high seat, and approached his guests.

"It is the one pain of mine exaltation," he said as he extended his arms to Marsyas, "that mine old loves believe that they must approach me now with humility."

"Yet they no less expect that thou wilt raise them," Marsyas said, returning the king's embrace.

Agrippa lifted Lydia to her feet and kissed her.

"There, by my kingdom!" he exclaimed. "I rejoice at thy wedding for the privilege it gives me! May joy be thy portion, and peace and abundance and years be multiplied unto you both! Evoe! as the heathen say! But for your sanctified atmosphere, I would have the trumpeters blow you a fan-fare!"

He handed Lydia to Cypros, who waited almost tearfully.

"Go, let the queen congratulate thee that thou hast wedded an upright man in the beginning and saved thyself of the pain of making him one—as she had to do! Come up," he continued to Marsyas, "and sit at our feet. And tell us of yourselves."

With his arm over Marsyas' shoulder, he went back to his dais, and sitting, had Marsyas take the guest's chair at his side, while Cypros bestowed Lydia on a velvet cushion at her feet.

"So much, so long my story, that I falter at its beginning, as one beginning a day's journey at sunset," said Marsyas.

"Thou needest but to essay a beginning; let me lead thee," Agrippa observed. "Let me satisfy the questions in thee, ere I be entertained. First, of Flaccus. I sent messengers to Cæsar from Antioch detailing the high offenses of the proconsul, hinting treason against the government of the emperor and other charges which excite Caligula most, and ere I departed I had from Cæsar's own hand the tidings that a centurion had been despatched to Alexandria to arrest Flaccus and bring him to Rome for trial. And the further news, which will raise thee, sweet Lydia, to calm content. The Jews are to be restored their rights, the prisoners freed, and better times assured to thy people."

Lydia clasped her hands, and her eyes filled with relief.

"And my father?" she asked in a low voice.

"Especially commended to Cæsar's favor! The black days for the Alexandrian Jews are over, unless Caligula force upon them his pet madness that he is a god and amenable to worship."

"Mad, at last!" Marsyas exclaimed.

"Never otherwise," Agrippa answered. "I hear that he has proclaimed Junia to be Athor, and hath set up a white cow in a temple to be propitiated in the wanton's name!"

Marsyas looked at the downcast lashes of Lydia and loved her for the silence she kept.

"Will she—be—empress?" Cypros faltered, in womanly fear of some unknown evil.

Agrippa laughed and dropped his hand meaningly on Marsyas' arm.

"If she should be, here is Marsyas yet to protect me!" he said. But Marsyas did not smile.

"What!" Agrippa cried; "still an Essene?"

"No," said Marsyas, "but the Lord forbend that the woman should ever become Augusta!"

"Never fear! She is too poor. Caligula, like any other mortal god, would prefer a dowry with his consort! And that, by Janus—ah—er—Jacob! brings me up to somewhat relative to our old fortune-seeking friend, Classicus."

"But," Marsyas protested with a show of his old-time spirit, "I shall not agree that Classicus sought Lydia for her riches alone!"

"The unhappiest remark, the crudest accusation thou didst ever force me to defend!" Agrippa exclaimed, glowering at Marsyas. "Now, how shall I convince thy sweet bride that I had not meant that any man could love her less than her dowry!"

But Lydia smiled, first at Marsyas and then at the king, and said: "Let us hear of Classicus."

The king clapped his hands, and an attendant bowed to the floor in the archway.

"Bring hither the letter from Alexandria, which my scribe answereth," Agrippa said. In a moment a package was put into the king's hands.

He unfolded it carefully. "It is fragile," he said, "reed paper—papyrus, of his own curing, and written with a quill. Evil days for Classicus; but observe, he hath not forgotten the latest fashion in folding it. Listen:

"To the Most High and Gracious Prince, Herod Agrippa, King of Judea, from his servant and subject, Justin Classicus, the Alexandrian, greeting:

"That thou hast come unto thine own, that thou hast triumphed and the day of fulfillment hath dawned, that the Jews of the hallowed soil of Canaan have again a king from among them, I give thee congratulations and God-speed, and offer thanks to the God of our fathers.

"Would to that same God who hath magnified thee, that the sway of thy scepter extended unto us, here, in Alexandria.

"Our misfortunes are beyond words. Particularly am I most unfortunate. Because of my friendliness to the alabarch, and subsequent turning upon Flaccus in thine own extremity, I am reduced to the utmost poverty, having neither food nor raiment beyond that which a faithful freedman supplies me out of his own little store.

"Since mine own people are imprisoned within a fourth of their territory, nor one permitted to come forth upon pain of dreadful death, I can not hope for help from them, much less from the Gentiles, who take particular delight in my humiliation.

"In thee I have hope. I pray thee number me among thy helpless ones and give me of thy bounty something to do to clothe and feed me, and sufficiently gentle that I may not be proscribed among my kind—"

Agrippa broke off and laughed aloud.

"Why read more? Is it not enough?"

"Enough," Marsyas said slowly. "But by thy leave, lord, we would know what thou wilt say to him."

"A just demand; for thou and not I didst suffer at his hands. I shall tell him that I laid the matter before thee and that thou—"

"Nay, then, lord," Marsyas broke in earnestly, "if thou carest in all earnestness for my suggestion, pray let me make it!"

"But I believe that I anticipated it and commanded the answer so to be written."

There was a little regretful silence, and Agrippa leaned toward Marsyas.

"What abideth there, Marsyas?" he asked, touching the young man's forehead.

After a pause, Marsyas raised his head.

"The full length of mine own story leadeth up to the answer," he said.

"Nay, then, speak!"

Asking permission of Cypros with her eyes, Lydia arose from her place on her cushion, and came to Marsyas' side. He put his arm about her and held her hand, and so she stood while he told his story.

Agrippa and Cypros listened with ordinary interest until he began to tell of his ride across the desert in pursuit of Saul. Then Agrippa's excitement-loving instincts stirred, and he sat up and contemplated Marsyas with arrested attention.

At the sighting of the Pharisee far down the road beyond Caucabe, the king's eyes sparkled; when Marsyas rode upon the party at the pool, Agrippa's hand on the arm of his throne had clenched. At Marsyas' dismounting and approach, the king muttered under his breath.

"But at that instant," the narrator went on, showing the effects of his own story, "a light, such as never before descended upon the earth and will not come again until the Prince of Light cometh, stood among us; at which we all fell to the ground as though stricken by a thunderbolt!"

Agrippa's brows knitted.

"While we lay, thus unable to move or cry out, Saul spoke and said unto the Presence: 'Who art Thou, Lord!' but we heard no answer. And again Saul spoke, as if he had been answered, saying: 'Lord, what is it that Thou wouldst have me to do?' And yet there was silence. But when we took courage and arose, Saul lay on the ground, helpless, blind and bereft of speech!"

Agrippa's face showed impatience and astonishment. This, from the lips of so sane a Jew as Marsyas!

"We took him up," Marsyas continued, after a moment's reflection, "and led him unto Damascus, and to Judas, the Pharisee, who dwelleth in Straight Street. And there Saul lay for three days. Throughout that time, I sought for Lydia, and at the end of the third day, I found her."

He touched his lips to Lydia's hand.

"Under the same roof with her I found Saul of Tarsus, broken and supplicating, changed, heart and soul, as was I. But he was not in ignorance of the fount of our transfiguration as I was. From Lydia's lips, I learned that he had been visited by the Lord; but from Saul, I learned its meaning. If there is change upon my face, lord, I have told thee whence came it!"

Agrippa's eyes were no longer on Marsyas; he had turned his head and was looking at Cypros, as if curious to see if so impossible a tale would find credence in the mind of the simple queen. She looked disturbed and awe-struck, and Agrippa's nostrils fluttered with a soundless laugh.

"*Quantum mutatus ab illo!*" he said, turning to Marsyas. "That I can swear under a dread oath. And perchance, were I an Essene and more than an adopted Pharisee, I could have been visited and borne witness to miracles, also. But thou'lt remember, Marsyas, that this Saul consented unto the death of thy Stephen?"

"I remember, lord; neither hath he forgotten!" answered Marsyas.

"And that through him, great numbers of innocent people fled Judea, among them one Marsyas, that this same Saul might not have their lives; that he pursued thee even unto thy refuge, put thy sweet bride in jeopardy, stained the whole world with persecution, and made an end by bringing up in heresy, after he had begun a journey to Damascus with the avowed purpose of extending his persecutions—even unto the death of thy Lydia! Thou hast not forgotten these things?"

"They are not to be forgotten!"

"And on a certain night, while yet Stephen was unburied, thou camest upon this Saul of Tarsus in Bezetha, and swore to accomplish vengeance upon him; and that same night in the cubiculum in the Prætorium thou didst make me swear to help thee to that revenge, if he should stumble in the Law!"

Marsyas took his arm from about Lydia and arose.

"I am here, O King," he said, "to crave the fulfilment of that oath."

Agrippa smiled, in spite of the serene gravity on Marsyas' face.

"Ask thy boon, Marsyas," he answered.

Marsyas knelt at the king's footstool, and put up his hands as supplicants do before a throne.

"Thou hast remembered thine oath unto me, my King; thou hast published thyself as ready to fulfil thy promise, and hast yielded unto me the choice of the manner of my requital! Thus assured and believing I make my prayer. Lift not thy hand against Saul of Tarsus!"

Agrippa's brows dropped suddenly; his face was no less displeased than startled. He had meant to have a jest at Marsyas' expense, to try the young man's claim to a change in heart, to bring to the surface human nature through its envelope of religion; but he had not looked for this thing! To behold so strange a perversion of the ancient spirit in a man like Marsyas, and to submit to its demands against his own inclinations weighed heavily on Agrippa's patience. Saul's lapse into apostasy gave him an opportunity to attach to him the loyalty of that fierce party in Judea, which were better propitiated than fought—the Sicarii, anarchists, who would demand the putting away of the heretic. Marsyas had asked him to sacrifice a potent piece of state-craft.

He glanced at Cypros, and saw resentfully that she was urging him with her eyes to submit. Marsyas' face began to show an expression that compelled him, while it irritated the more. The young man wore the face of one who does not expect defeat, denies it so confidently that it hesitates to exist. Agrippa shifted in his throne, frowned more, wavered, and finally said shortly:

"As Cæsar forgot me to mine own safety, I will forget Saul!"

Marsyas' hands dropped softly on the king's, a token of brotherhood.

"Death intervened," he whispered, "to save thee from Cæsar!"

Agrippa started and drew his hands away with a prescient terror in the movement.

"I will not pursue the man," he said; "I will not search for him!"

"Thou hast kept thy word, lord," Marsyas said, "and I go hence carrying trust in one more fellow man in my heart. May my God supply all thy need according to His riches in glory, by Jesus Christ!"

Agrippa's eyes which had all this time rested in fascination on Marsyas' face, flashed now with understanding. Marsyas was a Nazarene! The admission reassured him; set aside the astonishment at the young man's unusual behavior; and lessened the fear he had felt in the suggestion that drew a parallel between Cæsar's end and his own, to come. But Lydia was now kneeling before him, with glistening eyes, to kiss his hand, and Cypros was speaking.

"But thou gatherest peril yet about thee, Marsyas," she insisted. "Is the hazardous life, then, so inviting that thou hadst liefer be wrong than be safe?"

"No, lady; peace is no sweeter to my brethren, the Essenes, than it is to me. So I have put out my hand and possessed it. Think of us, henceforth, as the children of peace, not peril."

Agrippa shook his head.

"It hath consumed two years to establish it," he said conclusively, "and not until the last moment is it revealed that thou art a dreamer, Marsyas. Thou hast been an Essene, which is too strait an ambition to be practicable; thou didst cherish a love for a man, so deep that its bereavement engendered a hate that no man should feel, unless a woman were won from him or a fortune destroyed; thou wast urged by it into extreme acts—into selling thyself, into following me to the end of the world, into putting thyself between me and death—that I might help thee satisfy that hate! And now, the hour fallen, a new fancy hath engulfed thee, heart, head and soul—which bids thee forget thy rancor, defend thine enemy, and live in perpetual peril of destruction! Thou art a dreamer—though thy front be Jovian and thy steps like Mars!"

Marsyas laid his hand on Lydia's head, as she still knelt beside him.

"In substance, I so accused her once, and Stephen. Perhaps, if thou followest me insomuch, my King, thou wilt walk even as I have walked—into the light at last!"

Agrippa made a motion of dissent.

"I doubt, now, that thou couldst safely govern that pretty little city I had meant to make thee prefect over, here in Judea," he declared.

"Thou hast said! For me there is a new earth, and a new Law, and I go hence to Alexandria to begin a new life, which will make me a lover of all mankind."

"Nay, sweet Lydia!" Herod exclaimed, once more restored to himself. "Thou shouldst demand that he be less indiscriminate with his loves! But put off thy travel a space, and let us celebrate thy marriage with festivity!"

"Thou art most kind to us, King Agrippa," Lydia answered. "But my father is alone and uncomforted in Alexandria; even thou canst not tell me of a surety that evil hath not befallen him ere thy punishment of Flaccus could intervene. My heart is consumed with impatience and suspense. We can not tarry, though thy hospitality be most grateful—to us—who have found the world of late an untender place!"

So, since they would not be stayed, Agrippa summoned two stalwart palace servants to go with them, and calling his treasurer, ordered him to give into the hands of the servants six talents, five of which he owed to Lysimachus for Cypros, and one as a marriage largess. And when Marsyas and Lydia had kissed the hands of the royal pair, they went out and found, at the palace wall, a camel which should bear them in a white howdah to Ptolemais.

Marsyas lifted Lydia and set her under the canopy, but, before he went up himself, he saw borne past him, in a chair, a rabbi. He was a great man, grave, calm and preoccupied. Three students of the College attended him reverently. Marsyas caught his eye, and between the two passed a flash that was both understanding and congratulatory. But they saluted each other gravely, and Eleazer passed on to his own place.

Before they departed Herod sent out a chamberlain, who bowed low and handed a wax tablet to Marsyas, on which was written:

"Since Classicus would be in Alexandria to harass thee, and thy wits are meshed in love and religion, I have bidden my scribe write him to come hither, where I can kill him conveniently, if he need it. If thou have any enemies here in Jerusalem thou hast forgotten to bless, thou canst perhaps repair the misfortune by naming thy sons after them.

"My love goes with thee—mine and the queen's,

"HEROD."

So, with their faces alight with content and love and hopefulness, Marsyas and Lydia took up the long journey unto Alexandria.

*** END OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this

agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States

without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.

- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement

violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™'s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.