

TALES OF OLD SICILY

THE GREAT MOTHER
VENUS OF ERYX
THE DIVINE PHILOSOPHER
CYANE

TALES OF OLD SICILY

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C. K. OGDEN

TALES OF
OLD SICILY

BY
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AUTHOR OF
"Adria: A Tale of Venice," &c.



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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
SANTA BARBARA

To

JANE THOMSON,

the friend of my childhood and later years, these
tales of that Sicily we know so well
are dedicated with gratitude
and affection

PREFATORY NOTE.

IN these tales concerning the Sicilian past, the writer has referred to certain phases of life, which by an observant mind may be recognised as relics of that past to-day. Much exists in Sicily, shadowy though it be, and at times difficult to trace, of the hopes and aspirations, the beliefs, customs and fears of ancient days. Many have come down from the Greeks, if not intact, at least in a manner to be recognised, although more than twenty centuries have intervened.

In the great affection for the land, the desire to possess some portion, however small, the unwearying, almost loving devotion bestowed on its care by the Sicilian peasant, and in his pride for its exuberant production, the adoration and love for "The Great Mother," the Earth Goddess, Demeter or Ceres, is clearly to be traced. Similarly the cult of Venus, who had her remarkable temple on Mount Eryx, with its celebrated festivals and depraved orgies, survives in the designation of various places and of persons. Pride of race for the greatness of the past ;

the superstition that attaches to ancient strongholds or battlefields where warriors have fallen, together with the acknowledged fear of the taint and contagion which lingers about a place where crime has been committed, are noted in the tale "Venus of Eryx."

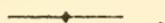
The fragmentary sketch of the life of Empedocles, "The Divine Philosopher," of Girgenti, is designed to mark the power of oratory, or, more strictly, the power of personality in combination with it, which holds particularly in Sicily, as well as the absorbing love for liberty which, if strong and firmly rooted, is too often over-shadowed by inertion or preponderance of factious opposition.

In "Cyane," the love of poetry has been made the principal theme—a sentiment which has left its silent trace in the romantic character of the people, its more eloquent expression in the popularity of the *cantastorie*, a reader or reciter of verse or prose, to be met with in almost every town. It is also found in the habit of individuals to mark special events by verse-making, and in the encouragement of poetry in the schools. Subsidiary to that is a reference to the old Greek subtlety or cunning, which has its too apparent counterpart in the daily life of the Sicilian lower classes; and to the superstitions concerning the Evil Eye, which are as prevalent now as in the days spoken of, or the remoter times of Egyptian civilisation.

For the rest the writer has not attempted to present what he has to relate in the usual form of a novel. His aim has been rather to create around the selected subjects incidents serving to illustrate them more fully, in the hope of redeeming them from mere pedantic expression, and keeping those incidents in subjection to the main themes.

He has to acknowledge his special indebtedness for the assistance found in the translations of the works of Euripides in "The Athenian Drama," and "The Trojan Women," by Mr. Gilbert Murray; also in Freeman's "History of Sicily," Holms' "Storia della Sicilia," Scinà's "Monograph on Empedocles," and other works.

CONTENTS.



	PAGE
THE GREAT MOTHER	I
VENUS OF ERYX	25
THE DIVINE PHILOSOPHER	73
CYANE	173

THE GREAT MOTHER.

THE GREAT MOTHER.

ON the ridge and precipitous sides of a high mountain rising from the upper corn-lands of Sicily in the far north-west corner of the province of Catania is perched the town of Troina, clinging like a lizard to a rock. There old Pietro Paterniti was born and reared, as were his father, grandfather, and many generations before him.

In age, Pietro was a little short of seventy, or perhaps a little over; he scarcely knew which. Time went by so quickly that he had lost count; and, besides, in Troina there was no fuss about birth certificates, registers, or such modern inventions when he was born. So he had nothing to help him to correct the sum total of passing years, which, as he believed himself to be hale and hearty, did not give him any trouble whatever.

In appearance he was of middle height with white hair and shaggy white eye-brows that met over blue eyes. His figure was a little bent from stooping to his work. He was always neatly dressed in a blue cloth suit and a shirt of home-made linen

coarsely woven. He wore a well-made pair of shoes, such as one in the trade should wear as a specimen of his skill, for he was a cobbler, and an authority on all matters connected with leather work. Both inside and outside his house he bore a Phrygian cap, still much used in Sicily; he preferred it to any other head-gear, he said, as it reminded him of ancient days, and besides, kept him warm in winter and was a protection from the sun in summer time.

His life had been uneventful, and he was contented with his lot. Now that he was older and had become a little more stiff in his limbs, perhaps he would have wished the winds of winter to be somewhat less keen, the periods of snow and cloud in the mountain town to be a little less long. But as the neighbours provided sufficient work for his wants, he was not without charcoal to warm his room, nor sufficient food and clothing for his needs at the worst of times.

He was without relations, and unmarried. The *commari* of the town had given up hope of wedding him to any one of their daughters long ago; and he was glad when they finally recognised that his only wish was to be left alone to work and dream, dream and work, as he liked, without interruption and fear of the trouble that a wife and possible family would inevitably bring him.

Pietro was no scholar. The only education he had

received as a boy was what his father had given him: to choose a well-seasoned hide at the merchant's shop; to cut the leather with all economy; and to firmly lay and sew the strips together with good stout thread, so that customers might not complain of creaking shoes or boots which let in the wet through the soles. In his young days learning was for priests and *avvocati*. Even the gentlefolk thought little of it; and, perhaps, not one in ten of the inhabitants could do more in the way of writing than laboriously sign his name to a paper or a letter. So in acquiring knowledge he had to be content with listening to what his customers might let fall by chance, treasuring what he heard with great care, and dwelling upon it meditatively as he sate over his work.

In that way he had heard something of the great history of the past: the old Sicani, the Greeks, the Romans, the Saracens, the light-haired Normans, from whom he with his blue eyes, as he was told, might have descended. But they were confused in his mind as beings that lived some time in the past, with whom the history of the country was in some way inextricably mixed up—they were so many in number, and he could not clearly determine who they really were, what they strove for, and what they accomplished.

Nevertheless, Pietro was certainly not unmindful of the fame of his native place; and Troina was to

be admired, and extolled, as well as to be loved, for no Sicilian worthy of the name may admit that any spot on earth is half so beautiful, half so civilised, or half so alluring as his own *paese*, without being condemned as disloyal to his birthplace and worthy of the contempt of his fellow townsmen. Besides it was the highest inhabited town of Sicily, and that of itself was a great distinction. Troina had also once been a royal residence with its castle, the celebrated fortress and key of Sicily, the hard fought for prize of Count Roger the Norman, and maintained against the Saracenic revolt by the Count and his brave young wife. Indeed, it was behind the very wall beneath which Pietro lived, that, when the garrison was so closely beset by the foe, and all were in so desperate a condition for the want of the common necessities of life, the royal couple had to share one cloak between them to ward off the extreme winter cold and be content with the meagre portions of food served out to the soldiery and the starving inhabitants for their maintenance. So important a place was it in those days, in fact, that the heroic Countess was left behind in supreme command to guard the town when her lord went to distant Calabria to make good his possession of those lands, which the proud house of Hauteville had conquered on the way to Sicily from their home in remote Normandy.

Yes, surely, Troina had had a great past, and if the ordinary human eye to-day only could see in a

well-turned Norman arch and in the neatly joined stones of ancient buildings vestiges of a silent past, that brighter and clearer eye of the mind could discern much more and give colour and definition to scenes which tradition evokes from the past, adding greater glory than perhaps is dreamt of in latter day complacency and local pride of place.

But much more to him were those beautiful beings he had heard of from a professor of ancient Greek, who had retired to Troina from his post at the University of Catania to end his days in his native place. For hours would Pietro listen wonderingly to the talk of the learned man who came to chat with him as he worked. That was in his younger days, for the professor had been dead many years. But Pietro forgot nothing of what he had been told. Even now the names of many of them who peopled the world then lingered in his memory, and he loved to murmur them to himself, under his breath, for fear the neighbours might have heard and laughed at him for calling upon ancient gods and goddesses. So they were spoken softly, and when he was alone. Ceres* and Persephone, Apollo and Aphrodite, Hermes and Hera—he remembered them all. What dream visions of beautiful faces and graceful forms they called up; what noble deeds; what fierce strivings; what soul-stirring adventures!

* Demeter, the Greek name of the divinity, was scarcely known in Sicily.

But of all the deities, the two who were most to him and first in his affections were Ceres and Persephone, for they had chosen his own land for their favoured habitation. It pleased him to think that they had lived among the mountains which were his home. He felt a glow of satisfaction when he considered that he gazed on the very scenes they had looked upon, felt the same cool breeze of the hills, scented the same sweet flowers, basked in the same sunshine, sought the same shady spots that they had sought. To the Great Mother and her Daughter the world owed the blessings of the earth, the fruit, the flowers, the oil-bearing berry, the sweet herbs, and, above all, the grain without which men would fade and wither like the stalks on which it grows. How great the thought! How deep the debt of gratitude that could never be adequately repaid! Surely a man, if born in such a spot, might rightly be proud, for he was, in a sense, a compatriot of those divine benefactors, who had left upon the world the seal of their presence and filled it with the lingering fragrance of memories that could never fail.

Ceres and Persephone—Mother and Daughter; they were to him as parent and child. There was that within him, which compelled his admiration for the divine pair. The old love of the soil; the worship of the earth and its fruit, begotten of the self-dedication and devotion to its cultivation of countless

generations of his forbears; the recognition of the Giver of Gifts—all which had been lost in the centuries and now revived in him, may have been the cause, perhaps. Whatever it might be, it was a compelling force, a subtle irresistible impulse which possessed him, against which he could offer no resistance. He was only aware of a passionate fondness for the Great Mother whom he regarded as friend, companion, and consoler, who was ever present in his thoughts day and night.

In his way Pietro was a philosopher and took things as they came to him, calmly and resignedly. But he had a reflective mind, and he often paused to consider what was the inner motive which lay behind men's thoughts and actions, especially in moments of doubt such as frequently came to him. No amount of reflection sufficed here. He could only admit the force of the spell under which he lay, and prudently avoid the topic when talking to his neighbours for dread of being accounted bewitched, thereby incurring the risk of a visit from the arch-priest of the town with bell, book, candle and holy water, to free him from the influence of the Evil One.

From the back window of his little house of two rooms, which, by careful saving and small economies, he had erected on ground that he had also bought, he was able to see in clear days the immense table-mountain of Castrogiovanni, on which stretched

the Plains of Enna. There, as he knew, the Great Mother of the Earth, the Beneficent One, had lived in a vast temple of stone surrounded by boundless fields of flowering poppies. That Pietro could well believe, for from the glow of the sky at evening he knew poppies must still be growing there, so brilliant were the clouds that hung above, so ruddy the haze that enveloped the heights where was the abode of the goddess. He thought of Persephone (he would dwell upon the name fondly, almost caressingly, for to utter it was as if he listened to the love-song of doves in the spring-time), the frail, beautiful girl—and remembered that from that very spot before him she had been ravished from her companions and carried by her admirer to his realms below the smoking mountain, to that nether world whose entrance, it was said, lay on the slopes of *Ætna* by the side of the lake eastward towards Randazzo. Yes, and probably *Ceres*, passionately despondent, wearily seeking, may have climbed the mountain where Troina now stood, passing on in her sorrowful quest for her lost and much-loved child.

With such thoughts did the days, months and years pass quickly to old Pietro, the gentle old cobbler of Troina, and they would have pursued their even course until the end had not an event occurred to disturb his peaceful existence. His eyesight, which had been keen and strong as that of

a hawk circling round his mountain peaks, began to fail him; and, notwithstanding his rule to be self-reliant and independent, he was compelled to seek the advice of a doctor of the little town.

When the old man went from the latter's house, he was a changed man. He had been told that an operation to his eyes was not only advisable, but of urgent necessity; indeed, to risk delay meant the greater risk of loss of sight within a short time.

Pietro, a man of few words, said nothing. He could think only of the menace of coming blindness as he walked slowly to his home. In the horror of the threatened danger, he had not noted a second warning, more grave even than the other, which, had he understood, would have made him yet more pensive and disturbed. The advice given was to leave Troina at once and seek the assistance of a surgeon, celebrated throughout the world for his wonderful operations, who, himself a Sicilian, now settled in Rome, came yearly to his birthplace, a small town among the lemon groves of the Ionian Sea, to operate upon his poorer neighbours without remuneration, save that derived from soothing pain and doing a kindly action. To him Pietro was given a letter from the doctor, a former pupil of the surgeon, which would assure him prompt attention.

On further reflection, however, the old man doubted if his eyesight was in such imminent danger.

Doctors were as frequently wrong as right, more wrong, indeed, than right in Troina, if they were to be judged by the fate of many poor folk carried away to their last resting-place, when a little more knowledge and a little more care might have sent them back into the world hale and hearty. It is true he could not now so well see the needle's point when he sewed at night, nor was he always sure of striking the little tacks faultlessly, when he drove them home into the heels and soles of the shoes left him to mend. But, as he stood that evening looking towards the Fields of Enna, with their sombre outline of dark-blue standing in bold relief out of the flush of the poppies reflected on the sky, whither his eyes always strayed before dusk, he could not, because, perhaps, he would not, credit the possibility of that wonderful and much-loved scene being lost to him in the darkness of a continuous night. He therefore put away the doctor's letter carefully, and as much of the anxiety as he could dismiss from his mind, resuming his former occupations.

But within a short time he could but acknowledge that his eyesight was becoming gradually worse; and great though the effort was, great the expense, and greater far the reluctance at leaving his beloved *paese*, he resolved to set out upon his journey, and seek the great surgeon without delay.

Pietro had never been absent from Troina, except

on rare occasions when he had visited friends at their tiny farms during the *villeggiatura* in spring or autumn, to breathe the fresh air of the fields, as did his neighbours. He had resisted any temptation to climb the distant heights of Castrogiovanni and wander over the Fields of Enna, to seek for the former home of the Great Mother, though he had often wished to perform that pilgrimage. Travelling in his part of Sicily, not easy now, was a very difficult undertaking twenty years ago when *Ætna* had not been yet looped with her girdle of iron, nor the hill-sides cut into by winding carriage roads as they are to-day. Horses and mules were for the well-to-do traveller then; and even that mode of locomotion was irksome and dangerous over the rocky, dusty tracks in summer, and the muddy precipitous ways in winter. To the very poor, walking was, therefore, the only mode of travel; and what wonder that most men were content to remain at home and not expose themselves to these dangers, and the further one of being detained and robbed on the road by the evil-minded hordes who occasionally scoured the country in search of plunder!

One early morning in mid-November, after a long yearning gaze towards his land of dreams, Pietro, with a heavy heart, locked the door of his house and set out on the long journey to the seaboard of Messina.

Some way down the rough winding path, which

leads from the town into the valley, the old cobbler was overtaken by a muleteer and a string of mules with jangling bells, laden with charcoal from the forests of Troina for Cesarò, a neighbouring and rival town, which lay a few miles off the road. Tore, the muleteer, vacated his seat on the leading mule and invited Pietro to take his place. He wished to secure his companionship for the evening at Cesarò, whence he could start refreshed and rested the following morning. But Pietro refused. The men of Troina and Cesarò were not friends. The latter were land-grabbers, who attacked their neighbours' rights, forgetting they lived no longer in mediæval times when might was right by force or cunning, and when the wish to wound or harass invariably found the way to gain that end. No, he said, he would not trouble the Cesarotani with his presence even for a second of a minute, nor would he accept their hospitality and shelter, though he had nothing to pay for either.

So at the parting of the ways, Tore and his mules commenced the ascent of the rocky heights of Rapiti, the peak that dominates the upper valley of the Simeto, towards his destination, and Pietro continued his way down the valley, intending to pass the night at the Fondaco di Bolo—a wayside homestead and inn by the banks of the river Simeto.

Pietro's bed that evening was but a mattress placed on a rough wooden trestle, built into the corner of

a large stable shared by cattle and mules, pigs and poultry, which for all the noise they made throughout the night must have suffered strangely from nightmare, insomnia, or unappeasable hunger. By the flicker of a tiny oil lamp, which hung by a wire from a beam (a Sicilian peasant will not willingly sleep in the dark for dread of evil spirits), Pietro from his corner could see the dim outline of horned oxen with their heads in the mangers and the dark forms of horses; and occasionally a restless pig would pass below him grunting in search of food. Above, fowls roosted with heads under their wings, and Pietro wondered how they could thus sleep and maintain their equilibrium. Bats flitted about the tiny lamp, and occasionally rats scampered over his body unheedingly. The old man sighed. Travelling was not to his liking. He longed for his neat little room with his comfortable bed, placed so that through the unshuttered window he might catch the flush of sunrise as it struck the heights of Enna. Though weary and suffering, he had not slept except to dream, and that of a mighty temple standing amid fields and fields of poppies, and of a beautiful and benign face that seemed to be omnipresent and to beckon him towards it. He was therefore up and astir even before the chancleers of the farm had announced the return of day.

Crossing the stony bed of the Simeto easily on foot—the tardy rains that year had not yet filled

the water-course, which in winter roars with floods from Monte Soro and the Serra del Rè—he soon passed the large square block of buildings—the old fortress-monastery of Maniace, where in the castle chapel, safely housed behind solid walls, is preserved the holy picture brought from the East, and painted by St. Luke himself, once committed by royal and devout hands to the custody of holy men. Had his strength permitted, he might have turned aside out of mere curiosity to see what the countrymen so greatly venerated. But he feared to waste the little he had left, and plodded on steadily, resolved to lose no time in idle dallying by the way.

Then he stood face to face to Ætna, seeing nothing between him and the mighty flank of the mountain, which sprung into vivid reality and nearness before him, and soared thousands of feet upward to the flat summit of the snowy cone. Dense volumes of white vapour poured from the crater, and dominated the volcano, spreading above in the shape of a huge palm tree against the blue sky. All his life Pietro had daily gazed from a distance on Ætna, and, as with all who live within sight of it, the mountain played a mysterious undefined part in his life, as does the sea to many who seek its shores. But to him the volcano had not the fascination, nor did it compel the worship, nor the dread, which it obtained from most people of its neighbourhood. Indeed he even looked at it regretfully, almost in a

hostile spirit, as the prison of Persephone, the home of the ruthless one, who stole the maid from the midst of her companions and bore her thence unwillingly in his chariot. Yet that day when he trudged over the large stretch of lava-land, in the shadow of that mighty presence, he too felt the fascination that *Ætna* claims, and he could but wonder at its marvellous beauty and admit the potency of its charm.

He paused on the mule track as he neared Gurrída, the lake, which empties itself into the bowels of the earth, straining his eyes to discover among the rocks the entrance to the nether world, which he knew existed thereabout, and by which the girl-goddess was hurried to her bridal-bed. But he sought vainly, for a mist floated before his eyes. He passed on.

Then he reached a place, which might have been the very kingdom of *Aidoneus* himself, he thought—a pitiless region upon which the god of the volcano had set his seal, a dreary black-grey waste of lava rock and scoria. He had never pictured such a sight, nor imagined that *Hades* itself could offer so many horrors to the eye. It was as if the waves of a stormy sea, lashed and carried skyward by a driving wind, had been suddenly turned into stone to which a scirocco sky had imparted its ashen tint, and then been split up by terrible convulsions of Nature. Sharp crags shot upward from the grey uneven surface. Cracks and fissures gave access to illimitable

depths. All was grey desolation—a wilderness of jagged stone, a world of ruin, an universe of sombre destruction on which living foot could scarcely rest, on which neither shrub nor tree would grow.

Pietro was overwhelmed, and hurried on his journey, anxious to escape from the spell of so forbidding a scene, almost fearing that its lord and master might suddenly appear and claim him for his own. He shared the superstitious nature of his countrymen, as he also shared their childlike and impressionable character.

The sight of Randazzo on its cliff overhanging a river bed, its ancient towers and *campanili*, its moss-covered gateways and battlemented walls, and the agreeable vicinity of his fellow men, scarcely served to restore his equanimity; and not until he had eaten his mid-day meal and left the town behind could he dismiss that sombre lava scene from his mind.

His road now was among vines and shady trees above the bank of the Alcantara—a river washing the eastern base of Ætna. The country was more populated, and houses stood by the side of the path with trellised vines still bearing bunches of grapes saved from the past vintage. The day was hot for mid-November and there was a touch of scirocco in the air. The sun beat down fiercely on the dusty roadway. Pietro would now willingly have found a friendly muleteer to offer him a seat; but none overtook him; those he saw were travelling in the

opposite direction in charge of mules laden with purple-dyed skins, bulging and shaking with wine, which was being transferred from the presses of the countryside to the cellars in the town.

He was very weary. At times a strange giddiness came over him, and he felt an overwhelming sense of pain new to him. He struggled on manfully though he scarcely saw more than the path in front along which he stumbled arduously.

Night fell, and he was yet wandering when his remaining strength gave way, and he had but sufficient left to drag himself to a small cave formed by an overhanging rock of lava. Therein a shepherd or benighted traveller like himself had left a bed of fern. He stretched himself upon it gladly, and rested in the balmy stillness of a warm summer night with stars peeping in upon him.

When Pietro awoke to consciousness the following morning, he knew he was very ill; he was so weak he could scarcely stand. He dragged himself with difficulty to the opening of the cave, wondering how he could continue his journey.

He looked out. Dazed and bewildered by what he saw before him, he gasped: "Enna, the temple of the Dear Mother herself, surely so beautiful a city must be her home."

But—it came to him slowly—the Plains of Enna and its poppies had been left far behind him westward, and what he looked upon was not Enna. Yet

the domes and towers of those fairy-like palaces which he saw, poised on the rock and glistening in the sunlight, could be but the home of gods, not of mortals—they were too beautiful for the habitations of men, their surroundings too dream-like for an earthly city.

All about him seemed to be of gold, all except the sky of the deepest blue, and the silver-grey buildings of the mountain rock, which rose from the valley as if from a world of gold. Golden was the bracken at his feet. Golden the lichen on the old lava rocks. Golden the leaves of chestnut and oak stretching up to the walls of the temples and palaces. Golden the foliage of pear and apple tree. Golden the spires of poplars fringing the distant river. Golden the euphorbia flowers which sprung from the crevices of the rocks. Golden the sunbeams in which yellow butterflies flitted. And as of golden flame, the vast plain and hillsides of vines flushing to their winter death now that they had yielded their fruit to the pickers.

“Surely it is the home of the Sun-God,” Pietro murmured to himself, “and if I wait patiently I may see Apollo himself in his chariot drawn by the fiery horses.”

Then his eye caught sight of the Alcantara—the river of the valley, reflecting the foliage of the poplars.

“It is Chryseis, the river of gold,” he cried; “truly

I am come into the land of the precious metal that turns men's heads in the getting and the holding."

Then the golden world before him suddenly lost definition. It became to him as a vast, surging sea of molten metal, glittering in the sunshine, above which were seen, though vaguely and indistinctly, the æthereal palaces of his imagination.

He leaned his head in his hands and closed his eyes. Consciousness left him, and he knew no more, and he remained thus for a long time, motionless, gently moaning in pain.

Pietro was found in the afternoon by some peasants and taken in a dazed condition to Castiglione, which, poised serenely on its rugged peak of sandstone rock, had seemed to his fevered imagination to be a city of temples and palaces.

He scarcely noticed the tortuous and steep ascent from the valley among the oak and chestnut trees and hedges of cactus. His only thought seemed to be to gaze intently westward as turns in the zigzag path brought him face to face with the setting sun. Those who had found him in the cave, remarked that then he wore a sorrowful look as if he saw not what he sought. They asked him what thought grieved him, for they were kind folk. He made no answer. He knew they would have scoffed for all their charity if he had said he sought the Plains of Enna where the Great Mother dwelt.

He was carried to the hospital—an old monastery

once devoted to the cure of men's souls, now adapted to the healing of their bodies. The Little Sisters of the Poor received him kindly. A doctor and a priest were simultaneously sent for. The doctor shook his head, saying that it was an internal trouble that might cause death at any moment, and left after giving a few directions. The priest, Padre Felice, waited, and uneasily, for Pietro had declared he had nothing to tell him, nothing to ask him to do, saying he was alone in the world and had no messages to send, and besides, he would not confess himself, for, he added, he had wittingly sinned against no man and owed no man reparation.

Old Pietro lingered in a semi-conscious condition, muttering strange names which the good women in black garments, who tended him, could not understand. The priest, who yet waited, knew better. He was shocked that a dying person should call upon heathen gods for help, for so he interpreted the sick man's wanderings. He bade the sisters add their prayers to his for the saving of a heretic's soul, and seeing his presence was of no avail, also left.

Towards the end of the second day, Pietro somewhat revived. He asked that his bed might be moved to the window whence he could gaze upon the valley below and upon the vast stretch of mountains beyond. His eyes eagerly scanned the westward horizon, dwelling on height after height, and peak after peak. His face saddened. Again he

was disappointed. He silently shook his head. But soon the lines of suffering relaxed, and he smiled.

“At least there are the rocks of Rapiti, and they look down on the Great Mother’s home,” he said gently to himself. “I see them dimly, but they are surely there.”

He was content. He did not now feel so remote from the Fields of Enna—the home of his dreams—and from her who had lived there among the flowers.

The sunset glow quickened rapidly, and the western sky was ablaze with a flare of light. A ray breaking from behind a bank of cloud entered the window, and illumined the face of the sick man and the figures of the two nurses at his side, striking the bare white wall of the chamber behind which it turned to red. The old man smiled happily, and raised himself with an effort from his pillow.

“The flush of the poppies!” he cried. “Mother, I come.”

He stretched out his arms to the light as if in welcome, and fell back lifeless.

So old Pietro Paterniti died, and the kind surgeon by the sea lost a patient.

The two sisters knelt by the bed repeating prayers for the dead. “At least we can tell Padre Felice that the old man may have Christian burial, for he called on the Holy Virgin at the last, no longer on heathen gods,” they whispered. They had not understood.

So Pietro was buried decently and masses for his soul were said by Padre Felice—as long, that is, as the few coins found in the old man's pocket lasted for the saying of them.

VENUS OF ERYX.



VENUS OF ERYX.

CHAPTER 1.

YOUNG Padre Giuliano sate alone in a little room of his uncle's house at Trapani after a long absence from his old home. He was absorbed in thought, with his eyes fixed vacantly on the floor. Between heavily pencilled eyebrows arched in a manner that any woman might have envied, two vertical lines marked his forehead, denoting that his thoughts were sad and perplexed. He remained long in that position of abstraction, and the look of embarrassment and anxiety became more accentuated the more he pondered. At length he roused himself, and, walking to the window, met the full glare of a spring day, made more brilliant by the ripples of the sea which danced merrily in the sunshine below a balcony facing the harbour. He murmured half to himself, half aloud, and wearily:

“I am ordered to do what I have dreaded and yet feared I might have to perform. It is hard to refuse. It is yet harder to comply. If it be my fate, may the saints and the blessed St. Julian succour me.”

Giuliano degli Antonii had been born at Trapani,

in Sicily, and lived there with his father, his mother having died when he was young. Of his early years there is little to say. He came of an old Trapanese family which had known better days; the race had now been reduced to its sole three representatives, Giuliano, his father, and the latter's brother, Padre Illuminato—a priest. Of the two elder, the former was an *impiegato* in the fiscal department of the State, but beyond that one whom others regarded as of little account, and generally passed by in their estimation of men and things. The other was a jovial, well-to-do ecclesiastic, a canon of the cathedral, and by no means an unimportant member of that body. As Giuliano grew older, Padre Illuminato developed a great affection for his brother's child, keeping him by his side whenever he could induce the boy to be with him, and personally superintending his education. So Giuliano saw more of his uncle than of his father, and the Padre obtained an ascendancy over him such as the other never secured. It was mainly by his uncle's influence that the boy's thoughts were directed towards the Church as a profession, although his parent, being unwilling that his name and family should eventually disappear from among the honoured ones of Trapani, would have preferred any other vocation for his son.

But the ecclesiastic prevailed in spite of that meagre opposition, suggesting that it was an easy matter for his brother to marry again if he so desired

to insure the continuation of his race. As the former was too important a member of the family to be thwarted in his wishes, being the elder of the two brothers and the richer, it was not wise to oppose him in view of the disposal of his property thereafter, so it was decided that Giuliano should enter the Church, and to the study of Greek and Latin his instruction was mainly directed, under his uncle's special supervision.

The good Canon, though a priest of rank, was neither a bigot nor an ascetic. Indeed, no one would have supposed that he had any leaning towards a life of abstinence, for the large and rubicund face with its merry twinkling eyes, and a large mouth with a full under lip, about which generally lurked a pleasant smile, denied all suggestion that he subjected himself to any more mortification of the flesh than was rigorously required of him as a canon of the cathedral and a prominent member of the chapter. His genial nature was well known in Trapani, and when to that was added a tender heart, prompting him to lend a sympathetic ear to tales of suffering and a ready hand to help those in need, Padre Illuminato's name—thus familiarly shorn of its full ecclesiastical dignity—was regarded as a household word for what was neighbourly and kind.

A student by nature, the Canon's studies were almost entirely turned to the early story of his own

neighbourhood, of Trapani, Monte San Giuliano (the ancient Eryx), of Motya, of Lilybæum, and the other celebrated places of Greek and Roman times. Their stories of rise and fall, of strife and lust of power, of fierce determination and bloodshed, of deep cunning and greater bravery, absorbed him. The mythical and legendary lore which belonged to them, that romance and poetry which are peculiarly their own, recommended themselves so vastly that he lived more in the past than in the present, thought more of ancient times than even of the future. He was wont to own he was proud that the blood of the heroes of those days might well be running in his veins, for, as all knew, his family had lived at Trapani for many centuries, and its name was to be found among the earliest records of the town, with its evident trace of Greek derivation.

Together with that marked partiality for things of the ancient world, Padre Illuminato had a special hobby, of which his more discreet friends endeavoured to avoid mention when conversing with him. But others were not so cautious, and as a consequence their temerity involved them in much argument, great loss of time, and not infrequently loss of temper besides. The Canon had convinced himself that the scenes described in the *Odyssey* and the adventures of Ulysses after he came from the land of the Cicones, were in and round Sicily itself.

To him, Trapani, lying between two harbours, was surely "the jutting land" of Scheria, the kingdom of Alcinous and the home of Nausicaa, as also was Ithaca, the hero's own realm and home, situated there. In the same way he insisted that the islands, whence came the suitors for Penelope's hand, were not the Ionian Isles far away in the Grecian Archipelago, but were, on the contrary, off the coast and near the shore of Trapani, which he and all his friends had gazed upon from childhood.

Such was the Canon's strenuous contention. It was, as has been said, a dangerous topic to touch upon, for when fairly launched upon the subject, he would fetch from their shelf plans, notes, treatises, and written arguments from which he would read, and prove to his own satisfaction over and over again, that in Sicily and at no other spot in the world could the adventures described in the *Odyssey* have happened. On such occasions there was no stemming the flow of words, no checking the exuberance of demonstration, and the early dawn frequently found the Padre and his guests—the latter more often silent and overwhelmed, if not by facts at least by rhetoric—discussing the subject so dear to his heart.

CHAPTER II.

THE up-bringing of Giuliano was greatly influenced by the atmosphere of ancient times thus created by his uncle, and their conversation was of little else. The latter had the faculty of vivid description, so that at times the boy almost seemed to live with those who had played their part in Trapanese history, with Æneas, who mourned the loss of his father, with Dionysius the Syracusan, with Pyrrhus, "the most renowned prince of his time, the very model of a warrior king," with the Carthaginian Hamilkar, and with the Roman generals who finally became sole conquerors of the island at that spot. He was more interested in the purely fabulous tales of Hercules, of Dædalus, of Dorieus; and yet more of the mountain city of Eryx, to which St. Julian had given his name later.

But the reason why Eryx especially appealed to his boyish imagination was not because it was now under the protection of the holy hunter, his own patron saint, whose exploits on its walls were always the wonder of the devout, and the pride of the place. Not even because it had such a wonderful position on the summit of the mountain, mysterious

when lost to view in the clouds and mists of winter, or again beautiful as an enchanted city, glittering in the sunshine of summer days, all of which greatly recommended it to his love of beauty. The fascination of it came from a source more remote and more engrossing—the thought that there was the very site of the Temple of Venus, the home of the Goddess of Love and Beauty, the shrine of the Peerless One, which had called men from all known lands and from time immemorial, to worship before the wonderful statue of marble which stood within the walls of a mighty fabric.

When the unimpassioned days of boyhood had been lost in the quickening of the senses—when Giuliano felt the first impulses of adolescence stir in his veins, his thoughts would turn to the goddess and her charms, half wondering, half realising why those of the ancient world, whether hailing her as Istar or Ashtaroth, Aphrodite or Venus, as they came from Assyria, from Phœnicia, from Greece, or from the western shores of Italy, flocked in thousands thither. The partial knowledge stirred him deeply, the wonder scarcely less.

Therefore, perhaps, Padre Illuminato was not circumspect in dwelling upon the rites and ceremonies celebrated of old in the precincts of the temple, on the fairer attributes of the goddess, and on her charms which men recognised in her, before a boy so impressionable as his nephew. True, he refrained

from imparting information likely to raise a blush to any cheek, though as he was greatly wrapt up in ancient lore of the gods, he would frequently fail to distinguish between what might conveniently be said and what left unsaid before a child. At times Padre Illuminato in his enthusiasm even dug down so deeply to the roots of the family tree as to hint at a divine origin for his house (was not the family degli Antonii descended from that Antones who was the son of Hercules, and therefore it might be said with the blood of the goddess herself in its veins?). No matter if those present would laugh covertly and tap their foreheads significantly if secretly when the Canon was in one of those genealogical moods. The boy scarcely noticed their sarcasm, and eagerly listened to what his uncle said. Such remarks were certain to have their effect on an observant mind, and to increase his absorbing interest in the great goddess who had reigned supreme in her fortress temple on Mount Eryx.

When Giuliano was sixteen years old, his father was transferred to a post at Syracuse, and the former accompanied him. At Syracuse it was agreed that Giuliano was to enter the seminary for young priests. There his education began a new phase, being principally devoted to a study of sacred writings and the usual routine of instruction followed by those about to enter holy orders. He was kept strictly to his work by the Rector, who not only was informed

of his peculiar up-bringing by his relative, but noticed from his conversation that Giuliano thought too much of the past history of Sicily. The head of the seminary was a different type of man from his uncle. Indeed no two men could differ more greatly in their opinions, nor were so widely apart as the austere and ascetic Rector and the lenient, kind-hearted Canon. The former's efforts were therefore mainly directed to wean the boy's thoughts from pagan things, to wipe out from his memory what his uncle had taught him, and, instead, to direct his whole mind to the contemplation of the sufferings and rewards of the saints and martyrs of the Church, whereby hoping to arouse the keenest anxiety for his soul's welfare. In that the Rector so far succeeded that Giuliano—a docile lad at all times—began to regard most of what he had learnt from his uncle as impious, and dreaded the moment when he might be called back to Trapani to associate with him.

That dread was considerably increased by what had occurred to him when he first went to Syracuse. Having a few weeks of leisure before beginning his studies, he had devoted the major portion of his time to seeing the remains of the Greek occupation, as his uncle had recommended—the temples which had been dedicated to Minerva and Diana, the springs sacred to Arethusa and Cyane, the Latomic, or quarries (where the Athenian prisoners had died by thousands after the siege), and the two columns

solitary in their grandeur across the greater harbour, the sole vestiges of that splendid palace-temple of the Olympian Jove, the home of untold treasures, rivalling those of Eryx itself. He would go to the cathedral of the city, converted from pagan uses, still occupying the site and enclosed within the columns of the old heathen sanctuary. There he loved to linger during the frequent masses, and think to see in the display of a present ritual the processions and ceremonies of more remote days. Once again he gladly lived in the recollection of all that his uncle had impressed upon him so carefully and so fully, dreaming many dreams and calling up imaginary pictures of the doings of ancient times.

But among all the vestiges of Greek and Roman days with which Syracuse abounds for those who know how to look for them, the greatest attraction was what a little room in the museum presented, and scarcely a day of his short holiday passed that he was not irresistibly drawn to it. That which he sought so continuously had burst upon him unexpectedly soon after his arrival. What he there saw was the marble statue of Venus—Venus rising from the sea, or, as the old *custode* told him, that Aphrodite Anadyomene—for it was the Greek idea, not the Roman, which here found expression—of which his uncle had so often spoken as being possibly a counterpart of, or similar to, the chief ornament of

the temple on Mount Eryx, which, alas, Claudius Marcellus had removed to grace the temple of the goddess at Rome, leaving the Sicilian fane bereft.

Giuliano did not rightly understand why this statue appealed so greatly to his imagination, claimed so large a share of his admiration, for it was headless, and part of the right arm was missing besides.

Found in a garden outside the present city at the beginning of the nineteenth century, there was not the care in excavating such things then as is now bestowed; or, perhaps, those who buried it may have secreted the remains of a much venerated object after profane hands had mutilated it. Who could tell? Anyhow, the head was missing, and only the imagination could supply the features of the face, which must have been of singular beauty, had they corresponded with the seductive and faultless lines of the remains of the sculptor's work.

Giuliano was young, and, as has been said, impressionable. To his youthful appreciation, nothing could surpass the beautiful contour of the gleaming shoulders, the voluptuous moulding of the torso, the wonderful curves of the limbs. Surely nothing so sublime had ever been seen before, he thought, no living being, no work of art so perfect in form as this.

It was curious that he did not greatly regret the absence of the head. He had often imagined to himself what the great Venus of Eryx may have

looked like in her temple. His uncle had drawn her picture for him many times, and his fancy was well acquainted with that sublime profile, the clustering hair on the lofty forehead, the straight nose above the small seductive lips of a mouth that seemed only to speak of love and beautiful things. The full face, with pleading eyes under arched brows, with chin slightly raised imperiously as if commanding that praise and adoration which men were fated to yield from their birth—all were known to him, and these he easily restored to the statue as he gazed upon it. His imagination would even impart the flesh tints to the marble, the colour to the eyes and hair.

Little by little the marble figure obtained so great a power that it obsessed him. He worshipped it for its beauty. It became to him almost a living being, and he could not dismiss its faultless image from his mind. At night he dreamt of it; in the daytime it accompanied him in his wanderings. Once when he went to the museum and found men arduously working to remove the statue from its wooden pedestal to one of stone, he could have cried out for anxiety that by falling it might lose its beauty irrevocably in a hundred fragments.

Giuliano, though only sixteen, had left boyhood behind. In the South, youths reach manhood at an early age, and his feelings thus curiously aroused and accentuated were not a boyish fancy for an

object pleasing to the eye ; they were, on the contrary, of a stronger nature, in which new-born impulses of the senses played their part. It was not that the lad was in love with the image created in his mind, recalled and intensified by his admiration for the statue. He was yet too young to be in love, and the idea was, besides, preposterous. But it was a sentiment akin to it, awakening for the first time desire in his heart and a yearning for the other sex, the natural inclination of manhood. His feelings puzzled him greatly, and he was by no means happy.

He had been careful to conceal the state of his mind from his father and his friends. None would have understood had he confided in them, and the former was scarcely interested in anything beyond his ordinary routine of daily work and the usual events of a monotonous life in a Sicilian country town.

When the hour came to enter the seminary, Giuliano greatly regretted his loss of liberty. Thenceforth his time was given to study, his leisure moments to the companionship of lads unable to share his thoughts. It was a rule that the pupils were not to be left alone ; and he was therefore always in the presence of a tutor to watch his every action, and to report all he did to the Superior. Confidence in the natural rectitude of youth forms no part of its education in the South.

As has been said, the Rector had discerned much of Giuliano's love for the old paganism, and set himself strenuously to counteract it. It was not a difficult task. Giuliano was largely influenced by those around him, and found it difficult to oppose the opinions of those he associated with. So little by little it came to him that he had been following the false gods spoken of by the Scriptures, that he permitted his thoughts to be absorbed by those who were the cause of the idolatry of ancient times and of the blood-shedding of the holy saints and martyrs. Had he himself not been a pagan, even, in the absorbing interest which he had taken in the gods of old? he asked himself with fear and trembling. As his love increased for the sacred things of the Church, of which his life was now so full, that fear grew in strength until the Rector complacently admitted to himself that he had no more promising pupil than the young man, nor one in whom the true spirit of the priesthood was so abundantly manifest.

But the effort to Giuliano to cast out from his heart his early teaching—his love for the old legends and myths, his pride in the history of his native land, and above all the proud boast that his forefathers had taken their share in those immortal exploits, was very great. Greater still was the effort he made to drive from his remembrance Venus Erycina, and her white statue in the museum. But he had

brought himself to acknowledge that that curious influence which had possessed him so singularly must surely have been the work of the Evil One himself. He admitted with shame that the thoughts which the image had prompted, vague and undetermined as they were, were not always such as would have borne the searching light of day nor the critical examination of the outside world.

So, though he would not speak of the matter to his confessor, he poured out his soul in silent prayer and contrition, vowing, if strength were given him, never to put himself voluntarily in peril of so great a temptation. During the several years that he remained at his studies at Syracuse, therefore, Giuliano never set foot inside the museum again. It is true his eyes would involuntarily seek the window of that building behind which the statue stood on its marble pedestal, as he walked with his companions by the side of the Great Harbour. But when suddenly he recalled his vow, he averted his gaze, repentantly checking any thought that might be contrary to his pledge, and with fear, for there was always an undefined dread, perhaps a premonition, lurking in the innermost recesses of his being, that that incident was not done with, that the fascination which the Venus of Eryx had exercised upon him earlier in life was not entirely left behind, and might again confront him in the future.

CHAPTER III.

SOON after Giuliano had completed his studies and had been ordained priest, an urgent letter came from his uncle the Canon, asking him to return to Trapani immediately. The latter was getting old, he said, and wanted to see his nephew. Besides he had important news to give, which he thought might be welcome. So Giuliano went back to Trapani, reluctantly, yet strong in the belief that he had little to fear now from any danger to his peace of mind a reference to pagan times might cause. Moreover he contemplated but a short visit to his uncle, counting on the promise and influence of his friend the Rector of the seminary to be appointed soon to one of the Syracusan churches, and there find his proper sphere of life work.

But no sooner had he entered the old Canon's house, and heard what the latter had to communicate, than all his hopes were shattered, his misgivings newly aroused, and he sought his room in that state of doubt and perplexity already mentioned.

The Canon, anxious to have his nephew near him in the future, and unable to secure a vacant

post in Trapani, had induced the Bishop to nominate his young relative as priest at Monte San Giuliano (or, as he would still call it, Eryx), whither he was to repair at once as the post had been definitely accepted for him.

The intelligence had overwhelmed Giuliano. Like a flash of lightning, the dread of the old paganism, from which he had lately freed himself, the danger old associations might bring him, and, above all, that subtle and incomprehensible fascination exercised by the image of Venus Anadyomene, which had crept into his life and threatened not only destruction of his mind's peace but perdition to his soul, confronted him again. The proposal to go to Eryx, the very home of the goddess, where the recollection of her beauty would be a perpetual temptation and a standing menace, could be but one prompted by Satan himself. The atmosphere in which he was called upon to live in future would be impregnated with unholy recollections. Even the ground he trod would exhale the miasma of the unspeakable orgies of the place, and the stones which had witnessed them would be perpetual reminders of the wantonness, the lust, the shameless libertinage of centuries. Truly no place in the world could be so wicked and so tainted as that polluted Eryx. How could he live there and keep himself from contamination? How could he ever find the mind's tranquillity without which his ministry must be

futile, his preaching a mockery? For a long time there was no possible answer to his doubts, no hope that his appointment could bring him anything but sorrow and mental suffering, and probably much worse.

Yet, when he became calmer, he asked himself, was all his training as a priest to resist the world's temptations of no avail? Had the past years of abstinence and self-restraint been futile after all? Was he so miserably weak in character and moral stability that the rigid discipline which he had gone through had wrought no permanent change for good in him?

Again, he pondered, would it be right to refuse to face temptation? Was it not possible he had been chosen by Heaven for some special work which, it was decreed, he alone could perform? Besides, should he thwart his uncle's dearest wishes and oppose the desire of the Bishop who had selected him for so important a cure of souls?

He sank to his knees and prayed fervently to the Madonna for courage and guidance, and principally to St. Julian, Protector of the christianised pagan-fastness of Eryx, remembering that the divine hunter had also endeavoured to escape from his destiny and yet secured heavenly protection and the greater guerdon of sanctification at his death. Surely, he meditated, he might venture to hope that if he were assailed by the Evil One, the saint, who had once

appeared on the walls of Eryx in bodily form and put to confusion the pagan enemies of the city, might also extend his protection to him who bore his name in any hour of dire necessity and danger to his soul.

When he rejoined the Canon later, he informed him he would accept the Bishop's offer, and was ready to start for Monte San Guiliano as soon as he should be ordered to do so.

CHAPTER IV.

THE first few days at his new abode were so occupied by Giuliano in learning his duties that there was no time to allow his thoughts to wander to the memories of the past. In fact he had now persuaded himself that after all there was not the great danger in them on which the Rector of the seminary had insisted, and in any case he was now strong enough to withstand it under any circumstances.

So one afternoon, having a spare hour or two, he climbed to the top of the mountain where the Temple of Venus stood. If he had misgivings on first visiting the scene of so many of his dreams, for, strange to say, he had never been there before, he told himself it was wiser to face the danger at once, if danger there might be, and thus be prepared to meet it with resolution and resignation.

When he had gained the summit, passing by the mediæval castle, now a prison, which stands at one end of the plateau, he was surprised that so ordinary a spot should have acquired so sinister a reputation in his mind. Of the old Temple of Venus nothing was to be seen except a few massive and well-cut

stones that had served as part of its foundation, and a large oblong opening in the ground built in masonry which had been, perhaps, a receptacle for the water needed for the inhabitants of the temple-fortress. All the rest was much as another mountain top: a circumscribed and irregular grass-grown space covered with flowers, among which were wild myrtle, poppies, and a briar rose or two springing from the crevices of the stones. He laughed to himself that so harmless a spot should have held out so many terrors to his imagination.

He sate down on a rock near the old cistern with a flock of sparrows for his sole companions, the soft cooing of doves as the only sound to break the hush of solitude, and, forgetting all else, gave himself up to recalling one by one the incidents associated with Mount Eryx; of Dædalus, its renowned architect, that heaven-born artisan and artist, at once the designer as well as the dreaded prisoner of the Labyrinth.

There was a rich mine of poetic lore, an inexhaustible store of historical associations to draw from the spot, and Giuliano was happy in his recollections. He readily surrendered himself to the enjoyment of the moment, scarcely noticing the superb view which stretched around him, so absorbed was he in the ancient history of the place, so content to bask in the warm rays of the sun amid the wild flowers around him.

The moments flew gladly by. Then he slept—he never knew how long, for when he woke all thought of time vanished, and all feeling save one of intense amazement at what he saw before him: the figure of a young and singularly beautiful woman, dressed in white with a girdle at her waist, standing by the side of the old reservoir as if she had risen from its depths.

“Venus—the statue!” he gasped below his breath, not knowing whether he was awake or dreaming. Then, returning to full consciousness, all the agony of dread, all the dire apprehension of the past, all the same fierce desire, seized upon him again, for in her who gazed smilingly at him now he recognised the same face with the large expressive eyes and the winsome mouth such as his youthful fancy had given to the beautiful body and limbs of the statue of Venus in the museum of Syracuse. In an instant it flashed upon him that his supreme hour of temptation had come; that here and now began the battle between the power of good and the power of evil from which few men can escape, and which a strange foreboding had bidden him to fear. Yet he could not fly, nor even move from the rock on which he sate. His limbs refused their office. His eyes remained fixed on those of the girl opposite him.

A ringing laugh greeted his gaze and evident discomfiture.

“You are Padre Giuliano degli Antonii, the new

priest from Trapani, I think," she said. "I saw you go up to the castle and I thought I would follow to make acquaintance. I am Venerina, the daughter of Don Antonino Zurria, the notary."

She looked hard at Giuliano and waited for an answer. But none came.

"Since we are to be neighbours and fellow town-folk, it is well we make friends at once," she continued without advancing. Something in the young man's face prevented her moving from where she stood, though she held out her hand.

By this time Giuliano had partly regained his composure, and rose to his feet, replacing the broad-brimmed beaver hat which had fallen from his head as he slept. He would not trust himself to speak, but he could not take his eyes from the girl's face. He ignored the proffered hand. She turned and stooped to pick a flower at her feet, showing her side-face, which Giuliano noted to his astonishment and dismay had also the same classical profile with the clustering hair about the temples and the seductive mouth of the image he had once silently worshipped in his heart.

The girl was far from being repulsed by the cold, unresponsive demeanour of the young priest. Though she could read no outward sign of the favourable impression she evidently desired to make, she perceived that below the surface was some deep emotion caused by her appearance, which, if not

flattering to her vanity as a woman, was, at least, interesting and worth discovering for its own sake.

"Yes," she continued, "I heard you preach in church this morning, and," she added boldly, "I liked your looks, for you seem different from the men of these parts."

While speaking, she looked into Giuliano's face with a bold stare, and then surveyed him from head to foot. What she saw pleased her, for the young priest was tall and prepossessing in appearance, with an oval face and large pensive eyes, a mouth and chin weak rather than strong, and more fitted perhaps to a woman than a man, and with dark hair which grew thickly over a high forehead—in short, a type of man likely to be attractive to women. In spite of her attempt to enlist his sympathy, the last words that the girl spoke seemed to recall him to a greater sense of danger, for his eyes left her face and sought the ground in confusion. Then, lifting his hat ceremoniously and bowing gravely, he passed her without raising his glance and quickly began his descent into the town.

CHAPTER V.

VENERINA ZURRIA was well known in Monte San Giuliano for her wonderful beauty, which men and women extolled. When both sexes agree as to the good looks of a woman, there is little more to be said on the subject. The few artists who found their way to the remote town were loud in their praises of her. Young men of the place wrote sonnets in her honour, in which they declared that Venus had returned to her favourite abode, accompanied by her son, since a glance from the eyes of Venerina Zurria was like a dart from Cupid's bow—swift, sure and destructive.

But there praise of Venerina ceased. The women of Monte San Giuliano did more than shake their heads when other qualities besides her beauty were discussed. Some had words of pity because she had been brought up by a crusty and penurious father, who let her run loose from childhood and cared little about her education or the company she kept. Others had no good to say of her. They were mothers and sisters and sweethearts of young fellows whom she had allured by her charms, played with

for a time, and then cast off to find others to satisfy her appetite for adulation and mischief-making. Few things pleased Venerina Zurria more than to draw a young fellow away from his *promessa* and keep him dangling at her side. She did not spare young married men either; and many were the houses into which she had brought despair. That frowning precipice which sank many hundred feet perpendicularly from the plateau of the temple into the plain below had seen more than one despairing wretch dash in desperation from its summit to find death on her account. "Venerina del Monte"—the "Little Venus of the Mount"—as she was called, had no good repute therefore; though it was long before young Padre Giuliano heard as much concerning her. He was not one to listen to women's tales, and with men he did not greatly associate, so no rumours reached his ears. He was chiefly concerned in endeavouring to drive from his thoughts this new menace, which had taken bodily form and substance, though to his horror he recognised that from day to day she, the woman, was fast acquiring the influence that the statue, or its perfected counterpart created by his imagination, had formerly had over him. Indeed, strive as he might against his thoughts, wrestle as he would against what had now become a persistent longing, he could not dismiss her from his mind, nor her image from his brain.

In the earlier days of his trial he had attempted

to persuade himself that Venerina with a face so beautiful might, indeed must, be one whose acquaintance could have nought of harm in it, whose friendship would be of value, whose companionship would be helpful and disinterested. He could associate no evil with those steadfast eyes, that engaging smile, that marble brow. Such thoughts came to him when he tried to free himself from the difficulty which beset him, hoping that after all he might not be the special mark for the machinations of the Evil One, as he feared, and that his apprehensions of coming misfortune were ill-placed and even childish. But then his common sense told him no modest girl, no woman with self-respect could have acted as she had acted when he first saw her on the site of the temple.

Soon he could not disguise the fact that Venerina was deliberately throwing herself in his way with a given object, which, he shuddered to think, went perilously near to what he dreaded: the falling away from that path of a pure life which his sacred calling imperatively demanded of him.

Venerina Zurria had indeed marked the young priest as her prey. She was tired of the ordinary quarry that the sparse population of Monte San Giuliano provided for her, and she lost no opportunity of endeavouring to entice him into her toils. Seeing that she had made a mistake in too openly showing her intentions at the beginning of their acquaintance, she tried other methods to obtain

his goodwill. She endeavoured to secure him as her confessor. In that she failed. She attended the church at which he officiated, and by her devout demeanour and constant attendance hoped to enlist his sympathy. In that she partially succeeded. She waylaid him in his visits to the poor, and, for a time, even took upon herself the special care of certain sick folk whose houses he frequented. As the last effort proved irksome, her charitable intention was soon discontinued.

The less successful her efforts to attain her end, the more eager she became, for her self-love was now not only wounded by the studied indifference outwardly shown her by Giuliano, but her passion, which could never be long restrained, impelled her to try and win at all costs what she had set her heart upon to gain.

Though outwardly calm and self-possessed, the young priest was now a prey to the most conflicting emotions. At times when the ardent southern nature stirred within him, he cursed the fate that had driven him to adopt a profession which cut him off so completely from the ordinary love of man for woman. "What had he done," he asked himself, "that the natural instinct of humanity for an ideal companionship should be for ever denied him?" At others he would recognise the full extent of mortal sin which that rebellion of the flesh against the spirit implied; and he would pass sorrowful

hours of contrition in acts of penance and supplication for strength to withstand so hideous a temptation. Some days he would be filled with loathing for the cause of his trouble; at other times he was overcome by Venerina's apparent faultlessness of conduct and her extreme beauty.

Later, when he could no longer disregard the friendly warnings of those who saw through the girl's attempt at his undoing, he was brought to a yet lower state of misery and dejection. Unable to cast her image from his heart, he recognised that as Venus was worshipped by the men of old by the lowest of all incentives, the wish to gratify the passions, he, too, was far from being able to attribute his admiration of her solely to the love of beauty for beauty's sake. When that knowledge fully burst upon him, Giuliano's mental misery touched the lowest depth, and he asked himself whether anything was left to him but death by his own hand with perdition to his soul, or living to face everlasting and irredeemable disgrace before the world.

Until now he had suffered alone. He was one of those reserved natures that refuse to declare their troubles to others. At Syracuse he had not taken his doubts and perplexity to the confessional—they had been perceived by the keen and watchful eye of the Rector without his divulging them. And at Monte San Giuliano his pride again forbade him to acknowledge his weakness to any one of his fellow

clergy as was manifestly the duty of an ordained priest. He could not bring himself to own even to himself that he was conquered by what, as he had been taught, was the basest passion of mankind. So he had suffered in silence and alone.

But now that he must declare himself all but vanquished, recognising that either his health would give way entirely under the strain of that terrible anguish, for with fastings, midnight watchings, and sleeplessness, he had become emaciated and weak, or that he would yield irrevocably to the temptation which assailed him, he felt he could no longer stand alone and must seek worldly as well as spiritual assistance. He therefore resolved to write to his uncle, the Canon, a request to visit him, saying he was too ill to undertake the long ride to Trapani, and asking him to come without loss of time. To him he would unburden himself, knowing full well he could rely upon his sympathy and counsel, his assistance with the Bishop, and upon his sanction and approval if he felt compelled to forsake his post and flee from temptation. He therefore despatched a letter to his relative, without mentioning the special cause of the summons, and anxiously awaited his coming.

CHAPTER VI.

TWO days after the letter was sent, Canon degli Antonii arrived on a mule, hot and dusty. The day was sunny and the road with its steep ascent dry and scorching.

His joy at being once again on Mount Eryx was even greater than that of seeing his nephew. Many years had elapsed since he had climbed the sides of the mountain—some ten or more, he said, for, as he owned, looking down at his figure, the path was not an easy one either for him or the beast which carried him.

He insisted on going at once to the site of the temple, forgetting that the urgent summons he had received suggested Giuliano might have something to communicate without loss of time. He declared there was no more delightful spot in the world whereon to sit, and as for confidences it was a place as secure from interruption as the centre of the Sahara or the North Pole.

Giuliano wished to speak then and there, and he would have preferred any other place than that proposed by his uncle in which to make his confession.

But, anxious to humour the old man, and fearing that the pleasure of a visit to the site of the temple,

on which he had set his heart, might be marred if attempted after hearing what he had to tell, he acquiesced, and the two priests climbed slowly to the spot where Giuliano had first seen Venerina.

Padre Illuminato, on reaching the site of the temple, drew from his pocket a small map of the adjacent coast and mountains, which lay below in a far-reaching panorama, and began to study it attentively, oblivious of his nephew, who stood by his side bracing himself for the effort to speak.

"Mio Padre——" he began, but the Canon's thoughts were far away, and he interrupted him, saying :

"See, there are the three islands at our feet—the islands of the suitors in the Odyssey—Dulichium, the long strip by the shore, and Samne and Zacynthus. There," said the Canon, pointing to each with his finger as he spoke, "is 'Ithaca on the horizon, all highest up in the sea towards the West.' There, on the spur of the mountain near the sea," he continued, waving his hand towards the north, "'is the cave of Polyphemus, where were the vessels brimful of whey, and the racks loaded with cheeses,' and where to-day, as I have seen frequently, flocks are herded at night in the same cave. Imagine the terror of Ulysses and his men," said the Canon, warming to his subject, "when surprised by the one-eyed giant they were imprisoned by the big rock he rolled against the cavern, which no man except he 'nor even

two and twenty waggons could carry.' Imagine, too, the horror when the giant 'gripped up two of the men, dashed them on the ground, and ate them raw, blood, bones and bowels, like a savage lion of the wilderness.' All that happened over there on the flank of the mountain. See," pursued the Canon, taking by the arm the younger priest (who had now given up all hope of speaking until his uncle should have tired of his Odyssean reminiscences), "there also are the real rocks thrown by the giant—the first, the Formiche, the second the isle of Asinelli, flung a little behind the ship of Ulysses. Even Pantellaria, the home of Calypso, and Ustica, the kingdom of Æolus, can I see. What wonderful clearness of atmosphere there is to-day, and what a superb view!"

The scene the two men looked on was indeed remarkable, and Giuliano almost forgot the aching care at his heart as he gazed. Around them, and in close proximity, were the silver grey rocks of the precipitous mountain, standing in solitary grandeur and rising two thousand feet from the sea and plain in bold outline. On the western side clustered the houses of the modern town with their grey red tiles, invading the once sacred precincts of the temple; and among them, with its towers and gateways, the walls of the once hallowed spot built by giant hands, walls which for their gigantic structure will survive long after many a proud city of to-day shall have passed behind the veil of years. Landward and east-

ward in the direction of Calatafimi and Alcamo lay Sicily, with its countless peaks vying with one another as to which should touch the sky, yet pigmies when compared to the "Mountain of Mountains"—Ætna, with her snowy cone and column of vapour many miles away in the haze of distance. The Canon descried at no great distance, and pointed out the heights where stood Segeste, the proud Elymian city, which once boasted its lordly rock-cut theatre, knowing to-day but the tread of shepherds where thousands had once thronged, and the bleat of goats where the treasured lines of poets had awakened the echoes of the hills; and, hard by, on the brink of a precipice, in majestic solitude, the temple of mighty columns, unfinished, unadorned, yet matchless in its incomparable grandeur.

To north, south and west of the two men—one enthusiastically eloquent, the other pensively silent—was the sea, sparkling in the sun as a gem of countless facets, and of a blue so intense, so limpid, so vivid, that in the sky alone could it find a rival. Fringing it on the one hand was the coast line, with promontories of reddish marble, and fishing villages nestling in its bays; on the other the towns of Trapani and Marsala (the "Troy of Sicily"), with the site of the long lost Motya on whose waters was fought that supreme battle which saw Rome avenged for her defeat at Adherbal's hands, and vanquished Hanno cede the supremacy of Sicily. Beyond, again,

the deserted solitude of the ruined temple-city of Selinous, with its broken columns lying pell-mell on the shore, as mighty in its fall as ever it was in its days of prosperity and pride.

It was a long time before the Canon had exhausted what he had to say, or could withdraw his eyes from the scene which had so great an allure-ment for him. Finally his thoughts came back from his pet subject, and he remembered his nephew had something to impart.

Then the latter related as much of his temptation and difficulty as he thought advisable, being careful to avoid dwelling much on his training at Syracuse and the Rector's influence over him, for he knew that to do so would probably raise in his uncle a spirit of opposition, and possibly cause an elaborate argument in defence of his favourite theory. He laid greater stress on the relentless persecution at the hands of Venerina Zurria, to which, he said, he had been a victim since his arrival.

At first the old priest was inclined to be sceptical about the temptation to which the younger alluded ; especially when Giuliano inadvertently referred to her great beauty and classical features. But subsequently moved by his earnestness and evident distress, he offered what advice and comfort he thought desirable, and promised to approach the Bishop to ascertain if he would obtain the removal of his nephew to some other cure.

The two priests then drew from their pockets books of devotion, the older one disappearing from sight and seeking the further end of the plateau, the younger leaning against a ledge of rock which, as it happened, was the same spot where he had first seen Venerina Zurria soon after his coming to Eryx. He did not remember that where he stood had commenced all his trouble, but after being absorbed in his reading for a time it flashed suddenly to his recollection. At the same moment a sense of uneasiness possessed him, and with it the knowledge of the near presence of some one yet unseen. Raising his eyes from the book, he saw that Venerina herself had approached noiselessly and again stood before him. He made as if to move away, but she stopped him.

"No," she said angrily, "you shall not avoid me further; you have fooled me long enough."

Then, in order to try and win the young man's attention, the girl dropped her voice suddenly, saying caressingly:

"Why do you always shun me? I have few friends, none, indeed, who can help me like you. You know the world and its temptations, therefore you can pity one who has been a victim."

Giuliano was silent. He felt he was again fascinated by the spell of the girl's gaze as a bird by a serpent, and by her caressing voice, as the snake in turn is fascinated by the music of the charmer. Her

eyes seemed to penetrate to his inmost soul, to see the fear, the longing, and the shame which lingered there. He could not move.

“You cannot be aware how greatly I need your help,” she continued; “my mother died when I was yet a child, and my father never loved me. The women here are unkind; they are jealous of me. They vent their spite by telling wicked tales. I have no friend; I sorely need one. Will you not be that to me?”

The young man shook his head. “It is impossible,” he said below his breath.

“Impossible! Why?” she asked. “You have no one here to care for you. You are among strangers. You, who, above all others, have need of one to talk to, to advise with. Why not be friendly?”

There was no response, only that despairing look on the young man’s face, first seen when he was told of his nomination as priest at Monte San Giuliano, and which had now finally settled there.

Venerina could see that her words were taking effect. She was not sure whether favourably or not, but her hopes rose, and she continued:

“Do not fear what the neighbours will say about me. I have always had my own way, and I go where I like and do as I please. If you do not wish it, we need not be seen together. No one need know we are friends.”

She approached nearer when she spoke the last

words, so that her gaze was more direct as she looked earnestly into his eyes for an answer. He shuddered slightly. He felt all the subtle potency of her charm, and a voice within him cried aloud to take her in his arms and press his lips to hers. But he only shrank against the rock.

Seeing that passion was making his blood course wildly in his veins—at least, so she interpreted the look she saw in his eyes—she changed her tactics.

“Think of the sunny hours we might pass together,” she said. “You have sick people to tend in the country. We could meet constantly on your way to visit them. Then you could tell me all your cares for the sick and suffering, I all my hopes for the future. Hand in hand we would sit among the flowers, weaving plans in which you and I, I and you, would always be the central figures. No, do not say it is impossible.”

She advanced still nearer to him, and placed her right hand on his shoulder. Her breath brushed his cheek. Still he made no reply. His face was as pale as the spent embers of a wood fire. The veins on his forehead stood out as cords. His breathing came short and laboured. His fists were tightly clenched, so that the nails ran into the palms of his hands.

The girl, whose body now nearly touched his, raised her left hand, laying it on the other shoulder. As she was gradually encircling his neck with her

arms, she inclined her head upon his shoulder, so that her forehead touched his cheek. She met with no resistance, and though the thought flashed through her mind that she might be embracing a carven image, she imagined the victory was hers, and felt the thrill of triumph.

But she was wrong in her surmise. Giuliano, with a face now distorted with anger and repugnance at that first contact of a woman's skin with his own, which for him to suffer willingly was the deadliest sin of all, tore himself apart, casting the girl from him with so great a violence as to throw her to her knees. He took one step forward, saying in a firm voice :

“I refuse your friendship. I will have none of it. That is my sole and irrevocable answer.”

Venerina recovered herself slowly and confronted him, now with her face aflame with passion.

“It is war between us then, war,” she cried furiously, “and you shall soon learn what that means. I would kill you here and with this instantly,” she added, drawing a knife from below the folds of her dress, “but it would be over too soon. I'll wait and see you gradually waste away from sheer terror, for though the blow will fall some day you will not know when it will be struck nor whence it come. Yet you shall die.”

The young priest had regained his composure, and did not flinch.

“But first you shall be stript of what little reputation you have. People shall shun you as plague-stricken, and it will be my work. You shall be branded as an untrue priest, and my hand will be in it. You shall be known as a danger to men and women on account of your false vows, and I, the ‘Little Venus of the Mount,’ shall be the cause of your undoing.”

Again Giuliano made no attempt to speak, nor even to move. At the moment he would have welcomed a mortal stroke from the knife which the infuriated girl still brandished in her hand, emphasising her vows of vengeance as she spoke

But soon a softer light shone from his eyes, a calmer look crept over his face. The knowledge that he had been strong enough to face the danger, to resist the temptation at the supreme moment, and finally repulse the girl’s attempt to ruin him, forced itself irresistibly upon him, and all except the thought that he had saved his soul was as nothing to him. His peril was now past.

Venerina noticed the change, and redoubled her invectives.

“You laugh at me, I see it in your eyes,” she hissed; “but you will laugh no longer when all the world is told that you, false priest, have made advances to me under the cloak of religion, and have been spurned. People know I am bad. Yes, I am, bad and wicked to the bone—and for that they will

laugh when they hear that I will have none of you. Faugh! I loathe and detest you! You, with your pale thin face and bloodless body! Why did I ever desire your love? There are plenty of men to be at my feet for the mere lifting of my finger. Nino Grassia, in spite of Placida, the girl he married three months since, and who cries her eyes out with jealousy on my account, worships the air I breathe, the very ground I walk upon, besides a host of other men who follow me."

Seeing that Giuliano maintained a rigid silence, she went on, though her voice was hoarse and she was nearly hysterical from rage.

"At all hours you shall remember Venerina Zurria. When you see the covert sneer at your name, the avoided glance, the fear of little children when they fly at your approach, the contempt of those you honour, the active malice of your enemies, the silent coldness of your friends—think of me then, dream of me at night as the evil genius of your life, as one who will thwart your every aspiration, your every wish to live down your ignominy. Ha! ha! What will your uncle the Canon, that silly old man who lives at Trapani, who thinks of nothing but the ancient Greeks, say when he knows that his nephew has fallen irreparably in love with the Little Venus, and has sold his soul in exchange for her smiles? And what will you feel when the old Bishop is told of the conduct of his young friend? Can you not

picture his severe face, hear his solemn words, followed by his curse for the renegade priest who has betrayed his trust? Think of all that lies before you," she shrieked, advancing as if to strike him, "and remember that I am working day and night for your undoing, and I will never cease to——"

"The good Bishop shall hear of all that you have said and why you have said it," exclaimed a voice in measured tones from behind Venerina. "I will take upon myself to inform him minutely."

The girl turned round and faced the Canon, who, unheard and unperceived, had approached from behind the rock.

"Yes," he added, seeing the girl's confusion, "I am well able to report faithfully, for I have listened to all you have addressed to my nephew. I would not interrupt you, for it was well he should know you as you are, and once for all, casting you from his life, escape from the spell which you have put about him."

Venerina, taken by surprise and condemned by her own confession, was cowed at first by this unexpected witness; but regaining self-possession, she was about to renew her attack and defy both men.

"Stay," said the Canon, drawing himself up to his full height and raising his hand, "I listen to no more menaces. And beware that I am about to make a sworn declaration that you have threatened the life of my nephew, and that on the smallest

future annoyance you shall be arrested and held up to the scorn of your fellow men."

The girl made no reply. Her hand sought the opening in her skirt for the knife she now missed, and which she had dropped on the ground in her agitation. The Canon saw the movement, and stepping forward placed his foot upon the weapon.

"No," he said, "that vengeance is also denied you."

He stooped down and secured the knife.

With that, the Canon, seeing that Venerina did not depart, beckoned to Giuliano to follow him, and they moved away out of sight, leaving the girl alone where she stood.

The two priests continued in earnest conversation for some time, and it was decided that both should return to Trapani for Giuliano to make full confession to the Bishop, and await his decision as to what his future should be. The older priest did his best to comfort his nephew, and not without compunction, for he was aware that he was not altogether blameless, now that the latter lay bare to him at last the peculiar form in which his temptation had assailed him.

"I had lost sight of the Venus Pandemos, when I thought of Urania—that beautiful Venus Anadyomene who rose from the foam of the sea," he said sadly, adding humbly, "may be I erred, and I ask forgiveness since it has brought unhappiness to one I love."

They continued talking earnestly for some time, when their attention was suddenly aroused by a piercing shriek and a man's cry, followed shortly by another scream less loud, which seemed to proceed from a remoter spot.

Venerina Zurria had remained motionless with her eyes fixed on the ground, where Padre Illuminato and Giuliano had left her. She was perplexed and undecided whether to follow and continue to vent her anger upon them, or to acknowledge herself defeated and depart. So deeply was she absorbed in considering what would be the better course that she failed to hear the approach of a woman, crouching and stealthily moving from rock to rock towards her. The latter drew slowly nearer, her steps deadened by the grass and flowers. The woman's face showed signs of suffering, and there was a hard look of determination about the mouth and eyes. Her right hand was hidden beneath her apron.

Then there was a spring and a sudden rush forward. The hand beneath the apron was withdrawn, steel flashed in the air for an instant, and a long thin blade found its home in the back of Venerina Zurria. The girl uttered the piercing shriek which the two priests heard, and fell to the ground without a word. The murderess knelt down, and putting her mouth close to her victim's ear shouted, "I, Placida Grassia, have done this, because you stole my Nino from me." Then she fled.

When the Canon and Giuliano hurriedly reached the spot where Venerina lay with the knife buried in her back, they found her dead—death had been instantaneous. As they supported her in their arms, the *custode* of the old castle ran towards them. He had been looking from a window of his room after his *siesta*, he said, and had seen a woman creep towards and strike another in the back. He had shouted to warn the one and deter the other, but he was too late; the blow fell, and the murderess turned and ran the quicker towards the edge of the precipice rising sheer from the valley. There, uttering a cry, she flung herself over, and, added the man, crossing himself devoutly, "May the blessed Virgin have mercy on her, for she, too, must be dead in the plain below."

Sending the man at once into the town to summon the authorities, the two priests silently laid out the body of the murdered girl, closing her eyes, and folding her hands over her bosom. Giuliano took the small crucifix which he wore round his neck and placed it on her breast.

The old Canon nodded approvingly, whispering, "It is well. We may not judge her now."

Then as the westering sun was tracing a pathway of gold on the sea, the chanting of a litany for the dead rose from the lips of the kneeling priests and was wafted on the still air of the summer evening upward from the plateau of the old temple of Venus—

a prayer for mercy which was accompanied by the music of the sea's gentle murmur below and the soft chorus of doves among the grey rocks of the world-famed mountain.

THE DIVINE PHILOSOPHER.

THE DIVINE PHILOSOPHER.

CHAPTER I.

ONE night four centuries or more before the Christian era, when Pericles ruled in Athens and the Peloponnesian strife had scarce begun; when in Rome the Decemvirs had fallen and the Consuls been re-established; when Sicily had freed herself with effort from the selfish sway of tyrants and was prosperous and powerful, two youths sate on the semi-circular seat of white marble which then faced the temple of Hera below the city of Acragas (Girgenti) in Sicily.

The night was one of late Spring. The bees had long ago sucked the honey from the white and pink blossom of the almond trees which grew around in thick groves, their fresh foliage and green velvet-covered fruit catching glints of moonlight as they moved to the gentle stir of the south-west wind. The moon at its full was past the zenith, dropping to the shining floor of the sea which glistened far below—a blue-black expanse shot with silver. The subtle scent of irises, of mint and of wild hyacinths filled the air. At times the stronger fragrance of

roses came on the breeze from the near gardens. All was silent in the hush of a great calm save for the chirp of the cicala, the continuous croak of the tree-frog, and the occasional hoot of the aziola.

The two youths, who silently rested within the precincts of the temple, were Hylas and Sikôn—the one a Greek of Acragas, the other from Palica, the Sikel city of the mountains, once a noble among a noble if primitive people, but now a freed slave among the Sicilian Greeks. The young men, equal in age and height, were both comely in face and figure. There similarity ceased, for Hylas, who vaunted his descent direct from the Rhodian founders of the city, was fair of countenance, with the classic regularity of profile and clustering hair about a high forehead of which the marble of Praxiteles has made immortal record; while Sikôn possessed the darker skin and more marked features of the old possessors of the land. And in this the two also differed. The former had the languid eyes and winning smile of one nursed in luxury, whose nature inclined to pleasant thoughts and kindly deeds, perhaps because the world had scarcely reckoned him as yet among its foes; whereas the latter possessed the look of determination and self-reliance which adversity stamps upon haughty natures, indicating hidden fires of fierce resolve, dormant or active, as love or hate, pain or pleasure, determine.

There had been a long silence. Hylas sate with

bowed head looking on the ground where, strewn at his feet, lay petals of a rose torn from the stem. Sikôn gazed at him sadly. At last the latter said soothingly :

“Do not be cast down. Though you have not spoken, I readily divine the cause of your melancholy—the reason of this summons to meet you here so late. Speak to ease your mind of evil thoughts, and let the stream of kindness that flows between you and me wash away the bitter undercurrent of regret.”

“Forgive me, Sikôn, for my mood, which is beyond all effort to control,” Hylas replied. “And forgive me too for calling you away from the feasts and merry-makings in the city. I would wish you to be there, albeit those very joys are hurting me as if Prometheus lived again and I were he.”

“That is naught, oh, Hylas. I took no part in those festivities, nor would I willingly, knowing that every goblet quaffed, each jest, each shout of joy, must cause you pain.”

“What! Though we have not met now for a month or more, you know all my secret?” the other rejoined.

“I know what all the world knows,” was the answer: “how Aglaia, the daughter of Antisthenes, who to-day has wedded that man of evil doing, that Thoas——”

“Sikôn, what is this? You spit upon the ground,

as if the name you speak is unholy to you, unclean. I, truly, have no cause to reverence that name, but you——”

“Ah, there are things which none can stomach, names which choke men in the utterance if by chance they rise to the lips unheedingly,” Sikôn answered. “Yet think not of me. For you and for your sorrow is my chief concern. As I was saying, I know full well Aglaia has played you false, has led you on to love her and then spurned you for another, aye, chiefly for love of gold and of that flitting shadow which men call power, for her husband at any rate can give her those.”

“It is true, my friend,” Hylas answered, “and I am here since dawn lamenting what I could not stay to witness—the revelry of her marriage day. I wandered far among the temples and the groves, seeking to forget, but I have been pursued by that relentless torture of rejoicing in the city. Even here the scene has haunted me; I picture to myself the great occasion for which Antisthenes has pined to show the world his wealth and lavish of hospitality at the wedding of his daughter.

“Nay, do not dwell upon what is past and done,” Sikôn objected; “Aglaia is now another’s wife, and is lost to you. And yet——”

“Yet the scene is ever present,” continued Hylas, not heeding the interruption. “I know the programme of the day, since perchance I was an un-

welcome listener to the order of the feast. I know full well, though I saw her not, how Aglaia, robed in white, left her father's house as dark came upon the city, torches without number flaring in the night to light her on her way to her new home, and how eight hundred horses swelled that great procession through the crowded streets. It was of course an opportunity for Antisthenes to vaunt the splendour of his riches, even in these days of show and pomp that make Acragas so famous. He could not forego the chance to outvie his fellow men."

"It is true," Sikôn replied, "and only once—at least so men said to-day—has Acragas seen the like of it, and that when Exenetos, a victor in the Olympian Games, made triumphant entry in a chariot escorted by three hundred more drawn by milk-white horses. When I hurried at your bidding to find you here, Antisthenes himself was feasting the people in the streets at long tables spread with meats and all that dainty mortals could demand, aye, and thirsty ones as well, for amphoræ of wine stood against the walls in endless rows in a manner that Gellias with his hundred tanks or more of vintage must surely envy. Thousands came, even the unbidden, for strangers from afar were made doubly welcome."

"The din and noise of that great carousing reached me here," said Hylas absently.

"Yet that was nothing to the revelry within the house of the giver of the feast, where precious

vessels weighed the board with priceless wines and luxuries," Sikôn continued. "Men marvelled at the prodigality that Antisthenes displayed."

"I see it all so clearly," Hylas murmured: "the guests in hundreds bedecked with jewels, gold as plentiful as copper in a rich man's kitchen; even the servitors in costly garb such as you or I would not disdain to wear; the halls garlanded with flowers; the calls for wine; the noisy hum of conversation; the bursts of merry laughter; and, most seen of all, Aglaia with her smooth white skin and jet black hair, the mistress of the banquet—at her side the man she now calls husband—her lustrous eyes turned on him, eager with anticipation of fulfilled desire. Ha ha!" he laughed harshly; "no need to tell *me* what you have gazed upon, for with the eye of jealousy I have seen all, not once, nor twice, but a thousand times or more."

Sikôn tried to interrupt his thoughts, but without avail.

"In my solitude," Hylas continued, "I cursed the day and hour which first brought Aglaia to my sight. And as if the Fates had not already filled my cup of suffering to overflowing, they pursued me here. At the solemn moment of the night when the cups were poured out in libation to Aphrodite, impiously proclaimed Protectress of a feast of which Love knew naught, by given signal from the citadel, as if by magic these mighty temples round me blazed with

fire, a trick to cajole the world that the gods themselves sanctioned the cursed union. Though that luridness, which painted the giant structures with touch of flame, was wonderful to behold; though the mountain city with all its palaces and towers glowed like the abode of the Lord of Hell; though the hills and plains and sky and sea reddened to the flare of that strange illumination, I fled into the darker recesses of the groves to shut from my eyes the unholy glare, which seemed to scorch my brain. It was all in vain. The trembling leaves, the spreading branches, the ground itself around me shone, and the stars with the moon above me were as blood—all the world conspired to mock me with that direful light."

"Hylas, speak not so; no woman is worthy——"

"Ah, if I could think like you," Hylas answered; "you, to whom a woman's love means so little now, since, as you say, you have no thought but for your wrongs, of which you will not speak save that you will be revenged some day. Revenge? Ah, it might be sweet! Tell me," he added with sudden interest, "is it truly said that you have vowed to be avenged: that by that awful lake among the mountains of your native land, in which no fish can live, nor even bird traverse in its flight, where the infernal fires belch forth their poisoned breath and churn its waters into black and boiling foam, solemn oaths bind men for ever if sworn in the names of those

twin gods you worship? Tell me, have you thus sworn?"

"Seek not to penetrate my secret, Hylas," Sikôn replied evasively, "for fear your affection for me vanish as surely as the snows on Ætna's flanks in summer. What knows your soul of hatred? What of vengeance? Or, if it know them, how faintly, as a stream of purest water is tainted by one drop of vinegar."

"How strange you are, my friend, and how mysterious," Hylas rejoined. "Yet scarce so strange, so unaccountable as our friendship either, for in nature we are far apart. Since you will not answer one, I will ask another question. Why is it, think you, that you and I are friends, each sworn to help and maintain the other: I so indolent, you so resolute and strong; you one in whom I trust, as much indeed as in that great man, my Master? Sikôn, I know not why I love you, for you and I are as if we had been born in different worlds: you a Sikel from the mountains, where life is hard and strange; I an Acragantine, reared in luxury, knowing naught but ease and careless self-indulgence."

"Seek not to penetrate that greater secret either," Sikôn replied, "for who can say why mortals love? It were tempting all the gods to seek a cause for so great a mystery. Let be. The fact remains, and it should suffice."

"Yet," continued Sikôn, seeing what he said

interested his companion, or at least served to distract his thoughts from brooding on the events of the day, "this I may say—that from the time, now two years since or more, you took me to your house a slave, when Ducetius, my king, fell from power before the hosts of Acragas and Syracuse, and I was held with other prisoners captive—naught but kind words and helpful sympathy to rouse me from my misery have I received. And then you gave me freedom, to make me, as you said, your equal, though that I can never be, for he who gives must always be the greater, not he who takes. I have good cause to love you, Hylas, even for mere gratitude. And as yet I have not been able to repay my debt."

"There is no debt to pay, Sikôn."

"I do not know. A time may come, perhaps is near at hand, when I the barbarian, as men call me here, may well requite that debt. Perhaps to-day, or yesterday, for midnight is now past, has seen the beginning of that time."

"Sikôn, sheathe that dagger with its quaint device to hurt," said Hylas hurriedly; "I fear to see it in your hand. I want nothing but your sympathy and friendship to help me pass these weary love-sick days. As for hatred and that malice born of envy, they should be laid aside, even the jealousy which now consumes me, else will Empedocles, my Master, say I am no worthy pupil, and mock me that the

first tussle with the enemy of my quiet has proved too grave a fight for my craven spirit."

"That is well said, oh Hylas. I see your courage is returning," Sikôn replied, replacing a dagger which in his excitement he had taken from the folds of his robe. "Let no sad thoughts vex you longer. Count on me at all times. I promise you my help to bring laughter to your heart. And that I swear by the Divine Pair—an oath I will renew by the shore of the holy lake, than which none is more sacred to a Sikel. But let us talk of things less sad. Tell me of that great Empedocles, of whom the whole world speaks. Is he the true sage, magician, seer and healer that men say he is?"

"Silence, speak not so loud, Sikôn," Hylas replied in a whisper; "some one approaches, and by the sacred fire of Hera I think Empedocles himself comes. I know him even from afar by the clang of his brazen shoes. Yes, it is he, communing with himself aloud as is his wont. Beware that we disturb him not in his meditations. Let us await his coming here without a word above a whisper."

CHAPTER II.

A SOUND of footsteps was heard on the sun-baked ground, and Empedocles, the Philosopher of Acragas, approached slowly by the path or terrace between the side of the temple and the furthest angle seaward of the great wall of the city. The two youths were hidden from sight by the marble balustrade of the terraced seat on which they rested. The tall figure of Empedocles, conspicuous for its grace and dignity of carriage, was clad in a flowing robe of purple. His head was adorned with a Delphic crown of gold, holding in place curling and abundant hair above a massive forehead. Unconscious of their presence, he paused so near the young men that Sikôn, in the bright moonlight, was able to plainly discern the features of a man of middle age, at once noble and regular, of which the almost serene beauty was marred by a melancholy of thought and suffering written about the brows, yet redeemed by a look of kindness, almost of pleading sympathy, in the eyes. The nose was straight; the mouth firm, with compressed lips.

Empedocles, wrapt in thought, was speaking to himself in disjointed sentences. He had strolled from the higher part of the city by the pathway leading to the Golden Gate, but half-way, turning to the left, had gone in the direction of the Temple of Demeter and Persephone, thence he had continued his way to the Temple of Hera, following the fortification, half wall of massive blocks of yellow stone, and half cliff, for Theron the Tyrant had impressed Nature, too, for the work of strengthening the celebrated defences of Acragas, which he had imposed upon the Carthaginian slaves captured at Himera. Empedocles had evidently been among the guests present at the wedding of Antisthenes' daughter, for in the words that reached Hylas and his companion, it was easy to understand contempt and protest, sorrow and pity against the useless prodigality of that entertainment entered largely into his thoughts and excited his anger. After a while the Philosopher roused himself from his reverie, and mounting the stylobate of three steps to the corner of the temple, leaned against a column and gazed towards the city. All sadness faded from his face.

"See how the fairness of what he looks upon soothes him," whispered Hylas to his companion; "it is ever thus. All things beautiful are to him as rain to parched meadows. Nature in her sad and joyous moods alike, the sound of music, what is best in painting and sculpture, lofty thoughts, high

ideals of life, above all, noble efforts of men to help their fellows, soothe and comfort him for the time, until the world intrudes once more with its crude realities."

Sikôn, not understanding, and wondering how such things could be, let his gaze wander to what Empedocles saw with so great a content. He, child of Nature as he was, also was moved. Northward, against a sky studded with stars innumerable, which, with the light of the moon, made night almost as bright as day, a high mountain, crowned by "the fairest of mortal cities," rose majestically in the distance, with its fortress, temples and columns standing out clear cut against the sky. To the right was the Rock of Athené, surmounted by the shrine of the Goddess; and stretching from that sacred spot to the plain in terraced regularity the more humble houses of the poor. Lower down, stately residences, porticoes and public buildings nestled among olive and almond trees. On either side Theron's famous wall, pierced with gates and dotted with low towers, enclosed the vast extent of the Greek city. Southward and beyond the wall was the sea; and east and west the silver thread of two rivers, like serpents in the shadow, glided tranquilly to the shore.

But beyond that scene so seductive to the eye, and yet more remarkable, were the monster edifices erected to the chosen deities of the Acragantines, in a long majestic line temple after temple, in whose

Doric simplicity, beauty and elegance, grandeur and magnificence met in friendly emulation. Far away on the right was the temple of the Great Mother and her Daughter, the divinities worshipped in the earlier days of settlement. Then that of Hera, to which Empedocles had come silently to the presence of the two friends. Further westward the shrine of the Healing God, with its heavy entablature, in silent beauty at the very verge of the cliff. Then of Herakles by the Golden Gate, wherein stood the bronze statue of the deity, so beautiful as to excite wonder and cupidity in those who looked upon it; and where also was the yet more priceless treasure of art—the picture of Alcmena, the mother of the divinity, than which Zeuxis declared he had never painted one more wonderful. Again the monster fabric of Olympian Zeus, surpassing all others in its size. Then the temple of the Twins; and lastly of Hephaistos by the murmuring waters of the river. Around were shady groves, in which curving palm branches mingled with the dark spires of cypresses; luxuriant gardens, where delicate blossoms added their scent to the fragrance of herbs and wild flowers; plains and valleys, mountains and the distant outline of the sea; all making a scene of untellable loveliness in the silver radiance of a summer night.

Empedocles remained a long time contemplating what was before him. Then, with a sigh, he turned to go, murmuring sorrowfully:

“Beauty, ah! yes, of that the world is full. But men know it not, nor even seek to learn its power.”

He descended the steep steps of the temple and continued his way towards the Golden Gate, passing slowly into the shadow of the night. The two young men watched as he went, listening to the sound of his brazen shoon until that too was lost in the distance .

Then Sikôn, addressing his companion, said :

“Tell me more of him. He fills me with great wonder, for there is that about him which binds me like a spell. Even yonder he seemed as if he were one apart from us, of another race, indeed.”

“You say truly, my friend. He is that and more. Among men he is supreme. Later I will speak of him, but not here. Now he is gone let us walk a little. To my home I cannot return. The very thought of walls and doors oppresses me. I would suffocate within a house.”

The young men rose. Passing the Temple of Herakles and leaving the Golden Gateway to the left, they descended from the higher plateau and soon reached the precincts of the temple of Olympian Zeus—that stupendous thank-offering for the victory of Himera which Theron the Tyrant commenced, but which neither he nor any man lived to see completed before ruin came to it. The shadow of the immense edifice with its colossal columns lay long and black on the ground about them. The enormous

carved Atlantides, supporting the sculptured Metopes and the roof, towered above them. Here they tarried.

“There is no better place than by so great a temple to speak of so great a man,” said Hylas, settling himself comfortably within the fluting of a pillar, so largely and deeply cut as to receive his entire body. Here will I tell you something of Empedocles as you wish, though it were presumptuous of me, so young, to say much concerning him. This is what I know. His father was Meton, and he a son of the older Empedocles, who won the crown for victory in the Olympian games. The old man was a pupil of Pythagoras, from whom he acquired his learning and ways of life. Empedocles the younger was a victor in the games. That he also wears the crown of victory is no small part of my master’s honest pride, for there is no greater glory to us Greeks. You remember what Lacon said to Diagora of Rhodes, when he, victorious, also saw his two sons crowned?”

Sikôn shook his head, “The Sikels set not much store on athletic games,” he said. Hylas smiled compassionately and continued:

“Lacon said—it shows how we confide in manly energy and courage—‘Die now, Diagora, for greater honour cannot come to you than this.’ There was nothing left to live for, Lacon thought. As for my master,” Hylas continued, “wealthy by birth,

Empedocles grew up, administering well the riches of his house, leading a sober youth, honourable and refined. He sought wisdom from the Muses first, and then from men whose fame goes far beyond our Sicily and Greece. First to Xenophanes he went, but he soon out-learnt all that that philosopher had to teach; then to Parmenides of Elis, the great and wise, who loved him above all his pupils, and taught him until there was no more to learn. From him, as Empedocles has told me, he acquired the love of poetry wherewith he clothes his words in verse, the better, as he says, to convey the lofty expression of his thoughts. Then to Nature and her philosophy he turned, to the glorious heights of which he wished to climb. From the writings of Pythagoras he drank deep draughts of wisdom, steeping his soul in the subtle wisdom of that sage. At heart he was and is of the Pythagorean School, though latterly it would have none of him, nor he of it; its rules of conduct were too eclectic, too discretional. He is too great to accept the fiat of one man."

"To us at Palica, even the name of Pythagoras was known," interposed Sikôn, who listened with attention to what Hylas said, "and Ducetius laid store on what he taught, in theory that is, for, as you know, our king was no friend to Grecian domination, and Pythagoreans aimed at power no less menacing for the subtlety of its hold."

“Finding that great school too narrow and incomplete,” Hylas resumed, “Empedocles started for the Eastern world, the true seat of deeper learning. There he plunged into the Oriental mysteries of theologies, which, he says, are much above the Greek ideals of religious thought, as the crested wave above the caverns of the sea. There he dwelt among the priests as one of them, to learn the great secrets of theurgic magic—the key that opens to the benign presence of the deities of Intelligence and Power, by whose aid mortals may hope to approach the throne of the great divinity.

“Afterwards Empedocles came to his Sicilian home, strong in resolve, stronger yet in the holiness of the cause he had adopted—the desire to help his fellow men. But the time was unpropitious. Tyrants reigned in Acragas, and the people were untaught, unwilling, not knowing what the great Reformer planned for them in his heart. He waited as a tree the sun and rain to bring the buds to blossom. Yet he was not idle. Hundreds flocked to hear him speak of things lost sight of in the clash of war, in the tyranny which crushed men to earth, in the search for riches, in self-indulgence, for who in Acragas then thought of Nature’s laws and the duty of man to man, of wisdom and the fairness of virtue; above all the beauty which underlies created things, that beauty which Empedocles said just now ‘men ever fail to see’?”

“How did he assert his power? How did men come to know him?” Sikôn asked.

“Theron died, and Thrasydaios, who came next to rule, hated and scorned, defeated also by the greater Hiero of Syracuse, fled, and met his death at Megara. Thus the house of Emmenid fell, and with it ceased the years of slavery that Phalaris had brought. At last the opportunity arose for which Empedocles longed. He came from his retirement and proudly proclaimed himself. Fearful that the tyranny might arise again, anxious that greater liberty should befall his native land, boldly at a banquet he accused his host, and one, a favoured guest, who was in power and held high office, of designs against the State—plans well studied as he knew, and now confirmed by the action of the guests who dared to acclaim and treat that one as king. Before the Senate he denounced them both, host and guest, for treason; and they met their fate. Empedocles was their accuser, and the champion of the people’s cause. Soon, word by word, and phrase by phrase, his wisdom caught the ear, and then the fancy of the multitude. Thus he acquired his power. No sudden change was meant, no hasty revolution. The Sage but sought to turn men’s thoughts from evil, and make them seek the good.”

“How strange it seems,” said Sikôn, sitting down on the highest of the several steps giving access

to the floor of the temple, where Hylas joined him, "how strange that a man by means of words should win men's minds and hearts. With us it is by deeds alone we gain their confidence."

"Had you heard Empedocles speak more often, Sikôn, you would no longer wonder at his power," Hylas replied. "His voice is as the music which he himself at times draws from the lyre he plays with so great a skill, sweet and full of fascination. Yet his words are much more potent, for they betray the inner power, the man of learning, the seer, the poet, the man of State. In speech is no limit to his imagination, he moulds men's minds like clay on a potter's wheel. Thus he dominates the suave and courteous Acragantines, raising them to the further heights of great enthusiasm, or thrusts them to the lowest depths of suffering and despair. I have seen them cry and laugh for joy at the pictures which he draws, and then bemoan their fate in sobs and sighs. Aye, shout and storm with rage and fury, passing from passive hearing to muttered curses, thence to fevered action for the wrongs so vividly described. Before Empedocles none knew so well nor taught the power of Rhetoric, nor deemed it even an art to cultivate. Only now has that school arisen at his bidding, seeing the authority which speech bestows. Yet am I persuaded his hold on men comes not from words alone, sublime as they may be, for there is much which underlies the charm

of his discourse—sanctity of life, a singleness of aim, which make men honour him the more.”

“So great his power, why then did Empedocles refuse the crown of sovereignty the people offered him?” Sikôn asked. “It is said he might have been king.”

“Those who love him not, and there are many here, since the ancient rulers deprived of power, and moved by hate, are thirsting for revenge, say he feared to lose the people’s constancy. But it was not so—far from it. ‘What!’ he cried, when the citizens, hailing him as their saviour, begged him wield the sceptre for their sakes, ‘what! cast to the winds the labour of my life, my tenderest hopes, and become a king? Have I preached equality and the common rights of man only to help me climb a throne? The thought is vile!’ He scorned the joys of kingship, if joys there be. Yet, withal, I think he truly began to reign when he refused to govern; for then his throne was planted firmly in the people’s hearts, and his head adorned with a brighter diadem than one of gold—that of gratitude and love.”

“What of his music—that subtle influence he employs, of which I have no knowledge, except it be a noise the shepherds make with reeds upon the mountain sides?” Sikôn asked. “They say he is so great a master upon the lyre that he charms away the evil vapours which assail the brain.”

"Alas, poor Sikôn," was the answer, "you have much to learn, since you speak of music thus. To us Greeks, music is not noise, but as the voice of gods; or, as some say, the sound of the sea, the moan of the wind, the joyful song of the birds by day and night, caught and stayed in mid air, and there combined returned to the earth in melody. A healing art, a spell, too, is music, that is often used for suffering man. Priests say it makes us pure. Surely it induces rest, when tired eyelids will not close in sleep. It soothes, consoles, and even cures distempers. Why, only a week ago or more, in the house of Anchites, father of the wise Pausanias, a mad youth, charmed by the Sage's music, was cured of his insanity. I was a witness of the cure, and saw the young man drop the sword by which he sought to kill a friend, trembling at the notes from Empedocles' lyre, as the wild beasts when Orpheus played."

"And what about his power over wind and rain, for I have heard it said he may stay the gales that cause destruction, and bring moisture to crops that languish?"

"All that and more my master does," rejoined Hylas. "In bleak districts where dread Æolus holds sway, raging among the valleys and the hills, he has made men build great walls to still his fury. And on the mountain sides, where all before was barrenness, trees grow at his command, which invite

the rains, calling from the earth its fields of waving corn and grass. Thus has Acragas become a pasture land, in which untold herds wander as they will. At Selinous is he worshipped as well as here. When the city was struck down by pestilence, which carried off young and old, causing women to miscarry for very fear, his greater knowledge discerned the cause—a stagnant stream poisoned by the sun, which, at his own cost, he purged by channels from other streams, thus changing the stinking waters into bright and sparkling flood. Thereat the Selinuntines in their gratitude hail him as a god, according him divine honours, of which the medals struck to commemorate the noble deed will perpetuate the record for all time.

“But see,” Hylas continued, “morning paints the East already; and since evil dreams, even if dreamt by men awake, should end with night, we will go up to the city, and, as Empedocles would enjoin, face serenely the suffering that perchance the day may bring.”

CHAPTER III.

“THOAS has fallen! Great Thoas is dead!” was the sinister rumour that flitted silently through Acragas like night-birds on the wing early one morning several months following that moonlit evening when Hylas and Sikôn had talked together among the temples. The information had been whispered secretly to a trusted companion by a slave, who, fearful to be the first to make known so direful an event, had found his master at daybreak lying dead on the floor of his room. Then it spread rapidly to the many awe-stricken dependents of the dead man.

The news descended to the street. From the Acropolis, where Thoas had his dwelling, it passed from mouth to mouth, as ill news will, mysteriously and rapidly, to shops and markets, to the squares and public meeting-places, from house to house, to the terraced ways beyond, to the plain, to the temples where many had already gathered to pay morning tribute to the gods, to the gardens about the Fish-pond—the favoured haunt of idlers during all parts

of the day, and, through the gates of the city, to the Emporium, to the fisher-folk by the sea, to the farther harbour and to all the country-side. That wave of evil tidings became at last like a rushing torrent, gathering force as it went and sparing none on its course.

The announcement was received with incredulity at first, then with concern and amazement, for the dead man had been seen in health the day before, and all the more because he was still in the forefront of men's observation, not only because of the high place he occupied in the State but on account of the remarkable rejoicings on his marriage with the daughter of the rich Antisthenes.

"Thoas dead!" The words were on the lips of everyone. Further information soon followed, which increased the consternation. It was said that his end had come by foul means, that he had been killed during the night, or rather in the early hours of the morning, for when found his body was yet warm, though set with the rigour of death.

What had been before amazement then turned to indignation. A sudden death among the several hundred thousand inhabitants of Acragas was of small moment; even that of one of power and opulence as was Thoas would be short-lived and soon forgotten. There were many other things to demand attention among the pleasure-seeking crowds of that wonderful city. But a murder, and a

mysterious murder too—for beyond the fact that Thoas had been found lying in a pool of blood on the floor, struck down, none could tell by whose hand—stirred the people to the depths of their being, and roused them from the apathy born of self-indulgence, which was the principal feature of their easy-going and luxurious existence. Now instead, listless minds became suddenly alert, and idle folk active with an energy begotten of curiosity. People forsook their occupations and poured forth from the houses to gather in knots and discuss the occurrence. Shops were left unattended. Those in the country hurried homeward at once on learning the news, unwilling to be absent from the scene of so startling an event.

The popular feeling swelled and grew in intensity. There must be a hidden meaning for the crime, men said. And what? Thoas, it was true, had enemies—men rich and powerful seldom escape them, especially one who derived his wealth from many sources, principally usury as did he. But, though the man enjoyed no great esteem in the minds of his fellow citizens, it was not likely he had fallen a victim to a revengeful debtor, for he was not an exacting creditor, though careful to demand ample security for what he lent.

No, the cause must be sought elsewhere. Some nodded their heads wisely, and alluded darkly to Aglaia, the widow, who, they said, probably knew

more about her husband's death than most if she chose to speak, for of late angry words had passed between them, and discord reigned in the house of the newly-married pair.

Besides it was whispered that Aglaia, soon after marriage, which everyone was aware was a loveless one, had recalled to her side former admirers, with whom she passed her time when Thoas happened to be absent during his frequent journeys on business. The voice of scandal, in fact, had been busy with her name, and as she was known to be of a passionate and wayward nature, rumour was not checked by any admiration for her character.

Conjecture followed on conjecture, doubt upon doubt. Speculation of all kinds was rife. Theories were propounded and eagerly listened to. The most extravagant solutions were suggested and obtained credence. So great, indeed, seemed the mystery, that it was even avowed the death was the work of the immortal gods, whom Thoas must have offended in some unknown way.

Again, many declared the crime a political one. Party feeling ran high in Acragas, and it was maintained that Thoas had fallen because his wealth was known to assist the cause of those who, ousted from power through the working of Empedocles, had lost none of their animosity, and were but awaiting the opportunity to avenge themselves, and to wrest from the people the greater authority which Empedocles

had placed in their hands. To forward that view, and hoping to embroil the philosopher with the populace, secret emissaries mixed freely with the crowds collected in the streets throughout the day, suggesting that Thoas had been murdered to remove a powerful adversary not only, but that this was the first blow of others to follow aimed at the rich and powerful in the city. Then it was that the name of Hylas, the friend and disciple of Empedocles, was mentioned in connection with the deed, more especially as it was generally known that he had been in love with Aglaia previous to her marriage and that he had been seen once more at her side.

Notwithstanding all these conjectures, the enigma of the murder remained as unintelligible as before. Only one significant fact leaked out, which rather increased than diminished the wonder: the wound which had brought death to Thoas was said to be a remarkable as well as a fatal one.

In the absence of Empedocles, the healer, who was on one of his many journeys at the invitation of neighbouring cities to deliver orations or advise on matters of local interest, Akrôn and Pausanias, his friends, enjoying second to him the greatest reputation as doctors in Acragas, had been summoned to her husband's side by Aglaia. Though those physicians could only confirm what was surmised at first, that death had been instantaneous, they added that the wound presented an uncommon appearance, being

torn and jagged as if inflicted by an unusual weapon. They could throw no light on the deed further than that, any more than they could render any assistance to the stricken man. All indeed was wrapped in mystery, and nothing but pure supposition could suggest any clue as to the murderer, or afford any hope of bringing him to justice.

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The days following that night of Hylas' mental suffering among the temples had been spent by him in companionship and constant intercourse with Empedocles. Hylas had poured out his woes in his Master's ears. So great an influence did the latter exercise on those who sought his advice and assistance, that the young man, following the elder's precepts, became gradually reconciled to the blow his self-love had received, and learned to direct his thoughts to those higher subjects of which Empedocles never tired of speaking.

He found relief in the potent charm of the philosopher's teaching, which irresistibly won not only the reverence but the complete concurrence of his listeners. He found consolation in the lofty views of the duties of humanity as expounded by Empedocles, who, while admitting the full force and bitterness of the ordinary trials of existence, would dismiss them from consideration as transient, evanescent, ephemeral, to be studied rather than suffered,

to be passed over rather than accepted seriously, regarded as transitory disturbers of man's equanimity rather than allowing them to affect his endeavours towards a high ideal of conduct. And, above all, Hylas was moved by the unceasing and active practice of what the Sage declared to be the true doctrine of life: the sacrifice of self in the higher interest of mankind and the continuous search for and discovery of that eternal Beauty of created things, which was the foundation of his belief, the mainspring of his actions, and the talisman by which he hoped to realise his sacred aspiration of redeeming the world from misery and suffering. Though such teaching was not new, as Hylas, fond of speculative study from his youth, was well aware, it found greater force and emphasis when put forward by one whose whole life was devoted to its exemplification. That magical power of fixed resolve and innate conviction; that atmosphere of compelling mastery which surrounds some men, more felt than recognised, a subtle domination rather than an avowed authority, which is indifferently and vaguely termed personality, held undivided sway in the person and presence of Empedocles; and Hylas, together with the crowd of eager youths who flocked from the cities of Sicily and Major Greece to join the older disciples sitting at the feet of the Sage, fell completely under the spell, and allowed his life henceforth to be ruled according to the guidance of the Master.

Hylas was called upon soon to prove by his own conduct that this seed of philosophical teaching had not fallen on barren ground. The woman he had loved with all the passion of his young southern nature, now tired of the restraint imposed upon her by marriage and weary of the loneliness to which her husband, busy with his own affairs, left her, soon attempted to draw him again to her side. At first his better nature rebelled, and he refused to obey the bidding. Then, yielding to insistence for an interview, he went to her. A stormy scene followed. Entreaties, cajolings, tears, threats, flattery, all the bewitchery of an unscrupulous woman intent on gaining her purpose at all costs, were used in turn. But to no purpose. If the flame of his former love for Aglaia was not dead—and he knew it still lay dormant in the recesses of his nature ready to burst out anew if not kept firmly in subjection—Hylas at least was sufficiently strengthened by the discipline of the last few months to keep strict watch on his thoughts, a severe check on his feelings, and to avoid the humiliation of surrendering to temptation strong though it was.

Aglaia and he parted with angry words, she vowing to be revenged for her slighted love; he lamenting that the ideal, which had once occupied so large a part of his being, had thus been so miserably shattered.

When this final rupture occurred, Hylas had not

the companionship of his friend, for Sikôn, who had remained with his benefactor for some time, seeing that the other had partially recovered his serenity of mind, left him to visit some lands of Hylas' near Gela. Sikôn wrote occasionally from there. His communications were couched in the same terms of pity and encouragement which had marked his conduct towards the other; for in the depths of his savage nature he conceived that Hylas must still retain, if secretly, the same burning desire to possess Aglaia which he openly professed at the time of her marriage with Thoas. In his answers, Hylas did not think to tell him of the change that had come upon him through the teaching of Empedocles.

To the Sikel, a son of the ancient soil and from the hilltops of Sicily, where the finer instincts of civilisation had never penetrated, the ardent wish to have become as one of the main objects of living. An oath to love or hate, to save or protect, to harass and destroy, if taken in the names of the mysterious Twin Deities on the shores of that black and seething lake of his own country, as has been said, was the predominating rule of conduct, the one absorbing hope and aspiration, to neglect which would entail countless horrors in this world and inappeasable regret in the next. There was no drawing back from such an oath, and Sikôn was now bound by a double one, for he had once more hastened to the

sacred city by the side of the lake to record his second vow before the avenging gods of his people, the fulfilment of which he now awaited with fixed intent and relentless impatience.

CHAPTER IV.

THE evening in Acragas following the death of Thoas was no less agitated than the earlier part of the day. On the contrary, the excitement of the crowds, which still filled the streets, had gained considerably, for as the different rumours concerning the murder grew in number so the people became more greatly exercised in their minds. The inhabitants had been on foot all day. They yet remained, awaiting the midnight hour, when it was known the funeral procession would issue from the dead man's house, to wend its way through the terraced streets unto the plain below by the Gate of Herakleia and the Bridge of the Dead to the Necropolis beyond the west wall of the city.

The magnificent tomb which Thoas had prepared for himself in his lifetime, was to be occupied that night, and all the notable people of Acragas would be there to do honour to his memory. It was a demonstration not only of pity, but of protest also, from which an ulterior object was not wanting. Some of the more guileless said it was a pity that Empe-

docles was absent, for he, though no great friend of Thoas', nor any of his faction, moved by so solemn an occasion, might have been prevailed upon to deliver an oration, which would have added much to the solemnity of the ceremony.

The tints of sunset had faded from a sky that had illuminated the city, the sea, the plain and the surrounding mountains with a crimson and unearthly radiance. At the rapid approach of dusk single and radiant stars appeared. The evening was one of complete calm. In the distant cemetery, clearly to be seen from the Acropolis, torches cast their fitful glow on the marble tomb of Thoas, which stood out high and squarely from among the others. Diminutive figures moved around it, making the last preparations for the reception of its occupant. Southward the gigantic temples were faintly discernible. There was a hum of conversation in the open space before Thoas' house as the people waited, but it was subdued like the murmur of wind among pine-trees, not the roar of a tempest as before, now that the moment of the passing of the dead man was so near. Only from afar came the greater noises of the crowd who had less cause to compose themselves than those gathered in the vicinity of the house of mourning. Men felt instinctively some clue to the mystery, which had filled their minds so completely all day, would be forthcoming. None would risk being absent at such a moment. Besides it was

rumoured that Gorgias, the great lawyer and orator, who had learnt his art from Empedocles, and of whom it had been said "he had held the Athenians in the palm of his hand by the magic of his word"—would in the absence of the Philosopher speak of the murder, and perhaps indicate where the sword of justice might strike to avenge the deed. Such a treat was worth waiting for. And if the cavalcade of Thoas, the bridegroom, had been marvellous in its splendour as he conducted his bride to her new home in the city, surely the procession of Thoas, the corpse, would be scarcely less remarkable for pomp on leaving the house for his new abode among the tombs. So expectancy beguiled the hours of waiting.

Shortly before midnight a large concourse, composed of the Proagoras, or Chief Magistrate, all the great men of the city, the relatives and friends of the deceased, and the soldiery, had assembled in the large open space or the square of the Acropolis before Thoas' house. Lights shone from every aperture. The doorways were open to the night. The subdued sound of much doing within came from them. The glare of torches lit up the surrounding buildings. The head of the procession was marshalled in long line down the principal way. The Senate and others of consequence waited to follow the body as soon as it should be brought out.

It was at the moment when the bier borne on the shoulders of eight stalwart bearers issued from the

door followed by Aglaia, who was veiled, and leaning on the arm of Antisthenes her father, that Hylas, elbowing his way through the crowd, hurriedly approached to take his place in the procession. He was a noble, and though he would willingly have absented himself from the ceremony, his high position in the city, and being a former friend of Aglaia, demanded that he should pay this last tribute to her husband.

Aglaia's glance, which had wandered eagerly among the crowd, met his, and a gleam of satisfied hate shone from her eyes. Advancing towards Hylas, her veil now thrown back and pointing at him, she screamed, rather than spoke, in a voice that carried far:

"Stay. At this solemn moment, when my honoured husband leaves his home and all he held most dear, behold the man by whom he met his death. Hylas, son of Electron, I denounce you as the murderer of Thoas, and may my curses follow you to your unhallowed grave."

The procession had stopped at Aglaia's bidding. The silence which the presence of the dead commanded was rudely broken. The people's excitement of the morning was as the rumbling of a distant storm to the thunderclap of indignation and protest which now burst about the group. The pent-up feelings found terrific outbursts in imprecations and threats of vengeance:

“Hylas the murderer!” “Hylas the rejected lover!” “Hylas has killed the good Thoas!” “To death with the assassin!”

The cries voiced in the Acropolis were carried by hundreds of throats to the crowds below, repeated a thousandfold along the road to the Necropolis. In an instant all was turmoil and commotion. Blood surged to men’s brains. The lust of it filled their souls. The populace, convulsed with rage, rushed forward to seize the object of their fury. The soldiery, taken by surprise, was impotent to restrain.

Hylas, overwhelmed at so grave an accusation, and for the moment deprived of speech, stood with his back to a column and was silent. He was entirely at the mercy of the mob. Yet he flinched not. Then unsummoned and unsought, certain of his friends gathered round him. He was safe from immediate molestation. When at last he found speech he exclaimed proudly:

“I hurl the foul charge back in the teeth of her who makes it: it is false—false as the lips that framed it.”

The soldiers by this time had pushed back the crowd and formed a circle before the house. In the centre was the bier with the body of Thoas supported on the shoulders of the bearers. Aglaia and her father had advanced to the foot and were facing the Proagoras. The Senators, who had collected together, were holding hurried consultation. Hylas

and his friends also came forward and silently awaited the result of their deliberation. The Progoras, by name Echion, then spoke :

“Of the two alternatives proposed: that of arresting the accused and deferring judgment, and of hearing the accusation now with the defence that the accused may make, we propose the latter. What says Aglaia, the widow of the dead Thoas? And what Hylas?”

Hylas offered no objection. He had no fear of the result. Aglaia exclaimed :

“Let justice be done forthwith, I say also; the man before you can have to-morrow no better answer than he can frame to-day. Here in the presence of my murdered husband I would rather speak, and clear my name from suspicion, for men say that even I too assisted at the crime—a foul charge. Here then is my proof,” she added, “this dagger which bears the name of Hylas on the hilt wrought curiously. My serving-woman found it beneath the bed this morning soon after my husband fell, swept there and forgotten in the hurry of the deed. See the blade is thick with blood that is scarcely dry. Step forward, woman,” Aglaia said, turning to an attendant, “and confirm what I have said.”

One of the female servants, also closely veiled, advanced and related that when the man-slave had found his master's body in the morning and had told her of the fact, she had gone to the room where she

had picked up the dagger now produced. She swore to it, by the gods in whom she trusted.

When this was known the indignation of the crowd broke out again and it was some time before a voice could be heard, save that of the soldiery loudly enjoining silence.

“What say you to so damning a proof?” said the Proagoras, turning to Hylas. “Speak freely, yet be careful of your words, for surely in them will lay your life or death.”

“I deny the charge as I denied before. Though the dagger is truly mine—I have not seen it for many days. I lost it, I know not how. I wear not such weapons now. Yet stay, I recollect that I——”

“Ah! listen to the lies his false tongue frames,” Aglaia hastily interrupted. “I demand——”

“Silence, Aglaia, let Hylas speak,” Echion protested. “He has much to answer for if your accusing is well laid.” But Hylas did not speak. Then turning to two of the chief men who surrounded him, the magistrate said:

“Great Akrôn and Pausanias, truthful men and sober citizens, relate all that you know about the crime, for you were called to give your aid and were among the first to see the murdered man.”

“We know but one thing,” said Akrôn, “and that is soon told: the blow was swift and sure, death was instantaneous. It surely came by some weapon similar to that which Aglaia has produced, said to

belong to Hylas, one that can be carried easily and used at will. I have nothing else to add save Thoas had been dead some hours when we were called to see him."

"Stay, Akrôn," Pausanias here interrupted, "you forget one point that is not devoid of interest: the wound was lacerated as if the weapon had been withdrawn with difficulty after the deed was done—a wound curiously inflicted, the like of which I have never seen."

Hylas started and grew paler. That moonlight night among the temples, Sikôn's strange conduct, the hatred shown at the mention of Thoas' name, the dagger, which he had seen before and which corresponded with the description now given by Pausanias, all flashed to his mind in an instant. The deed then was the work of Sikôn. He had had some unknown cause for hatred of Aglaia's husband; and more than that, from the words that he had let drop inadvertently Hylas now understood that a double motive prompted Sikôn to commit the crime—desire not only to wreak a personal vengeance for some cause unknown, but the hope that by removing Thoas he would recover for him the hand and love of Aglaia, the loss of which had affected his friend so deeply. The full force and significance of the Sikel oath came home to Hylas in this fleeting thought.

To Hylas, the disciple and chosen companion of

Empedocles, follower of the Pythagorean doctrine, the taking of life in any form was a crime, of human life except in self-defence an abomination, and at first Hylas felt almost as great a repugnance at the possibility that his friend should have committed a murder as that he himself should have been accused of it. But then he remembered the nature of Sikôn, reared amid surroundings of which self-protection and self-assertion were the first essentials of living, differed largely from his, and that he could not be judged by the same moral standard of conduct. There was that oath, too, that strange mysterious bond, sworn in the hot haste of youthful anger and indignation, caused by some wrong under which he writhed in the first place no doubt; and in the second by the sworn desire to help his friend: an oath terribly and inexorably binding. Such considerations greatly reduced the enormity of the offence in Hylas' mind and caused him to dwell more on the love of one who could make so great a sacrifice for his sake, for Sikôn could not have been unaware of the fatal consequences of his act if he had been really guilty as he supposed. In a flash Hylas' thoughts—notwithstanding the menaces which had broken out around him again—turned in anticipation to his own country-house where his friend was; to the angry knocking at the door by the soldiers sent to take him; to the scorn and indignation of the populace on his being brought to Acragas

to be tried; to his speedy condemnation; to his horrible death by torture. The barbarities of Phalaris still lingered among Acragantine customs, and a barbarian such as Sikôn was held to be would be spared none of them.

On the other hand, Hylas recalled the devotion and affection with which, as slave first, and then as friend, Sikôn had served him. He remembered his own oath to support and sustain the other in adversity. Was an oath less binding on Hylas the Greek than on Sikôn the Sikel? It could not be. And was Sikôn to die at the word—the sole word of his friend?

That word Hylas knew at once he could never speak. Death might be bitter, under such circumstances terribly bitter, for he would go to his grave foresworn, loathed by his fellow men, his memory become a by-word and a reproach. But it was better to die than betray.

To his romantic nature, emphasised by his special training, the idea of self-extinction on the altar of friendship almost commended itself. The beauty of it was alluring. In the days hereafter, when his innocence should be established, his name would be lauded, handed down as one who courted death rather than be false to a friend he had sworn to help.

It was with such thoughts that Hylas was occupied while the Proagoras consulted with those about him.

The bearers, weary of their burden, had deposited the bier on stools hastily brought from the house, and silently waited for orders to resume their journey.

Aglaia seeing there was delay in the proceedings, which she had carefully planned beforehand, again interposed, saying:

“Not only is this dagger that of Hylas, and by it he did the deed, but also I vow I saw him wandering near my house last night; and he was noticed by another, my faithful woman, who has just spoken. See, she confirms what I have just said.”

“Is it true that you were near Thoas’ house last night?” Echion asked, turning to Hylas.

“It is true, Echion. I have naught to hide, I was close to this spot last night,” was the measured reply.

A yell broke from the crowd at this admission, which seemed to be an avowal of guilt.

“Death to Hylas!” “Revenge!” “Let him die!” burst from all sides.

“Do you admit the crime then?” the Proagoras asked gravely.

No answer came.

“I repeat: do you admit the crime? Does the death of Thoas lie at your door, Hylas?”

Again no answer.

The commotion assumed such alarming proportions that the soldiery had much difficulty in keep-

ing open the space before the bier, in restraining the excited mass of human beings, their faces distorted now with hate and eyes glaring with the lust for blood.

With difficulty silence was restored and Echion again spoke:

“Hylas, you have selected thus to be tried, you stand almost self-condemned. Yet the inevitable sentence shall not be given here, but by the superior court to-morrow. Soldiers, remove your prisoner, and guard him safely from the populace, that Justice be not robbed of what is her right. Let the corpse be now taken to its burial,” he continued: “it is not seemly thus to treat the dead.”

A gleam of satisfaction shot from Aglaia's eyes as she hastily dropped her veil and resumed her place in the procession. As the bearers again hoisted the bier to their shoulders, preparatory to starting afresh, the sounds of another and more distant uproar came from the lower city. It grew louder in confused cries; then more distinctly in shouts of welcome as if a hero returned in triumph from a war. Soon one name was distinctly heard, “Empedocles,” “Empedocles the Great Physician,” “Empedocles the Great and Good,” “Empedocles the divine Philosopher.”

Those who had been foremost in inciting popular fury against Hylas, now looked at one another uneasily. Their discomfort was visibly increased as

Empedocles himself, dressed in the long cloak of purple and the gold crown on his head, stepped from the crowd roughly pushed on one side by those who accompanied him. Many knelt reverently and asked a blessing as the Sage swept majestically towards Hylas and his guards, and the groups formed by Aglaia, Antisthenes and the bearers of the corpse.

From the faces of the multitude hatred and the lust of blood faded, to give way to the look that greets the arrival of a welcome friend.

CHAPTER V.

TO understand the sudden change in the conduct of the people, which the unexpected arrival of Empedocles caused among that dangerously excited crowd of human beings, it is necessary to speak more fully of the position which he held in Acragas at the time.

As Hylas had told his friend Sikôn, Empedocles had emerged from his life of retirement, about which the common folk had woven strange tales of his goodness, his wisdom and his powers, to be the leading spirit of their down-trodden aspirations, and, as they hoped, the saviour, as he was their consoler.

It has been seen that Empedocles had devoted his life to the study of the more abstruse branches of philosophy, first walking in the footsteps of the ancient teachers; then, having obtained from them all there was to learn, turning his thoughts to the broader and higher branches of knowledge—the study of Nature as applied to the understanding of life and its mysteries. In formulating his theory of the world's existence (which he did in so complete a manner that one principal contention concerning

the elements, unknown until his time, has been universally accepted as an axiom), he naturally and principally became absorbed in the investigation of the cause, the being, the reason of human life. From the teaching of the Pythagorean School he had learnt that the universal laws of creation had been beauty, harmony, just proportion and equal correspondence. From that he deduced that the life of man should also be beautiful, well regulated and harmonious.

To the mind of a reformer like Empedocles, the should-be rapidly developed into the must-be; and in consequence he devoted all his energies to that end. He had attacked the tyrannical form of government existing in Acragas, because it was in the hands of the corrupt few to the detriment of the many. He could not contemplate without indignant protest and resistance the oppression which that caused among his fellow-citizens, and which shocked his love of beauty, his sense of fairness. He aimed not at depriving the wealthy of their share in governing, only at excluding all save those who were capable and honest. He desired equalisation of power, and power for those capable to wield it. To strength of mind, great tenacity of purpose and singleness of aim, he added the mature wisdom of a profound thinker, combined with business habits and a consummate knowledge of men. There was that within him, indeed, which made him a born leader of mankind, a subtle power almost of mag-

netism, by which he imposed his will on others. Such gifts could not fail to cause him to triumph as soon as the opportunity might be given him.

Another potent cause of influence was great—his proficiency in the art of healing. It was also a principal factor in enabling him to gain the end he had in view. Medicine was then a science chiefly in the hands of priests. Curing was greatly the work of charmers. He had learnt the art of both when he was received as a student of old-world mysteries by the priests, among whom he lived during his visit to the East. So little was the art of healing generally known in Sicily before his time that those who practised it successfully were looked upon as possessing supernatural powers.

Empedocles, learned in anatomy, and insisting on moderation in all things—more especially in a simple diet and observance of strict rules of hygiene in daily life—easily effected remarkable cures; and he was soon regarded by an ignorant people prone to ascribe to supernatural causes any great success in combating their arch enemy, Death, not only on account of the remarkable treatises which he wrote, but also from the active practice of his precepts, as one holding the scales of life and death.

It may be said that Empedocles traded in that superstitious tendency to enhance his power and forward the end he had in view. At any rate, he did not decline nor protest against the attributes of

superhuman aid in his work, knowing that thereby his influence for good would be the greater, and the realisation of his hopes more secure. It was a common fault among the sophists of his day who aspired to awe as well as lead men by their superior attainments. His power was derived from other sources also. Deep study of the laws of cause and effect enabled him to assist Nature in their fuller development. There is little doubt that he saved the inhabitants of the neighbouring Selinous from dire pestilence by draining malaria-giving swamps in the manner already indicated, and in modifying the climatic and agricultural surroundings of Acragas by planting and by irrigation on a vast scale, and in a manner so thorough as to bring fertility to barren lands. His reputation lost nothing by the fact that the cost was defrayed from his own purse.

He shared the lives of the common people, ministering to their wants, sympathising with their troubles and taking active interest in their occupations. Possessed of great wealth, he was able to supplement the promptings of a kind-hearted nature by tangible proofs of his sympathy. He would give portions to dowerless maidens, and assist personally at the marriage feasts which he also supplied.

Again, to the more refined, his talent as a poet greatly enhanced his reputation, at a time when poetry was regarded as one of the most powerful and noblest of the arts. All Greece revered him for

his verses, which were regarded as equal to those of Homer or of Hesiod. To the seriously-minded, his moral precepts in regard to the up-bringing of youth and the training of the human mind, by which men should strive to attain to the attributes of the Divine, greatly recommended him. In short, in un-biassed minds he occupied a position as great as any of the sages of old, combining in himself the supreme gifts of poet, philosopher and physician.

This was the man who suddenly appeared in the public square the evening following the murder of Thoas and the arrest of Hylas.

The late moon had risen behind the older temples of Zeus Atabyrios and Athene on the Acropolis, casting its light on that strange scene enacted before the house of Thoas. The massive and lofty columns surrounding the shrines of those tutelary deities rose in front of the dark blue screen of night, gaunt and giant-like, dominating one side of the square. Porticoes and public buildings, interspersed among which were columns and statues—silent witnesses of brave deeds of the city and her sons—occupied two sides, while dwellings of rich and noble citizens stood on the remaining side.

The space was densely packed with human beings except the circle, kept open with difficulty by the soldiery with their spears, wherein was happening the drama of life and death, of love and hate already described. The light of the moon was increased by

the quavering flare of many torches, which illuminated with a lurid uncertain glare the buildings and the expectant faces of the crowd.

By the side of Hylas and his guard now stood the majestic figure of Empedocles. A deep frown was on his brow. His eyes flashing with indignation, were fixed on the veiled figure of Aglaia and her father. The philosopher had understood the situation at a glance. At a short distance apart, the Proagoras once more was earnestly consulting with the other notables in subdued tones. Otherwise there was a tense silence.

Then Empedocles, laying his hand on Hylas' shoulder, spoke.

"No need to seek the cause of all this riot," he said. "I know it well. I am the cause, I, Empedocles; for at me my enemies attempt to strike through the innocence of this lad. I demand his liberty."

A thrill of admiration passed through the crowd at this open defiance. Some loudly applauded; others murmured.

"Empedocles, your friendship for Hylas carries you away," replied the Proagoras, to whom the words were addressed. "The youth stands there almost self-confessed as the murderer of the noble Thoas." He then briefly related what had taken place, adding: "Hylas is the prisoner of the State, and as such must be sentenced to-morrow."

“To-morrow,” was the answer. “No, to-night; this moment he shall be judged. The lad shall not linger through the dark hours with the horror of that charge upon his mind. What say you, Hylas, shall I plead for you, proclaim your guiltlessness before the world?”

Hylas was greatly troubled. He was silent, and averted his gaze from his friend and master. The bystanders marvelled, and whispered among themselves.

Empedocles looked at him searchingly for some moments. At first he seemed puzzled and greatly perturbed. Then the hard lines of thought softened, the frown left his brow, and a look of tenderness, rarely seen, came to his eyes.

“You answer not,” he said. “I will answer for you, then, for of your silence I divine the cause. A great joy fills my soul. The gods be praised, my teaching has not been fruitless; I have come in time to avert a crime more hideous than the one of which you stand accused. Yet there is another cause for joy, greater yet than that. Fellow citizens, my people whom I love,” he said, turning to the crowd and speaking in measured sonorous tones, so that his voice carried to the farthest ends of the square, “I will defend this youth from the vile insinuation, for he is innocent, as innocent as I. First will I prove that by his up-bringing he is incapable of the crime. Listen, that you may adjudge him guiltless by the

simple beauty of his mind. It is long since, as he would say—for boys count years as we do weeks and days—yet scarcely a year ago, he came to me anxious to learn to live the higher life, seeking to know what all that meant. A son of Acragas, whose father had fallen honourably in battle, he also, a mere lad, had taken his part in that anxious strife wherein Ducetius, the Sikel king, had thought to drive us from the proud possession of these shores, won by our Rhodian fathers in remoter times. Hylas fought and fell, then fought again, though gravely wounded, performing deeds of valour you all recall, for which publicly he was praised. Men's memory is short, but brave acts like his die not in so short a time. Then his nature changed through sorrow. He turned from strife of mind and body, yearning for the peace that comes from noble study, and asked me to befriend him. I granted his request. From that day I have watched his soul expand from the bud of guileless boyhood to the full flower of blameless adolescence. Thenceforth he has been to me a favoured pupil, yes, as a son has he become, for in him I recognised that divine light by which a man sees naught but beauty and what is fair. His purity of life, his aims, his hopes, his deeds, I vouch for as surely as I do for mine. He has no wish I do not share, no thought I would be ashamed to own myself. He is a Pythagorean—has sworn to obey the law by which no man may take a life, for, know you well, it is

our stern decree that if any spirit of man err, staining his hands with blood, it is cast out from the abode of the righteous, where the gods have their holy being, and goes wandering in pain upon the earth through three times ten thousand returns of spring."

A subdued murmur of approval welcomed these words as Empedocles paused. He resumed :

"Could Hylas, then, have done this deed, foul and dastardly, of which he stands accused, unless his soul were black and his whole life a villainy? It is incredible. I, Empedocles, declare it so. It may be that within your hearts you still suspect his love for one who, first free to give what he was prone to take—a woman's love—drove him from the heights of noble conduct to that depth of infamy. But by the holy elements of the universe, by the sacred beauty of the world, aye, by all the gods that have their being, it is false—false as the painted mists that beguile men in thirsting deserts, false as she who now bemoans her husband's fate, and tries to blast the life of her fellow man."

Empedocles again paused, and pointing to Aglaia with his finger, continued :

"Hear all. Though a good woman's name is sacred, her fame invulnerable, I denounce Aglaia as a wanton, a perjurer, a would-be murderer herself, for she well knows Hylas committed not the deed of which she accuses him. It is true she allured him to her house after she became a wife, thinking he

among the rest would pander to her pride and, for former love, to her desire. But his soul rebelled. One day, seeing him cast down and sorrowful, I surprised his secret—the shame he suffered that she he loved should have shattered her image in his heart. He told me of her threat to be revenged for that injury to her pride, and though I thought it naught but a woman's taunt of malice, I see it was gravely meant. This then is more her work, not his."

"The dagger with its bloody stain, what say you of that, Empedocles? Hylas confesses the poniard is his own, that he also was on the spot when the murder was committed. That is damning evidence," interposed Echion.

"The dagger was, perchance, stolen by Aglaia when Hylas was last with her," he replied. "Ha! my arrow shot at a venture has struck home. See how she trembles beneath her veil. Let Aglaia doff that false covering of woe and show her face to answer me. She fights with hidden weapons still."

"She answers not," Empedocles continued, as Aglaia made no sign of complying. "Hand me the dagger that is said to have deprived Thoas of his life so that I may see it. Yes, it is as I supposed—a trumped-up charge, a lie, as foul as a stinking pool under the August sun. See," he said, handing back the weapon to Echion, "this has killed no man, inflicted no wound, since that double notch near the point is

as guiltless of blood as the hand of Hylas itself. It may be the blood of Thoas, or that of an ox or a sheep—the dead man had many flocks and herds—that defiles the blade, I know not. But this I know, and do declare most solemnly, that this gore was placed there with fell intent, aye, and carelessly, for here is the impress of the finger that smeared the poniard purposely.”

Turning again to the people, he said :

“ Say, my friends, is Hylas guilty? Your verdict shall decide. If he be innocent, I demand he be set free, and full amend made for the grave injustice of the charge.”

From the moment Empedocles began to speak, not a word escaped the attentive throng, which drank in his words eagerly. When he ended his speech with the demand for a popular verdict, the enthusiasm had no bounds. Deafening shouts proclaiming Hylas blameless and lauding his defender rent the air. These were renewed again and again when the guards at a sign from Echion released their prisoner, leaving him standing alone by the side of Empedocles.

But those who had thought to tarnish the fame of the philosopher by the condemnation of his favourite disciple would not permit the hope to fail thus. There were murmurings and complaints among them. They greatly protested, saying to the Progoras: “ Hylas scarcely denies the charge, and you liberate him thus. Even if he be not the murderer,

he must be an accomplice at least. Is there a special law for Empedocles and his friends? If that man once refused a crown, truly his hand yet wields a sceptre. He preaches equality, but thwarts the law by clamour. Down with such tyrants! Let no magic hold in Acragas—the inhabitants are bewitched.”

Empedocles turned upon his traducers indignantly. He was ready to accept their challenge, now openly directed against himself, and he prepared himself for the answer.

CHAPTER VI.

AT those words of defiance, which were meant to be a public indictment of Empedocles' conduct, an indescribable uproar again broke forth. Men's minds had been at so high a tension for many hours that a less important episode would have easily excited them. That the people's idol and champion was openly attacked and derided by his and their adversaries was beyond endurance, and they were prepared to show their anger in an unmistakable manner. A serious riot was imminent. But after some minutes of troubled thought, Empedocles, on whom all eyes were fixed, unconscious of the noise around him, raised his hand to enjoin silence. At once all was quiet. A gesture sufficed to calm the storm. It seemed as if the mere suggestion of his will was able to appease men's anger. His words were awaited with a hush of expectation.

"No, it is untrue what these men say of me," he cried, speaking to the people. "I would only that justice be done to all. But I vow that the guiltless shall not suffer for this crime. By all I hold most sacred do I swear it. Though Aglaia should rightly

pay the penalty for her act of ill-considered vengeance, I will not suffer the foul charge of murder of a husband to linger even about her name in the minds of those who may yet stoop to call her friend. And because some feign to think that Hylas may still be guilty, I will give you further evidence that they do wrongly judge him.

“See here,” he continued, drawing from beneath his robe a packet which he carefully unrolled, “the proof of what I say, placed in my hands when I passed the city gate an hour ago. It is a letter, badly written, since the hand that traced it is illiterate, though the words have the solemnity of sincerity. The meaning too is clear enough. The scroll was wrapt around these daggers to which it makes appeal. Before I mastered its contents, the bearer had disappeared, and no one could tell who it was that brought it. Hear what the letter says, and listen well, all that are within reach of hearing. It shall set at rest the doubt which seems to work yet in people’s minds.”

Empedocles then read from the letter he held in his hand as follows:

“To the Sage Empedocles, that men call Divine: I, Sikôn of Palica, fearing that others may be blamed for what I alone have done, write, confiding in your sense of justice and righteous dealing. I know not why, but dread besets me that another may be charged with what some may call a crime—that

Thoas fell and by other hands than mine. It was I who killed him. I glory in the deed, and would no other share the credit or the blame, accordingly as men may speak of it. This is the cause that prompted me to take that false man's life—the fulfilment of an oath sworn by my native gods—a double oath indeed, for a debt of gratitude compelled me to the act as greatly as one of vengeance. Thoas—I write that name with loathing—after the bloody war in which great Ducetius fell from power and went a suppliant to Syracuse, as sharer of the spoil won my brother for a slave—a mere boy, who could scarcely wield a sword. The child followed me from home when duty called me to the battle. I loved him with that strong affection of an elder brother for his mother's younger son, because he was weak and frail, and none but him I had to remind me that once I had a home. Thoas took him. And because the lad was ailing and too weak for the tasks his master set him, he fell into disgrace. In a fit of anger, that man struck him, once, twice, a dozen times—it was told me by a Sikel, a fellow slave—and though he cried for mercy, more blows followed, and my brother died, beaten to death by the man himself. Then Thoas, later, as if his wickedness were not enough to damn him for countless ages, steadfast in his path of evil-doing, came between Hylas and his happiness, for it is known that Hylas loved Aglaia and would have wedded

her. Hylas was my friend. All Acragas has learnt of my deliverance from bondage at his hands—that he and I were sworn to help each other to the death. How could I let Thoas live?—the man who had doubly wronged me through those I loved more than my own life? Hence the reason of my solemn oaths and why I sought Thoas in his room late one night and killed him. Yes, I killed him, I alone, but not unchallenged. It was done in fairness, I took no undue advantage. I kill no man undefended. We fought, he with his dagger bravely, I with mine, man to man. As proofs I send the daggers to you, both stained with blood, for I too was struck in that fierce fight for life. If further doubt there be that my hand brought Thoas to his end, look at his wound and on my dagger; touch the spring that lies concealed beneath the hilt. That, when used, makes a jagged edge which lacerates the wound. This, oh Sage, is all I have to write to ease my mind. Yet I would add one word more. Tell Hylas not to mourn my absence, for even friendship comes second to a Sikel's oath. Let no man seek me. I sail for a distant land, since I, a barbarian, cannot look for fairness in a trial for life."

Empedocles folded the scroll and handed it with the two daggers to Echion.

"If doubt there still be of Hylas' innocence," the former continued, "I claim the dead man himself to bear witness of the truth. Let the wound be laid

bare to see if it tallies with the knife. I demand it for justice sake."

Here Pausanias stepped forward. "It is enough; I have seen the wound and vouch it was caused by that weapon and no other. Akrôn can confirm it. Hylas' innocence is now manifest beyond all doubt."

Aglaia, during this unexpected disclosure which fell from the lips of Empedocles, drew her veil more closely about her face. She moved further from the bier, clinging to Antisthenes for support.

The discomfiture of the opposite faction was apparent, and increased as many pressed forward to take Hylas by the hand. It seemed as if nothing more was to be said, and Echion, after again declaring Hylas to be at liberty, was about to give orders for the removal of Thoas' body.

But Empedocles was not one to allow his adversaries to depart without answering their charge against himself.

"I demand a further hearing," he said, speaking to Echion.

"Speak, Empedocles, speak," was the universal and emphatic cry of the people, who would not be denied the sound of their favourite's voice.

"I have this to say," he continued. "I essayed to make men understand that a guileless soul was incapable of a deed so hideous as murder; that one reared in paths of virtue could never lend a thought,

still less a hand, to perpetrate such infamy. Oft have I tried to cause mankind to know the beauty of these precepts whereby the sanctity of life is held to be inviolate—life which no human being may take nor think to take. Yet all in vain. Doubly have you wounded me through Hylas," he went on to say, now addressing his opponents, who were gathered in a group. "Not only have you wished to brand the boy as murderer, him whom I cherish as my own—and doubly now since he was ready to sacrifice himself for Sikôn as once Chariton for Melanippos in the days of Phalaris—hence his hesitation to declare his innocence. Did you not note it? Or are your eyes so blinded by your hate that devotion to a friend so great goes unperceived? But you also cast a foul blight upon my teaching, blasting it with the vile breath of lust as well. Again you charge me before the people of trampling under foot the very laws which despite your enmity I myself have made. Does a mother slay the child she has prayed the gods to give her? You judge me by yourselves, oh nobles! You suppose no man strives but to impose his will upon the weak, as you would do, and did in the older days of tyranny. But take heed. Phalaris, the man you fain would emulate, no longer lives; unrepentant, unreclaimed, he died. The Tyrant's mother dreamed her dream of blood flowing from Hermes' hand—a stream sent by the other gods which poured upon the earth and

rose until it filled his house, destroying all within—a solemn intimation of his fate which he ignored. He fell. And with him that power in which the people had no share. Read you the signs that are not wanting now, and beware you of his fate. No longer is heard in Acragas that brazen bull bellowing with the roar of men imprisoned within its belly slowly roasting to their death—the work of Perillos, for which he paid the penalty, as did Phalaris himself. You would fain renew those days. But I warn you they are gone for ever! Even though I fall, a victim to your menaces, the spirit I have breathed into the souls of men will live. The fire of liberty may die down, perchance, when I am no longer here to fan it back to life. But the spark will burn for ever, ready to burst out anew. Again, take heed how you beguile the crowd with lies. Their answer will be swift and sure, for I have taught them the paths of truth and virtue, which surely they will follow. My words will live for ever. Mine is no idle boast, no matter how you seek to sophisticate the truth.”

There was a solemn silence. No man spoke.

“What charge have you against me?” Empedocles continued. “I have attempted no violent change, no sudden revolution. Too lenient have I been. Even in the vices of the citizens have I discerned the path of virtue and led the way. From the great extravagance of living in this mighty city,

where men eat as if they must die to-morrow and build as if they would live for ever, I have taught that hospitality for which Acragas is far-famed. To all time will be remembered how the thousands from Selinous, harassed by the African foe, were received within the walls and treated liberally as friends invited to a feast. The destitute of Gela, too, fed and clothed from the purse of Gellias—that noble-hearted owner of lands and herds, who, out-vying all the others in his love of hospitality, sits at the city gates to swell the number of his guests. Where else, save here, are houses set apart for entertaining, wherein the poor are as welcome as the rich, and the unknown as the dearest intimate of the host? Truly has Acragas become the sacred and august refuge of the stranger for its unbounded liberality. In such is no crime.

“Yet you would upbraid me for the practice of that virtue. I have no fault. Learn that it is wiser to wean men from their prodigality, turning it into wiser channels thus, than make it hard for the self-indulgent to be virtuous. I hear men say it to my shame that I was cast out from among the followers of Pythagoras. So be it. That I was. And why? Disdainful that they alone should claim to know the mysteries of the infinite, I rebelled, and broke from the vow of secrecy. No sect, no caste has a right to monopolise eternal truths, which are the gift of the great ‘I Am’ to all mankind. I glory in

that act, since I can better benefit my fellow men. Where is then the shame?"

Empedocles looked round for an answer. None came.

"Then you cast it in my teeth and scoff that I claim to be divine, with powers that men know not of," he continued. "Concerning such things I refuse to speak. The mystery is too great, too holy, too full of wonder to be discussed. Yet I, purified by a life of abstinence, and for that above all men honoured and esteemed, declare most solemnly once more and do affirm before you all, that I am divine—an immortal god—since I have within me that holy fount of knowledge whereby I speak no longer as a mortal being. This is far above the limit of your understanding. Your thoughts unsanctified cannot attain to that holy state where Truth and Eternal Beauty reign, and which to know is to bring a man to the likeness of his Maker. I have naught to add. Should my traducers seek me, let them come to find me at Peisianax, whither to the tranquillity of my groves I betake myself in peace to meditate."

The multitude had listened with rapt attention to the harangue of Empedocles. But when he uttered the words, "I am divine—an Immortal God," the cries burst forth again with redoubled force, some of derision, but mostly of approval and respect, for the mass of the people truly thought him divine.

As Empedocles left the open space in the square with Hylas, the crowd making way for him reverently, a man eagerly pressed forward to kiss the hem of his robe, crying after him, "Oh, Physician, Philosopher and Friend, the Worker of signs and wonders, thou art the greatest of all great men, the richest of the rare gifts of our beloved Sicily!" and the cry, "Physician, Philosopher, Friend," accompanied him as he walked to his house, for as such also was he venerated by the people.

Then the body of Thoas was carried to its tomb silently, a few only escorting the bier from the city across the Bridge of the Dead to the Necropolis beyond the western wall.

Aglaiia, retreating to her home, was seen no more.

CHAPTER VII.

THE small leaves of the olives of Peisianax were casting a dark and delicate lacework of shadow on the ground, as the tall figure of Empedocles walked to and fro among the trees. He had come from Acragas with Hylas, after the events recorded, to that favoured spot—his farm, which stretched from the sun-licked shores of the African Sea to the higher reaches of the mountains behind—in search of the solitude so precious to him, and the repose for which he yearned.

The Sage, deep in thought, was harassed and pre-occupied. He was alone. Though his friends and retainers were seen among the grey and gnarled trunks anxiously awaiting the moment to approach him, none dared to interrupt his reverie. Pausanias had come from the city that morning expressly to renew the request repeatedly made to return there. All were interested in his going. Yet they held aloof.

Once more were the inhabitants of Acragas in a turmoil, and were loudly demanding Empedocles' presence. A remarkable event had occurred. A

woman, Pantheia by name, had died. When the body was about to be consigned to the tomb, it had been seen to move, and a groan was heard from below the sheet covering it. Those present hurriedly fled and reported the circumstance in the city. A consultation of the learned was held, and it was decided the burial should not take place. The body was taken back to the house whence it started. All this had happened a month before, and the lifeless form had lain for that period in its house. Yet no sign of decay, no corruption had come to it.

Such a thing was unknown, unheard of. It was a miracle, some said. The gods had decreed immortality for this woman of the people. They had chosen Pantheia as the special subject of their power, as a sign of their continual presence—a warning, probably, in a godless, pleasure-seeking age. It was thought Pantheia would soon be summoned to join the celestial beings, for surely she herself must be divine since so great a wonder was wrought in her person.

Priests, doctors and seers were much perplexed at this extraordinary occurrence. Popular clamour called for Empedocles. He, who was divine also, could alone solve the mystery, and advise in a matter which disturbed men's minds so deeply.

Repeated efforts had been made ineffectually to induce him to return to the city. From what Pausanias had told him he knew that the woman

was not dead. With his knowledge of the art of healing, though her state might be one of grave anxiety if help were not immediately given, he was aware he could possibly restore her to life. Yet he was undecided.

“Recall her from the silence of the Unknown to life?” he communed with himself, as he moodily paced beneath the olives. “To what good purpose? It is a sin to kill. But when Death has laid a soothing hand upon her brow and claimed her for his own, can it be sinful to let her rest? Hers was a life of weariness—her children lost; desolate her home; forsaken by her spouse; pain, sorrow, toil her lot. Shall I waken her to a recollection of the past? Shall I restore life to one who wished to die? Bid her fight the battle once again? What good can come? No, my soul revolts. Even now her spirit, hovering in the pure æther, whispers in my ears—‘Let be; she has lived enough, since all was suffering.’ It were easy for her to glide from this semblance of death to the silence of the tomb. But dare I such a deed? This pictured death is but a trance, else would decay have long since claimed her. When the stars glistened in the blue immensity of the Egyptian sky, the priestly seers would speak secretly of men who lay as dead for weeks, of herbs that bring life to those sunk in the similitude of death. . . Ah! they spoke, too, of how they raised themselves in man’s esteem by giving back what

alone the gods bestow—life, the eternal gift of life. Maybe I might regain my own waning power if I called Pantheia back from the brink of the Eternal Shades. Truly should I be thought divine by such an act, even by those who doubt and scoff. I dare not let her rest besides. To leave her would be to kill. I shudder at the thought of such a deed. ‘No man may take a life.’ . . . It is enough. I will try my skill, recalling what I learnt in Egypt. Ho! Hylas, Pausanias! I am resolved,” he cried, summoning his friends. “Take me to Pantheia’s side. Before the sun sinks in the golden west she shall be among the living. Let us to Acragas as fast as mules may take us. I would that you accompany me to bear witness of a deed at which all the world shall marvel.”

* * * * *

Again were the streets of Acragas alive with an excited throng of people. The dead woman, Pantheia, had risen from the bier on which she had lain for so many days, and was now walking about the city.

Empedocles had wrought the cure; no man knew how. He had shut himself within the room alone with the sleeping woman, and emerged leading her by the hand.

The same crowds which had before shouted “Thoas dead!” and bemoaned his fate with anger, now cried “Pantheia lives!” with double vehemence,

and rejoiced with wonder and amazement. The latter event altogether eclipsed the former in importance. If some murmured, saying it was impious of Empedocles to oppose the will of the gods by restoring to life one whom the gods had specially chosen for their own, the people were overjoyed by what they regarded as a wonderful miracle, wrought by their divine counsellor and friend. Empedocles' fame, great as it was before, was greatly increased, and men flocked from all sides to prostrate themselves at his feet, imploring protection and asking for favours such as a god alone could grant.

His enemies, however, were more greatly disturbed at this overwhelming wave of popularity of Empedocles. They trembled that he might retaliate upon them. Others, though less bitter, united with them in their protest, thinking it prudent to put a limit to his popularity. A meeting was therefore convoked, and it was agreed to strike a decided blow in self-defence at once.

Empedocles once more returned to his farm. Anxious to conform to the custom of the Acragantines—that public thanksgiving should follow any successful venture or exploit—he ordained a sacrifice to the gods, to which he invited a large number of friends. After the religious ceremony a banquet followed. It was given in the garden surrounding the philosopher's house, and was worthy of the occasion and the eighty or more bidden to the feast. Yet

the festivity fell far short of the great event which it was meant to celebrate, for many of the guests knew that a secret sentence had been pronounced against their host that morning on the charge of treason against the state for having sided with the Athenians against Syracuse, the ally of Acragas, in the past war.

So trivial an accusation against so distinguished a patriot as Empedocles was as ludicrous as it was unjust. Yet it served the purpose and prevailed. The sentence of the Senate was to be communicated that night.

The guests had separated in the hot evening after the feast to seek repose in the open air among the olive groves, when Empedocles was summoned to meet the messengers of the Halia. He meekly received the message, which imposed perpetual and immediate banishment under pain of death. He who had always preached acquiescence in the laws was not one to fall away from his own teaching. Perhaps he was content to bide his time without exercising the power he undoubtedly possessed, knowing that justice would prevail in the future and his name be vindicated.

When the guests at Peisianax assembled in the morning Empedocles was not among them. He had departed mysteriously. He was anxiously sought. Only a slave could throw any light on his master's disappearance. He said that shortly after midnight

he had been awakened by a strange glow in the sky and a noise as of distant thunder, above which was heard a voice calling loudly the name of Empedocles. A sound of steeds vehemently urged followed. Then all was silence.

In that manner the philosopher left Acragas. And in the mystery of his departure, the people, true in their intense love for him, found ample conviction that divine as he appeared to them to be on earth, no less divine was the call which summoned him to take his departure from among them and his place among the immortals to whom he affirmed, and they believed, he surely belonged.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN the late afternoon of the second day following the banquet at Peisianax, two travellers, mounted on mules, were slowly ascending the lower slopes of Mount *Ætna*.

Both had been silent for some hours. One—the elder man—seemed to be so deeply absorbed in thought that he was unconscious of all around him. Even the stumbling steps of the animal he rode scarcely roused him from his reverie. The other, a youth, who preceded him, was on the contrary keenly alert; and from the anxious glances he threw over his shoulder at his companion from time to time, also disturbed and perplexed in mind. The two were *Empedocles* and *Hylas*, fugitives from *Acragas*.

The slopes of the volcano, umber-hued in their stretches of lava now free from snow, rose in majestic outline to the crest from the sparkling sea on one side, and from the valley of *Simaitos* on the other. High up, volumes of vapour poured from the crater—at times grey with the fine ash ejected, or rose-coloured when the whiter cloud caught and reflected the glow of the sinking sun. Above the mountain

the heavy, palm-shaped cloud hung suspended like a pall.

The riders had long left the vineyards covering the lower ground with patches of vivid green, and reached the chestnut forest with its monster trees, now bright with autumnal tints. The precipitous track was strewn with loose stones, and its dust rose in stifling clouds to the tread of the mules' feet. The air was hot and sultry. The sky had a ruddy golden flush which was communicated to the landscape. Once the young man stopped his mule, and turning on his pack-saddle, waited as if expecting definite instructions from the other. He was not disappointed.

"On, Hylas, on," Empedocles commanded. "There must be no tarrying, since we need reach the summit before dawn. The road is long; I know it well."

The two resumed their journey silently.

The belt of chestnut trees was left behind, to be succeeded by oaks, and in their turn by gigantic pine trees.

It was soon dusk and the mules had difficulty in keeping to the track in the deep shadow of the firs. At length those last trees of the mountain-forest gave way to stunted undergrowth, and then to small and ever-diminishing patches of vegetation. A plant of the cactus-pear here and there stretched out its gaunt arms by the road-side as if in warning, or in supplication to be delivered from a scene of so great

a ruin. Tufts of the volcanic broom grew shabbily from the crevices of the rocks. Then the open wastes lay before them. As the travellers mounted, the moon and the brilliancy of countless stars brought with them a light as of day.

Onward and upward, panting and wearied, the mules toiled, stumbling among the loose stones or plunging into unseen holes. They and their riders were now among the unequalled horrors of the volcano. Not even the lank grasses, the last signs of vegetable life in those high solitudes, raised their spikes from among the stones. All was given over to the destruction of the hidden fires below. All was black, desolate and horrible. Even the moonbeams, which faintly touched the points of some high crags of lava, tossed and twisted into fantastic shapes, like the waters of a tempest-wrought sea caught and bound in a stony eternity, failed to redeem that black world of vomited rock from its abomination of supreme desolation. It was a region that the volcano had claimed entirely for its own, blasting it as with an eternal curse. Masses of black rocks stood out from beds of scoria or streams of naked twisted lava. Extinct craters, in the shape of rounded pyramids, mute records of past fury and fierce destruction, rose on every side. The higher parts of the mountain—black sandy slopes and gloomy valleys, towered above. Every sign of life, every vestige of vegetation, failed. Not a lizard moved, not an insect

crawled among that dreary blackened waste. No bird, no bat circled in the sky, no little owl nor cricket called to disturb that awful solitude of Nature. All was dumb with the overpowering silence of an universal death.

Hylas, unaccustomed to such a scene, trembled. He had heard of the terrors of Ætna, the dread entrance to the infernal regions, or, as some had it, the prison of the vanquished Typhæus. He had often gazed upon its placid rose-coloured slopes at sunset, when climbing to the heights of his own sunny lands bordered by the African sea near Acragas. Then he was at a safe distance, and its terrors were remote and vague.

But now, toiling wearily through those lava wastes, he recalled the beliefs associated with the mysterious mountain—the tales of the country folk about the monstrous men who had their home within its bowels, their incessant work forging thunderbolts for Zeus; the one-eyed giant with his flocks and herds wandering in search of pasture. Despite his philosophic training, Hylas was a prey to the superstitious fears of youth, and he trembled.

The travellers at length reached the cone, that lesser mountain rising on the shoulders of the greater. At its base the mules stopped. They could go no further. Only the foot of man, and that with difficulty, could mount the remaining three or four hundred paces to the summit. Ætna was vomiting

volumes of vapour from the lips of the crater overhead. These, glowing intermittently as the flames below surged upwards or died down momentarily, rose perpendicularly in a huge and lurid column, which rolled away in the clear sky northward as it caught the breeze from the plain of Katané. The sullen rumbling as of distant and continuous thunder told that the volcano was sorely in travail.

Hylas dismounted and assisted Empedocles from his saddle. Both were stiff from the long ride.

"Here may we rest awhile," the latter said, "before I climb to the summit. My spirit draws me to that home of eternal fire so akin to the hell of thought and trouble that burns within me."

"Must we not await Pausanias here, then?" Hylas enquired. "His message was he would join us before we reached the highest peak."

"Pausanias, does he also come?" the Sage replied, frowning. "Even though so great a friendship binds us that not even his enmity could change it, I would not have told him of my path had I known such was his intent. Well, let it be so, Hylas. You await Pausanias here. But take heed I am not disturbed. I crave to be alone."

CHAPTER IX.

LEAVING Hylas in charge of the mules, Empedocles mounted the steep slope of the cone of the volcano. The ascent was very arduous, and an hour or more passed before he reached the summit. Before him was an extended plateau in the centre of which sank the enormous crater. He approached the edge of that yawning circular abyss. A great internal disturbance was in the depths of the mighty chasm. A sea of incandescent lava heaved and writhed many hundreds of feet below, for not yet had the rivers of molten fire welled to the brim to burst over in downward course of destruction.

A sullen roar as of a continuous tempest, accompanied at intervals by louder explosions, deafened the ear. At times, massive stones and dense volumes of vapour were shot forth. Then the fiery secrets of the abyss were hidden from view. At other times the seething mass glowed fiercely and clearly illuminated its recesses, showing the vivid orange and yellow salts of minerals which strangely encrusted its inner walls with a brilliant efflorescence.

Empedocles gazed silently upon that wonderful

scene. The fierce enmity of this mighty sullen force repelled yet fascinated him. So like was it to the hot passions, the strife, the savage fury and the fiery tumult of his fellow men. Saddened at the thought, he turned and walked from the brink until he reached the easternmost verge of the cone.

The moon had now set. The brilliancy of the stars was growing dim in a greyness which had its origin in the east beyond the sea. The faint light slowly asserted itself, and a glow suffused that quarter of the sky. Shortly the sun rose from among clouds of gold and blood-red, casting on the sea a pathway of living light, of dancing gleams, which broadened as it led to the mountain's base.

Slowly the quickening light left the wavelets breaking on the shore and crept to the thick groves of olive and almond standing among vineyards, to the great belt of forest, to the wastes of lava, calling them momentarily from their blackened death to a semblance of joy and life; then to the cone, enveloping Empedocles himself in its warm glow of welcome, and upward yet to the summit and that vast surging mass of vapour pouring from the bowels of the mountain, which it changed into a column of translucent colour by the magic of its touch.

The lowing of cattle, the sound of sheep-bells, the music of a shepherd's reed came fitfully from below.

Empedocles lost not the smallest detail of that

withdrawal of night, that heralding of morn. Such a moment was to him the most sacred of the day. He was keenly alive to the uplifting freshness, the sense of buoyant freedom and exhilaration, the still and impressive aloofness from the world that watchers of the dawn experience.

The volcano had subsided into relative calm. For the time the noisy explosions and vomiting of vapour ceased. Only the dull thunderings from below were heard at intervals like the roar of snow-fields falling into echoing valleys.

Empedocles, from gazing seaward turned towards the land. A scene of incredible grandeur met his eyes. Sicily was below him. Not the vast expanse of plain and forest, of limitless cornlands and roving pastures, of mighty mountains and dark mysterious valleys which he knew so well. But Sicily small and undetermined in the morning haze, three-sided and minute—a tiny jewel of light azure resting on the surrounding seas, a beryl set within the deeper blue of a monster sapphire.

As he gazed, the mists lifted, and one by one he recognised familiar spots—Eryx on the western coast, where Aphrodite in her majestic temple of the hill reigned supreme; Panormos, the Phœnician stronghold; Henna, the home of the Great Mother of the Earth, on its broad table-mountain; the promontory of Mylai; the sickle-shaped harbour of Zancle, joined, as it were, to the higher ranges of the mainland,

stretching northward to far distance, but for the narrow strip of shining sea on whose shores Scylla sheltered the dread Charybdis, and Naxos yet remembered its Grecian founders. Below, and seemingly at his feet, Katané, the home of Stesichorus; and, beyond the fertile plain through which Symaithos wandered, and where the sparkling waters of Leonitinoi glittered, the city of Syracuse wherein Empedocles had often been an honoured guest.

Every indentation of the coast, every undulation of the land, stood out clearly and distinctly as if painted by an unerring brush. Mountain after mountain raised their crests to the growing sunlight. Valleys treasured their secrets in the shadow of the early morning. Beyond all, and surrounding all, lay dazzling seas, on which, northward, were dotted the island around the home of Aiolos in Lipara, with the smoking pyramid of Strongyle; to the south, Melite; and westward, beyond Motya, the peaks of the Aigousa group, bordered by the faint outline of the African Continent.

But what most claimed the philosopher's attention in the first moments of the sunrise was a mysterious shadow of enormous size, cast against the island and the sky, defined with the utmost delicacy, finding its three-sided counterpart perpendicularly on the dove-tinted atmosphere and land. It was imposing, unearthly, almost startling in its æthereal loveliness. It was the shadow of Ætna.

“Oh! Mother of Mountains, Guardian of the Eternal Fire,” Empedocles cried, unable to keep silence, “how beautiful thou art in thy majesty. How bountiful in thy favours, for that which makes this island the storehouse of the world is thy doing, thine the priceless gift. But,” he added sorrowfully, after a long pause, “as is this shadow so is thy beauty—passing, unreliable. Treacherous, too, in thy pure white winter mantle, as in thy ruddy garb of summer, when almond blossoms and the myriad flowers deck thee, and vines trail about thy feet. Aye, as Sicily herself in fickleness art thou, for she and her people do take thee for their guide and imitate thy moods. Men strive to be as thou—to smile to-day, casting favours broadcast on the land, and to-morrow ruthlessly destroy. Greater power than thine for good exists not upon the earth. Yet art thou not loved. Men bow before thee; weave sweet fables round thy name; exalt thee to a god. Albeit in their hearts they curse thee. Oh, thou false one, deceitful as a woman, who sells her smiles for gold and turns to rend her lover, infamous art thou in the evil thou hast wrought.

“Yet,” he continued, relapsing into the sad meditative mood from which the beauty of the sunrise had momentarily aroused him, “is this mountain but a slave—a slave of higher things following an inscrutable law and obedient to a will superior to itself. Like the world it has no will nor real beginning, no

end, no birth, no death. What is the world itself but the mingling of that which is apart, by which alone it has its origin, but the child of Fire and Earth, of Æther and the moisture of the sky, which in their turn are the children of the Great All, the Eternal, the Indestructible? Why do I then rage at Ætna, at what is beyond its own control, at what none hath power to remedy? Long past is the god-like time when all was Harmony. Long since the Golden Age when Love and Friendship reigned supreme, when animals were friends of man, and trees bore leaves all the months and never failed of fruit. Beauty no longer rules the universe. Hate, the origin of evil, was born, took its place, and is triumphant. Yet in the end Love shall overcome Hate, for in all is there steady progress towards the good. Love shall prevail. Even the monsters which have their being in the air and assail men with evil shall be perfected at last by that utmost Love. Such is the Law of all things, the Supreme Love over all, that God who vaunts no likeness to man, a Spirit only, the sacred Spirit of the Most High One, of which no tongue can adequately speak, of which all Nature breathes. Therefore, surely, must Beauty reign.”*

Empedocles was silent for a time. His eyes were fixed on the landscape below. The sullen roar of the mountain continued.

* This is an outline of Empedocles' theory of the Universe.

Then his thoughts turned to his native city.

“O Acragas, worthy sanctuary of the wanderer!” he murmured, “my beloved home, if thou wert as of old, ignorant of evil-doing, I would not have suffered at thy hands thus. But thou and thine have turned from the path of virtue, and fallen a prey to Hate, at whose coming Beauty flies. But, again, why judge I my fellow men, who, seeing nothing clearly, know not what to believe? They, as I, are but puppets in the hands of the Power unseen, passers-by on the narrow road, and going hence leaving no trace behind. Yet are they instinct with life, having that sacred gift within them which never dies, and for that are they to be revered. Therefore have I strived to aid them in their search for happiness, to soothe their troubles, to make existence easier. Alas, that for all my zeal I am become an outcast, a pensioner of chance. Oh that the world had never known my birth, that my spirit had never taken earthly form! From what honour have I fallen miserably! From what happy state, from life to death, straying far from heaven, here and there in endless exile, torn by inward conflict, and alone! To this dark cave of earthly being, to this unsafe sojourn, have I come. And whither do I go? Ah! Where? There is no extinction in the tomb, no quiet, no rest. Souls wander unceasingly through the ages. I, Empedocles, was a maiden, a bird, a tree, a fish was I, too, in the silents depths of ocean,

for souls traverse the world in varied form unrecognised by men, until, beautified at last, they find eternal peace within the arms of the Divine Love whence they came. So the great Pythagoras, and Parmenides, my master, taught, and so I believe."

CHAPTER X.

THE sun was now high in the sky and beating fiercely on the black sand and lava. With its heat the noxious gases rose more overpoweringly from the fissures in the ground.

A voice calling from a distance was heard faintly. Empedocles heeded it not. He was too deeply absorbed in thought. His heart ached on account of the injustice done him; his soul was bowed with sorrow. He arraigned himself before an imaginary tribunal of his own creation, as if he were pleading his cause before the Acragantines. He spoke softly to himself, not angrily. He had infinite pity for the ignorance, the lack of knowledge of what was right and comely, which his countrymen had shown in their base ingratitude towards him.

"They accuse me of having thought more of the good of Sicily than of the smaller affairs of our single State," he said. "It may be true. I was but fired with the splendour, the beauty, the integrity of virtue, and the desire to sow it broadcast, see it take root and grow among my fellow-men. They cast it in my teeth that I thwarted them in their

ways of life. I but tried to turn their vices into better channels, their riches to charity, their vanity to hospitality. I sought to divert their thoughts from the sensuality of the past, to the conception of the Divine as a Spirit. I attacked the venality of those in power; and loaded them with shame, so that they ceased from their evil ways. The end should direct the means. By example only I became the master. I sought no power. My ambition was to make my life divine by beauty and thus approach the Deity. The magic for which I stand condemned is but a knowledge of the deeper secrets hidden from the world. If that be sin, then am I guilty. Sweet weds with sweet, bitter finds its mate. Warmth flies to warmth, and so the soul of Man perfected must go forth to meet the Beautiful. With such weapons did I strive. Men deride what they will not imitate. I would not stoop to Hate, to the littleness of life. Of strife I would have none. Therein lay my fault. I looked to higher things, for we are not born to ourselves. Men are but stewards, holders of a trust for the Owner, who is Another. I am faint and weary. I crave to be freed from these bonds which bind my spirit to earth. My task is too great, my burden too heavy to support. What profits it that I live only to be scorned and mocked, to fly at the sight of men who have sworn to persecute me to an earthly death? My force is spent, my work done, I am weary of the striving.

“Oh! Divine Being,” he continued, “give me then the rest my soul yearns for, the peace I have not known. I am in sore travail with the pains of thought. My brain reels with doubt. I am become as him forsworn, one stained by the sin of heart, who by an utterance of Fate, an ancient decree of the Everlasting Gods, sealed with solemn oaths, wanders far from the Blessed for thrice ten thousand years, growing, as the ages glide, through all the shapes of mortal things, passing from one to another of the weary ways of life. The might of the Æther hurls him to the Sea, the Sea vomits him back to the floor of Earth, and Earth flings him to the fire of Helios, the unwearied, and he to the whirlwinds of Æther. He is received by one after another, and abhorred of all.* As such am I become.”

Empedocles sate long with bowed head as these thoughts found slow and painful utterance.

Sapped and destroyed by the fire of inward suffering, life and vigour seemed to have left him. The dauntless spirit of the Champion of Equity and the dignity of mankind was broken by the cruelty of those for whom he had spent himself.

Then rousing from his dejection he rose and retraced his steps to the spot where he had stood on the edge of the crater, drawn by an irresistible force. It had a strange fascination for him, which

* This rendering is taken from Mr. Gilbert Murray's "Ancient Greek Literature."

he could not gauge nor resist. He gazed long into the chasm as the seething mass of incandescent lava rose and fell in cruel and restless writhings. That molten fire was ever accompanied by a menacing rumbling as of continued thunder.

"Yet if there still be work, oh Almighty Wisdom," he said, continuing his interrupted train of thought, and withdrawing his gaze reluctantly from the living flame below to look upward, "let me live awhile on earth, to perfect my soul for the Eternal Rest. Dispel my ignorance. Increase my knowledge, which scarcely tells me what in the infinity of knowing there is to know. Accomplish my love of loveliness. Give me clear light to discern that Beauty which is the spirit of God on earth, the token of His love, His breath, His being, the very Essence of His presence, which to know fully is to be with Him for ever in the infinite hereafter of the ages. I ask no more."

* * * * *

Hylas, in charge of the mules at the foot of the cone, was a prey to uneasy thoughts. Beside the oppressive loneliness, the roaring of the volcano, and the gloom, which the brilliant starlight served only to intensify, there was more within him to cause uneasiness. A misgiving, persistent, intense, yet undefinable, possessed him. His uneasiness provoked him to follow the footsteps of his Master. Yet he feared to disobey his commands. Empedocles'

orders were as binding on his disciples as the word of Pythagoras before him. So he remained. He tried to rest, but the wish to sleep failed. Though weary with incessant travelling in the heat of the last two days, Hylas was unable to close his eyes. He paced restlessly to and fro on the black sand, so great was his anxiety.

At length relief came. A distant cry was heard. At first Hylas thought it was the voice of Empedocles summoning him. He looked to the rope-fastenings of the mules to prevent their straying, and prepared to start.

The cry was repeated, and two names reached him on the breeze from the lower slopes, his own, and that of Empedocles. Then he knew that Pausanias had fulfilled his intention of joining them. The latter shortly appeared, guided by the young man's shouts.

Hylas welcomed Pausanias warmly. He told him how Empedocles had left him some hours before, and of his uneasiness. After a short conversation, and receiving no answer to their repeated cries, the two resolved to seek Empedocles. Pausanias began to share his companion's disquietude, for no feeling is so contagious as fear. Together they climbed the side of the cone and reached the summit.

After a short time they discerned Empedocles at a distance standing on a rock overhanging the brink of the crater—his tall figure outlined against the

blue of the sky. Was it a portent that he in his purple robe and Delphic crown should stand a solitary figure environed by that intense blue, the unpropitious colour of the Acragantines?

Hylas pressed forward joyfully. He felt his misgivings had been ill-placed. His master was safe. Besides, he had great news to impart. Pausanias had brought word that the petition which he had presented on behalf of Sikôn, his friend, had been considered. He had claimed the life and liberty of the young Sikel from the State, alleging that the death of Thoas came by honest combat after dire provocation. The Senate of Acragas had given a favourable answer and a full pardon had been granted. Sikôn, therefore, could return to Acragas as soon as he could be communicated with. Hylas' mood was in consequence as happy as shortly before it had been gloomy and foreboding of evil. He had not only recovered his friend, but also saved him from a perpetual exile of shame.

The Mountain had been silent. The column of vapour had ceased to pour from the crater. A period of relative calm had supervened. The volcano was apparently at rest.

But at the moment when Hylas and Pausanias caught sight of Empedocles, and were preparing to join him, a deafening and terrible roar filled the air. The earth swayed and rocked, throwing the two to the ground. The surface opened around them.

From the crater, which was a hundred paces or more from them, a terrific outburst broke. A fiery grey mass of flame and vapour was vomited into the air, accompanied by loud and incessant detonations as of falling thunderbolts. In an instant the sun was blotted out and daylight lost. It was as if night had suddenly descended save for the terrible lurid glare which turned all things to the colour of a ruddy copper. Flashes of lightning played in and about the vast canopy of cloud which hung over the chasm of fire. Ashes and red-hot stones, hurled to the sky, fell about them in thick showers.

Hylas and Pausanias, terror-stricken and dumb, crept with difficulty under a projecting rock to find protection from a pitiless rain of molten scoria. From their insecure refuge, they could watch those awful pangs of Nature, that travail of the Mountain, bringing forth the dual birth of Destruction and Death. Though the principal force of the eruption was on the further side of the crater's plateau, every moment might prove to be their last. They were in imminent peril of their lives, yet to move meant instant death.

The earth continued to heave and tremble. Fissures were constantly opening on all sides to emit foul, suffocating gases and eddies of vapour. The air reeked of sulphurous fumes. Breathing was almost impossible.

Huge rocks of enormous weight, red-hot, were

hurled with awful force into the air to fall to earth on the side of the Mountain, to rush with ever increasing speed into the valleys below.

Then the molten lava of Earth's cauldron surged to the brink, and breaking over the side in cataracts of hissing fire, poured down the slopes in torrents of flaming stone, melting the rocks which they engulfed in their progress, and carrying instant destruction to forest and vineyards, which they met in their course.

Rain in torrents now fell. Incessant claps of thunder lent deafening noise to the roar of the volcano. The wind rose with the force of a hurricane and shrieked above. Earth and sky, the one shaken to its foundations, the other reverberating in sullen rage and fury to the far distance, vied with one another in awful rivalry in that terrible orgie of Nature, that horrible outburst of her forces, that hideous strife of the elements wherein Heaven itself, with all hope of Peace, all thought of Beauty, all idea of Love, seemed to be eternally lost before the combined powers of Hell and Hate.

Then a sound louder still than all the prevailing din rose above the clamour. It lasted for an instant or two, awe-inspiring and terrible, and suddenly ceased. The discharge of vapour stopped. The dull grey pall of cloud rolled away on the wings of the departing wind. The rivers of lava were stayed at their source. The air above cleared. Daylight

re-asserted itself. There was a great calm. Only a vast cloud of dust shot up into the sky.

The high cliffs or walls of the crater, molten by fire, weakened by the rain, shaken to their foundations by the explosions and earthquakes, had fallen inward with an awful crash, filling the abyss to the brim, choking its fire and ending its violence. What had been before a yawning chasm was now a tossed and smoking table-land of scoria and ash.

The rock on which Empedocles had stood, together with all the surrounding ground, had been hurled below, engulfed by that fearful cataclysm of Nature, and he had been buried with them.

Hylas and Pausanias at length crept from their refuge, stunned and dazed. The two men silently and solemnly descended the cone with great grief in their hearts. They sought not for Empedocles. They knew he had certainly perished, a victim to those four elements, "the Roots of the Great All," of which he had been the wise expounder.

As they went, the sun shone again. Sicily, tranquil and serene, lay below them, nursed in the lap of her seas. Universal Beauty once more resumed its dominion. But its most noble apostle, a man perfected by Love, the Upholder of the fallen, the Divine Philosopher of Acragas, meanwhile, had been called to the surpassing fellowship of the Immortals.

CYANE.

CYANE.

PROLOGUE.

ONE evening of late spring 415 years before the Christian Era, the dark ripples of the Cretan sea were recalled to life from the deep shadows of dusk by the light of a full moon rising behind the island of Melos.

The night was one of serene tranquillity, of pervading calm. The caressing softness of the air, the hushed murmurs of far-reaching waters, the perfume of flowers, faintly borne by an imperceptible breeze from distant shores, told of Nature at rest in a quietude and repose that were alike solemn and awe-inspiring.

The smooth expanse of hushed waters stretched southward to the dark horizon until it was lost in that distance where sky and sea mingle, and where life itself seems to pause before the dim regions of doubt and mystery that lie beyond. It was a solitude of sky and waters except for the frowning heights of Melos, which uplifted sternly and menacingly. And on land, all was dark and lonesome with the black shades of dying hours—no

valleys visible, no hillsides scored by torrents, no signs of living men. All had been lulled to sleep by the alluring spell of the summer night.

Suddenly, as the tide of light fell upon the sea, the blue-black waters danced to the flicker of moonbeams, which darted quivering flashes on all sides, eclipsing the wayward gleam of phosphorus and the silver glint of fish rising lazily to the surface.

Then when the moon outlined with silvered brilliancy some topmost ridge or rocky point of Melos, and the early stars paled at the coming of the stronger light, the silence was broken by a sound faintly wafted over the water from the north—a sound like that of breezes moving about the strings of a lute, lightly touching them, so subdued the tones, so vague the harmony. Imperceptibly the music swelled, became more defined, rising and falling on the puffs of air, until it ripened to a fuller melody of subdued beauty. Then suddenly the sound ceased.

At that moment the indistinct form of two galleys emerged from the shadow; one from the north beyond the distant headland of the island; the other from the purple distance of the south.

As the ships drew near, the masts showed bare; the windless night had caused the flapping sails to be furled. The galleys approached rapidly, for many oars were deftly dipped.

From the bows of one leapt troubled waters.

Behind the other a long translucent way widened in the moonlight from the stern. Their build told what country had sent them forth. From Athens came the one shot from the shadow of Melos; from Syracuse the other.

As the chaunt came again low and soft over the sea, terror reigned among the Syracusan sailors. They remembered the Syrens' song, the advice of Odysseus, and stopped their ears. They could not account for the music and feared the evil that might befall. But soon the mast and hull of the Athenian ship became more distinct, the chaunt of its mariners better understood. Then they knew and listened.

Suddenly, at a word clearly given, the Athenian thole pins ceased their groaning and the oars were still. The Syracusans went upon their course. The two countries then were friendly, bound by ties of blood, so they had nought to fear. The clouds of fratricidal strife to come were as yet barely above the horizon.

Then the chaunt of voices broke once more loudly from the Athenian ship, whose deck was crowded with fair-haired men. At first little but the notes of those who sang reached the other ship. But as they came together the significance of words was added to the music.

The Syracusans, dark, lissom men, left their oars and clustered to the side. They stayed their course for politeness' sake to hear the greeting of comrades

hailing from the parent shore. Yet their tarrying had some deeper meaning, a latent hope.

The two galleys met. The oars were backed, and the ships lay motionless alongside, with only a path of gleaming sea between. The hulls, the rigging, the banks of oars run out, the faces and figures of the sailors, were seen clearly in the full moon as by the light of day.

The song continued for a time. Then came words chaunted by one alone, or in chorus from the mouths of several as the case might be.

“H’st, listen,” said the Syracusans to one another in great expectancy.

The words of poets by rich and poor alike in old Greece and in the younger beyond her seas, were accounted as treasures beyond price, divine expression of the immortals to soothe, to cheer, to abase, to exhort to brave deeds, to restrain the wilful passions of mankind, and as such they were not to be lost.

It was known in Syracuse that the great Euripides of Salamis, the bard of Athens, had but recently given to the world a tragedy concerning the Trojan Women and the Sack of Troy with which Greece was ringing from end to end—a tragedy which moved men to the depths of their souls, not only because it was a consummate work of art, but because it was regarded also as a solemn warning, a prophecy foretelling untold disasters to mighty Athens for her

inappeasable greed of gain, her lust of power, her defiance of the common rights of men. Was not Melos, whose rocky heights were now frowning down upon the two galleys as they moved to the surge of the sea, a dire example of the unexpiated crime deplored—of ruthless war, of murder, of bloody conquest, of oppression on the part of Athens? And to those who thought the more and deeper there was much beyond. Was not pity for mankind, for the fallen, for the down-trodden, pity even for those women, who, heretofore ignored by men, were raised by the magic of words from the sordid condition of slaves to be reputed worthy of that pity, in the cry that now went up from the soul of Euripides to an unheeding and degenerate age? Would the words of that great tragedy, of which only the rumour of its fame had reached the shores of Sicily, fall upon the ears of the expectant islanders to be treasured as pearls beyond price, to be borne home by them and repeated proudly to rapturous audiences at Syracuse so soon as their voyage might be ended? Such was the hope of those who listened anxiously on board the Syracusan galley.

A voice declaiming the following lines was heard:

“Up from Ægean caverns, pool by pool of blue salt sea, where feet most beautiful of Nereïd maidens weave beneath the foam their long sea-dances, I, their lord, am come, Poseidon of the sea. 'Twas I whose power, with great Apollo, builded tower by

tower these walls of Troy; and still my care doth stand true to the ancient people of my hand; which now as smoke is perished in the shock of Argive spears."

The words came clearly in the still night air.

"None but Euripides could have penned such lines," excitedly said one from Ortygia to his companions. "They speak of our lord and master of the waves, Poseidon, who thus laments the fall of Troy—his own beloved city."

A pause ensued. Not a sound came from the Sicilian ship. All was expectancy.

Another voice from the Athenian galley chaunted in response:

"O ships, O crowding faces of ships, O hurrying beat of oars as of crawling feet, how found ye our holy places? . . . What sought ye then that ye came?"

"It must be Hecuba, the Queen, who addresses the invading Greek fleet," whispered the Syracusans to each other; "she who mourned her lot sitting by the Greek king's door, and speaks of Helen and the Sack of Troy."

"Hush," said another, as the Athenian reciter continued, "the wife of Priam continues her lamentation; lose not a word."

"O Mothers of the Brazen Spear, and maidens, brides of shame, Troy is a smoke, a dying flame; together we will weep for her: I call ye as

a wide-winged bird calleth the children of her fold, to cry, ah! not the cry men heard in Ilion, not the songs of old, that echoed when my hand was true on Priam's sceptre, and my feet touched on the stone one signal beat, and out the Dardan music rolled; and Troy's great Gods gave ear thereto."

Another and longer pause. Nothing was heard but the lap of the sea, the noise of ripples licking the blades of the oars at rest, and the sides of the galleys outlined by eager faces. Then a third voice, more musical and pitched in a higher key, the voice of a youth, sang clearly the following words, specially chosen apparently for a greeting to the Greeks of Greater Greece by the men of Athens, as extolling the island whence they came:

"They told us of a land high-born, red with corn and burdened fruits. Of Ætna's breast, the deeps of fire that front the Tyrian's Citadel, first Mother, she, of Sicily and mighty mountains: fame hath told their crowns of goodness manifold. And, close beyond the narrowing sea, a sister land, where float enchanted Ionian summits, wave on wave, and Crathis of the burning tresses makes red the happy vale, and blesses with gold of fountains spirit-haunted homes of true men and brave."

The last words came softly and indistinctly, for the galleys had now drifted apart. The older among the Syracusans murmured—they could not fully catch the significance of the verse.

Then a loud voice from the Athenian craft was heard once more :

“ Hail, brother mariners, go now your way upon calm seas, resting with the melody of the great Euripides in your ears. It is our salute to you of Sicily, ‘ true men and brave.’ ”

“ May Poseidon be your guide and guard, and may the Sun Lord, the God of Music, look kindly on you for your noble greeting,” was the rejoinder from the Syracusan ship.

The oars of both galleys moved evenly again. The sea was beaten into silvered foam as the men bent to their toil. The ships soon lost sight of one another and disappeared into the gloom, one heading for the frowning cliffs of Melos, the other for sun-licked southern shores. Now and again the chaunt of sonorous words lingered in the air until that too was lost, and once more universal solitude held the summer night.

CHAPTER I.

A LONG procession of men and women of all ages and conditions was wending its way noisily along the way that led towards Heloron, from the different quarters of the ancient city of Syracuse in Sicily. Gaiety and freedom from care marked the demeanour of those who walked the flat road, notwithstanding the hot sun of a day in early autumn beating fiercely on their heads, and the white dust rising in choking clouds to the tread of many feet.

All in that concourse of Syracusans were directly interested in the proceedings. Each man, woman and child carried a gift for the Great Mother of the Earth and her Fair Daughter, because the day was one of the yearly festivals in honour of the goddess of corn and harvests, and of her no less beloved child, the fruit-bearing Persephone. Much of the ritual of these festivals had been brought from the older Greece to her offshoot in Sicily, and though shorn of some of the solemnity of those mysteries which made Eleusis celebrated, Sicily could not be unmindful, as she never was unmindful in more

ancient days, of what she owed the Divine Pair who had had their chief habitation in the island.

So here at Syracuse, the principal city of that larger Greece beyond the sea, sacrifice and prayer were to be offered this day, and due honour done to the goddesses. Here was the holy casket, carried in a consecrated car drawn by oxen, followed by women, who, garlanded with flowers, bore baskets in which pomegranates and poppies, cakes, carded wool and other products of the land—things most acceptable and specially dedicated to the elder deity—were heaped in profusion. Bulls were led out to be sacrificed. Many men carried huge torches to be lighted at night to commemorate the travellings and sore quest of the Mother for her Daughter on the slopes of the burning mountain. Children held bunches of fruit and flowers, branches of oak trees and dishes of fish, to lay at the feet of their great Protectress. Notwithstanding the burdens the crowd danced along merrily to the sound of singing and the beating of brass vessels—exuberance of spirits finding vent in a bewildering discord of sound. Such a medley of revelry and devotion was demanded by custom to show proper respect to the occasion.

But beyond the rejoicing there was on that day a feeling of thankfulness and relief for freedom from sore anxiety, which made the men and boys shout the louder and the maidens trip with lighter feet.

Syracuse, for some time past, had been a victim to vague apprehensions, which had gradually developed into well-defined misgivings. It was known that the mightiest city of the parent land, Athens, in her lust for power and conquest, had long cast envious eyes at the prosperity of her kinsmen in Sicily; and now on futile pretext had shown hostile intent. Her vast fleet, indeed, had recently anchored at the adjacent Katané, and on a trumped-up charge seemed ready to take revenge for what she declared to be an outrage to her pride.

Among the pleasure-loving Syracusans scorn and derision had first met the disquietude of the more far-seeing citizens. They had refused to recognise any danger from such a source, even though invasion was spoken of. But when the arrival of the Athenian fleet, first at Rhegion and then at Katané, became an ascertained fact, fear and discouragement possessed them. One day these misgivings gave way to despondency. That was when sixty Athenian ships in single column appeared off Syracuse, and, more terrifying still, when with great temerity ten entered the Great Harbour and passed close to the walls and docks of the city. Then the gravest apprehension possessed people's minds, for disregarding sage advice offered by wiser men, the Syracusans had built no galleys, made no attempt at armament wherewith to oppose the enemy, and were therefore unprepared to defend themselves.

Yet strange to say the ten ships had soon passed out of the harbour, and with them sailed away also the fleet which had seemed so menacing and so strong. Thereupon great joy reigned once more in Syracuse. At this unlooked for removal of danger many averred no harm from the Athenians need be feared, that no notice need be taken of a haughty message delivered by a herald from the deck of the Athenian leader's trireme. If war had been the intention, many averred, it would have fallen on Syracuse then, when unprepared and entirely at the mercy of her enemy. The danger, therefore, was now past.

It is true that an act of hostility had been committed and a handful of Athenians taken prisoners when a party, landing in the proximity of the Olympieion on the further side of the harbour, had been repulsed. But evidently the Athenians had changed their minds, over-awed by the magnificence of the city which stretched so far from the sea to the heights above.

So the laughter and rejoicing of the crowded procession of the Syracusans in honour of the two goddesses that day was doubly gay, gratitude for deliverance from a grave peril increasing the enthusiasm which the religious festival evoked. It was in this spirit that the throng approached the end and aim of their pilgrimage—the Temple of the Dual Deities, a monster fabric shining like marble in the

sunshine, and raising the peristyle of its lofty Doric columns and heavy entablature in the clear autumn air against a sky of deep blue. The temple was the last of the many sacred buildings for which Syracuse was so famed before reaching the surpassing magnificence of the Olympieion beyond ; it stood at the base of the sloping cliff of grey rock in the plain which stretched from the high ground of Epipolai to the waters of the Great Harbour.

In the midst of the procession, and decked with garlands, was a group of girls, the fairest of all the maidens in that city of beautiful women, girls who had been chosen for their comeliness as well as for their rank and virtue, to do greater honour to Persephone. Chief among these was Cyane, the daughter of Mara, a Syracusan Greek, who held high office among the nobles of the land.

Cyane, now in her eighteenth year, even among her companions, attracted the observation of the bystanders, and created almost as great an interest as the trophies and paraphernalia of the festival itself. Tall and slim in form, with large blue eyes laughing below curling lashes, the points of which were lost in the dark eyebrows above, with a winsome mouth that scarcely concealed a faultless row of teeth, so mobile with merriment was it, she well merited the admiration of the crowd ever moved by things beautiful. Her hair was of a rich brown colour, and her complexion as clear as the water of that fountain

from which she took her name. She eclipsed her fellows in loveliness as a diamond the crystal in brilliancy, or burnished gold the quartz from which it comes.

The young man Lydias, standing by the roadside, gazed at her with the rest, but with feelings more intense, more defined. Lydias and Cyane had been brought up together from childhood. But it was only lately that Lydias had awakened to the knowledge that he loved Cyane. It was a mystery to him that a yearning, now so strong, had but made itself known to him within the last month or so. That it had not was because no particle of coquetry, not a trace of vanity was to be found in Cyane's nature; and because she had been so much a part of his life from his earliest days that he had hitherto regarded her in the light of a sister only. But that he scarcely paused to consider. Both their mothers, friends from girlhood, being dead, the two had been thrown together, and depended on one another for companionship; and when Lydias' father was killed in one of the many small frays between the Syracusans and the Leontines, it was natural that the boy should find a second home in the house of Mara.

Cyane on the contrary was not in any way in love with Lydias, nor was she until lately aware that his feelings for her had undergone so great a change. Dark, with a thick-set sturdy figure de-

noting physical strength, with black hair curling over a low forehead, an aquiline nose and bushy eyebrows meeting over small brown eyes, Lydias was not one to attract a young woman's fancy. Added to that he had not paid her any marked attention, being inclined towards an easy indolent life, taking his share in the frivolities and luxurious existence in which the upper classes and the young nobles of Syracuse indulged freely.

When the procession had halted a little short of the temple to allow its leaders to enter the edifice, the din of revelry somewhat abated. Curiosity had overcome all other feelings for the moment.

By the side of the road, and withdrawn from the approaching procession for greater safety, a small detachment of Syracusan soldiers rested. They were in charge of a half-dozen or more of Athenian prisoners, who had been captured when their galleys had entered the Great Harbour, and who, imprisoned for a time within the precincts of the Olympieion, or Temple of Olympian Zeus, were now being escorted to Syracuse to be handed over to the proper authorities and dealt with as their fate might be determined.

The crowd of merry-makers, like children in their search for amusement, could not allow so novel and appropriate an occasion to be lost for sallies of wit and boisterous as well as caustic remarks. Many went further and loaded the captives with taunts

and menaces. The Athenians, dejected and wounded, heeded not the insults heaped on them. They were listening intently to words of encouragement, which one of them, a youth, and seemingly accepted as their leader, was addressing to them. When the latter ceased speaking the prisoners turned to the holiday-making Syracusans, and silently gazed upon them and the doings of the day.

It so happened that when the procession had halted, Cyane was within a short distance of where the Athenians stood. She heard the words of exhortation spoken by their leader. With that gentleness of nature which was one of her chief characteristics, she rebuked her companions for mocking the captives; she was sorry for them, as a gentle nature would be sorry for the few tormented by the many. Thus she drew the attention of the Athenian youth, who, attracted by her beauty, gazed long and kindly upon her. Their eyes met.

Cyane in her youthful enthusiasm saw before her a face which, sleeping or waking, was never to fade from her memory. To her it was as if she looked upon the divine face of the son of Latona, the Sun-god, so regular its features, so great its beauty. Clustering light hair hung thickly about a high forehead; the eyes were large and blue as the sea itself, with steady and penetrating gaze; the mouth finely chiselled, the profile of the pure Greek type. Yet the greater charm of the face seemed to Cyane to

lie in something deeper and more lasting than personal comeliness of face and of form—for the young Athenian was also tall and shapely—there was that in the expression of eyes and mouth alike denoting power of will and firm resolve, and withal a refined nature and noble character which irresistibly attracted.

Unconsciously Cyane made mental comparison between the stranger as she now saw him and Lydias, with his dark sallow complexion and self-indulgent and indolent character. Girl as she was, her womanly instinct told her intuitively wherein the two differed, and why the one had moved her at once while the other never had. That was but a momentary thought, a passing reflection which came quickly as it was rapidly banished from her mind. Yet she could not withdraw her eyes from those which now gazed fearlessly into hers. She saw in them something new, something remote from her life heretofore, a menace and a danger perhaps, but at the same time a light which seemed to kindle in her heart suddenly an unknown warmth, begetting a yearning for a happiness undefined.

As the crowd pressing from behind forced her and her companions to move slowly towards the temple, she recalled herself with an effort to the reality of her surroundings from that short dream in which she seemed to have lost herself momentarily in a new world suddenly opened. Even then her

eyes remained fixed on the young man's face, and they sought the ground in confusion only when a deep blush rose to her cheeks, coming with the fuller knowledge that something strange had now mysteriously and suddenly entered into her life. As she walked she knew instinctively that the eyes of the young Athenian followed her.

Thenceforth the events of the day were as nothing to her—the shouting, the laughter, the joking, the merry-making of the Syracusans, even the solemn ceremonial in the temple made no impression. She had but one wish, one desire—to break away from her companions and the noisy crowd, to be alone with her thoughts and the image of that fair face with pleading eyes, which her imagination conjured up incessantly and persistently held before her.

CHAPTER II.

CYANE'S early years had been uneventful. Life for a young girl in Syracuse was far removed from stirring events. The thirst for domination and increase of territory, which, alike at Athens as at Syracuse, was a disturbing element, failed to alter the even tenour of her existence. Even the recent attack on Leontinoi, to be followed by such dread consequence in the immediate future, failed to disturb the pleasant monotony of her days. Political jealousy, always rife inside the walls of the city, left a maiden such as she untouched. Storms of party striving might rage, the people might endeavour to wrest power and wealth from the rich, the rich oppress the poor, but Cyane remained unconscious except for the signs of disquietude or concern that her father, Mara, returning from the discussion of public affairs, might show. Even the warnings of the great Hermokrates, whose renown as statesman and patriot was acknowledged by all, meant nothing to her. What mattered it if Hermokrates preached danger from Athens, or Athenagoras, his opponent, scoffed at his preaching?

Cyane was queen in her own little realm within the walls of her father's house in the noble quarter of Achradina. There she reigned supreme, and she had as little leisure as of inclination to occupy herself with affairs that lay beyond. Her father, whose only child she was, was deeply attached to her and seldom thwarted her desires. Lydias, the adopted son of the house, humoured her whims and fancies. Both were her willing subjects, and naturally the rest of the household, men and women slaves, followed the example of their superiors.

Among the many servitors in Mara's house two were attached to Cyane—Baubo, who had been her nurse and attendant since her birth, and Dion, a man-slave belonging to Lydias, who more by his sourness of temper than by other special virtue had risen to something like a position of trust in the household of Mara.

Baubo was Sikelian by origin. She had been born among the mountains in the centre of Sicily, and by accident only had been brought to Syracuse from her mountain home, a prisoner in one of the many fights between the old inhabitants of the soil and the Syracusans. Middle-aged, short and round of figure, she had a kind face with large dark eyes. Prominent cheek-bones marked her Sikel origin, and malaria and sun combined had tinged her complexion to a brownish yellow.

Dion, a Syracusan Greek, was tall and very thin ;

he had a long nose ending in an upward curve, and ears which protruded at right angles from the head. Small eyes, that never rested on any object long, denoted a character differing from that of the homely nature of his fellow slave. Dion, indeed, was cunning and reticent, his thin lips denoting the bad temper for which he was known and feared. He was not an agreeable person either in looks or disposition, and his appearance was further marred by complete baldness, which he sought to hide by wearing a Phrygian cap, without which he was never seen.

The two slaves were at work together a week or so following the festival of Demeter-already recorded.

"What ails the girl? What ails Cyane?" asked Dion of Baubo, pausing in his occupation. "Something lies heavily on her mind, for naught else could take the laughter from her eyes, and the smile she has for all who serve her."

Dion had to repeat the words, for he received no reply. Had he noticed a gesture of annoyance which his companion made, as if she resented the question, he might more wisely have kept silence, or chosen another topic of conversation.

"Some flowers close at night," Baubo replied vaguely, seeing an answer was expected. But as Dion was not content with so general an answer, and was about to put the question again, she added: "Your looks, ugly as they are, are your own to discuss if you wish; leave those of others alone."

The woman was vexed he should have noticed what she hoped she alone had discerned. Jealousy made her resent that others should have a share in her mistress' life.

Dion smiled in his own peculiar way; that is, his lips curled into a feline expression which was his best attempt at showing satisfaction. He saw he had touched upon a tender spot and was pleased.

He and Baubo systematically disagreed and contradicted each other. They had drifted unconsciously into those relations. There was scarcely an hour of the day in which the two were not quarrelling, yet he was far from disliking his fellow slave.

"As for looks, I would rather be myself than like a goldfinch," he retorted.

"A goldfinch?" the other queried. She also scented danger, but could not restrain her curiosity. "The bird has a pretty note anyhow," she returned offhand.

"I said a goldfinch; it is all brown and yellow." Dion shot his bolt to some effect, for Baubo, who knew he referred to the colour of her skin, which was a sore point with her, bridled perceptibly.

"A brown skin is better than a pumpkin for a head, and reeds taken from the Anapos for legs," Baubo rejoined hotly.

Dion, like many ill-tempered people, could keep his temper when others lost theirs, though the allu-

sion to his baldness, which the mention of the pumpkin suggested, was almost more than he could bear. He did not mind about his legs being held up to ridicule, for if long and thin they were at least useful in getting over the ground, as he often said complacently. But the want of hair on his head was a sore subject, and his pale face reddened with suppressed rage.

“May the Furies tear out your malignant tongue, and the gods hurl thunderbolts at you,” was the angry retort.

Baubo's vexation cooled as Dion's increased.

“As for the gods, they will heed you as little as you heed them, since you say you have no belief in them. For the Furies—I'll take my chance, although you know more about them than I do, since certainly they suckled you when young. Maybe the bitterest tongue will be the first to be taken,” she rejoined.

Baubo had the best of the discussion. Dion was silent, but not beaten. He had yet a Parthian shot that never failed in effect; he used it seldom that its full force should be maintained.

“Then may the Evil Eye rest upon you and blast all your hopes,” he cried, “may the——”

“Silence, speak not of that Thing here,” shrieked the woman, now beginning to be seriously alarmed, and relinquishing all thought of continuing the duel of words. She was deeply steeped in superstition, and, like all Sikels, had unlimited belief in the

malevolence of the Evil Eye. The mention of it was to her fraught with menace of unknown peril.

But Dion saw his advantage and craftily pursued it, being well aware of Baubo's weak point of defence. He knew that in the small room which was retained for her private use in Mara's house, there was a strange collection of charms and such objects as were held to counteract the far-reaching influence of fascination, or *baskania*, the common name by which it was known. He had seen them himself; and he, sceptic as he was of what others held sacred, and, indeed, of all things not intimately connected with his own primitive and selfish mode of living, wondered greatly and with much contempt at the woman's credulity. Here was a proper and never-ending opportunity of paying off old scores—the sum total of much rancour resulting from differences of opinion, petty jealousies, and constant conflict of interest and favour.

“So it was to charm away the Evil Eye that I saw you in hot pursuit of a locust in Epipolai the other day,” he said. “Your short legs had a long chase after the nimble insect. Did you catch him?” Dion's query was only meant to annoy, as he knew that his companion had brought the locust home and had nailed it to the wall of her room above the mattress on which she slept.

Baubo's only answer was to spit upon the ground, and to instinctively point the first and little fingers

of a closed hand at him. She frowned heavily and would have fled, but she could not bring herself to acknowledge defeat, nor allow Dion to boast of so signal a victory. Yet she neither wished to nor could deny the truth of his scoffing, for she was aware that he knew on the walls of her room were hung many charms, acquired in one way or another on account of that curious superstition which possessed her. Her collection was a varied one, indeed. Among other things were shells of a peculiar shape joined together in chains, and which she often wore round her neck. A large drawing of a human eye, roughly drawn by an inexpert hand in charcoal, faced the stranger on entering; the dried body of a serpent dangled in a corner. Rough images in clay resembling a raven, crow, crane, a lion and a scorpion were lying about, and with them quaint nondescript figures where the head of a man would surmount the body of a horse carried on legs of a bird. There were also two-headed beasts, crescent moons, a small branch of coral or two, figures of hands in terra-cotta, a dried lizard—a veritable museum of weird things, in fact, strangely filling the small apartment.

Yet it must be owned Baubo had not thought of herself only when getting together so curious a collection of charms and amulets. Her main object was to avert evil from the person and home of her beloved mistress, Cyane. Of that Dion was aware,

and, satisfied that he had turned the tide of war in his favour, resumed his work complacently. Baubo, on the verge of tears, sought her room.

What Dion had said to Baubo was true: Cyane was ailing; something lay heavily on her mind. The glad lightsome nature of the girl had changed suddenly; her gay moods, which had made the house of Mara one of frolic and laughter, had given place to moodiness and reserve. A shadow had crept within the walls.

Mara, the father, was too much occupied with public affairs to notice his daughter's altered condition. He was one of the followers of Hermokrates, and shared his leader's anxiety as to the result of the war with the Athenians which now was certainly inevitable. Such a danger was enough to engage any thoughtful mind seriously.

But both Dion and Baubo not only took notice of, but each pondered over it in a way peculiar to each other. Baubo was convinced that Cyane had been *fascinated*, or "overlooked" by one possessing the Evil Eye. There was a dark cloud overhanging her, eclipsing the sunshine of her nature and chilling the genial warmth of her spirits: nothing more. What could it mean but that Cyane had been bewitched? She had often told her young charge she was unwise in constantly speaking of the happiness that surrounded her. Those who boasted of happiness were chiefly the victims of the hidden

influence. As for Baubo herself, she would rather have vowed defiance to all the gods of her native land and Greece combined than have admitted at any time that the state of her own health was anything more than tolerable, that existence was little less than irksome and suffering. She had had a horrible fear of exciting the anger of those many unknown but ever present beings, who jealously lie in wait to destroy the happiness of mortals; and she would not put herself in their power.

Dion, on his side, though puzzled, had a particular theory concerning Cyane's state. His intellect was as sharp as that of his fellows, sharper indeed; besides, he was observant and inquisitive. His curiously shaped nose, one of the danger signals that Nature provides for the safety of others, could but belong to a meddling disposition. He made a shrewd guess at the nature of Cyane's ailment, and, unable to divine the cause, set himself to the task of discovering it.

CHAPTER III.

CYANE was in love. Among the crowd which hurried to do honour to the Great Mother and her Daughter that day some weeks ago was one, a mischievous curly-headed boy, invisible and unacknowledged, yet active as ever, with bow strung and quiver full, who planted a dart unerringly in the heart of the young girl. It was, of course, at the moment when the eyes of the wounded Athenian youth held those of Cyane in steadfast gaze. Since then, though life had some exquisite moments for her, the days were mostly passed in sore doubt and perplexity. At first she could not understand. She rebelled at the subtle power that impelled her thoughts always towards a man, a total stranger, whose name she knew not, nor anything concerning him save that he was an enemy. In that last thought lay a sting sharp and remorseful. What right had she, a Syracusan, priding herself on her origin, loving the land of her birth; daughter, too, of a man whose patriotism was proverbial, to think with affection of an avowed enemy of Syracuse?

She had heard the protests and execrations at

the action of the Athenians, their gratuitous aggression and cruel cupidity. The scorn shown by her countrymen at the reputed cowardice of their foes when the fleet had sailed away after entering the Great Harbour, had now given place to a deeper feeling among them. And now it was known the enemy, instead of abandoning the enterprise, had but withdrawn to the neighbouring Katané, and was preparing to carry out the threat of invasion, the intention of reducing Syracuse to a dependency of Athens which Hermokrates had long discerned.

Cyane, with the rest, shared the bitter indignation and hatred of her fellow citizens. How could she then be attracted by one who had struck the first blow at the liberty of her home? she asked herself. She could hardly admit the truth of such a possibility, and still less to her father, whose rage against Athens was inappeasable, and daily growing in intensity.

And what of Lydias? She had divined within the last week or so that his feelings towards her had greatly changed. Instinctively she knew that he regarded her with different eyes than heretofore; that his thoughts were centred on her; that her actions were more closely scrutinised by him. She perceived he sought her companionship more frequently, offered little services which before had been ignored—in short, she was aware, with that knowledge which came from her own state of feeling, that Lydias yearned to be accepted as her lover.

This was an additional pang. Warm-hearted and affectionate to those about her, the thought of inflicting pain was abhorrent, and she knew she could not rightly accept the offer of her adopted brother's hand if it were made. To refuse would be a source of infinite pain. That, too, would displease her father, who would, she also was aware, have gladly welcomed a marriage between her and Lydias.

So with the days the doubts and difficulties to which Cyane was a victim increased within Mara's house, as greatly as they also did beyond in Syracuse itself.

Finally the dreaded moment came when Lydias declared his love for Cyane and asked her to become his wife. She did not give an answer at once. She pleaded for time to consider.

Then began the real battle within her; the tussle between her inclination and what she thought her duty to those she loved. Her cheeks grew pale, her misery great. Her health was visibly more suffering.

Baubo, her old nurse, was much disturbed. As Cyane's condition got worse she was more assured than before that magic was at the root of Cyane's unhappiness. She consulted the oracles of all the gods in turn; she prayed at all the temples. She frequented groves to see whether the trees would give answer to her queries; she would sit on the bank of the pool of Cyane, the nymph, to watch if the

motions of the sacred fish would give any indication of the truth. She would prostrate herself in the temple of Persephone, looking for a sign from the goddess herself. Her few precious treasures were willingly sacrificed. She would have given her life to detect the cause and to find the remedy for her beloved mistress' malady. All in vain.

Then one day when she least suspected it she was rewarded. Mara had taken his daughter to witness the performance of the play "Hippolytus" by Euripides, in the hope of rallying her from her despondency, and Baubo accompanied them. Cyane, sad, dejected, and immersed deeply in thought, had been indifferent to the play and to things around her. At first she paid no heed to the words of Hippolytus, of Aphrodite and Artemis, the goddesses. It was only when in answer to the question, "Canst thou not force her, then? Or think of ways to trap the secret of the sick heart's pain," and when the old nurse of the lovesick Phædra plies her with questions, finally surprising the secret of her mistress' ill-placed love for Hippolytus, that Cyane roused herself suddenly, showing infinite distress.

Baubo, watching her closely, then guessed that forlorn love in Cyane's own heart was the cause of the ill, and the rest was easy.

That night, as she was preparing Cyane for bed, the girl, clinging to her old attendant, in answer to a few adroit questions told all there was to tell—

her love so carefully concealed and for that the more fondly nurtured.

Baubo was at first overwhelmed with the knowledge. She was well aware of Mara's stern conception of duty, of Lydias' devotion, of the many other difficulties which made it hopeless her mistress' wishes could be realised. She saw it was manifestly her duty to all concerned to show the uselessness of the girl's passion, to make a bold attempt to redeem her thoughts from so unhappy a love; but she made the mistake of depreciating the object of it.

"I have heard of the young man you speak of," she cried. "A sorry youth indeed. Ariston by name, who said he came from Athens, but he was surely a Thracian, or one of those barbarians who live beyond the land of Greece. His wound was cared for by Dion's step-brother as he lay a prisoner in Syracuse. He is gone. Think no more of him."

Cyane started violently. She now heard for the first time the name of the man she loved. She had been too much overcome by what she had thought to be her folly to make any enquiries on her own account concerning him. She had feared any confidences, and kept silence.

"Is he then dead? Were his wounds so bad that he died?" she asked tremulously.

"Dead!" echoed Baubo. "Not he. After he had been kindly treated and was cured of his wound—a sword thrust in the thigh of no great moment—

he gave his keeper the slip, and maybe now is floating in the sea with his face nodding to the stars, for it was to the sea he took when pursued, and not a sign of him was seen again. Surely Father Poseidon has him for company, and the Nereïds now tend him."

"Did he leave nothing behind? Did he say nothing to those who nursed him?" asked Cyane through her tears, which began to flow afresh. Her heart ached for some definite information of one who never left her thoughts.

"Nothing I know of. Not likely he should since he brought nothing with him, the rascally fellow. Thieves who come after other folk's goods don't bring much in their train to leave behind," was her answer.

Baubo left her mistress after vain endeavours to soothe her. She had answered her questioning thus roughly in accordance with the dictates of prudence, as she thought that the sooner Cyane could dismiss the young Athenian from her mind the better it would be for all. But at the same time her heart bled for her, moved, perhaps, as much by sympathy as by romance and love of intrigue inherent in her nature. She intended therefore to make further enquiries about Ariston privately, for the latter part of the tale concerning him was untrue, an invention of her own. Ariston, cured of his wound, had escaped. That was certain. It was thought he had success-

fully joined his fellow countrymen at Katané. She would help Cyane if she could. She swore it to herself. But at present she would say nothing.

The only source Baubo could tap for information was Dion, for his step-brother, to whom the cure of the sick Ariston had been entrusted, was now employed beyond the city watching the movements of the Athenians.

She was very loth to take Dion into her confidence, however. It would be showing too much deference to consult him; and then she doubted whether, as the slave of Lydias, he could be trusted. In all things connected with Cyane Baubo was jealous. She would not allow anyone had a right to share her intimacy with her mistress. Certainly not Dion.

But to Dion she felt herself forced to go. She must know Ariston's fate at any cost for her mistress' sake. It was a delicate matter requiring diplomacy, of that she was well aware, for Dion disliked direct questions. He never answered them. His cautious nature told him that if a question was put a reason prompted the putting, and that that should be ascertained before replying; on such occasions he was either silent, or he answered by another question—which was annoying and sometimes embarrassing. The woman was perplexed.

“If only he were ill,” sighed she, “I could manage him better. He is more amenable when he has aches and pains and comes to me for relief.”

But Dion was in florid health, and wanted no help, no decoction such as Baubo was famed for making. Summoning up her courage she made up her mind to sound him. She chose an unlucky moment. A gust of wind had blown off his Phrygian cap in the street as he climbed the hill from Ortygia to Mara's house, and little boys had followed him laughing at his bald head. Despite his long legs they had eluded his pursuit and vengeance. He was out of breath and very angry.

Baubo was unaware of that. She saw he was in an irritable mood, but as he always was she did not hesitate to speak.

"What news from Ortygia to-day?" she hazarded.

"What news should there be?" was the surly answer.

"What of the war do they say down in Ortygia?" Baubo repeated, unabashed. She thus hoped to bring the conversation round diplomatically to the Athenian prisoners.

"Women who ask questions can best supply their own answers," was the querulous reply.

Baubo was not to be beaten thus. If she had only her own interest at heart she might have desisted, leaving Dion alone to recover of his bad temper. But this was Cyane's business, and she must make a further effort. She repeated the question, not without misgiving.

Dion's fixed look of discontent with the world in

general relaxed. Here was something new: Baubo interesting herself in politics and affairs of state when it was her rule to occupy herself only with her domestic business, her superstitions, and the tittle-tattle of the house; it meant more than met the eye. What was it? He meant to find out, so he led her on.

“Well, they do say the Athenian ships are at Katané,” Dion replied slowly.

As this was a fact that had been known by both for some time past, it was not encouraging to Baubo; but she persevered, asking this time boldly:

“What of those prisoners captured on the day of the feast of the Great Mother?”

“Why! what of them? They were shut up, weren’t they?”

“What happened to them? Some of them escaped, did they not?” pursued Baubo persistently.

Things were drawing to a point. Dion remembered that Baubo had been present when his step-brother had brought news of Ariston’s escape, when he had bewailed his fate in her presence, saying that he would be punished for failing in his duty. Dion recalled how she essayed to comfort him, saying that the loss of one prisoner only could not be so grave a matter. What was the cause of Baubo’s present interest apparently centring in the one escaped prisoner therefore? She had a special reason for wishing to know. He was bound to discover it.

According to what his step-brother told him, Ariston, the prisoner, was unlike others he had had in his care. He was very silent; had made none of the complaints which prisoners invariably made. He had lost all the gaiety which first seemed to possess him. When he got better of his wound he scrawled verses on the soft stones of his prison walls with a pointed piece of iron; that was his only amusement. After he had escaped, the cell in which he had been confined had been examined, and all the words inscribed were found to be on the subject of a great and overpowering love. A small piece of papyrus, swept to a corner, was also picked up, on which had been written an adieu in passionate words to one unknown. Ariston then loved somebody devotedly, and he wished to have the poor satisfaction of leaving behind an adieu to the beloved one. That piece of papyrus was in possession of his step-brother yet. Dion remembered all that, and thought he would like to know more. Continuing his train of thought he argued the object of the Athenian's devotion could only be in Syracuse—Ariston would not have written and left a fond farewell to one to whom he might fairly hope to be reunited by escaping. Dion, though illiterate, determined to possess himself of that piece of papyrus; it might give him a clue as to whom it was addressed.

But why was Baubo so interested in the matter? He was puzzled. Was she in love with Ariston? He

looked at her round squat figure, her yellow face, and his lips took the upward curve already noted, without any corresponding gleam from the eyes. That facial distortion recalled the grin of a skull. No, certainly Ariston could not have addressed words of love to her.

“You have been dreaming some of your dreams, Baubo?” he queried casually.

This was an attack on the flank, which somewhat disconcerted the woman. She was an unfailing believer in dreams, and in her weak moments had sometimes referred to them and the difficulties into which they led her.

“Maybe I have,” was her retort. Then seeing a possible opportunity of arriving in that manner at the information, she continued: “And if I have, what matter? I may wish to know if my dream is true or not.”

“Say on,” said Dion. He did not believe her, but thought she might betray herself by talking. “The last dream you had made you look for a sunken treasure on the Little Harbour, and a crab caught you by the toe as you groped about in the water,” he ventured.

Baubo sniffed, but restrained her indignation; as the tale was true it was not worth while to deny it. Then she was wise in her own conceit, and recounted a dream which was the opposite to what she desired to have confirmed. She knew Dion well enough to

anticipate he would deny the truth of any dream of hers, and in the heat of argument, perhaps, betray the reason for denying.

"I dreamed that all the Athenians were killed in their attempt to escape. Is that true?" she said.

But Dion was too wary to commit himself.

"May be yes, may be no—anyway they deserved the fate if it be so," he remarked.

Baubo's southern passionate nature was too exasperated by the man's feigned indifference for further diplomacy, and she blurted out, "Tell me, man, I must know what became of Ariston for the sake of my mistress. You must speak."

Dion's lips again curled upward. He had learnt why Baubo wished to know of Ariston's fate, and obtained his knowledge without giving the required information. He was pleased in his unpleasant way. He got up, pulled the cap firmly over his bald head and went out, leaving Baubo in tears, greatly worried that she should have betrayed her mistress' confidence thus.

CHAPTER IV.

THOUGH Cyane's confiding in her nurse brought her some degree of comfort, the intelligence of Ariston's death redoubled her grief. Vainly she struggled to summon resolution to her aid, arguing with herself on the folly of a love, which, absolute as it was, must now go unrequited. How strange that love of hers! How great the power which first had borne her to a new world, a vast field of sweet-scented flowers, wherein her fancy danced with rapture to the music that was in her soul; and then to a dense thicket of tangled wounding thorns from which there was no escape except to an arid wilderness beyond.

Cyane, in her innocence, knew nothing of the power of love to kindle the spark which ignites both the flame that consumes as well as the light that gives glory to life. But afterwards she knew, for brooding suffering brings knowledge. That steadfast gaze into answering eyes, that magic and creative glance, with all that followed in its train, was no longer a mystery; for her love had sprung into life and being thus. Of that she was sure. Equally sure was she that in Ariston's heart love

for her dwelt also. She knew instinctively that his love had gone out to her as surely as hers to him, spontaneously and irrevocably. Such had been her consolation in the bitterest hours of suffering, when she feared she would never look into his eyes again.

Since Cyane had listened to the words of Phædra in the tragedy her doubt and perplexity had increased. With what vividness she pictured to herself the scene of which she had been an eye-witness: the front of the royal castle of Troezen with the statues of the rival goddesses—Artemis and Aphrodite—on either side. But beyond and above all was the pale and haughty form of Phædra, the wife of Theseus, on whom her attention had become rivetted with the intensity born of a like suffering.

Irresistibly Cyane had seen herself as Phædra, with the queen's dejection, her failing health, the segregation from her companions, the awful weight of suffering caused by conscious deviation from rectitude of conduct which was the secret of Phædra's undoing. In the innocence of youth, Cyane found no mitigation of what she thought to be her crime because she could not distinguish between herself and the other.

Phædra's first utterance of her guiltiness, "My hand is clean; but is my heart, oh God?" found a solemn echo in her own breast with no reassuring answer. To herself she applied the words, "When the first stab came, and I knew I loved, I cast about

how best to face mine ill. And the first thought was to be still and hide my sickness." In vain Cyane sought to find help in the queen's resignation, wherein she declares, "I would my madness bravely bear, and try to conquer by mine own heart's purity;" rather was she haunted day and night by her heart-broken lamentation, "I know not, save of one thing, to die right soon. For such as I God keeps no other boon."

Had Mara known more he would not have taken his ailing daughter to a spectacle which, instead of alleviating, aggravated her suffering to so great a degree. Cyane now saw Phædra in all her thoughts: her own guiltiness in loving an enemy of her country, as she called her disloyalty to Mara, to Lydias, and to Syracuse, being equal in her mind to Phædra's crime.

To such a depth of misery did she reach that she came to look upon herself as an outcast deserving the fate of Phædra herself. Brooding over the tragedy, and continuing in that frame of mind, she asked herself repeatedly: what mattered her future lot? She could no longer fight against fate, especially now she was face to face with the love of Lydias.

Lydias was pressing for an answer to his demand for her hand. He was shortly to join the army which Syracuse was preparing with feverish energy to oppose the Athenian invasion. The period for con-

sideration she had pleaded for was near its end. He must have her reply.

Cyane's strength failed her. She knew she could battle no longer. Life was dead to her, or that better part of it which reflected her inner nature and real self. If Lydias wished to take her as she was, a cold, loveless woman, he might. She would not refuse him. She could not face the further sorrow of incurring her father's anger and causing Lydias pain by her denial.

Cyane knew that Lydias loved her deeply. Every day brought renewed tokens of it. But she would be honest with him. She would not wed him allowing him to suppose he had won her love. She would tell him all: that her heart had been given to another irrevocably. Then, if he still willed it, she would marry him. What mattered it to her? He should decide.

So a few days later, when Lydias renewed his offer of marriage, she told him what she had to tell.

The sun was setting as they strolled together through the walls of the Temenites to the high plateau of the Temple of Apollo. Standing in front of the edifice, they faced the land-locked harbour below them, a peaceful scene with little to denote either the present trouble of the man and woman who looked upon it, or to suggest the coming strife of men now so imminent.

Cyane spoke calmly and distinctly. She did not

spare herself. Far from it. She pleaded her own weakness, the magic of an overpowering passion. She had not been able to hold out against one nor the other. With downcast eyes she acknowledged her sin of loving so helplessly an avowed enemy of her country. She laid her heart bare. She kept nothing back.

As she spoke she did not look at Lydias, but gazed afar into the sunset sky as if what she related had been the tale of some other woman who had done with life and all things connected with it. Had she glanced at her companion she would have seen his face grow darker and darker, big veins start to his forehead, his eyes become bloodshot, his jaw closely set.

As she finished what she had to say she added mechanically :

“Take me if you will have such as I am. I give you all I have, nought but my wretched body, for all else within me is dead—stone dead.”

A stern battle between right and wrong, between the weak and the strong, between selfishness and sacrifice, between great love and great pity, between joy and grief, between the hope of the light and darkness of his future raged within the man as she spoke. The savage instinct of an untrained nature, the promptings of his senses at the near fulfilment of desire, demanded of him to secure what he had come to look upon as his own, and there and then

to take the girl to his heart in spite of all she had said.

There was a long silence. In her indifference she looked not for the answer.

Then Lydias spoke tremblingly, but slowly and distinctly. His face had lost the tense look of jealousy, of desire, of savage impulse of a few moments before.

"No, Cyane," he said kindly. "I cannot take you thus. You must come of your own accord. Some day perhaps you will come. We will leave it so."

Cyane turned, looking into his eyes for the first time for many days. The answer had at first filled her with infinite wonder. Then the love and nobleness of the real man were understood. Unconscious of the torture she caused, she laid her head on his shoulder and wept: no longer tears of unutterable despair, but of gratitude for the sympathy and help she had found so unexpectedly.

CHAPTER V.

EVENTS now followed which left no time for thoughts of love on Lydias' part. Cyane, too, was roused from her brooding grief.

The cloud which had hung over them with ever increasing menace since the first appearance of the Athenian fleet in the Great Harbour, burst with the din and stress of war about Syracuse.

The Athenians had retired to Katané, as has been seen, and there secured the alliance of its inhabitants. The Syracusans, drawn to attack them there with promises of help from within, arrived off the walls by land only to find that the enemy had set out at night for Syracuse by sea. When they reached home again they found the formidable Athenian armament, composed of nearly a hundred and a half of ships and eight thousand men, had once more entered the Great Harbour to encamp themselves in a strong position beyond the river Anapos, in close proximity to the fortified precincts of the Olympieion—the temple of Zeus and the treasure-house of the city.

The consternation of the inhabitants was at its

height. They had feared that immediate attack would be made, men slain, and women captured before the army marched to Katané could return. All the fighting men had gone on that lamentable expedition, and some days must elapse before they could come to their relief.

When the day after the appearance of the Athenians passed without attack; when it was seen that they were more intent on securing their position, on drawing up their ships, and making palisades, the spirits of the Syracusans rose. They could not understand the tactics of the enemy, but at least they had breathing time. Then they were further relieved by the news that their own army had been seen from the heights of Epipolai hastening to their help—that it would shortly arrive to attack the enemy.

The assault was begun, and the battle raged in the low-lying ground beyond the Temple of the Great Mother, but fierce though the fight was on both sides neither could claim a victory. Many were the examples of great prowess, of personal daring. During the combat the figure of a young commander was seen among the Athenian ranks wherever the fighting was thickest. Now it was among the hoplites who occupied the centre of the line of battle, then among the Argives on the right. When the left—where were the slingers and archers—showed signs of wavering, there the young man

was to the front. He was loudly acclaimed as he passed from one to another part of the battle-field. Even his foes regarded him with admiration, many with awe; he was fair to gaze upon, and in his bravery and freedom from danger seemed to have special protection of the gods. The Syracusans knew not his name, but they called him Kallistos, for he was comely. He became a by-word to them for manly courage.

Later the Athenians, seeing that the winter was near, and that in some respects they were inferior in force, embarked and sailed for the friendly Naxos, where they remained for the winter months.

Thus Syracuse, in her unprepared state, had not only another escape from destruction, but was given the opportunity of arming herself for the deferred struggle, of negotiating the help which was to be of such incalculable value in her need later on.

And thus was the undoing of Athens furthered by procrastination once more. When the excitement and more pressing sense of danger caused by the presence of the enemy were removed, Cyane sank again into the unhappy state which her love-sick condition had caused. Nothing that Baubo could do sufficed to bring back the smiles to her face, the colour to her cheeks. She mourned for her love as truly as a love-sick maiden had ever mourned before. Her nurse suggested charms and incantations as a remedy. She surreptitiously

brought philtres against ill-placed love, alleging that they were but her own nostrums for the cure of a passing indisposition. Seeing that they were of no use she frequented the oracles more continuously, and vowed vows to all the gods in succession if they would deign to cure her beloved mistress. Soon Baubo, for her fruitless anxiety, came to look as sick and sorry as Cyane herself.

Dion, in the meantime, had not been inactive. Possessed of the secret of Cyane's love for Ariston, he was pondering how to turn it to his own advantage. And here it must be said that he had no wish to harm Cyane, to whom he owed no grudge; but neither did he desire to lose so good an opportunity of ingratiating himself with his master which he thought the possession of the secret gave him. His malicious nature, moreover, was not averse from dwelling on the difficulties into which Baubo would certainly fall for having betrayed her mistress' confidence.

Dion had been perplexed how to utilise his knowledge. If he imparted his information to his master incautiously, could he be sure not to get a beating for his trouble? How would Lydias take the news? More likely was it he would be angry than show gratitude. Dion was like a man who has a valuable jewel and is unable to dispose of it. He was of course unaware of Cyane's confession to Lydias and the latter's reply.

Then suddenly the thought came to him: if he could gain no material advantage by his secret, he would at least use it in a way almost as satisfactory: in a scheme of revenge against Baubo for the many slights received at her hands. He thought out his plan carefully. He would announce his determination to make Baubo his wife. He did not desire to marry her; and he knew that she was as far from wishing it as he. That it was so, so much the better he told himself. The greater repugnance on her part the greater his diversion. He would certainly make Baubo accept him as her future husband, and he had the power in his hands.

Dion was well aware that Baubo would do or promise anything to save Cyane from pain or trouble. He counted on that; and he rubbed his hands with glee at the thought of the fine revenge he would take when, having forced Baubo at last to consent to his wishes, he would repudiate his proposal and mockingly declare he had changed his mind. He would hold over her the terror of the secret which they shared until he had brought her humbly to his feet. He chuckled at the thought.

* * * * *

After the departure of the Athenians, the doings of those who had fought bravely on both sides were freely discussed in Syracuse. The age of heroes had not died out—or at least the pleasure in heroic

deeds still existed, and their merits were appraised with fairness. The ancient pride of race, the glorying in noble deeds of old, the intense interest taken in the heroes of the Mother-land of the Greek nation, fostered, emphasised and immortalised by the poets, were yet alive in Syracuse.

Thus it was that the acts of the young man known as Kallistos came to be extolled above the others. The name was in everybody's mouth, and it soon reached the ears of Dion and Baubo.

Both those tried to ignore the fact that the Kallistos spoken of was none other than he who had been a prisoner and escaped—Baubo because the knowledge that Cyane's beloved was yet alive should be kept from her at all costs; and Dion because with greater perspicacity he saw in Ariston's fame and near presence that the chance of Lydias' suit with Cyane would suffer.

It was that dread on Baubo's part that made her approach Dion. For some time, indeed ever since she had had that last encounter with him in which she had fared so badly, she had avoided his company. It had not been difficult, because most of her time was occupied with Cyane; and Dion had been serving his master, first in the field before Katané, then in the fight by the Anapos, and subsequently in Syracuse itself, where Lydias was in command of one of the quarters of the city.

But now events had happened, might be said to

be approaching a climax, when seeming indifference could be of little avail, and it was necessary to hear what Dion's intentions were. He had had sufficient time in which to mature his plans, Baubo said to herself, and no doubt his cunning mind and crooked nature had resolved on some course of action.

Seeing Dion cleaning his master's weapons one day she approached him, but not without misgiving. This time she preferred to give him an opportunity of opening the conversation, and she was not disappointed, for Dion at once remarked:

"Fine doings here in Syracuse, Baubo, when the enemies of our country are looked upon as heroes, and people shout themselves hoarse about their deeds. For my part, I would hang the lot to the nearest olive-tree rather than suffer them."

Baubo understood he referred to Ariston. The conversation was taking the right direction; but she did not like the soured way in which he spoke.

"Times are changed sadly," he continued. "It makes me long to get away among the mountains and settle down far from such doings." He looked hard at her as he spoke.

"Among the mountains, indeed," she answered. "What would you do there alone, with none to look after you, you who have lived in a town all your life, knowing nothing of tilling the ground or such things."

"Scratching up a little earth, putting in a little

seed, scratching the earth a little more until the corn is ripe to cut, require no great knowledge," he resumed. "As for being alone, that I don't intend to be. I shall marry."

"Marry?" said Baubo, with a scream of laughter. "Bald heads don't marry, none'll have them."

"Don't make too sure," he rejoined. "I know one who will have me."

"You don't," said she, surprised. There was more interrogation than denial in her reply, for Dion's look of certainty seemed to indicate a fixed purpose. Besides, his impudent stare and leer about the mouth warned her there was something more than she could understand.

"I say I know of one who will; or if she says she won't she will be more foolish than women mostly are," was the answer. "Look here," he said, putting aside the sword he was cleaning, and rising from the stool he sate on, "that woman is not far off, and she wouldn't dare to say, No!"

"What! You mean me?" screamed Baubo in amazement, raising her two hands together and pointing to herself.

Dion nodded his head decisively.

"Never," was the rejoinder.

But Baubo changed colour.

Dion saw his advantage and continued: "That is a far-reaching word, but it don't mean much after all. You and I have a secret to keep; it is better we

keep it together, to make sure of one another, you understand."

Baubo looked hard at Dion, her breath coming in gasps. She thought he was in earnest.

"If Athene were to strike me dead with her spear this instant I should still say 'Never,' and stick to it," she screamed incoherently and in great trouble.

The more moved Baubo became, the more imperturbable Dion was.

"It has to be, on that I am resolved," he said, standing his ground unflinchingly.

"What! end by marrying a man with a head as bare as a drop of water and legs like straws, after the many chances given me," she continued, now really frightened. Alas! she tried her favourite taunt without arousing his evil temper. It was a bad sign. She was more of a match for him when he was in a rage. When he was calm she was at her worst, for her tongue was the unequal of his. But she would not give in.

"If I say I'll die first, and mean it, what then?" she asked.

"You'll have to marry me," he replied, "and if you will not promise that on all you hold most sacred, your mistress Cyane's secret——"

"Hush, hush, for the sake of the mother who bore you," she sobbed hysterically. "Not that: her secret must never be mentioned. I—I will give you my answer to-morrow."

"You promise to do that without fail?" Dion asked, taking her roughly by the hand and scrutinising her severely.

Baubo could only nod her head. "Let me go," she said. "I promise."

Dion went back to his work with a satisfied air. He had begun well. He would have Baubo's answer to-morrow. Of course it would be favourable to his scheme. She was too terrified, she and Cyane were too much in his power to refuse him. After that he would begin that course of persecution of Baubo, which would cause her so much trouble, him so much delight. And finally he would cast her off, leaving her the laughing-stock of her friends.

The following day Baubo with set purpose made as if to avoid Dion. But he sought her and demanded her answer. As he surmised it would be: it was in the affirmative, given with reluctance, but with a coyness which upset him. He was somewhat ill at ease with women at all times, and whenever they made advances he left them speedily. The more timid Dion became the more tender Baubo grew. She even tried to caress him. This was more than he bargained for. He rose angrily and left her.

It was Baubo's turn to smile. Pondering over Dion's conduct of the day before, and the wish he suddenly expressed with menace that she must marry him—upsetting and alarming to her as the proposal

was—she had sense enough in her scared brain to suspect that things were not as she understood them. She knew something of Dion's character. Suddenly the thought came to her that Dion could not really wish to find a wife, still less to retire to the mountains of Sicily to live in bucolic simplicity and conjugal bliss, because a country life and the society of women were both distasteful to him. Of that she was certain. What was then the reason of his sudden proposal? What else but some scheme of annoyance in which she was to be the principal sufferer. The more she thought the more sure she was of the true state of affairs, and she made up her mind to meet him on his own ground of deceit, and to fight him with his own weapons. That was why she told Dion that she consented to become his wife. For the sake of Cyane, her beloved mistress, and her secret, which she considered should be kept from the knowledge of all the world, she would embark on the course of action she had planned without regarding the repugnance which it brought her.

CHAPTER VI.

IN the spring of the following year the Athenian army and their allies, for they had secured many from Sicily, moved from Katané, where the Greek commanders, Nikias and Lamachos, had massed their forces, and embarked on their ships heading towards Syracuse.

Stopping in the Bay of Trogitos, which is short of the promontory whereon the Acropolis of the city is built, the troops were landed and hurriedly moved to the rocky ground above and to the westward of Syracuse, called Epipolai, occupying a point of 'vantage which was to be afterwards known to fame as the castle of Euryalos.

It was there that the real siege of Syracuse began, where the first blow in this second stage of the war was struck.

The Syracusan forces had been called out by their leaders, of whom Hermokrates was still the chief, to be reviewed on the low-lying ground by the harbour, not far from the spot where the engagement had taken place in the preceding autumn. Unaccountable negligence, bordering on folly almost

criminal, had caused the Syracusans to think more of their review than of the movements of the Athenians and their fleet. Thus their enemies fell upon them before they were aware of their presence. The peaceful review was turned unexpectedly into a hard-fought battle.

Useless was the attempt of six hundred chosen men; and useless the attack of other troops who followed them to dislodge the Athenians from the strong position they occupied. The Syracusans were repulsed and had to take refuge within the walls of the city, leaving several hundred dead on the ground.

The following day the besiegers went as far as the gates of the city, but as no sally was made they marched back to their first position, and built a fort on the top of the cliffs which border Epipolai on the north side.

The intention of the Athenians, who were disinclined to risk an assault on the now considerably increased defences of Syracuse, was to starve the city to subjection. To do that they must stop all communication with the land by means of a wall. Their fleet was relied on to seize the supplies by sea. They therefore began a wall which was to extend from the waters of the Great Harbour on the south, and mounting the hill of Epipolai reach to the sea on the north. Thus they hoped to cut off the promontory entirely. In order to complete the work they built another large fort, circular in shape.

The men of Syracuse viewed with great consternation an imprisonment which also meant starvation. Popular clamour insisted on a sally. Again the army proved inferior to the Greek, and they had to retreat within the city. The only course for Hermokrates, then, was to avoid further actions until reinforcements should come; and in the meantime impede the construction of the enemy's walls, which threatened to turn Syracuse into a living tomb. This could be done by making a counter wall at right angles to the other.

The Athenians were occupied in their building to the north of the circular fort. They were more interested with making sure of their communication with the fleet for their own supplies, than in cutting off those of the enemy at present. The Syracusans, therefore, were allowed to run their wall from east to west and across the line that the southern part of the Athenian wall was intended to take later. The Syracusans toiled and built, erected palisades and built towers, even sacrificing in their haste and anxiety the sacred olive-groves of Apollo.

Then another blow fell on Syracuse; the underground water channels were discovered, cut off, and thirst was added to the terror of hunger. More was to follow swiftly. The Athenians, watching for the opportunity to undo what the Syracusans had done, seized the wall, when the latter, too jubilant at having accomplished their work, and thinking, perhaps, that

the Athenian plan was frustrated, were off their guard. The enemy not only possessed themselves of the wall, but even penetrated within the gate of the city itself. From the latter they were driven with slaughter; but they destroyed the Syracusan counter wall, making use of its materials for the more speedy prosecution of their own defences. So quickly did that work advance that the Syracusans, hoping to obstruct it, desperately resolved to attempt a second entrenchment on the lower ground, starting from the older fortification of the city. The ground was marshy. A deep trench, filled with water, strengthened by a palisade, was the result. But the Athenians would not brook interruption. They descended from the heights and drove the defenders off. Bodies of Syracusans had issued both from the city and from the Olympieion to give assistance, and the men joined their comrades drawn up between the trench and the Anapos. The Athenians thereupon attacked them, and once again the Syracusans fled, some towards the city, others towards the Olympieion. But here the Syracusan cavalry well nigh changed the chance of the day, for they charged the men sent in pursuit, whom they overwhelmed, and followed up their success by attacking the Athenian main body, throwing it into confusion.

It was at this moment that the Athenian general, the noble Lamachos, whose counsels had been formerly neglected to the future undoing of the ex-

pedition, cut off from his men, except for a few of his comrades, stepped forward and challenged Kallikrates, the leader of the opposing cavalry, to single combat. The challenge was accepted, and the two fought. Both fell mortally wounded; but by the death of Lamachos, the ardent fighter and energetic general, the Syracusans gained more than the Athenians had won by the victory of the day.

Further consternation filled the minds of the Syracusans. As they sought the security of the city after their defeat they saw the Athenian fleet pass the point of Plemmyrion and sail unmolested into the Great Harbour. By land and sea alike were they now invested by a powerful and implacable foe.

If increasing timidity and misgivings had been before the lot of those who passed up and down the streets of Syracuse restlessly by night and day, asking for news, yet fearful of what they might learn, dismay and mortal terror seized them now. The blame which attached to themselves for their indolence and lack of appreciating the manifest dangers which threatened when they first heard of the Athenian attack, they readily cast on their generals. The noble Hermokrates, and the two who shared the command with him, were deposed, and others named in their place. But besides discontent, treason also held in Syracuse—treason which favoured the Athenian schemes, had given them information of plans, and now openly advocated peace at any price

with the invaders. Starvation, bloodshed, possible slavery, stared the Syracusans in the face, were, in fact, at their very doors. They found they had been over-matched in skill, resources and generalship, and were now brought to the lowest depths of despair.

Messages were forwarded to Nikias, now the sole commander of the Athenian army, and in reply he had demanded terms which wanted but a definite answer of acceptance for the city to fall into his power. A day would have sufficed to have raised Nikias to a pinnacle of fame, his army to the proud position of conquerors in an arduous expedition. But that day never came. Nikias, sick in body, elated, too, at the thought of victory, which seemed to be in the hollow of his hand for the mere grasping, had omitted to take all contingencies into consideration. He failed to make the investment of Syracuse complete; to prevent assistance reaching the besieged from outside, which, as he knew, was not unlikely to arrive.

The morning of the day broke which should have made Syracuse a vassal of Athens. The inhabitants were assembling in consternation to hand over the liberty of the city to her enemy. Grief at this levelling of their pride, anxiety as to what their fate might be, were written on the faces of the whole population, except those who had plotted and planned for Athens within the walls. An hour or two would have decided their lot and sealed their future. But at the supreme

moment unexpected relief came. A ship arrived at dawn causing a change in the outlook, as glorious a change, indeed, as ever the sunrise brings to the world wrapt in the gloom of night, carrying a message of coming deliverance from the darkness of despair.

Men flocked to the Little Harbour where the ship had anchored—the Greater Harbour was in the hands of the Athenians. Nothing more was thought of the message of Nikias demanding surrender as men gathered about the galley. All tongues spoke only of the speedy arrival of Gylippos, the Spartan, with men and ships, who was now, at last, known to be on his way to give the assistance for which the Syracusans so long had yearned and were now so desperately in need of.

CHAPTER VII.

IN the round fort on Epipolai built by the Athenians, hard by the walls of the city, a group of Athenians were sitting, outside the tent of their sick commander Nikias. Among the men whose dress and weapons proclaimed them leaders was Ariston, the young captive first seen outside the Temple of the Great Mother, then heard of as having escaped from his captivity in Syracuse, and subsequently known as Kallistos.

An animated discussion was in course about the recent battles, and especially the lamented death of Lamachos, whose body, carried off by the Syracusans, had now been restored to receive funeral honours. But the thought that filled most men's minds was that of their near return to Athens, for on all sides it was thought the war was at an end, and nothing was likely to occur to prevent the bulk of the army from sailing for home.

Then the conversation turned to the unhappy result of the embassies which Syracuse had sent to Sparta and Corinth; and the apparent inefficacy of the pleading of Alcibiades, once one of the leaders of the Athenian expedition to Sicily, now an outcast

from Athens on an invidious charge, and a declared traitor to his country, in league with Syracuse.

“Even his eloquence was of no avail,” remarked one; “though we have heard rumours of help from Sparta at the instigation of Alcibiades, none has come. Now it is too late, for Syracuse is ours.”

“Ours, you say,” rejoined Ariston; “it seems likely, and we shall certainly know now. There are our messengers returning from the Syracusan *Agora*. See, they have just issued from the gate,” he added, pointing to the adjacent wall of Tycha, the nearest as it was then the highest quarter of the city.

“How came it about that our fleet did not intercept that one vessel which put into the harbour the north side of Ortygia,” remarked an old warrior from the island of Paros, “I saw her in the distance as soon as the sky shot grey this morning. We seem to be too lax in our guard, too sure of our prey.”

“What,” said another, “is one ship going to save Syracuse?” The others laughed.

The old Parian paid no heed to the mirth. Turning to Ariston, he said: “Since Lamachos died all life seems to have left us. Even the walls both north and south of where we stand are uncompleted. What think you of that?”

“It would be bad if there were chance of attack from our rear, of help coming from Sicily,” Ariston answered. “It was only yesterday I spoke to Nikias of it, asking why the stones are left unbuilt above

the sea near Trogiolos. It wants but little to complete the work."

"What did Nikias say?" pursued the Parian.

"That the Fates were with him, and further work would be thrown away."

"I yet fear that image-breaker, Alcibiades," the old man continued; "the magic of his words has wrought more havoc than the eyes of Helen."

"You speak truly," said another; "and he is the more to be feared since, having been commander here along with Lamachos and Nikias before he was summoned back to Athens to take his trial, his knowledge of our plans would greatly harm us."

By this time the messengers from Athens had reached the fort and entered Nikias' tent. The others were summoned in council to hear the answer. They crowded to the entrance.

"Syracuse rejects all terms, and will fight unto death," was the unexpected reply.

Ridicule greeted this haughty defiance. The Syracusans had scarcely justified by their deeds the arrogant position they now took up.

Then it became known, also, that the ship which had arrived that morning had brought tidings that Gylippos, the son of Kleandridas, the Spartan, was at hand; that far from the war being ended, and homeward the next move of the Athenian army, a struggle more bitter far than what had been was likely to follow. And so it happened.

Gylippos soon appeared storming up the same path by which Nikias and Lamachos had formerly led their men, finding no one to oppose him. He marched along the edge of the cliff, past the spot where the north wall of the Athenians should have effectually barred his progress, and there met the rejoicing Syracusans, who issued forth in great numbers to welcome him. Gylippos and his men encamped within the walls of Syracuse the first night of his appearance, and without any opposition on the part of the Athenians. He assumed command of the Syracusan forces.

What was Nikias doing? The question may well be asked.

The younger and warlike men like Ariston fretted at the supineness of their leader, protesting that even with the Spartan reinforcement they could well cope with the undisciplined Syracusan levies. But Nikias, suffering in health, remained within the walls of his round fort, making no effort to attack Gylippos. The latter immediately began his aggressive tactics, captured by night the fort of Labdalon on the brink of the cliff, putting the garrison to death. Gylippos then resumed building the counter-wall which the Syracusans had abandoned, running a new line due west from the city on the high ground of Epipolai, and thus prevented the Athenians finishing theirs towards Trogiolos.

The taking of Labdalon, the fort, was succeeded

by the capture of an Athenian trireme in the Great Harbour—two successes which did something to restore the low spirits of the Syracusans. The loss of the trireme stirred Nikias into action and to perception of the danger to which the fleet, anchored by the southern wall, now tardily completed down to the Great Harbour, was likely to be subjected. So he detached men under the command of Ariston to seize Plemmyrion, the headland at the mouth of the Great Harbour, facing the island city of Ortygia. This Ariston did without difficulty, for strategically important as the site was, the Syracusans, as in the case of Euryalos before, had neglected to think of securing it for their own purposes.

Ariston built forts and entrenched himself, continuing in command of that position. The place became not only a haven for the ships but a place where the stores for the fighters on sea and land alike were deposited.

He and his men were unmolested by the enemy, who contented themselves by watching his movements from the Olympieion below. The comparative quiet from the unceasing watchfulness against attack, the fighting and the hard work of building walls which his former quarters on Epipolai entailed but a short time previously, came as a welcome respite to Ariston.

He had leisure to turn his thoughts more often to the beautiful girl he had seen surrounded by her companions, who had unceasingly occupied his

thoughts during the time. Her face had haunted him during his imprisonment, had ever accompanied him in his perilous escape and flight towards Katané. Now that he was back at Syracuse and was breathing the same air as she, her features seemed to take a yet more definite form in his mind, and the personality with which he had endowed her a more vivid reality. Her image and the hope of meeting again were of those few things which had helped him to endure the grievous days of bondage in Syracuse. His dreams, day and night, then, as they were now, were of the soft pleading eyes, the tender look, and the reproaches with which she had rebuked those who had scoffed at the prisoners of whom he had been one.

During his imprisonment he had been able to learn from his guards some information concerning Cyane. One of his guards had been among those who escorted him and his companions to Syracuse that day, and he had told him her name and that of her father. But he had gleaned little else save that she lived in the upper quarter of the city called Achradina. It was something he had learnt her name. That she was his equal in station, noble by nature as well as by birth, he knew; her face and bearing told him that.

When the heavier work of the day was done he would stroll alone to the point of Plemmyrion to sit and gaze towards Achradina, where he

longed to be. Around him were the cliffs, rugged and twisted, with the sea sounding in the caverns which it had hollowed out. Below were rocks and small islands, detached from the headland by storm and stress of weather, scattered at his feet. Before him was the whole panorama of the three cities of Syracuse. The sides east and west of Ortygia, the triangular island with its elongated point towards him, where three hundred years before Archias, the Corinthian, had laid the foundation of the present mighty Syracuse. Above the oldest city, now crowded with houses and surmounted by Athene's temple, rose the splendid houses of Achradina—its eastern side bordering the sea. At its north-western corner the buildings of Tycha stood out against the sky, and below them Temenites, the sacred enclosure of the Temple of Apollo, and further to the left that of Herakles.

From his post of observation the Great Harbour stretched at his feet, with the Athenian ships either beached or at anchor immediately below him, and the docks within the precincts of the city, where the Syracusans nursed their growing fleet. The wall his countrymen had made, the forts of Kyklos—the circle—and of Labdalon he clearly discerned. To his left the rivers Anapos and Cyane threaded the plain, and behind towered the columns of the Olympieion. All could be seen clearly.

But his innermost man was not in those places.

It was concentrated on one spot only—a large house which stood out distinctly in Achradina, for that, he had learnt, was Mara's house, and therein lived the girl he loved.

One night late, when the young moon had set and clouds were low, drifting before a land wind, and when he had seen that the guards were set and that nothing stirred in the plain, he walked down the precipitous path on the side of the cliff to the sea. A small boat, manned by two trusted companions, awaited him. Into that he got and pushed out from the shadow of the land. Ariston had divested himself of his weapons except a short sword, and was in the garb of a slave. The boat, silently rowed, was headed at first towards the centre of the harbour, and when near the mouth of the river Anapos turned at right angles and made for Ortygia.

Ariston gave his orders in a low voice: "Keep the boat in a straight line with Athene's temple," he said. "You can see the surmounting figure of the goddess faintly in the night, and when near the shore, if we are unperceived, beach her at the spot where Alphæus and Arethusa send their waters to the sea. I will land. You will then pull out towards the centre of the harbour, and wait out of sight until you hear the cry of an owl repeated three times; then come for me. If the first streak of dawn in the sky finds you still waiting, tarry no longer, row back to Plemmyrion."

His companions endeavoured to prevent Ariston from hazarding his life by attempting to land in the enemy's city. The Syracusans were sure to be on their guard since Gylippos commanded them, they said; and even if Ariston landed the adventure was full of danger.

Their remonstrance had no effect. The boat silently approached the city, which seemed to be wrapt in the deepest slumber. Nobody was about the far-famed waters of the fountain, and Ariston landed unperceived. The boat was rowed from the shore leaving him alone.

Perhaps not until that moment was the full danger of the risk he ran perceived. He had been buoyed up by the spirit of adventure; he was young—impelled by an ardent wish. Those had moved him. But he was now face to face with the reality of the situation, and might have to meet the consequence of his daring at any minute. If discovered and taken he would be executed as a spy. The Syracusans would give him no quarter—of that he had no doubt. Much must depend on his coolness; much more on his good fortune.

He had one thing in his favour: Syracuse was full of Greek strangers, followers in the train of Gylippos, and of several nationalities, for many had joined him in the hope of personal advantage or profit. In the streets of Syracuse, then, he might pass as a Spartan or any one of the various races who had been accepted

as allies and received as guests in their struggle for freedom.

Ariston hoped, too, that the encampment of Gylippos, which was in the upper city of Tycha, would attract the guard, or as many of them as could be spared from their posts to hear the doings of the day, the brushes with their opponents, the progress which the building of the counter-wall was making.

In that hope he was not disappointed. He walked unmolested along the wall bordering the Great Harbour, past the docks, and reached that which divided the city of Ortygia from Achradina, near the Little Harbour. Here he feared he might encounter difficulty in his progress; but the gate was open, and, though the guards were lounging about, he passed through without hindrance.

Hurrying across the flat space whereon stood the Agora, and where groups of people, even at that late hour, were talking of the siege, he left the Little Harbour on the right to mount the main street of Achradina. At last he was within that quarter of the city on which his thoughts had centred in many weary days of waiting. He had to find the house of Mara, the object of his adventurous visit.

It was not difficult. The habitation of the influential and wealthy Syracusan stood within its own garden, and was readily discovered. He had but to ask a passer-by once, and he found himself beneath the walls.

Up to now Ariston scarcely knew what was the real aim and scope of his hazardous adventure. He was only conscious of an all-powerful desire to be near Cyane, an irresistible impulse to bridge the gulf that had separated them. Did he think to see her? Had he put the question to himself, his common sense would have told him he was a fool for asking it. It was more than improbable that Cyane or any in the house would be awake or abroad at so late an hour. Yet as he reasoned thus with himself fortune seemed to favour him. When he approached the house he saw lamps were burning within, and he heard the sound of voices. He crept nearer stealthily, and listened. Circumstances forced him to be an eavesdropper whether he wished or did not wish, and he lay in the shadow of the wall listening to words that reached him clearly.

CHAPTER VIII.

THEN Ariston approached the house through a deserted gateway. Notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, its occupants were evidently far from sharing the repose in which that quarter of the city was wrapt. He heard voices in altercation.

"Then it is settled we ask our good masters for permission to marry," said a woman's voice insinuatingly.

"Ugh! there is time enough for that," replied her companion surlily.

"Not so much time for that matter, Dion, my sweet one," was the answer in winning tones. "Where Eros commands poor folk must obey."

"Eros, pooh, little has he to do with it."

"What? do you pretend not to love me longer?" said Baubo, for it was she. "Already, maybe, the mistress has spoken to the lord Mara, and to Lydias, saying the matter is an old affair, love waiting for many a long year. Why delay further?"

"Umph!" was the sole rejoinder.

"Why wait until our hair be grey?" pursued the other, maliciously fixing her gaze on the baldness of Dion's head showing below the Phrygian cap.

Dion rose from his seat angrily, pushing aside the stool on which he sat and pulling the cap lower on his head.

“Wedding or no wedding, you will have to wait,” he said angrily, as he left the room abruptly.

Baubo's intention was to carry affairs as far as she dared short of actual marriage, and so compromise Dion that he would be glad to make terms at any cost. It had come to her knowledge that he had possessed himself of the papyrus on which Ariston had traced in prison those lines to Cyane, and she was determined to have it, partly because it might deprive him of making a bad use of it, and partly because it would give Cyane later great joy to have a certain proof of Ariston's love. Baubo was aware she could not hope to obtain the scroll save under exceptional circumstances: to have asked for it direct would have been tantamount to losing it for ever. The faithful slave had now secretly abandoned all her antagonism to Cyane's infatuation. She could hold out no longer against her mistress' sufferings. But her sympathy was of the silent kind, waiting for an opportunity to assist, yet prudently checking the access of grief to which Cyane at times yielded.

Meanwhile Ariston, moving to a group of bushes at a little distance, waited in doubt. Half an hour or more passed, and he feared his adventure was doomed to end in disappointment. Though burning

with desire to see Cyane, to hear her voice, he was unaware how his wish could be accomplished. In Greek houses were few windows, and he dared not penetrate within the walls, as no doubt the doors were guarded.

All around was now still except for the chirp of the cicala, and the hoot of the little owl. Occasionally the far off challenge of sentinels on duty at the city walls denoted that strife underlay the apparent calm of the night, and that, with an implacable foe at the gates of the beleaguered city, it might be followed by a morrow of conflict and bloodshed.

When it was forced upon his conviction that to find his companions in the harbour as arranged he should return without delay, the sound of approaching footsteps was heard. He drew further within the shade of the bay laurel under which he had taken refuge. His heart beat violently, first with hope, then with certainty, for now he listened once more to the voice he had heard chiding others for their gibes at himself and his companions by the Temple of the Great Mother—the voice which had haunted him ever since. It was Cyane who approached.

She and Baubo were talking. The latter was expostulating somewhat crossly with the other for thus disturbing her rest.

“The roses will never again bloom on the fairest cheeks in Syracuse, if you cheat yourself of sleep

thus," she said. "May misfortune ever befall the luckless stranger who is the cause of it."

"I could not sleep, Baubo," was the answer. "Something in the night calls me to the garden, the house holds no repose for me."

"Tush! it is the same old tale, no rest, no sleep; the moon and the stars for your companions. For my part it is a dreary time to go wandering abroad among the bats and owls."

"I would wander on for ever, as the Great Mother in search of her beloved," Cyane rejoined: "there is no peace for a heart which is sore as mine."

"I have no patience with such thoughts," Baubo answered vehemently. She was tired, and in no mood for romance.

But Cyane took no heed of her companion's remark.

"Yes, wander on until what is sought be found, to rest by the side of the one beloved," she said. "Do you remember what the Athenian poet has sung of the longing of a weary soul; we heard it together not long since:

" Could I take me to some cavern for mine hiding,
 - In the hill-tops where the Sun scarce hath trod,
 Or a cloud make the home of my abiding,
 As a bird among the bird-droves of God!
 Yea, beyond that Pillar of the End
 That Atlas guardeth, would I wend;

Where a voice of living waters never ceaseth
 In God's quiet garden by the sea.
 And Earth, the ancient life-giver, increaseth
 Joy among the shadows, like a tree."

As if the Great Mother of Nature herself wished to emphasise that comfort and hope in the future, spoken of by the poet, softly and melodiously were borne back on the still night air the words :

" Earth, the ancient life-giver, increaseth
 Joy among the shadows, like a tree."

" What do I hear ? " said Cyane, clinging to Baubo. " The night holds mysteries ; even the leaves echo my words. There is some strange presence that fills me with joy, yet alarms me. Surely it is his voice—Ariston's, that I hear."

Baubo, who had listened disdainfully to her mistress' declamation, had heard the repeated lines too, and her superstitious fears mastered her. It was the voice of the imprisoned Daphne, speaking from the trunk of the tree, she told herself. In a flash the garden seemed to her terrified imagination to be peopled with evil spirits, beings—fauns, satyrs, monads and the like, gathered together to bring misfortune to them both. She screamed loudly.

At that moment loud distant shouts of warning were heard afar. The cries were taken up near at hand. The house itself was soon alive with movement and alarm.

Baubo caught Cyane by the arm and hurried her towards the building as steps approached.

"It is an assault on the walls by the Athenians," she panted, forgetting her fright. "We must seek the house at once to send our men to the fight with food."

Ariston was again alone. To have followed Cyane now would have been madness. He had satisfied his longing to gaze upon her he loved, had even listened to the sound of her voice. In that he had been more fortunate than he had dared to hope. But with the desire gratified, another and stronger one came: to take Cyane in his arms, to press her to his heart, his lips to her lips. He had been about to spring to her side; the cries of alarm and near presence of men had alone deterred him. Sick at heart, with a sense of bitter disappointment at a joy snatched from him so suddenly, he remained a time in his place of concealment until the continued clamour of the call to arms brought to him a full understanding of his peril. Moving from the shelter of the bay-tree he hastily made his way to the gate.

As Ariston gained the entrance, Dion, aroused by the general commotion, was coming down the central pathway of the garden and espied his retreating figure. Morose, and more churlish at being aroused from sleep, thinking, too, that the pursuit of a possible thief was more likely to preserve a sound

skin than following his master against the enemy, he raised his own shout of warning and started in pursuit.

Ariston, grasping the sword hidden below his shirt, saw his only safety lay in swift flight. He had little fear of being overtaken. He was fleet of foot, had won many contests in the games at Athens. He therefore smiled at the thought how he could easily distance his pursuers. But he was unaware of Dion's powers as a runner, increased as they were by his desire to offer a valid excuse for absenting himself from those who should follow Mara and Lydias to the walls. In fact, Dion's long legs covered as much ground as Ariston's swift feet, and the latter soon perceived he was well matched.

Dion's cries had attracted others, and Ariston, glancing over his shoulder hurriedly, saw he was no longer followed by one man but by a small crowd.

"Spy, Thief, Traitor," were cries now hurled at him, swelling the numbers of those behind him. The situation was becoming serious. Ariston feared a second crowd, warned by the cries, would oppose him in front. His fears were realised. He saw a band of armed men a short distance ahead, threatening to cut off his retreat. It seemed likely he would be surrounded and captured, or killed in the resistance he meant to offer. When he was bracing himself to meet the worst that fate might have in store for him, to his relief he perceived a side-street on his

left, leading in the direction of the Little Harbour. Into that he plunged recklessly.

The shouts of the Syracusans were loud and menacing in his rear, though his enemies had not yet reached the turning which held out the only hope of safety. Darting again to the right, along a narrow passage, and once more to the left, he gained the sands of the harbour, and after running for half a mile or more with all speed, he succeeded in reaching the bridge over the canal that joins the Little with the Greater Harbour. That was deserted and he passed over safely, but it was very doubtful, he knew, if he would be so favoured by fortune as to find the gate of Ortygia, the walls of which now loomed up in front of him, open or unguarded.

At first it seemed probable, and he put forth every effort to reach it before the shouts behind him, which momentarily were getting louder, would attract the attention of the guards. On those two chances his safety hung.

As he drew near, with a gasp of relief he saw his hope was not in vain. The gate was open, and no one in charge of it. Passing through, he dashed down a dark passage to the right, and thence once more he heard the clamouring of many voices on his track, to which was now added the clash of arms as the unwatchful guards of the gate tardily joined in the chase.

Ariston hurried through streets which now began

to be alive with people. The cries of "Spy, Traitor," were renewed and grew louder about him, until the city seemed to be alive with voices. To avoid attention he slackened his speed, and joined in the general outcry against himself. He drew away from the tumult as best he could by keeping to the streets which led from the docks towards the point of the promontory of Ortygia, along the cliff above the Great Harbour, the sight of whose waters he hailed with delight as the only sure road to safety.

He was nearing the spot where the stream of the Fountain of Arethusa comes from the earth and runs to the sea—where he had landed some hours previously. A few minutes more would have freed him from further observation and pursuit, when, looking to the left, up a street communicating with the higher part of the city, he descried once again the multitude in hot pursuit, still headed by the lank figure of Dion. With a shout of triumph the latter recognised him, and redoubled his efforts to overtake him.

CHAPTER IX.

LESS than a hundred yards separated the pursuers from the pursued. Ariston, exhausted as he was by rapid flight, strained his utmost to maintain that distance, and, though he felt instinctively his enemies were gaining on him, he succeeded in reaching the shore of the Great Harbour and plunged into the dark waters.

The crowd, baffled of their prey and hope of blood, halted angrily at the edge lining the wedge-like opening of the harbour. Stones and missiles of all kinds fell about Ariston so closely that they blinded him with their splash. But, nothing daunted, by skilful diving and strong strokes he put more and more water between him and the land.

He struck out resolutely towards Plemmyrion's point, with no breath in his body to shout for the boat which he hoped might still be lingering to receive him. To his dismay he could see no sign of it, nor dared he raise himself in the water to look if it might be near.

Once he paused to listen if he were further pursued by boat or swimmer from the shore. But from the

angry vehemence of the Syracusans behind him he concluded from that source of danger he had nothing now to fear. His enemies had evidently decided it was useless to continue the chase in the dark waters.

An unexpected and even a greater peril now confronted Ariston, however. He had not foreseen that his strength, which had never yet failed in emergency, strained as it was in the long and rapid flight from the heights of Achradina, now threatened to succumb. The coldness of the sea, at first so welcome and refreshing, now numbed him and made him ache in every limb. With a sick shock he understood that unless help were near he could never reach Plemmyrion. To return to land whence he came meant a death as sure and certain as that which awaited him in the harbour. Faintness attacked him; and though he was able to move arms and legs sufficiently to keep himself afloat, the action was mechanical, and did not serve to help him on his course. In vain he summoned all his determination to his aid; in vain told himself that the resolution of an Athenian, famous in feats of strength, was not to be vanquished thus. He felt himself sinking.

Then rapidly, like the constant glimmering of summer lightning, events of his life flashed rapidly before him, as is the way with drowning men. Athens, his beloved home; his father's house below the shining temples of the Akropolis; his mother's anxious care for all that might make his life noble

and fair; the Olympian games, in which he had played his part, and won his prize among the thundering plaudits of the multitude; the great festivals of the deities; the triumphs of heroes returned from war. And later, when the more serious things of life had claimed him, he saw himself sitting at the feet of Socrates to learn his wisdom, or listening to the words of Euripides, which had carried him to heights of thought and imagination far from the sordid things of daily life—words which he had eagerly learnt and committed to memory to repeat at will, as was right for one so highly born and carefully reared as he. Then more vividly he saw the vast assembly of the people gathered to urge war upon Syracuse; the solemn protest of Nicias against what the great leader thought to be a step of dire imprudence and incalculable danger; the mocking rejoinder of his rival, Alcibiades, who for his own nefarious ends had driven his countrymen more surely on the path of ruin by the magic of his oratory; the roar of satisfaction when war was finally decreed; then the preparations for the expedition; the great procession of citizens as it issued solemnly from the gate of Athens to accompany the army on its way to embarkation; the fleet which for numbers and magnificence had never floated on the harbour of Piræus; and afterwards the leave-takings, some bitter and full of mournful forebodings, others joyful, foreseeing easy conquest and speedy triumph. Such

scenes found instant and vivid repetition in his mind as Ariston battled feebly for his life.

But those recollections seemed to belong to a past which had lost its greater significance, to a time of semi-obscurity, in comparison to the sunshine of the days which had first come when standing by the Temple of the Great Mother, captive though he was.

Since then there had been periods of darkness, in which he had groped painfully for the new light burst upon him of which the radiance had been partly lost. But now he had found it. The full sunshine had come with all the glow and warmth of summer noon as he lay concealed in Mara's garden. Assuredly that was the supreme moment of his life. The clouds that hung about his love, partially obscuring the summit of happiness reached when love is returned, had dissolved. He had seen Cyane, almost touched her garment and felt the breath of her lips, and above all he now knew she loved him. The remembrance of her words glowed as living fire within him, and supported him in this supreme hour of danger.

What if he were drowning, as he certainly knew he was! The prize for which he yearned—the prize of Cyane's love, was won. If it were to be his fate to die, what more fitting place than here in the waters of Arethusa? A passion such as his could not be ended in this world. In the next, he was certain that his soul and the soul of Cyane must be united

for ever, as the waters of Alphæus were united indissolubly with those of Arethusa by the benign love of the goddess Artemis.

Certain now the love of Cyane was his, and all else was as nothing to him, even when death was imminent.

The sound of choking waters blotted out all further recollection. Unconsciousness came upon him and he sank. He neither saw the dark form of a boat approach, nor felt the tight clutch of a friendly hand sustaining him as he rose to the surface. He knew not until later that his companions had heard his despairing struggles, his final shout for help, and had come in time to save him from certain death.

CHAPTER X.

GYLIPPOS, the Spartan, had taken supreme command of the Syracusan forces. He brought new courage and greater discipline to their ranks. The tables were turned. No longer were the besieged trembling within their walls. They had changed places with the besiegers, who now refused to be enticed from their entrenchments to give battle.

Gylippos was eager for the fight. He set himself to frustrate the enemy's plan of encompassing the city, by effectually constructing counter walls, which prevented the latter from carrying out his purpose.

The Athenians became so disheartened that Nikias, their leader, wrote home urgently pleading for large reinforcements, without which, he said, he would return to Athens with his men. He also asked to be relieved of the command owing to ill-health. Athens replied by voting a force, equal to the first, to be despatched immediately under the command of Demosthenes.

Exhorted by Gylippos and the intrepid Hermokrates, who impressed upon them that the Athenians were no better sailors than they, the Syracusans

attacked the enemy's fleet in the harbour and defeated it. They also retook Plemmyrion at the entrance, from which place Ariston had been recalled shortly before. By that success they forced the Athenian ships to retire to the inner part of the harbour.

As the enemy was worsted on his native element, so did the spirits of the Syracusans revive. But they rose only to fall again when they saw Demosthenes, with a force of five thousand men and seventy-five ships, sail unimpeded into the Great Harbour.

What Gylippos had done for Syracuse, so did Demosthenes for his countrymen. He infused greater ardour and insisted on further action. But his efforts were attended with poor results. In a night attack on the north side of the city, wisely planned, but ineffectually carried out, he suffered defeat. At first success seemed to attend him. He advanced by the pass of Euryalos at night, undiscovered by the enemy upon whom he fell, surprising the fort and putting some to the sword and some to flight. Advancing, he routed other bodies of men. But Gylippos, with the main body of his army, marched out of his entrenchments, and a fierce encounter ensued.

Confusion reigned supreme. In the obscurity of a waning moon it was impossible to distinguish friend from foe. The Athenians fell upon one another, regarding every man as an enemy. The pæans of

the allies, resembling those of their opponents, only increased the terror and confusion. A general rout followed. Many of Demosthenes' army were killed, many were driven over the precipice of Epipolai and dashed to pieces.

Thereupon Demosthenes, seeing his plans of dealing a swift and sure blow had failed, was eager to return to Athens. In that at first he was opposed by the indecision of Nikias, who maintained that, bad as their plight was, that of the Syracusans was worse. But when further aid came to the latter, and sickness and discontent daily increased in his camp, Nikias consented, and retreat was determined upon.

Once again did delay and irresolution thwart the Athenians. At the moment of striking the camp, the face of the moon became suddenly dark in an eclipse. The men in terror cried out to their leaders to halt, so moved were they by this unlooked-for sign. It was a warning from the gods to desist from the march, "a prognostic of great calamities," they said. Then the fatal superstition of Nikias, by advice of his soothsayers, imposed: "that it should no longer be debated whether the army should leave or not until three times nine days"—the period of propitiation to the gods, had passed. That fateful delay of a month was the cause of defeat later, and of the ultimate undoing of Athens.

The Syracusans, elated by their successes, and by

the enemy's plan to retreat, of which they were fully aware, urged by Gylippos, resolved to deal such a blow that the future should bring no menace of further aggression from Athens. Their chief aim was no longer that of self-preservation, but the destruction of the besieging army, and of its fleet in the Great Harbour; thus preventing escape and retaliation. A land attack was unsuccessful. But another by sea proved to be the turning-point of the war—the moment when the hour of victory struck, heralding the salvation and freedom of Sicily.

With a fleet of seventy-six ships, the Syracusans stood out to engage the Athenians in the Great Harbour. They were met by eighty-six of the enemy.

The shores were lined by thousands, the land armies of both combatants being drawn up at the water's edge as spectators to cheer their own galleys in moments of success, or to encourage when the tide of battle went against them. The inhabitants of the various quarters of the city flocked in multitudes to the heights and roofs of houses, crowding every 'vantage-ground whence a view of the Great Harbour could be obtained. There was a white sea of haggard faces watching the tragedy of strife and racial hatred enacted on the blue waters below.

To the Syracusans the moment was one of intense

anxiety, of awful suspense. On the result of the combat depended not alone their independence as a nation, but their lives and liberty also. There was not one among them who did not nurture that thought in his heart, and know its terrible significance. The din of battle on the sea scarcely surpassed the cries of conflicting emotion on land—the shouts of triumph when a native galley vanquished an enemy's ship, or the wails of lamentation when Athenian valour overcame Syracusan attack. Women wept and laughed deliriously in turn. Old men shouted in ecstasy or bent the head in sorrow. The young took their lead from the old, and loudly swelled the chorus of rejoicing or woe.

Cyane, drawn irresistibly from her home on the heights of Achradina, accompanied by Baubo, watched the fight with the rest. She, in marked contrast to those about her, was silent, notwithstanding the utmost anxiety which possessed her. For the latter she had good cause. Those she held most dear were opposed in stern conflict, for Mara, her father, and Lydias, her adopted brother, commanded a detachment of the attacking ships, and Ariston, the beloved of her heart, it was known, had under his orders a wing of the Athenian fleet. Thus her anxiety was a double one.

The scene that Cyane looked on, despite the horror of it, was wonderful to behold. The broad semi-circular expanse of the Great Harbour, stretched

at her feet below the mass of human heads and waving arms which swayed about her, was of that intense blue which a cloudless southern sky alone gives to the sea. Beyond, to left and right, were the heights of Plemmyrion, and of Euryalos, with the tragic ridge of Epipolai; in the centre the plain through which Anapos threaded its way—all ground newly-stained with the best blood of Sicily and further Greece. But beautiful as the surroundings were, no thought was given them that day. The eyes of the multitudes never left the ships on the calm water. So obstinate a sea-fight had never been fought before; nor so high a courage, nor so great a determination shown on both sides. The men of one were fired by the terror of captivity—of loss of home, riches, ease, and freedom as a nation. The others by a resolution to reacquire the lost lustre of the Athenian name, to vindicate their bravery in the eyes of their countrymen at home, and above all, to extricate themselves from a position fraught with danger and disaster.

Every man of both fleets was instinct with the spirit of resistance, and his ardour knew no limit. Each abided at his post, braced to some deed of valour. So many ships had never fought in so restricted a place. It was a hand-to-hand combat: ships, two, three, or more lay locked together; and while on one side men boarded, on the other side they were boarded in turn, until the decks flowed

with blood. The noise of galleys crashing into one another with beaks specially wrought with iron, was only equalled by the cries of officers stimulating their men, the shouts of those who fought, the lamentations of those who fell. The combatants were called upon by name to exert themselves to the uttermost, and when a ship floated out of the fight by chance or stress of circumstance it was recalled to the battle by personal appeal to him in command.

At times, when the din of the fight momentarily subsided, the roar of voices from the land—the encouragement of the soldiers on the shore—was borne over the water; those were mingled with the yells of the populace invoking the gods in desperate earnestness, shouting their messages of defiance or rejoicing, according as fortune frowned or smiled upon their men.

Nor were cases of individual courage failing on that memorable day. Far from it. Youths, too young to bear arms for the State, put to sea in small boats to harass the enemy as best they could. One, but a lad in years, by name Herakleides, of noble family, having no better weapons than a sharp tongue and ready wit, assailed the foe, and was only saved from death by a detachment of ships speeding to the rescue of the boy.

At length, after many hours, the cause of freedom prevailed, and the Athenians were put to flight. Many of their ships were sunk or taken. Their

defeat culminated in the death of their leader Eurymedon.

It was thus in the waters of Syracuse that the naval supremacy of Athens was irrevocably lost.

The invaders were now plunged into the deepest dejection. An attempt to retreat by sea, in spite of the heavy loss of ships, was decided upon. But this the Syracusans determined to thwart. They barred the entrance of the Great Harbour with a line of triremes and boats, firmly secured in a line from Plemmyrion to Ortygia.

Once more the Athenian ships issued to give battle ; but this time in sheer despair to make a dash for life, no longer as proud invaders intent on attack, accomplishing the mandate of a mighty nation. And once again was the whole population of Syracuse assembled on the heights and houses surrounding to witness the combat, not now with dejection depicted on their faces, but jubilant and triumphant to witness the last effort of a successful resistance, the final blow at a fleeing enemy.

The Athenian ships came on, attempting to break the barrier which lay between them and safety. But though the crash of brazen beaks against the wooden floating wall was terrific, and the people in the city held their breath in fear that by giving way they might be deprived of vengeance, the wall withstood the repeated shocks.

Then the victorious Syracusans swept down upon

their prey, annihilating what remained of the Athenian fleet, putting the finishing stroke to their former great victory. Some ships were sunk, some captured, some driven ashore in shallow water, where those who manned them hastily made for their camp, hoping to find a more sure retreat by land.

CHAPTER XI.

THAT evening Mara, accompanied by Lydias, returned to his house, both untouched by the chances of war. The meeting of father and daughter was most affecting; as the death-roll of the Syracusans was long and the sacrifice of life great in the endeavours to frustrate the escape of the Athenians. Mara had much to relate of the doings of that memorable day, of the risks run, of the courage on both sides.

Lydias, too, was less silent and reserved. He told his own experiences of the battle and of the escape he had had from certain death. He was eloquent when speaking of a noble Athenian who had intervened to save him, when, brought to his knees on the deck while boarding a ship, he lay expecting the final blow of his assailant. To rapid words of thanks for his preservation his rescuer had replied that the other's bravery in the fight had alone secured his protection; and then the two were separated in the combat and lost to sight of one another.

Mara could spare little time to tarry at home. His duties called him elsewhere, for the final act of the

drama which had threatened the existence of Syracuse was now to commence, and his presence was urgently demanded.

It was known, he said, that the Athenians were hastily preparing for retreat by land, which, if begun at once, would frustrate the scheme of the Syracusan leaders for their total destruction.

The Syracusan troops, elated by their victory, were celebrating the anniversary festival of sacrifice to Herakles that day, and nothing would turn them from their enjoyment, nor the carouse, of which the latter was the principal part. An order to attack would have been met either by refusal or by half-hearted acquiescence alike fatal to success against the desperation of the Athenians. Delay was essential, and to secure this Mara and his fellow leaders were now chiefly employed. Hermokrates, the resourceful, had proposed to send a message purporting to come from the friends of Athens known to be within the walls, which advised Nikias to postpone departure until the following day, saying that the night march threatened danger to him and his retreating army, because the passes were now occupied by the Syracusan forces, and in the dark the former would fall an easy prey. That plan was to be discussed, and Mara left to be present at the meeting.

Since the night in the garden, when her quiet walk with Baubo had been so suddenly interrupted,

Cyane's love for Ariston had undergone a change. From Baubo she had heard the story of Dion's pursuit of an unknown individual and his escape; and she could not but associate the latter with him who had echoed the words of the poet wrung from her in her despair. Nor were those words she heard uttered without some deep meaning. There was in the voice a subtle charm, a subdued passion, a latent hope, which conveyed more than the words themselves. She surely discerned in them an avowal—a faith in the future very precious to her.

With that half knowledge which the first love of a girl brings, and which is but a sighing for what the heart yearns vaguely, being as yet unaware of the fulness of joy awaiting it, Cyane had found at last an assurance which was sufficient answer to any misgivings she may have had. Instead of the vague longing and the despair which went hand in hand, by a subtle instinct she was certain that her passion, hopeless as it might be, was abundantly shared. If that was indeed Ariston who had spoken, what ineffable happiness! Yet that gave way to trembling for the peril he had run for her sake. And what if he should attempt to see her a second time? The passing thought gave her immense joy. But again the difficulties and danger of their mutual love rose before her, and once more she was overwhelmed by despair.

In her utter dejection then Cyane asked herself:

What would the end be? Detestation of the Athenians was at its height. Those who had brought supreme danger to Syracuse were looked upon as infamous foes, whose names were not only scorned but whose lives it was accounted a sacred duty to take. Under the most favourable circumstances could she hope that Ariston would ever be accepted by her father as a possible suitor for her hand? She knew she could not. Again, had he escaped from the hands of Dion and his pursuers, from the waters of the Great Harbour, only to fall in the fierce combats which had raged on sea and land? How could she tell?

To Cyane it seemed as if she were moving in a world of Cimmerian darkness, in which was but a faint glimmer of light, such as might come from a single star in a black heaven of deepest night.

* * * * *

The Athenian leader, deceived by the false message from supposed friends to delay the retreat for prudence sake, struck his camp two days later. If despair held the followers of Nikias before, their dejection was immeasurably increased by the scenes at their departure. When they had arrived in Sicily they had been elated with the thought of sure and immediate conquest. The armies of Athens had come to look upon victory as their right in the past; and with an armament and equipment the equal of

which had been unknown, confidence in their success had been absolute. Now all was changed. A war-like nation, whose greater pride lay in their prowess at sea, now found itself totally deprived of ships. The Syracusans had burnt what remained of the fleet, and safe retreat by water was exchanged for insecure flight by land.

To abandon their wounded and sick companions added intensity to the sorrow, for the prayers and lamentations of the latter not to be left went home to hearts in days when the real meaning of friendship was better understood. To leave the unburied dead also sorely offended their sense of duty towards brave comrades. Their despair was absolute.

And what had they to face in the future? Forced marches on hostile ground, since nearly the whole of Sicily was in arms against them, hunger and thirst, attacks on their rear by an implacable foe, a doubtful hope of return to their native land, even if they could fight their way to a friendly port. Such were the forebodings which filled their minds as the once proud and brilliant force of Athenians turned in ignominious flight from the city they had all but conquered.

Those misgivings were realised to the full during the several days of that terrible march.

Harassed incessantly by the Syracusans, who had been enabled to occupy every post of 'vantage and narrow road by which the retreat was carried out,

suffering from privation, ravaged by disease, stricken by the heat, the rearguard under Demosthenes surrendered to Gylippos after desperate resistance. But Nikias, the veteran leader, and the van, survivors of the retiring army, were the prey for which the pursuers chiefly sought. Pushing hurriedly onward they came up with them on the banks of the river Assinaros at a moment when the troops, unmindful of all except the agony of thirst, had plunged into the stream, each man passing his fellow in his haste to find relief from suffering. They fell and trampled on one another in their craving for the precious liquid; the madness of thirst possessed them, and they disregarded the graver danger in the overwhelming desire to drink.

Then began the last fight—for very life on one side, of retaliation and revenge on the other. The Syracusans occupied the high banks on both sides of the stream, and poured a thick rain of javelins and other missiles upon the Athenians below. Men went down in confused heaps, struggling under the weight of their weapons and armour, unable to rise. Some were killed with mouths to the stream drinking; others were carried away by the current and drowned. Then the Syracusans leapt from the banks and descended to the stream, slaughtering all they found, so that the river ran red with blood and the surface was stiff with human bodies. Those who fled were massacred by the cavalry. Eighteen thousand of the

flower of the older Greece met their deaths that day by the fatal river.

Athenian Nikias surrendered to Lacedæmonian Gylippos on condition that the slaughter of his men should cease. Whereat the latter issued his orders, and the Athenians were taken back to Syracuse as prisoners of war.

CHAPTER XII.

DION was in disgrace. He had fallen from the position which his bad temper and self-assertion had secured in Mara's household. His absence from the ranks of Lydias' followers the night of his pursuit of Ariston had been unduly prolonged: he had taken advantage of the chase to shirk duty at the walls. Imagining himself to be the hero of the evening for having discovered and followed Ariston, he thought that would be regarded as a valid excuse for absenting himself from the more real dangers to be met when opposing the Athenian attack. In that he was mistaken. He was now suffering punishment for his lack of military ardour.

Baubo was therefore mistress of the situation, and had resolved to make the most of her opportunity. When she had learnt that Lydias was fully aware of Cyane's secret, her great anxiety on behalf of her mistress was considerably lessened. At least, the danger of Dion trafficking with that secret by informing his master, as he had threatened, existed no longer. She was free to deal with Dion and his

crooked ways as she pleased, without need of much further diplomacy. She had him now in her power, and, Sikelian-like, meant to be avenged for the great uneasiness he had caused her.

Fortune seemed to favour Baubo. In Mara's house was a cell in which unruly slaves underwent chastisement; and Dion was its solitary occupant. Owing to his position he had been spared the indignity of corporal punishment; but if his skin had escaped, the rest of his body had not been so fortunate. Thin and haggard at all times, now, from the scanty allowance of food, he was pitiful to behold. He was reduced to a lank frame on which skin hung flabbily. Like many lean people, Dion's craving for food was always great—it was Nature's tacit protest against his gaunt appearance, perhaps. His greediness was prodigious.

Baubo was a daily visitor at the door of the cell. Sometimes she obtained leave to enter. Dion resented those visits, for Baubo was apt to be too affectionate in her manner on such occasions. Besides, her conversation invariably turned upon food, and the good fare of the day being prepared for the tables of their masters or the household. The first made him nervous, because he dreaded that, since he had fallen into disgrace, the woman's influence might cause their marriage to be brought about without his being consulted. The other because the mere mention of the dishes, in the

making which Baubo was famous, stirred within him unconquerable desire for food and greater discontent with his lot. At such moments he would be brought to the verge of tears.

When in one of those desponding moods, Baubo, keenly desiring to obtain for Cyane that proof of her lover's devotion, and selecting a favourable moment, asked Dion for the scroll on which Ariston had inscribed the verses when in prison.

She was met by blank refusal. Baubo said nothing, but casually observed she must leave him to attend to that day's dinner—a dish of meat, onions, and beans which, the day being a holiday, was to be served to the household. Dion's eyes glistened in the obscurity of the cell. Many days had passed since anything but bread and water, and that in small quantities, had passed his lips. He felt as empty as a bladder.

"Onions," he murmured softly, almost unconsciously to himself.

Baubo opened the door. The savoury fumes entered freely from a plateful of the stew, which she had craftily brought and left outside.

"Surely that is a good stew for hungry folk, to-day," she said, as she stood in the doorway, "I smell it even here."

Dion drew a long breath.

"You once thought that stew the best of all my dishes, Dion," she continued, insinuatingly.

There was no reply.

"Onions have a very fine flavour this year, it is said," she ventured anew.

The man could resist no longer. His stomach yearned for the toothsome food. Tears of self-pity were in his eyes.

"Baubo," he said, pleadingly, "bring me some of that dish, and you shall have the scroll."

But the woman made difficulties. She would not trust him.

"Tell me where the scroll is," she said eventually.

Dion eyed her suspiciously. Could he trust a woman sufficiently to put into her power, so to speak, what she sought without having the price of it in his beforehand? was his thought. He sighed. He was no longer the master.

"Below the large square tile of the floor in the left-hand further corner of the room I sleep in, it lies hidden," he said reluctantly. His eyes were fixed on her, trying to read whether his confidence was well-placed or not.

Baubo smiled faintly. Here was another victory. She left the cell, shutting and securing the door. The plate of stew remained where it was until she should have verified Dion's statement and secured the scroll. She went straight to the hiding-place indicated. For once Dion had not misled her. She found the papyrus, and forthwith carried it to her own room, where she was careful to secrete it

within the covering of the one mattress she slept upon.

Baubo then returned to the cell. Faithful to her part of the compact, she carried in the plate of food. Dion's greedy eyes fastened upon it as she entered. He was sullen. He had discerned the stratagem during her absence.

Baubo, affecting an innocent air, pretended not to notice his mood. She was now too content to resent it; besides, she had another shaft in her bow.

"Dion," she said, "the mistress tells me she has obtained your pardon from Lydias at my intercession, and that you will be set free at once, so that our marriage may take place to-morrow."

Baubo's matter-of-fact manner was calculated to deceive.

Dion paused suddenly as he was about to convey the first mouthful of the longed-for food to his lips. His arm was arrested half-way between the platter and his mouth. His jaw fell.

"What," he shouted, letting the plate slip from his lap to the floor as he rose indignantly, "marry you to-morrow. I would rather rot in this——"

But the smell of the onions rose from the floor to his nostrils; it was too potent to be resisted. Besides, refusal to obey the commands of his master under present circumstances would probably be followed by more severe castigation, possibly death, certainly by corporal punishment; such eventualities

his cowardice forbade him to face. The craftiness of the woman had no doubt secured the fulfilment of her wishes. He had been overreached, beaten on his own ground. His resistance failed. He was no longer the man he was. Privation and confinement had reduced his almost unlimited power of antagonism. He bowed his head in submission, and murmured sourly :

“Your wishes and those of the master’s shall be respected.” But as he stooped to recover the food from the floor, his thoughts wandered in search of consolation, and found it in the reflection that when Baubo was his wife her greater troubles would surely commence.

“Baubo his wife to-morrow.” The misogynist shuddered at the imminence of the peril; but his hunger and greed were too great, and he sat down to eat the food she had brought.

Baubo saw that the moment had come to deal the final blow at her malicious persecutor, to glory in her triumph, to chant her pæan of victory. She loudly called the slaves whose duty it was to watch the cell—not an irksome duty now, since the four walls shut in so unpopular a comrade as Dion.

“Pammon, Ladas, Damastor, all of you listen,” she said. “Dion says he will marry me to-morrow. Is it not so, Dion?” she asked, turning to her victim.

“I have said it,” Dion replied dejectedly, with a look of utmost hate in his eyes.

“Then,” continued Baubo exultingly, “my answer to him is that I will not have him even if he crowned me with gold, served me for forty years, and brought all the treasures of Olympian Zeus to lay at my feet. I marry a bald-pate with a head like a pumpkin, a man with legs like my broomsticks. I would rather wed a monkey in a tree, a camel from the desert. There,” she added, approaching him, and snapping her fingers in his face, “that is the answer I give to your wish to marry me, and now I have done with you.”

Baubo left the cell with her companions, laughing heartily, leaving Dion to his reflections, blankly gazing at the shut door.

CHAPTER XIII.

NO longer did heavy hearts outpour with sorrow ; no longer fear prompt the sobbing of women in Syracuse. The helplessness of the beleaguered gave way before the strength of the victorious. Weak limbs no longer trembled ; those stricken by despair rose at the call of hope returned. Even such as mourned the dead joined in the great rejoicing. The long night of dread had at last broken to the dawn of freedom.

The conquering army came back in triumph from the Assinaros amid the frenzied enthusiasm of the populace. The vanquished generals marched in their midst, with seven thousand or more prisoners to the state.

The sun shone brightly that November day, sending flashes of answering radiance from the waters of the Great Harbour and the gleaming temples of the gods. But brightly as the sun shone without it was rivalled by the radiant smiles on every face of the applauding multitudes. The city was mad with a delirium of rejoicing that day.

What was to be the fate of the prisoners ? Would

their lives be spared with those of the leaders whose surrender had demanded that act of mercy. Behind that pleasantness of rejoicing, which might well have also embraced the greater virtue of mercy, vengeance lurked. The great Nikias and Demosthenes were sacrificed to the baser passion; they were murdered and their bodies suffered the further indignity of exposure to the vulgar, pitiless scrutiny of the crowd. With them fell many others, done to death cruelly and treacherously. But the vast majority were condemned to lingering torture in the open air prison of the Latomie—vast stone quarries, from which the walls of Syracuse had taken form and strength.

Both Mara and Lydias returned from the fight. The latter had been wounded, and was brought home in a litter to be tended.

During the days of the pursuit of the Athenians, Cyane had been incessantly torn with the same emotions of hope and fear. Worn out by suffering, she relapsed into the despondent moods of early days. Nothing Baubo could do or think of availed to arouse her mistress. The return of Mara and Lydias had lifted the cloud momentarily only. It was one of the gravest accusations Cyane brought against herself that the safety of those she held so dear should not have sufficed to bring perpetual joy to her once more.

Her thoughts were daily more centred on Ariston and his fate. Nothing could be heard, all was obscure concerning him, though Baubo diligently

sought for information secretly. Several weeks passed thus, and the fear that her lover had been irrevocably lost grew greater in Cyane's breast. Utter listlessness succeeded the first days of bitter grief when that certainty came to her. All interest in outward things had gone from her; even her own will-power left her, and she seemed as a little child who is unable to stand or think for itself.

It was then that Mara, anxious about her state, sought to rouse her from her apathy. Tender-hearted towards his daughter as he was, he was a man who exacted obedience from those about him, and he could be stern, even cruel, when his wishes were thwarted. He had long wished that Cyane should become the wife of Lydias; and now considered delay should no longer be countenanced. He conceived that marriage might be a cure for Cyane's ill-health, the true cause of which he had not guessed—he was a busy man, occupied with weighty matters, in busy times, having little leisure for thought concerning the cause of a young girl's ailments, though she a daughter and much beloved. He therefore spoke both to Cyane and Lydias, intimating his wish that if the latter renewed his offer of marriage she should not refuse his hand.

Lydias had been faithful to his promise, and had not pressed his suit on Cyane since she had spoken so openly on the subject of her love for Ariston. But the intensity of his own love had undergone no

diminution ; on the contrary, it had increased during the hours she had tended him for his wound, and his whole being yearned for her more strongly than before. His nature was not to be kept in subjection easily. Headstrong, impulsive, the southern blood of youth coursing in his veins, restraint was difficult at any time ; he was a man prone to satisfy his desires without pausing to consider the rectitude of his conduct, as was customary with those of his time. Hitherto the great wave of love for Cyane had not swamped the compassion which her mute appeal had aroused. But now, urged by her father, by the promptings of his own desire, and conscious of the futility of Cyane's love for one who had evidently passed out of her life, he determined to approach her once more.

Lydias had no sooner made up his mind than he sought Cyane at once. He spoke kindly and considerately, pleading his cause urgently with impassioned words, meeting objections with promises of devotion and self-repression which touched her to the quick. He would wait patiently for the love she could not give him then. That love would come later. A new flame would be lighted in her heart from the ardent fire which burnt in his. At least she would find sympathy and protection where now all seemed lonely and desolate.

Perhaps it was this last thought that finally moved Cyane to yield. Her utter misery had seemed to

come from the dried-up fountain of love within her, outpoured with the exuberance of youth before one to whom she had given all without reserve. She was famishing for love. She had need of love or else she would die. She did not pause to consider the price she was paying. Weary, vanquished by circumstance, fearing to incur her father's wrath and to wound still more the passionate devotion of Lydias, yet scarcely knowing what she did, she yielded. She consented to become the wife of Lydias. Then she fled to her room to weep bitter tears at the thought of her outraged love for the dead Ariston.

The following day Cyane roused herself partially from her deep dejection. There was that within her which forced her to an endeavour to be true to her promise to Lydias. It was the strength of that effort which induced her to accompany some girl companions in a walk which had for its object a visit to the Latomie, wherein the Athenian prisoners were confined.

The city had soon resumed its old routine of joyous daily life. It is true that many moved about the streets in garbs of grief, and houses were closed in sign of mourning for relatives killed in the war. But the majority rejoiced. Was not the Great Harbour dotted with conquered ships, purses filled by the spoils of war, by treasure taken and by slaves fallen into private hands? Festivals took place once

more. The lordly Theatre below the Temple of Apollo was packed with the usual crowds eager to listen to the plays of the Athenian poets. In their hatred of Athens love for the spiritual work of her sons survived.

Another amusement, too, had been added to the daily programme of the pleasure-loving Syracusans, and typical of their character since pride and cruelty had their share in it. In that Cyane had been invited by her companions to share. Hitherto she had persistently refused to go to the brink of the prisons in the stone-quarries to gaze upon and make merry at the expense of the captives, who dragged out weary days of imprisonment below. Though that had become the fashionable pastime, her sense of pity had revolted against the cruelty. She could not bring herself to mock fellow beings in adversity, still less the companions of him she loved and mourned so deeply.

Yet to-day, Cyane, hardening her heart and resisting the dictates of her better instinct, consented to go. She told herself that she must forcibly put from her all feeling for the enemies of Syracuse. The effort cost her much. It was part of the self-discipline she had imposed since she plighted her troth to Lydias.

The group of girls soon reached the high ground of Achradina. As they neared the low wall at the edge of the precipice conversation gave way to silence,

curiosity overcame laughter and jests. Each one in her own way felt she was in the presence of human tragedy, real and heartrending, not the counterfeit seen at the Theatre hard by. Below was an abyss, irregular in shape, with branches here wide, there narrowing into long gloomy passages, shut in by perpendicular walls of white stone of immense height. The sides of those giant-like cliffs were straight-cut and smooth, except where the softer rock had worn away leaving harder strata in horizontal lines, and rocks protruding in rounded excrescence. They were bare except for a sickly plant of spurge or caper bending its crown upward to the light. In the centre of the wider gallery a mass of rock, fashioned at the caprice of quarry-men into semblance of a trireme's prow, rose to the full height above.

The ground below was covered with coarse weeds, browned and beaten with the tread of feet. Nothing was there save of grim melancholy in that deep prison-house, rough hewn from Nature though it was.

Among Cyane's companions all interest centred on the crowded masses of Athenian prisoners at their feet. Some were in groups, sitting on stones fallen from above, dejected, scarcely uttering, their eyes fixed to the ground; others were lying helpless, with backs supported by the cliffs, arms inert, and heads sunk forward on their breasts. Emaciated, pale faces told of intense suffering from hunger and thirst. The fever-stricken look of some indicated disease and

fast-approaching death. Many heads were roughly bandaged, limbs slung in ragged strips of clothing. Agony of mind as well as physical suffering were stamped indelibly on the faces of that crowd of helpless men, whose scanty coverings were in tatters, whose long and unkempt hair suggested the animal rather than the human being.

Such a spectacle was calculated to rouse the utmost pity in any man's heart. But no such feeling was evident among the Syracusans. The latter had come there, as daily they had come for many weeks, to gratify their lust of vengeance, their love of cruelty. They, from the heights above, secure from retaliation, were free to gibe, to mock, to insult, to add one more drop to the cup of bitter suffering to enemies now completely at their mercy. They indulged in that sorry sport to the full extent of their revengeful natures, day by day and hour by hour, taking pleasure therein.

So constant were those visits to the stone-quarries, that what befell the prisoners was intimately known. Many of the latter were recognised, and watched to note how the arms of death more surely closed about them. Wagers were freely made as to whether one or the other would live for a day, a week, a month. No tragedy of the poets could surpass that enacted in real life below the blue sky in the Latomie of Syracuse.

CHAPTER XIV.

NOT far from the spot immediately below Cyane and her companions a group of captives had collected round one who was addressing them. The girls moved the better to hear what was being said. Others soon added to their number.

It was known in the city that some prisoners were famed among their fellows as reciters of verse, cultivated men who had been followers of the philosophers and poets of Athens, apt pupils, evidently, who could speak of the teaching and writings of their masters with the authority of disciples. Those seemed to influence the minds of their comrades in misfortune so greatly that when they spoke the prevailing listlessness would be laid aside, and courage revive for a time.

In Syracuse, as at Athens, great importance attached to the writings of such men as Socrates and Plato, of *Æschylus*, *Aristophanes* and *Euripides*. Any new work by these, or other well-known men, attracted the notice of rich and poor alike. Their continued search for and appreciation of the spiritually beautiful was one of the main features

of Greek life in those days, notwithstanding the examples of cruelty, of license, of coarseness by which that higher life was marred.

Thus the words of him who now spoke to the Athenians, which, striking on the smooth surface of the cliffs, found clear hearing above, were listened to attentively, almost with reverence. The speaker, an old man and one in authority, apparently, paid no heed to the fringe of human faces which lined the edge of the precipice; his lamentation, for such it proved to be, was for himself and his fellow sufferers only. He was too haughty by nature, too wounded in pride, too moved by the words he was about to utter, to take notice of those into whose power he had fallen.

He had no sermon to preach, no lesson to impart. He had thought to find in the words of Euripides, concerning the woe of the Trojan Women, sorrow similar to his own, and with it an understanding, and in consequence a fellowship, to which none but the great poet could give so adequate an expression. And therein he thought to find consolation for the stricken men around him.

A drama of which, as has been said, "the only movement is a gradual extinguishing of all the familiar lights of human life with, perhaps, at the end, a suggestion that in the utterness of night, when all fear of a possible worse thing is past, there is some source of peace and even glory," one in which

eternal sorrow is glorified and made beautiful, and almost raised to the sublimity of a sacrament, could not fail to exalt men's minds above mere physical pain and mental torment.

As he spoke he spared not his own countrymen in his denunciation of their greed of conquest. "What but destruction to Athens could come, as it came to the destroyers of Troy," he was saying, "we who have sacked Melos, and dishonoured the gods?"

Delirium was evidently upon him; fever shone from his eyes—a fever which alone gave him strength to speak thus.

The beetling cliffs of glaring white, the emaciated faces around him, his own sufferings, were now lost to him in the scene of burning Troy and its Women. He was no longer the warrior, the acknowledged leader, but one who, in the earnestness and fervour of simulation, has sunk his individuality in the character assumed. The profound woe of Hecuba, the Queen, torn by agony for the death of all she held most dear, was in his soul. For the moment he saw with the eyes, spoke with the mouth of Hecuba. Loss of home, kindred, liberty, comrades, the haunting fear of bondage, had driven him to despair, as they had driven the Trojan Queen.

In a frenzy of lamentation he spoke the words of Hecuba, not consecutively, but choosing them as they occurred to memory. At times he addressed his

listeners ; at others, raising his eyes to the small patch of sky above, sole symbol left of the liberty he had lost.

“Lo, I have seen the open hand of God,” he cried, “and in it nothing, nothing, save the rod of mine affliction, and the eternal hate beyond all lands. Hath He not turned us in His hand, and thrust our high things low, and shaken our hills as dust, we had not been this splendour, and our wrong an everlasting music for the song of earth and heaven! God, O, God of Mercy! . . . Nay, why call I on the Gods? They know, they know my prayers, and would not hear them long ago.”

Profound silence reigned. The prisoners listened with bowed heads to words which went straight to their hearts, as a fitting expression of their own woe. The faces of the Syracusans above, on which the sun shone, were set with rapt attention.

“And I the aged, where go I?” he continued. “I, a winter-frozen bee, a slave death-shapen, as the stones that lie hewn on a dead man’s grave. Ah, well-a-day, this ache of lying comfortless and haunted. Ah, my side, my brow, my temples! All with changeful pain my body racketh, and would fain move to the tune of tears: for tears are music, too, and keep a song unheard in hearts that weep. Mine is the crown of misery, the bitterest of all our days.”

The silence of a long pause was broken only by

sobs from the captives reduced by disease. Wild cries of birds of prey hovering overhead in the blue distance were added to the sobs.

“This ruined body!” the old man continued, laying his hand on his breast. “Is the fall thereof too deep for all that now is over me of anguish, and hath been, and yet shall be? Ye Gods . . . Alas! Why call on things so weak for aid? Yet there is something that doth seek, crying, for God, when one of us hath woe. O, I will think of things gone long ago, and weave them to a song, like one more tear in the heart of misery.”

Then his mind turned from a personal suffering, and he spoke more directly to his companions: “Our comrades, dead, lie naked beneath the eye of Pallas, and vultures croak and flap for joy. Beat, beat your heads: beat with the wailing chime of hands lifted in tune. No wife came with gentle arms to shroud the limbs of them for burial, in a strange and angry earth laid dead. And there at home, the same long dearth: women that lonely died, and aged men waiting for sons that ne’er should return again, nor know their graves, nor pour drink offerings to still the unslaked dust. Yea, voices of Death; and mists are over them of dead men’s anguish like a diadem. Woe is me for the dead.”

When the speaker bewailed his own wretched fate, and that of his comrades, the Syracusans, who had collected in ever increasing numbers above, kept

silence, spell-bound by words which touched them deeply with pity for his years, for the dead fallen in battle. But when he referred to Athens, and those who might yet be awaiting the return of the expedition, their revengeful nature found expression, and silence gave way to derision and a storm of invective and curses hurled at the men below.

The orator paid no heed, nor did his companions glance upward. They were too accustomed to the mockery of their conquerors. In the earlier days of confinement they had been goaded to desperation by the taunts; but their proud resentful spirits were now broken, sapped by disease and want, and insults were regarded stoically as part of their grievous lot.

As the Athenian prisoner spoke, Cyane listened with tears welling to her eyes, moved to the depths of her being by the sufferings, which, though voiced by one alone, were, she well knew, those of the thousands shut in by the pitiless walls of stone. Several times she attempted to leave a scene of such misery, but her friends refused to accompany her. To dissuade Cyane from her intention one of them tried to interest her in the old man who had spoken, relating that when first he had been brought to the Latomie he had assiduously nursed a youth badly wounded—a son perhaps, or a friend. No mother could have been more tender, nor shown more anxious care. It was noticed with that absorbing interest which the Syracusans had in the actions of

their captives, that the older man took his own scanty garments to shield the other from the chill of night, gave him of his meagre portion of bread and water, which in the cruel revenge of their captors, was but half the ration of a common slave. As the air became more tainted from the presence of men confined, fœtid from the corpses of those who died by hundreds, left to rot in the sun because means and strength alike failed to give them burial, the youth was carried laboriously by no other arms but his from place to place, where the scorching heat of the sun by day and the damp and cold of night would be less. He never left his friend until he died with his arms about him, his head resting on his breast. From that day the elder man, who had seemed sustained by an unknown strength during his watch, after he had scratched with his own fingers until they bled a shallow grave for his friend, fell ill and lost his reason for a time. Then he recovered and endeavoured to lessen the suffering of his companions in the manner already related.

Cyane's attention became rivetted, as her girlfriend related the illness and death of the young Athenian. She was about to question her as to his appearance, to ask if she had heard his name. She was filled with dread that the youth who had died almost within call of her own home might have been Ariston. But she checked herself. No longer could she rightly think of him now passed from her life.

Then her companion told her that the old orator had been tended in his turn by a younger man who, scarcely recovered of his wounds, had crawled from one of the arched recesses of the quarries. He also seemed to be hailed with respect and deference, and his words listened to with interest and attention. At the sound of his voice when he spoke the sick, starving, and maimed dragged themselves from various parts, or were helped by others to hear him, looking for encouragement, anxious to share the sympathy he was prodigal of giving.

“Look,” added the girl, pointing with her finger to the prisoners grouped about the orator. “I see him now, he is addressing words to the older man.”

Cyane gazed listlessly. She failed to perceive aught in the distance but a pale face, drawn with suffering, the lower part of which was covered with a beard.

At that moment Lydias saw her from afar, and making his way with difficulty through the crowd, joined her. He, like Cyane, would not consent to take part in the pastime of mocking fallen enemies. He had heard of her being at the quarries and followed.

The lament from below re-commenced. Now a redoubled earnestness in the voice reciting the words, solemn as they were, seemed to indicate a deeper meaning on the part of him who spoke.

“What, then, lacketh, 'ere we touch the last dead

deep of misery? But a space, ye Dead, and I am with you," he said, turning with yearning eyes to a far off spot where lay buried the body of his dead friend. "Cast me on a bed of earth, rock pillowed, to lie down and pass away, wasted with tears. There liveth not in my life any more the hope that others have. Nor will I tell the lie to mine own heart that aught is well, or shall be well."

Here the voice failed and the speaker would have fallen had not a ready arm supported him. The inert crowd of dejected captives silently watched the face of the dying man. They did not stir. They had no relief to offer.

Then the last flicker of life, the final utterance of woe came.

"Ah, me! and is it come, the end of all, the very crest and summit of my days, thus?" With those words the old warrior sank to the ground; he lay lifeless in the clasp of one who held him.

Laying down the body tenderly, the other rose to address his companions. Though his back was towards Cyane, she recognised him as the young man who had been pointed out by her girl companion.

"Men of Athens," he said, with faltering voice, "weep not for him. Euripides has sung for such as he: 'there is a crown in death for him that striveth well and perisheth unstained. To die in evil were the stain. The dead hath now lost his pain, and weeps no more. To die is only not to be ;

and better to be dead than grievously living. They have no pain, they ponder not their own wrong.' Ah, weep no more for him."

Then lifting his hands above his head, his face turned to the reddening patch of sunset sky beyond the prison walls, he spoke comfort to his listeners thus in prayer :

"Thou deep Base of the World, and thou high Throne above the World, who e'er thou art, unknown and hard of surmise, Chain of things that be, or Reason of our Reason ; God, to Thee I lift my praise, seeing the silent road that bringeth justice ere the end be trod to all that breathes and dies."

The speaker concluded what he had to say slowly, and in evident pain, with that noble resignation to, that recognition of a Higher Power, in a voice shaken by emotion. As he withdrew his gaze from the opening in the cliffs above, it had rested on the serried ranks of Syracusans by the verge. There he saw what he had thought never to look upon again—the steadfast eyes of Cyane gazing into his, and therein a light which shone with love unfathomable.

CHAPTER XV.

GREAT commotion filled the ranks of Syracusans. If the death of the older Athenian orator had agitated them, the words of the younger moved them more deeply. It was the first time they had listened to the public expression of such noble sentiments; the first time, too, that that audacious cry for help to one Supreme Being, enigmatical and undefined though it was, had fallen upon their ears. The feeling was not one of disdain, reproach, or protest such as was levied against Euripides, its author, in his own country, driving him to banishment among strangers in a distant land. It was one in accordance with the advanced thought and teaching of the time, which vaguely knew of and sought for truth far above and beyond the polytheism of the day, a seeking for what might satisfy higher aspiration, accomplish a higher destiny. To the fatalist the "Chain of things that be" suggested a sequence in unknown laws. To the sage and philosopher the "Reason of our Reason" a dreamt-of fountain head of knowledge at which both drank. To the majority this new and startling idea of a Divinity reaching them from the depths

of a foetid prison by the mouth of a despised captive—sublime in thought and expression as it was—captivated at once their imagination, their sense of the beautiful, and their sympathy.

The savage look of hatred and scowls of vengeance vanished from their faces. And though no pity was within them for the sufferings they had witnessed, the words which they had heard filled them with amazement and admiration. A revulsion of feeling became manifest, and a loud murmur of approval ran through the people.

The crowd of Syracusans was too intent to notice the change which came to Cyane as the younger Athenian had bidden his companions to be comforted at the death of the other. She had started violently at the sound of that voice; it stirred her to the very depths of her soul. A moment of agonising fear came that it might be a delusion, that the hope now sprung again to life was but a phantasy, a dream, a mock reality, to which great longing had given birth. But in the next instant she knew that the voice was the same she had heard when she went to the Temple of the Great Mother near the banks of the Anapos, and again in her father's garden on Achradina.

The voice was the voice of Ariston without doubt, changed by pain and privation though it might be. That she knew instinctively, as surely as she knew that in that moment the world had become bright

and full of joy, her life radiantly happy once more. Then almost simultaneously, and with a sick shock, she remembered the promise given to Lydias—a promise which if unwillingly given was no less binding. The recollection turned her to stone, her momentary gladness to the fulness of despair. Ariston, in whom centred her sole hope of happiness in the future, could be nothing to her now; and even if she had not given herself to Lydias, the former was a prisoner with whom the daughter of a proud Syracusan could never mate.

Lydias, at her side, had been watching Cyane's face intently and unknown to her. He had seen the supreme joy that swept over it as she heard the young man's impassioned voice, the blank despair which followed. He divined the cause. Blood rushed tumultuously in his veins, tingeing all he looked upon with the colour of blood; his head reeled and he would have fallen. Recovering himself quickly, his eyes sought those of Cyane. In the furtive glances interchanged he saw terror and abject misery, and she haughty defiance and anger.

Below, in the charnel-house prison, the spectacle was over for the day. The Athenians had silently and wearily lifted the body of the latest victim, and borne it to the further corner on which the dead man's gaze had last rested, there where his dead friend lay.

The pleasure-loving Syracusans turned away seek-

ing the city. As they went the sun sank behind the mountains, sending up long rays of light reaching the vault above, which was flecked with curling thread-like clouds, like interlacing flame. The sea, the plain, the white houses and the temples were afire with the borrowed glow, earth and sky outvying the other in rivalry of crimson and gold. Then dusk fell quickly, eclipsing all but a lurid patch of cloud beyond the western mountains, mercifully blotting out from human gaze the hideous sufferings of captives in that pitiless prison of blank rock, wherein dead men lay rotting without burial and living men were jealous of their lot.

* * * * *

Cyane and Lydias were left alone. He made a sign to draw apart from the crowd, and they strolled towards the highest point of Achradina, enclosed on the north by the old wall of the city. For long there was complete silence between the two; each was fighting inward battles. Then Cyane spoke:

"You have seen and understood," she said simply. "He is yet alive, and I know that my love for him is as great as it ever was. But I renounce it once again, as I renounced it before. I will be true to my promise to become your wife."

Lydias said not a word. His veins stood out as cords on his forehead. His clenched hands were pressed firmly to his side. Cyane gazed into the far

distance, where the shadow of *Ætna* loomed under the quivering glow of its fires.

“I said before I would give you all I have to give. It is yours. I will not thwart your hopes nor my father’s wishes. If you wish for me as I am, take me.”

Cyane turned to seek his eyes, but *Lydias* did not look up. Nor did she expect an answer. The plighted troth of a noble *Syracusan* was as an oath irrevocably binding. Her gentle nature and innate sense of right made withdrawal of her promise an impossibility. Such was the result of the inward conflict with herself as she walked by the side of him she loved truly, but only with the love of a fond sister who recognises the desires and longings of a brother. Whatever the sacrifice demanded, and she was aware it might cost her her life, or at least any joy that existence might possibly offer in a distant future, she did not hesitate. She was no longer free, no longer her own mistress to say yes or no. She belonged to *Lydias* already.

At length the latter spoke. His words were as those of a dreamer speaking of things remote from actual surroundings, with a far-away sound; no life in them, no conviction. They were mechanical and hard, uttered because they had to be uttered whatever the cost might be. They were apparently pointless, too; beside the mark, indeed.

“*Ariston* then saved my life in the Great Harbour,” he affirmed slowly, as if speaking to himself.

Cyane turned to him again, this time with swimming eyes; but through the tears a flash of supreme joy lingered an instant. She said nothing. She hardly expected him to say anything; to her, her fate was irrevocably sealed.

Then he spoke: "I said before I cannot take you thus, Cyane. You must come to me of your own accord. I do not go from my word. I release you from your promise. I should never have sought you."

Lydias, the strong man, had also fought the inward fight against his weaker nature, and this was the victory of the one against the other, of right over evil, of kindness over hatred, of real love over selfish longing. Once before had that battle raged within him, and now with double fury. He was well aware he had but to stretch forth his hand to take the prize for which his whole being craved with increasing longing, since Cyane was already his by the laws of convention, as she herself allowed. Nothing was wanting but the solemnity of the marriage rites—a mere form which he might at any moment demand and immediately procure.

The promptings of his great love, his wish to possess her after so long a tarrying, urged him with all the insistence and ardour of his southern blood to the gratification of his desires. To make her his, to put it out of the reach of another to obtain the inestimable treasure, to clasp her to his heart and look upon

her as his own irrevocably, to lay his never ceasing devotion at her feet in future days of cloudless joy—such was his hope, and such he had had to fight against since he had seen that look of misery in Cyane's eyes as she gazed into the depths of the Latomie.

It had been a dire tussle, one of life and death to him, but the spirit of good which lies within the soul of every human being had emerged victorious. To his aid had come his entire devotion to Cyane, his sympathy for her in her suffering, his fear for her health, his earnest desire for her happiness; and therewith a proud determination to have only what he could win fairly, a reluctance to take what was reluctantly given.

His was a complex nature in which the nobleness of a race of heroic men was strangely mixed with the strong savage instinct to possess what his senses desired. But his entire love for Cyane caused nobleness to prevail in the end. Bitter and terrible as the sacrifice was, love overcame self and was triumphant.

Though such were the principal cause there was yet another which influenced Lydias' decision. The opportunity had come at length to requite the signal act of mercy by which he owed his life to Ariston. He had often told himself he sought for the occasion. Indeed, among the Athenian hosts, both fallen in battle and imprisoned, he had searched and caused search to be made diligently for the man who had so

greatly benefited him. Then, as Cyane had silently, he also concluded that Ariston had perished, and that his debt of gratitude would go for ever unpaid. The thought troubled him.

The doubt and fear of both himself and of the girl he loved had terminated simultaneously that evening when listening to the prayer for justice of the Athenian as it rose from the Latomie. His duty had seemed plain before him; and when that was evident it was but will-force to determine whether he should fail or conquer.

Cyane's only answer to the declaration that Lydias liberated her from her promise were the tears which flowed unceasingly, as with bent head she clung to his arm. Her heart was too full of gratitude, of pity for him, to speak.

As the moon rose out of the Ionian sea, cresting the waves with light and turning the dusk into a world of light, the two retraced their steps to Mara's house, the waterway of ever-widening dancing silver on the sea appearing to Cyane to be prophetic of the new life of hope now opening before her.

CHAPTER XVI.

TO a nature like Lydias' no half measures recommended themselves. Much might be required to move him, but when he had resolved on a course of action he dedicated himself thereto with an energy and a determination which rarely failed to meet with success.

The motive of his present activity was to bring back to Cyane the happiness he desired for her. A further one was to pay the debt of gratitude he owed to Ariston.

The cruelty of the Syracusans towards the Athenians, which had treacherously decreed death to Nikias and Demosthenes, and kept thousands of prisoners on the verge of starvation amid terrible sufferings, was not satiated. Soreness caused by the invasion, loss of lives and treasure, the terror of danger so real and imminent, rankled still in their minds. That was abundantly shown by the insults and harsh treatment which the captives had to suffer day by day.

For Lydias to apply for the immediate release of Ariston would have been the same as to entreat a

stone wall for sympathy. Alone, his influence was insufficient to obtain the favour. To induce Mara to aid him in his plan was a step he wished to postpone for the present; he would approach Cyane's father later. He was in doubt how best to further his ends.

The subtlety of the Grecian mind then came to his assistance, and he resolved on a definite plan. The fame of the reciters of Euripides' tragedy in the Latomie had spread throughout the city. The words which gave so eloquent an expression to human woe reached many hearts. Perhaps the tragic death of the elder of the two orators beneath the eyes of the spectators had accentuated the poignancy of grief which was the dominant key of that song of sorrow.

By carefully chosen means Lydiás sought to increase the enthusiasm. The crowd is always eager to accept a new topic of talk, and it had one to hand here. Men soon spoke of little save that wonderful poem; and they flocked daily in increasing numbers to the edge of the stone-quarries, hoping for a repetition of its recitation.

In that they were disappointed. The ever diminishing groups of captives gathered together at periods of each day to listen to words of exhortation and encouragement; but not once was Ariston's voice raised again to supplicate or lament in the much prized words of the poet.

Then public excitement increased as was Lydiás'

intent. Performances of other plays in the Theatre were deserted. Discontent at being baulked of their enjoyment became evident among the people.

When that agitation had continued for a time, it was suggested by some to appeal to authority to cause the surviving reciter to be brought from his prison to satisfy the legitimate longing of the people. A deputation presented itself before the magistrates and obtained the necessary order.

A day was fixed for Ariston to appear, and great preparations were made. The event was looked upon as a public holiday, and thousands flocked to the scene of the festival.

That enormous Theatre, holding more than twenty thousand spectators, was packed from the floor to its sixtieth tier of seats, and people unable to find sitting room crowded to the high-standing ground at the back and side. The marble-covered and stone seats, cut into the living rock, now represented a semi-circular slope of human faces, expectant, anxious, eager.

The sun above shone brightly in a sky which canopied the vast meeting-place with a dome of intensest blue. The land-locked waters of the Great Harbour were seen below. To the left was Ortygia—a neck of land closely packed with houses—going to meet the rocky heights of Plemmyrion. Further lay the Little Harbour, then the angle of the great wall which ran its course to the ports.

The lofty peristyles of the most sacred Herakleion vied in grandeur with those of the Great Mother and Persephone on the right hand ; and behind was the plain whereon the Anapos and Cyane threaded their united waters to the sea. Westward, in the far distance, lilac-hued shadows with flat summits indicated the high eminences and mountain fastnesses of rock-tossed, fire-wrought Sicily. Immediately behind and ponderously magnificent in Doric simplicity was the portico of Apollo's Temple. The contemplation of that scene which Grecian love of beauty had specially chosen for the home of the Muses was well calculated to redeem the tediousness of long waiting, for in their eagerness many people had sought their seats before dawn.

The tramp of soldiery was heard on the rocky highway from the Latomie. A body of men guarded Ariston on the march, and grouped themselves in semi-circle behind him when they reached the stage.

The figure of the Athenian captive, emaciated and suffering, stood alone. His scanty clothing was what remained to him after months of imprisonment ; he had indignantly refused to change them for the raiment which had been offered when told of what was expected of him that day. At first he had declined to accompany his guard ; he preferred the death which seemed drawing nearer to him with giant strides daily to appearing before his unfeeling

conquerors in any character but a warrior. He had relented only when one unknown had secretly bidden him to comply at all costs.

Silently and unmoved he confronted that wall of human faces. His gaze roved from face to face, from tier to tier, seeking what it could not find. Equally silent was his audience. Murmurings began after a time. "Were they to be disappointed, balked of their pleasure by the tacit defiance of a prisoner?" they asked each other. As the impatience increased, a magistrate intervened, bidding Ariston to speak without delay.

The latter recalled himself from the reverie into which he had fallen. At first he recited mechanically the opening lines of the Tragedy wherein the god Poseidon addresses the goddess Pallas Athena. He had committed the words to memory long since, and had in his captivity repeated and pondered over them, so that his speaking now was without halting or hesitation. Only when he reached the greater significance of the poet's intention—the portrayal of the sublime grief of the Troades, was he roused from his indifference and merged his own sorrows in those of the Trojan Women. Thenceforth, emotion giving strength to his voice as it rose with the heat of protest or fell in the subdued pity of despair, the words seemed no longer words, but the impassioned pleading of erring, tortured human beings, not now mourning on a distant shore, but

present in the flesh, laying bare their souls in the extremity of uttermost woe.

The lamentation of Hecuba as she wakes from her troubled sleep after the fall of Troy and gazes upon the Greek ships far off on the shore, her rebuke to the Greeks for seeking Helen, her reviling of the faithless wife of Menelaus, her appeal to the Women of Troy in their huts, fell upon ears that drank in eagerly every word. The reference to Sicily and her mighty mountain provoked muttered sounds of approval. The arrival of Talthybius, the herald, the fear at his coming, his hideous message, the telling of the destiny of the various women, moved the audience in anxious anticipation. The madness of Cassandra, whose darkened intellect, open yet to an understanding of the woe of the future, her menace, her tardy reticence, her own self-reliance, the sorry comfort she essayed to give her suffering mother, kept them spell-bound; as did the grief of Andromache, the leave-taking of her child, her final sacrifice, and her departure for captivity. When Menelaus appeared, followed by the guilty Helen, excitement was at its height, and with difficulty were the shouts of protest restrained as the latter sought for mercy, and Hecuba pleaded for vengeance at his hands. Sobs broke from the women when the body of the boy Astyanax, "Hector's child," was laid before Hecuba, when she tended him in abject grief, wrapt him in raiments, and laid him on his dead father's

shield, sole relic of a glorious past. Increasing grief thenceforth swayed the whole of that vast multitude, until the end of the Tragedy, when Hecuba, the Queen, with her women, goes forth to slavery, as the crash of falling walls and flare of flames proclaim the destruction of Troy.

Intense silence followed the conclusion of the story. Ariston had not faltered in the recital. His woes were as the woes of Hecuba, of Andromache, of all the Trojan Women. His heart but spoke his own torment. Therein lay his strength. But when he ended with the final words of farewell of Hecuba, his force failed him, and he sank to the ground.

The silence was broken then. Shout after shout of admiration went up. They paused not to consider that the lines were the lines of Euripides, the thoughts his thoughts, that the greater praise was due to him. They could only associate the great Tragedy—that “cry of the great wrongs of the world wrought into music,” with Ariston, and all the meed of praise was his by right. In that moment of exaltation, hatred of the Athenians, lingering thoughts of vengeance, soreness of past suffering vanished, and Ariston’s name was passed from mouth to mouth in praise and adulation.

Lydias saw that the moment he awaited had come. Surrounded as he was by friends specially chosen for the occasion, he rose in his place. When silence had been restored, he turned to the audience. In a loud

voice he demanded the liberation of Ariston as a mark of gratitude, of appreciation of his talents. As soon as the proposal was understood the crowd re-echoed it, and with one voice shouted: "He is free, he is free."

All faces were turned anxiously towards the seats of honour whereon sate the magistrates of Syracuse. The latter were seen to be in deliberation. The chief magistrate rose as spokesman for the rest.

"The popular verdict is our verdict," he said. "We grant freedom to the noble Ariston. His deeds of valour in war, though directed against ourselves, have secured our admiration as greatly as the words he has just now uttered."

A singular and impressive silence followed this pronouncement. Suddenly a great sob came from the expectant multitude—a sob at once of relief and of exultant joy. Then the shouts of those who listened and hoped were redoubled; and the sky was filled with shouts of "Ariston, Ariston!"

* * * * *

Two days later Lydias and Ariston went to the house of Mara. The former had accomplished the task he had set himself to perform. Mara had offered no opposition since it was at the instigation and prayer of Lydias that he should consent to Cyane's union with Ariston.

And now but one thing more remained for Lydias:

to bid farewell to the house that had sheltered him from childhood, to Mara and Cyane, who had been father and sister to him. His intention was to join the Lacedæmonians in their renewed attack against Athens; to seek in war abroad the peace of mind which could not be his in Syracuse.

The entreaties of Cyane and of her father, and of Ariston, could not prevail to alter his determination nor delay departure. He was to sail for Greece at once, taking Dion with him.

Late that night a man and woman stood on the furthest point of the promontory of Ortygia. The full moon, past the zenith, was sinking to the mountains beyond the plain. The city, wrapt in profound silence, shone with silvered brilliancy. But neither the scene, nor yet their love for one another, their past sufferings, their future union, occupied the minds of the two. Cyane and Ariston gazed earnestly and sorrowfully at the faint shadow of a ship gradually withdrawing into the distant gloom, thinking of one on board, who had brought happiness to both by self-sacrifice, and was now a voluntary exile from the country of his birth for their sakes.

EPILOGUE.

AMONG "the elm-woods and the oaken" on the northern slopes of Mount Olympus, little Amydon, the shepherd, leaned against a rock. Below him the goats and sheep grazed leisurely on green grass by the side of springs, which leapt among the stones in downward course, noisily tossing here and there thin mists of spray.

From the rudely-fashioned wax-stopt pipe the boy held to his lips merry notes came. Joy was in his heart, was echoed in the music that he piped. Why he knew not. But joy, too, was in the shadowy woodlands, in the heights and valleys, in the sky above, in the trills of hidden merles and nightingales that came from thick bushes. Even the breeze murmured pleasantly as it moved amid the leaves. Bells of roving herds tinkled faintly from afar. The grass was a lacework of dancing shadow embroidered by the sun. Pæonies, pink and white, and yellow primulas, bedecked the ground with gladsome colour. So little Amydon, pipe in hand, unwittingly played his part in that joyful chorus of content, for joy begets joy.

But suddenly the boy ceased his playing and fled to a thicket swiftly. In the distance he had seen one of whom the elder shepherds spoke with deepest reverence, and he regarded with the greatest awe. Trembling in his leafy sanctuary he watched him as he approached, for, he told himself, he gazed on an Immortal, one who had his home among the towering peaks above, where none might tread; and he greatly feared, though he had seen him often among the trees.

* * * * *

Euripides, the Bard of Salamis, the glory of nobler Athens, yet rejected of his countrymen and a wanderer, had gone to Macedon to find the honours which should have awaited him at home. Welcomed and revered there, as he had been scorned and mocked at Athens, he had now come to Mount Olympus from the friendly court of Archelaüs, to seek the solitude he needed for the furtherance of his work—the final outpouring of his soul, wherein the god Dionysos goes to the city of Thebes to be rejected by his own people, to suffer insult and the pain which Euripides himself had also suffered.

The usual grave and stately bearing of the poet had become more stern. Of care his face was typical. Long locks clustered about a high forehead, locks as white as the beard which covered the massive jaw, as the eyebrows which overshadowed deeply sunken eyes. But if suffering was not absent from a face

of singular beauty and refinement, it had not marred the benign expression which lurked about the brow and eyes.

Euripides, when espied by Amydon afar, was returning to the grotto among the wooded slopes wherein he was wont to write. Reaching the cave, "in the still dell where the Muses dwell," above which towered the "cloudless, rainless, windless" summit of the mountain, the home of the Immortal Gods, he sate awhile to ponder the thoughts which had come to him during his lonely ramble. To him "the wilderness was filled with moving voices and dim stress"; the earth and sky, the trees, the running water having messages that other mortals failed to hear.

Escaped but lately from the malicious persecution of fellow-men to lonely solitudes, his mind was at ease. In the peace of his surroundings, a quietude, undisturbed except by the song of birds, the music of wind among trees, the soft murmuring of distant seas breaking on Thermaic shores—his soul found rest.

He had lived long in Athens among bitter jealousies, heated rivalries, ceaseless ambitions, scepticism, doubts and heresy. He with his surpassing genius had been foremost in that human turmoil, seeking to control, striving to correct, and the end had been but scorn and exile. No recompense was it to him that his enemies had suffered, that his

warnings had come true, for thereby Athens, his own Athens, had suffered also.

But among the glades, the rocky heights, the shade of mighty forests, fear had left him. He was safe because he was alone—alone in that supernal world which deep wisdom creates about a man and into which none but he himself may enter.

“ What else is wisdom ? What of man’s endeavour,
Or God’s high grace, so lovely and so great ?
To stand from fear set free, to breathe and wait ;
To hold a hand uplifted over Hate,”

he murmured softly to himself as he sate down to rest.

Euripides’ work was all but done, his term of life nearing its close, as he knew. Yet here he was content ; content to have left the cares and toil of cities to live in the enjoyment of that world which he himself had made and finally chosen, “ alone in the loveliness ” of Thought and Nature. He could well “ hold a hand uplifted over Hate,” as he had sung, since he was now far above where “ Hate ” could reach, guarded by his immortal fame, secure on the heights of his imperishable achievements.

At that moment voices were heard, and steps approached. Euripides moved uneasily. He liked not to be disturbed. His grave face showed signs of annoyance.

Some five or six men, in whom fatigue of travel and recent suffering were plainly visible, appeared

before the mouth of the cave. Amydon, the shepherd, had laid aside his pipe and led them in their search of the Poet ; with companions the lad was more courageous.

Euripides asked what made the men disturb his quiet unbidden. One, acting as spokesman, answered for the others :

“ We venture thus to seek you, for a cause more grave and weighty than mere desire to speak with the great Euripides,” he said. “ We have a debt to pay, to give a message, and not on behalf of ourselves alone. To you we owe our liberty.”

The Poet looked up enquiringly.

“ In Syracusan quarries,” the man continued, “ and in infinite torment we lay, lost to all hope of freedom and of life. Each morn Death claimed our bravest and our best ; and it seemed that nought remained but to die and rot as they. One day our prison gate was open and redemption was at hand. At first no cause was given for that leniency. But then we knew. It was the magic of your poetry. Hearts as hard as those walls of stone which shut us in relented tardily, were melted at the sunshine of your words, the beauty of your Muse. We come to thank you, O Euripides, to praise the Gods and you for their eternal gift.”

When the spokesman had finished the men knelt at the feet of Euripides to kiss the hem of his robe.

The severe look of sorrow faded from the old man's

face. His eyes softened, and filled with tears of compassion, then of gratitude. He understood that his words, sown broadcast, had not fallen on barren ground, but had helped to ease a suffering of which his own heart was full to overflowing.

Little Amydon, open-eyed and standing apart from the others, approached the group, seeking in his goat-skin wallet for his pipe meanwhile. He thought to join once more the song of nightingale and merle among the branches, to call the birds to sing the louder at the bidding of the pipe; for on the old man's face he saw a joy akin to his, akin to that of peaks and valleys, of shadowy woodlands, of music of falling waters, of leafy solitudes—a joy speaking of sunshine and the clear sky above, which had filled his own heart that morning. Then he was afraid no longer of Euripides; and he shyly stooped to kiss the old man's hand.



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