Sisters, the — Volume 3 eBook

Sisters, the — Volume 3 by Georg Ebers

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THE SISTERS

By Georg Ebers

Volume 3.

CHAPTER XII.

While, in the vast peristyle, many a cup was still being emptied, and the carousers were growing merrier and noisier—while Cleopatra was abusing the maids and ladies who were undressing her for their clumsiness and unreadiness, because every touch hurt her, and every pin taken out of her dress pricked her—the Roman and his friend Lysias walked up and down in their tent in violent agitation.

"Speak lower," said the Greek, "for the very griffins woven into the tissue of these thin walls seem to me to be lying in wait, and listening.

"I certainly was not mistaken. When I came to fetch the gems I saw a light gleaming in the doorway as I approached it; but the intruder must have been warned, for just as I got up to the lantern in front of the servants' tent, it disappeared, and the torch which usually burns outside our tent had not been lighted at all; but a beam of light fell on the road, and a man's figure slipped across in a black robe sprinkled with gold ornaments which I saw glitter as the pale light of the lantern fell upon them—just as a slimy, black

newt glides through a pool. I have good eyes as you know, and I will give one of them at this moment, if I am mistaken, and if the cat that stole into our tent was not Eulaeus."

"And why did you not have him caught?" asked Publius, provoked.

"Because our tent was pitch-dark," replied Lysias, and that stout villain is as slippery as a badger with the dogs at his heels, Owls, bats and such vermin which seek their prey by night are all hideous to me, and this Eulaeus, who grins like a hyaena when he laughs—"

"This Eulaeus," said Publius, interrupting his friend, "shall learn to know me, and know too by experience that a man comes to no good, who picks a quarrel with my father's son."

"But, in the first instance, you treated him with disdain and discourtesy," said Lysias, "and that was not wise."

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“Wise, and wise, and wise!” the Roman broke out. “He is a scoundrel. It makes no difference to me so long as he keeps out of my way; but when, as has been the case for several days now, he constantly sticks close to me to spy upon me, and treats me as if he were my equal, I will show him that he is mistaken. He has no reason to complain of my want of frankness; he knows my opinion of him, and that I am quite inclined to give him a thrashing. If I wanted to meet his cunning with cunning I should get the worst of it, for he is far superior to me in intrigue. I shall fare better with him by my own unconcealed mode of fighting, which is new to him and puzzles him; besides it is better suited to my own nature, and more consonant to me than any other. He is not only sly, but is keen-witted, and he has at once connected the complaint which I have threatened to bring against him with the manuscript which Serapion, the recluse, gave me in his presence. There it lies—only look.

“Now, being not merely crafty, but a daring rascal too—two qualities which generally contradict each other, for no one who is really prudent lives in disobedience to the laws—he has secretly untied the strings which fastened it. But, you see, he had not time enough to tie the roll up again! He has read it all or in part, and I wish him joy of the picture of himself he will have found painted there. The anchorite wields a powerful pen, and paints with a firm outline and strongly marked coloring. If he has read the roll to the end it will spare me the trouble of explaining to him what I purpose to charge him with; if you disturbed him too soon I shall have to be more explicit in my accusation. Be that as it may, it is all the same to me.”

“Nay, certainly not,” cried Lysias, “for in the first case Eulaeus will have time to meditate his lies, and bribe witnesses for his defence. If any one entrusted me with such important papers—and if it had not been you who neglected to do it—I would carefully seal or lock them up. Where have you put the despatch from the Senate which the messenger brought you just now?”

“That is locked up in this casket,” replied Publius, moving his hand to press it more closely over his robe, under which he had carefully hidden it.

“May I not know what it contain?” asked the Corinthian.

“No, there is not time for that now, for we must first, and at once, consider what can be done to repair the last mischief which you have done. Is it not a disgraceful thing that you should betray the sweet creature whose childlike embarrassment charmed us this morning—of whom you yourself said, as we came home, that she reminded you of your lovely sister—that you should betray her, I say, into the power of the wildest of all the profligates I ever met—to this monster, whose pleasures are the unspeakable, whose boast is vice? What has Euergetes—”

“By great Poseidon!” cried Lysias, eagerly interrupting his friend. “I never once thought of this second Alcibiades when I mentioned her. What can the manager of a

performance do, but all in his power to secure the applause of the audience? and, by my honor! it was for my own sake that I wanted to bring Irene into the palace—I am mad with love for her —she has undone me."

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“Aye! like Callista, and Phryne, and the flute-player Stephanion,” interrupted the Roman, shrugging his shoulders.

“How should it be different?” asked the Corinthian, looking at his friend in astonishment. “Eros has many arrows in his quiver; one strikes deeply, another less deeply; and I believe that the wound I have received to-day will ache for many a week if I have to give up this child, who is even more charming than the much-admired Hebe on our cistern.”

“I advise you however to accustom yourself to the idea, and the sooner the better,” said Publius gravely, as he set himself with his arms crossed, directly in front of the Greek. “What would you feel inclined to do to me if I took a fancy to lure your pretty sister—-whom Irene, I repeat it, is said to resemble—to tempt her with base cunning from your parents’ house?”

“I protest against any such comparison,” cried the Corinthian very positively, and more genuinely exasperated than the Roman had ever seen him.

“You are angry without cause,” replied Publius calmly and gravely. “Your sister is a charming girl, the ornament of your illustrious house, and yet I dare compare the humble Irene—”

“With her! do you mean to say?” Lysias shouted again. “That is a poor return for the hospitality which was shown to you by my parents and of which you formally sang the praises. I am a good-natured fellow and will submit to more from you than from any other man—I know not why, myself; —but in a matter like this I do not understand a joke! My sister is the only daughter of the noblest and richest house in Corinth and has many suitors. She is in no respect inferior to the child of your own parents, and I should like to know what you would say if I made so bold as to compare the proud Lucretia with this poor little thing, who carries water like a serving-maid.”

“Do so, by all means!” interrupted Publius coolly, “I do not take your rage amiss, for you do not know who these two sisters are, in the temple of Serapis. Besides, they do not fill their jars for men but in the service of a god. Here—take this roll and read it through while I answer the despatch from Rome. Here! Spartacus, come and light a few more lamps.”

In a few minutes the two young men were sitting opposite each other at the table which stood in the middle of their tent. Publius wrote busily, and only looked up when his friend, who was reading the anchorite’s document, struck his hand on the table in disgust or sprang from his seat ejaculating bitter words of indignation. Both had finished at the same moment, and when Publius had folded and sealed his letter, and Lysias had flung the roll on to the table, the Roman said slowly, as he looked his friend steadily in the face: “Well?”

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“Well!” repeated Lysias. I now find myself in the humiliating position of being obliged to deem myself more stupid than you—I must own you in the right, and beg your pardon for having thought you insolent and arrogant! Never, no never did I hear a story so infernally scandalous as that in that roll, and such a thing could never have occurred but among these accursed Egyptians! Poor little Irene! And how can the dear little girl have kept such a sunny look through it all! I could thrash myself like any school-boy to think that I—a fool among fools—should have directed the attention of Euergetes to this girl, and he, the most powerful and profligate man in the whole country. What can now be done to save Irene from him? I cannot endure the thought of seeing her abandoned to his clutches, and I will not permit it to happen.

“Do not you think that we ought to take the water-bearers under our charge?”

“Not only we ought but we must,” said Publius decisively; “and if we did not we should be contemptible wretches. Since the recluse took me into his confidence I feel as if it were my, duty to watch over these girls whose parents have been stolen from them, as if I were their guardian— and you, my Lysias, shall help me. The elder sister is not now very friendly towards me, but I do not esteem her the less for that; the younger one seems less grave and reserved than Klea; I saw how she responded to your smile when the procession broke up. Afterwards, you did not come home immediately any more than I did, and I suspect that it was Irene who detained you. Be frank, I earnestly beseech you, and tell me all; for we must act in unison, and with thorough deliberation, if we hope to succeed in spoiling Euergetes’ game.”

“I have not much to tell you,” replied the Corinthian. “After the procession I went to the Pastophorium—naturally it was to see Irene, and in order not to fail in this I allowed the pilgrims to tell me what visions the god had sent them in their dreams, and what advice had been given them in the temple of Asclepius as to what to do for their own complaints, and those of their cousins, male and female.

“Quite half an hour had passed so before Irene came. She carried a little basket in which lay the gold ornaments she had worn at the festival, and which she had to restore to the keeper of the temple-treasure. My pomegranate-flower, which she had accepted in the morning, shone upon me from afar, and then, when she caught sight of me and blushed all over, casting down her eyes, then it was that it first struck me ‘just like the Hebe on our cistern.’

“She wanted to pass me, but I detained her, begging her to show me the ornaments in her hand; I said a number of things such as girls like to hear, and then I asked her if she were strictly watched, and whether they gave her delicate little hands and feet—which were worthy of better occupation than water-carrying—a great deal to do. She did not hesitate to answer, but with all she said she rarely raised her eyes. The longer you look at her the lovelier she is—and yet she is still a mere child-though a child certainly who

no longer loves staying at home, who has dreams of splendor, and enjoyment, and freedom while she is kept shut up in a dismal, dark place, and left to starve.

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“The poor creatures may never quit the temple excepting for a procession, or before sunrise. It sounded too delightful when she said that she was always so horribly tired, and so glad to go to sleep again after she was waked, and had to go out at once just when it is coldest, in the twilight before sunrise. Then she has to draw water from a cistern called the Well of the Sun.”

“Do you know where that cistern lies?” asked Publius.

“Behind the acacia-grove,” answered Lysias. “The guide pointed it out to me. It is said to hold particularly sacred water, which must be poured as a libation to the god at sunrise, unmixed with any other. The girls must get up so early, that as soon as dawn breaks water from this cistern shall not be lacking at the altar of Serapis. It is poured out on the earth by the priests as a drink-offering.”

Publius had listened attentively, and had not lost a word of his friend’s narrative. He now quitted him hastily, opened the tent-door, and went out into the night, looking up to discover the hour from the stars which were silently pursuing their everlasting courses in countless thousands, and sparkling with extraordinary brilliancy in the deep blue sky. The moon was already set, and the morning-star was slowly rising—every night since the Roman had been in the land of the Pyramids he had admired its magnificent size and brightness.

A cold breeze fanned the young man’s brow, and as he drew his robe across his breast with a shiver, he thought of the sisters, who, before long, would have to go out in the fresh morning air. Once more he raised his eyes from the earth to the firmament over his head, and it seemed to him that he saw before his very eyes the proud form of Klea, enveloped in a mantle sown over with stars. His heart throbbed high, and he felt as if the breeze that his heaving breast inhaled in deep breaths was as fresh and pure as the ether that floats over Elysium, and of a strange potency withal, as if too rare to breathe. Still he fancied he saw before him the image of Klea, but as he stretched out his hand towards the beautiful vision it vanished—a sound of hoofs and wheels fell upon his ear. Publius was not accustomed to abandon himself to dreaming when action was needed, and this reminded him of the purpose for which he had come out into the open air. Chariot after chariot came driving past as he returned into his tent. Lysias, who during his absence had been pacing up and down and reflecting, met him with the question:

“How long is it yet till sunrise?”

Hardly two hours,” replied the Roman. “And we must make good use of them if we would not arrive too late.”

“So I think too,” said the Corinthian. “The sisters will soon be at the Well of the Sun outside the temple walls, and I will persuade Irene to follow me. You think I shall not be successful? Nor do I myself—but still perhaps she will if I promise to show her

something very pretty, and if she does not suspect that she is to be parted from her sister, for she is like a child."

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“But Klea,” interrupted Publius thoughtfully, “is grave and prudent; and the light tone which you are so ready to adopt will be very little to her taste, Consider that, and dare the attempt—no, you dare not deceive her. Tell her the whole truth, out of Irene’s hearing, with the gravity the matter deserves, and she will not hinder her sister when she knows how great and how imminent is the danger that threatens her.”

“Good!” said the Corinthian. “I will be so solemnly earnest that the most wrinkled and furrowed graybeard among the censors of your native city shall seem a Dionysiac dancer compared with me. I will speak like your Cato when he so bitterly complained that the epicures of Rome paid more now for a barrel of fresh herrings than for a yoke of oxen. You shall be perfectly satisfied with me!—But whither am I to conduct Irene? I might perhaps make use of one of the king’s chariots which are passing now by dozens to carry the guests home.”

“I also had thought of that,” replied Publius. “Go with the chief of the Diadoches, whose splendid house was shown to us yesterday. It is on the way to the Serapeum, and just now at the feast you were talking with him incessantly. When there, indemnify the driver by the gift of a gold piece, so that he may not betray us, and do not return here but proceed to the harbor. I will await you near the little temple of Isis with our travelling chariot and my own horses, will receive Irene, and conduct her to some new refuge while you drive back Fuergetes’ chariot, and restore it to the driver.”

“That will not satisfy me by any means,” said Lysias very gravely; “I was ready to give up my pomegranate-flower to you yesterday for Irene, but herself—”

“I want nothing of her,” exclaimed Publius annoyed. “But you might—it seems to me—be rather more zealous in helping me to preserve her from the misfortune which threatens her through your own blunder. We cannot bring her here, but I think that I have thought of a safe hiding-place for her.

“Do you remember Apollodorus, the sculptor, to whom we were recommended by my father, and his kind and friendly wife who set before us that capital Chios wine? The man owes me a service, for my father commissioned him and his assistants to execute the mosaic pavement in the new arcade he was having built in the capitol; and subsequently, when the envy of rival artists threatened his life, my father saved him. You yourself heard him say that he and his were all at my disposal.”

“Certainly, certainly,” said Lysias. “But say, does it not strike you as most extraordinary that artists, the very men, that is to say, who beyond all others devote themselves to ideal aims and efforts, are particularly ready to yield to the basest impulses; envy, detraction, and—”

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“Man!” exclaimed Publius, angrily interrupting the Greek, “can you never for ten seconds keep on the same subject, and never keep anything to yourself that comes into your head? We have just now, as it seems to me, more important matters to discuss than the jealousy of each other shown by artists—and in my opinion, by learned men too. The sculptor Apollodorus, who is thus beholden to me, has been living here for the last six months with his wife and daughters, for he has been executing for Philometor the busts of the philosophers, and the animal groups to decorate the open space in front of the tomb of Apis. His sons are managers of his large factory in Alexandria, and when he next goes there, down the Nile in his boat, as often happens, he can take Irene with him, and put her on board a ship.

“As to where we can have her taken to keep her safe from Euergetes, we will talk that over afterwards with Apollodorus.”

“Good, very good,” agreed the Corinthian. “By Heracles! I am not suspicious—still it does not altogether please me that you should yourself conduct Irene to Apollodorus, for if you are seen in her company our whole project may be shipwrecked. Send the sculptor’s wife, who is little known in Memphis, to the temple of Isis, and request her to bring a veil and cloak to conceal the girl. Greet the gay Milesian from me too, and tell her—no, tell her nothing—I shall see her myself afterwards at the temple of Isis.”

During the last words of this conversation, slaves had been enveloping the two young men in their mantles. They now quitted the tent together, wished each other success, and set out at a brisk pace; the Roman to have his horses harnessed, and Lysias to accompany the chief of the Diadoches in one of the king’s chariots, and then to act on the plan he had agreed upon with Publius.

CHAPTER XIII.

Chariot after chariot hurried out of the great gate of the king’s palace and into the city, now sunk in slumber. All was still in the great banqueting-hall, and dark-hued slaves began with brooms and sponges to clean the mosaic pavement, which was strewed with rose leaves and with those that had fallen from the faded garlands of ivy and poplar; while here and there the spilt wine shone with a dark gleam in the dim light of the few lamps that had not been extinguished.

A young flute-player, overcome with sleep and wine, still sat in one corner. The poplar wreath that had crowned his curls had slipped over his pretty face, but even in sleep he still held his flute clasped fast in his fingers. The servants let him sleep on, and bustled about without noticing him; only an overseer pointed to him, and said laughing:

“His companions went home no more sober than that one. He is a pretty boy, and pretty Chloes lover besides—she will look for him in vain this morning.”

“And to-morrow too perhaps,” answered another; “for if the fat king sees her, poor Damon will have seen the last of her.”

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But the fat king, as Euergetes was called by the Alexandrians, and, following their example, by all the rest of Egypt, was not just then thinking of Chloe, nor of any such person; he was in the bath attached to his splendidly fitted residence. Divested of all clothing, he was standing in the tepid fluid which completely filled a huge basin of white marble. The clear surface of the perfumed water mirrored statues of nymphs fleeing from the pursuit of satyrs, and reflected the shimmering light of numbers of lamps suspended from the ceiling. At the upper end of the bath reclined the bearded and stalwart statue of the Nile, over whom the sixteen infant figures—representing the number of ells to which the great Egyptian stream must rise to secure a favorable inundation— clambered and played to the delight of their noble father Nile and of themselves. From the vase which supported the arm of the venerable god flowed an abundant stream of cold water, which five pretty lads received in slender alabaster vases, and poured over the head and the enormously prominent muscles of the breast, the back and the arms of the young king who was taking his bath.

“More, more—again and again,” cried Euergetes, as the boys began to pause in bringing and pouring the water; and then, when they threw a fresh stream over him, he snorted and plunged with satisfaction, and a perfect shower of jets splashed off him as the blast of his breath sputtered away the water that fell over his face.

At last he shouted out: “Enough!” flung himself with all his force into the water, that spurted up as if a huge block of stone had been thrown into it, held his head for a long time under water, and then went up the marble steps of the bath shaking his head violently and mischievously in his boyish insolence, so as thoroughly to wet his friends and servants who were standing round the margin of the basin; he suffered himself to be wrapped in snowy-white sheets of the thinnest and finest linen, to be sprinkled with costly essences of delicate odor, and then he withdrew into a small room hung all round with gaudy hangings.

There he flung himself on a mound of soft cushions, and said with a deep-drawn breath: “Now I am happy; and I am as sober again as a baby that has never tasted anything but its mother’s milk. Pindar is right! there is nothing better than water! and it slakes that raging fire which wine lights up in our brain and blood. Did I talk much nonsense just now, Hierax?”

The man thus addressed, the commander-in-chief of the royal troops, and the king’s particular friend, cast a hesitating glance at the bystanders; but, Euergetes desiring him to speak without reserve, he replied:

“Wine never weakens the mind of such as you are to the point of folly, but you were imprudent. It would be little short of a miracle if Philometor did not remark—”

“Capital!” interrupted the king sitting up on his cushions. “You, Hierax, and you, Komanus, remain here—you others may go. But do not go too far off, so as to be close

at hand in case I should need you. In these days as much happens in a few hours as usually takes place in as many years."

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Those who were thus dismissed withdrew, only the king's dresser, a Macedonian of rank, paused doubtfully at the door, but Euergetes signed to him to retire immediately, calling after him:

"I am very merry and shall not go to bed. At three hours after sunrise I expect Aristarchus—and for work too. Put out the manuscripts that I brought. Is the Eunuch Eulaeus waiting in the anteroom? Yes—so much the better!

"Now we are alone, my wise friends Hierax and Komanus, and I must explain to you that on this occasion, out of pure prudence, you seem to me to have been anything rather than prudent. To be prudent is to have the command of a wide circle of thought, so that what is close at hand is no more an obstacle than what is remote. The narrow mind can command only that which lies close under observation; the fool and visionary only that which is far off. I will not blame you, for even the wisest has his hours of folly, but on this occasion you have certainly overlooked that which is at hand, in gazing at the distance, and I see you stumble in consequence. If you had not fallen into that error you would hardly have looked so bewildered when, just now, I exclaimed 'Capital!'

"Now, attend to me. Philometor and my sister know very well what my humor is, and what to expect of me. If I had put on the mask of a satisfied man they would have been surprised, and have scented mischief, but as it was I showed myself to them exactly what I always am and even more reckless than usual, and talked of what I wanted so openly that they may indeed look forward to some deed of violence at my hands but hardly to a treacherous surprise, and that tomorrow; for he who falls on his enemy in the rear makes no noise about it.

"If I believed in your casuistry, I might think that to attack the enemy from behind was not a particularly fine thing to do, for even I would rather see a man's face than his rear—particularly in the case of my brother and sister, who are both handsome to look upon. But what can a man do? After all, the best thing to do is what wins the victory and makes the game. Indeed, my mode of warfare has found supporters among the wise. If you want to catch mice you must waste bacon, and if we are to tempt men into a snare we must know what their notions and ideas are, and begin by endeavoring to confuse them.

"A bull is least dangerous when he runs straight ahead in his fury; while his two-legged opponent is least dangerous when he does not know what he is about and runs feeling his way first to the right and then to the left. Thanks to your approval—for I have deserved it, and I hope to be able to return it, my friend Hierax. I am curious as to your report. Shake up the cushion here under my head—and now you may begin."

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“All appears admirably arranged,” answered the general. “The flower of our troops, the Diadoches and Hetairoi, two thousand-five hundred men, are on their way hither, and by to-morrow will encamp north of Memphis. Five hundred will find their way into the citadel, with the priests and other visitors to congratulate you on your birthday, the other two thousand will remain concealed in the tents. The captain of your brother Philometor’s Philobasilistes is bought over, and will stand by us; but his price was high —Komanus was forced to offer him twenty talents before he would bite.”

“He shall have them,” said the king laughing, “and he shall keep them too, till it suits me to regard him as suspicious, and to reward him according to his deserts by confiscating his estates. Well! proceed.”

“In order to quench the rising in Thebes, the day before yesterday Philometor sent the best of the mercenaries with the standards of Desilaus and Arsinoe to the South. Certainly it cost not a little to bribe the ringleaders, and to stir up the discontent to an outbreak.”

“My brother will repay us for this outlay,” interrupted the king, “when we pour his treasure into our own coffers. Go on.”

“We shall have most difficulty with the priests and the Jews. The former cling to Philometor, because he is the eldest son of his father, and has given large bounties to the temples, particularly of Apollinopolis and Philae; the Jews are attached to him, because he favors them more than the Greeks, and he, and his wife—your illustrious sister—trouble themselves with their vain religious squabbles; he disputes with them about the doctrines contained in their book, and at table too prefers conversing with them to any one else.”

“I will salt the wine and meat for them that they fatten on here,” cried Euergetes vehemently, “I forbade to-day their presence at my table, for they have good eyes and wits as sharp as their noses. And they are most dangerous when they are in fear, or can reckon on any gains.

“At the same time it cannot be denied that they are honest and tenacious, and as most of them are possessed of some property they rarely make common cause with the shrieking mob—particularly here in Alexandria.

“Envy alone can reproach them for their industry and enterprise, for the activity of the Hellenes has improved upon the example set by them and their Phoenician kindred.

“They thrive best in peaceful times, and since the world runs more quietly here, under my brother and sister, than under me, they attach themselves to them, lend my brother money, and supply my sister with cut stones, sapphires and emeralds, selling fine stuffs and other woman’s gear for a scrap of written papyrus, which will soon be of no more

value than the feather which falls from the wing of that green screaming bird on the perch yonder.

“It is incomprehensible to me that so keen a people cannot perceive that there is nothing permanent but change, nothing so certain as that nothing is certain; and that they therefore should regard their god as the one only god, their own doctrine as absolutely and eternally true, and that they contemn what other peoples believe.

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“These darkened views make fools of them, but certainly good soldiers too—perhaps by reason indeed of this very exalted self-consciousness and their firm reliance on their supreme god.”

“Yes, they certainly are,” assented Hierax. “But they serve your brother more willingly, and at a lower price, than us.”

“I will show them,” cried the king, “that their taste is a perverted and obnoxious one. I require of the priests that they should instruct the people to be obedient, and to bear their privations patiently; but the Jews,” and at these words his eyes rolled with an ominous glare, “the Jews I will exterminate, when the time comes.”

“That will be good for our treasury too,” laughed Komanus.

“And for the temples in the country,” added Euergetes, “for though I seek to extirpate other foes I would rather win over the priests; and I must try to win them if Philometor’s kingdom falls into my hands, for the Egyptians require that their king should be a god; and I cannot arrive at the dignity of a real god, to whom my swarthy subjects will pray with thorough satisfaction, and without making my life a burden to me by continual revolts, unless I am raised to it by the suffrages of the priests.”

“And nevertheless,” replied Hierax, who was the only one of Euergetes’ dependents, who dared to contradict him on important questions, “nevertheless this very day a grave demand is to be preferred on your account to the high-priest of Serapis. You press for the surrender of a servant of the god, and Philometor will not neglect—”

“Will not neglect,” interrupted Euergetes, “to inform the mighty Asclepiodorus that he wants the sweet creature for me, and not for himself. Do you know that Eros has pierced my heart, and that I burn for the fair Irene, although these eyes have not yet been blessed with the sight of her?

“I see you believe me, and I am speaking the exact truth, for I vow I will possess myself of this infantine Hebe as surely as I hope to win my brother’s throne; but when I plant a tree, it is not merely to ornament my garden but to get some use of it. You will see how I will win over both the prettiest of little lady-loves and the high-priest who, to be sure, is a Greek, but still a man hard to bend. My tools are all ready outside there.

“Now, leave me, and order Eulaeus to join me here.”

“You are as a divinity,” said Komanus, bowing deeply, “and we but as frail mortals. Your proceedings often seem dark and incomprehensible to our weak intellect, but when a course, which to us seems to lead to no good issue, turns out well, we are forced to admit with astonishment that you always choose the best way, though often a tortuous one.”

For a short time the king was alone, sitting with his black brows knit, and gazing meditatively at the floor. But as soon as he heard the soft foot-fall of Eulaeus, and the louder step of his guide, he once more assumed the aspect of a careless and reckless man of the world, shouted a jolly welcome to Eulaeus, reminded him of his, the king's, boyhood, and of how often he, Eulaeus, had helped him to persuade his mother to grant him some wish she had previously refused him.

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“But now, old boy,” continued the king, “the times are changed, and with you now-a-days it is everything for Philometor and nothing for poor Euergetes, who, being the younger, is just the one who most needs your assistance.”

Eulaeus bowed with a smile which conveyed that he understood perfectly how little the king’s last words were spoken in earnest, and he said:

“I purposed always to assist the weaker of you two, and that is what I believe myself to be doing now.”

“You mean my sister?”

“Our sovereign lady Cleopatra is of the sex which is often unjustly called the weaker. Though you no doubt were pleased to speak in jest when you asked that question, I feel bound to answer you distinctly that it was not Cleopatra that I meant, but King Philometor.”

“Philometor? Then you have no faith in his strength, you regard me as stronger than he; and yet, at the banquet to-day, you offered me your services, and told me that the task had devolved upon you of demanding the surrender of the little serving-maiden of Serapis, in the king’s name, of Asclepiodorus, the high-priest. Do you call that aiding the weaker? But perhaps you were drunk when you told me that?

“No? You were more moderate than I? Then some other change of views must have taken place in you; and yet that would very much surprise me, since your principles require you to aid the weaker son of my mother—”

“You are laughing at me,” interrupted the courtier with gentle reproachfulness, and yet in a tone of entreaty. “If I took your side it was not from caprice, but simply and expressly from a desire to remain faithful to the one aim and end of my life.”

“And that is?”

“To provide for the welfare of this country in the same sense as did your illustrious mother, whose counsellor I was.”

“But you forget to mention the other—to place yourself to the best possible advantage.”

“I did not forget it, but I did not mention it, for I know how closely measured out are the moments of a king; and besides, it seems to me as self-evident that we think of our personal advantage as that when we buy a horse we also buy his shadow.”

“How subtle! But I no more blame you than I should a girl who stands before her mirror to deck herself for her lover, and who takes the same opportunity of rejoicing in her own beauty.

“However, to return to your first speech. It is for the sake of Egypt as you think—if I understand you rightly—that you now offer me the services you have hitherto devoted to my brother’s interests?”

“As you say; in these difficult times the country needs the will and the hand of a powerful leader.”

“And such a leader you think I am?”

“Aye, a giant in strength of will, body and intellect—whose desire to unite the two parts of Egypt in your sole possession cannot fail, if you strike and grasp boldly, and if—”

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“If?” repeated the king, looking at the speaker so keenly that his eyes fell, and he answered softly:

“If Rome should raise no objection.”

Euergetes shrugged his shoulders, and replied gravely:

“Rome indeed is like Fate, which always must give the final decision in everything we do. I have certainly not been behindhand in enormous sacrifices to mollify that inexorable power, and my representative, through whose hands pass far greater sums than through those of the paymasters of the troops, writes me word that they are not unfavorably disposed towards me in the Senate.”

“We have learned that from ours also. You have more friends by the Tiber than Philometor, my own king, has; but our last despatch is already several weeks old, and in the last few days things have occurred—”

“Speak!” cried Euergetes, sitting bolt upright on his cushions. “But if you are laying a trap for me, and if you are speaking now as my brother’s tool, I will punish you—aye! and if you fled to the uttermost cave of the Troglodytes I would have you followed up, and you should be torn in pieces alive, as surely as I believe myself to be the true son of my father.”

“And I should deserve the punishment,” replied Eulaeus humbly. Then he went on: “If I see clearly, great events lie before us in the next few days.”

“Yes—truly,” said Euergetes firmly.

“But just at present Philometor is better represented in Rome than he has ever been. You made acquaintance with young Publius Scipio at the king’s table, and showed little zeal in endeavoring to win his good graces.”

“He is one of the Cornelii,” interrupted the king, “a distinguished young man, and related to all the noblest blood of Rome; but he is not an ambassador; he has travelled from Athens to Alexandria, in order to learn more than he need; and he carries his head higher and speaks more freely than becomes him before kings, because the young fellows fancy it looks well to behave like their elders.”

“He is of more importance than you imagine.”

“Then I will invite him to Alexandria, and there will win him over in three days, as surely as my name is Euergetes.”

“It will then be too late, for he has to-day received, as I know for certain, plenipotentiary powers from the Senate to act in their name in case of need, until the envoy who is to be sent here again arrives.”

“And I only now learn this for the first time!” cried the king springing up from his couch, “my friends must be deaf, and blind and dull indeed, if still I have any, and my servants and emissaries too! I cannot bear this haughty ungracious fellow, but I will invite him tomorrow morning— nay I will invite him to-day, to a festive entertainment, and send him the four handsomest horses that I have brought with me from Cyrene. I will—”

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“It will all be in vain,” said Eulaeus calmly and dispassionately. “For he is master, in the fullest and widest meaning of the word, of the queen’s favor—nay—if I may permit myself to speak out freely—of Cleopatra’s more than warm liking, and he enjoys this sweetest of gifts with a thankful heart. Philometor—as he always does—lets matters go as they may, and Cleopatra and Publius—Publius and Cleopatra triumph even publicly in their love; gaze into each other’s eyes like any pair of pastoral Arcadians, exchange cups and kiss the rim on the spot where the lips of the other have touched it. Promise and grant what you will to this man, he will stand by your sister; and if you should succeed in expelling her from the throne he would boldly treat you as Popilius Laenas did your uncle Antiochus: he would draw a circle round your person, and say that if you dared to step beyond it Rome would march against you.”

Euergetes listened in silence, then, flinging away the draperies that wrapped his body, he paced up and down in stormy agitation, groaning from time to time, and roaring like a wild bull that feels itself confined with cords and bands, and that exerts all its strength in vain to rend them.

Finally he stood still in front of Eulaeus and asked him:

“What more do you know of the Roman?”

“He, who would not allow you to compare yourself to Alcibiades, is endeavoring to out-do that darling of the Athenian maidens; for he is not content with having stolen the heart of the king’s wife, he is putting out his hand to reach the fairest virgin who serves the highest of the gods. The water-bearer whom Lysias, the Roman’s friend, recommended for a Hebe is beloved by Publius, and he hopes to enjoy her favors more easily in your gay palace than he can in the gloomy temple of Serapis.”

At these words the king struck his forehead with his hand, exclaiming: “Oh! to be a king—a man who is a match for any ten! and to be obliged to submit with a patient shrug like a peasant whose grain my horsemen crush into the ground!

“He can spoil everything; mar all my plans and thwart all my desires—and I can do nothing but clench my fist, and suffocate with rage. But this fuming and groaning are just as unavailing as my raging and cursing by the death-bed of my mother, who was dead all the same and never got up again.

“If this Publius were a Greek, a Syrian, an Egyptian—nay, were he my own brother—I tell you, Eulaeus, he should not long stand in my way; but he is plenipotentiary from Rome, and Rome is Fate—Rome is Fate.”

The king flung himself back on to his cushions with a deep sigh, and as if crushed with despair, hiding his face in the soft pillows; but Eulaeus crept noiselessly up to the young giant, and whispered in his ear with solemn deliberateness:

“Rome is Fate, but even Rome can do nothing against Fate. Publius Scipio must die because he is ruining your mother’s daughter, and stands in the way of your saving Egypt. The Senate would take a terrible revenge if he were murdered, but what can they do if wild beasts fall on their plenipotentiary, and tear him to pieces?”

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“Grand! splendid!” cried Euergetes, springing again to his feet, and opening his large eyes with radiant surprise and delight, as if heaven itself had opened before them, revealing the sublime host of the gods feasting at golden tables.

“You are a great man, Eulaeus, and I shall know how to reward you; but do you know of such wild beasts as we require, and do they know how to conduct themselves so that no one shall dare to harbor even the shadow of a suspicion that the wounds torn by their teeth and claws were inflicted by daggers, pikes or spearheads?”

“Be perfectly easy,” replied Eulaeus. “These beasts of prey have already had work to do here in Memphis, and are in the service of the king—”

“Aha! of my gentle brother!” laughed Euergetes. “And he boasts of never having killed any one excepting in battle—and now—”

“But Philometor has a wife,” interposed Eulaeus; and Euergetes went on.

“Aye, woman, woman! what is there that a man may not learn from a woman?”

Then he added in a lower tone: “When can your wild beasts do their work?”

“The sun has long since risen; before it sets I will have made my preparations, and by about midnight, I should think, the deed may be done. We will promise the Roman a secret meeting, lure him out to the temple of Serapis, and on his way home through the desert—”

“Aye, then,—” cried the king, making a thrust at his own breast as though his hand held a dagger, and he added in warning: “But your beasts must be as powerful as lions, and as cautious-as cautious, as cats. If you want gold apply to Komanus, or, better still, take this purse. Is it enough? Still I must ask you; have you any personal ground of hatred against the Roman?”

“Yes,” answered Eulaeus decisively. “He guesses that I know all about him and his doings, and he has attacked me with false accusations which may bring me into peril this very day. If you should hear that the queen has decided on throwing me into prison, take immediate steps for my liberation.”

“No one shall touch a hair of your head; depend upon that. I see that it is to your interest to play my game, and I am heartily glad of it, for a man works with all his might for no one but himself. And now for the last thing: When will you fetch my little Hebe?”

“In an hour’s time I am going to Asclepiodorus; but we must not demand the girl till to-morrow, for today she must remain in the temple as a decoy-bird for Publius Scipio.”

“I will take patience; still I have yet another charge to give you. Represent the matter to the high-priest in such a way that he shall think my brother wishes to gratify one of my fancies by demanding—absolutely demanding—the water-bearer on my behalf. Provoke the man as far as is possible without exciting suspicion, and if I know him rightly, he will stand upon his rights, and refuse you persistently. Then, after you, will come Komanus from me with greetings and gifts and promises.

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“To-morrow, when we have done what must be done to the Roman, you shall fetch the girl in my brother’s name either by cunning or by force; and the day after, if the gods graciously lend me their aid in uniting the two realms of Egypt under my own hand, I will explain to Asclepiodorus that I have punished Philometor for his sacrilege against his temple, and have deposed him from the throne. Serapis shall see which of us is his friend.

“If all goes well, as I mean that it shall, I will appoint you Epitropon of the re-united kingdom—that I swear to you by the souls of my deceased ancestors. I will speak with you to-day at any hour you may demand it.”

Eulaeus departed with a step as light as if his interview with the king had restored him to youth.

When Hierax, Komanus, and the other officers returned to the room, Euergetes gave orders that his four finest horses from Cyrene should be led before noonday to his friend Publius Cornelius Scipio, in token of his affection and respect. Then he suffered himself to be dressed, and went to Aristarchus with whom he sat down to work at his studies.

CHAPTER XIV.

The temple of Serapis lay in restful silence, enveloped in darkness, which so far hid its four wings from sight as to give it the aspect of a single rock-like mass wrapped in purple mist.

Outside the temple precincts too all had been still; but just now a clatter of hoofs and rumble of wheels was audible through the silence, otherwise so profound that it seemed increased by every sound. Before the vehicle which occasioned this disturbance had reached the temple, it stopped, just outside the sacred acacia-grove, for the neighing of a horse was now audible in that direction.

It was one of the king’s horses that neighed; Lysias, the Greek, tied him up to a tree by the road at the edge of the grove, flung his mantle over the loins of the smoking beast; and feeling his way from tree to tree soon found himself by the Well of the Sun where he sat down on the margin.

Presently from the east came a keen, cold breeze, the harbinger of sunrise; the gray gloaming began by degrees to pierce and part the tops of the tall trees, which, in the darkness, had seemed a compact black roof. The crowing of cocks rang out from the court-yard of the temple, and, as the Corinthian rose with a shiver to warm himself by a rapid walk backwards and forwards, he heard a door creak near the outer wall of the temple, of which the outline now grew sharper and clearer every instant in the growing light.

He now gazed with eager observation down the path which, as the day approached, stood out with increasing clearness from the surrounding shades, and his heart began to beat faster as he perceived a figure approaching the well, with rapid steps. It was a human form that advanced towards him—only one—no second figure accompanied it; but it was not a man—no, a woman in a long robe. Still, she for whom he waited was surely smaller than the woman, who now came near to him. Was it the elder and not the younger sister, whom alone he was anxious to speak with, who came to the well this morning?

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He could now distinguish her light foot-fall—now she was divided from him by a young acacia-shrub which hid her from his gaze-now she set down two water-jars on the ground—now she briskly lifted the bucket and filled the vessel she held in her left hand —now she looked towards the eastern horizon, where the dim light of dawn grew broader and brighter, and Lysias thought he recognized Irene—and now—Praised be the gods! he was sure; before him stood the younger and not the elder sister; the very maiden whom he sought.

Still half concealed by the acacia-shrub, and in a soft voice so as not to alarm her, he called Irene's name, and the poor child's blood froze with terror, for never before had she been startled by a man here, and at this hour. She stood as if rooted to the spot, and, trembling with fright, she pressed the cold, wet, golden jar, sacred to the god, closely to her bosom.

Lysias repeated her name, a little louder than before, and went on, but in a subdued voice:

"Do not be frightened, Irene; I am Lysias, the Corinthian—your friend, whose pomegranate-blossom you wore yesterday, and who spoke to you after the procession. Let me bid you good morning!"

At these words the girl let her hand fall by her side, still holding the jar, and pressing her right hand to her heart, she exclaimed, drawing a deep breath:

"How dreadfully you frightened me! I thought some wandering soul was calling me that had not yet returned to the nether world, for it is not till the sun rises that spirits are scared away."

"But it cannot scare men of flesh and blood whose purpose is good. I, you may believe me, would willingly stay with you, till Helios departs again, if you would permit me."

"I can neither permit nor forbid you anything," answered Irene. "But, how came you here at this hour?"

"In a chariot," replied Lysias smiling.

"That is nonsense—I want to know what you came to the Well of the Sun for at such an hour."

"I What but for you yourself? You told me yesterday that you were glad to sleep, and so am I; still, to see you once more, I have been only to glad to shorten my night's rest considerably."

"But, how did you know?"

“You yourself told me yesterday at what time you were allowed to leave the temple.”

“Did I tell you? Great Serapis! how light it is already. I shall be punished if the water-jar is not standing on the altar by sunrise, and there is Klea’s too to be filled.”

“I will fill it for you directly—there—that is done; and now I will carry them both for you to the end of the grove, if you will promise me to return soon, for I have many things to ask you.”

“Go on—only go on,” said the girl; “I know very little; but ask away, though you will not find much to be made of any answers that I can give.”

“Oh! yes, indeed, I shall—for instance, if I asked you to tell me all about your parents. My friend Publius, whom you know, and I also have heard how cruelly and unjustly they were punished, and we would gladly do much to procure their release.”

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“I will come—I will be sure to come,” cried Irene loudly and eagerly, “and shall I bring Klea with me? She was called up in the middle of the night by the gatekeeper, whose child is very ill. My sister is very fond of it, and Philo will only take his medicine from her. The little one had gone to sleep in her lap, and his mother came and begged me to fetch the water for us both. Now give me the jars, for none but we may enter the temple.”

“There they are. Do not disturb your sister on my account in her care of the poor little boy, for I might indeed have one or two things to say to you which she need not hear, and which might give you pleasure. Now, I am going back to the well, so farewell! But do not let me have to wait very long for you.” He spoke in a tender tone of entreaty, and the girl answered low and rapidly as she hurried away from him:

“I will come when the sun is up.”

The Corinthian looked after her till she had vanished within the temple, and his heart was stirred—stirred as it had not been for many years. He could not help recalling the time when he would teaze his younger sister, then still quite a child, putting her to the test by asking her, with a perfectly grave face, to give him her cake or her apple which he did not really want at all. The little one had almost always put the thing he asked for to his mouth with her tiny hands, and then he had often felt exactly as he felt now.

Irene too was still but a child, and no less guileless than his darling in his own home; and just as his sister had trusted him—offering him the best she had to give—so this simple child trusted him; him, the profligate Lysias, before whom all the modest women of Corinth cast down their eyes, while fathers warned their growing-up sons against him; trusted him with her virgin self—nay, as he thought, her sacred person.

“I will do thee no harm, sweet child!” he murmured to himself, as he presently turned on his heel to return to the well. He went forward quickly at first, but after a few steps he paused before the marvellous and glorious picture that met his gaze. Was Memphis in flames? Had fire fallen to burn up the shroud of mist which had veiled his way to the temple?

The trunks of the acacia-trees stood up like the blackened pillars of a burning city, and behind them the glow of a conflagration blazed high up to the heavens. Beams of violet and gold slipped and sparkled between the boughs, and danced among the thorny twigs, the white racemes of flowers, and the tufts of leaves with their feathery leaflets; the clouds above were fired with tints more pure and tender than those of the roses with which Cleopatra had decked herself for the banquet.

Not like this did the sun rise in his own country! Or, was it perhaps only that in Corinth or in Athens at break of day, as he staggered home drunk from some feast, he had looked more at the earth than at the heavens?

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His horses began now to neigh loudly as if to greet the steeds of the coming Sun-god. Lysias hurried to them through the grove, patted their shining necks with soothing words, and stood looking down at the vast city at his feet, over which hung a film of violet mist—at the solemn Pyramids, over which the morning glow flung a gay robe of rose-color—on the huge temple of Ptah, with the great colossi in front of its pylons— on the Nile, mirroring the glory of the sky, and on the limestone hills behind the villages of Babylon and Troy, about which he had, only yesterday, heard a Jew at the king's table relating a legend current among his countrymen to the effect that these hills had been obliged to give up all their verdure to grace the mounts of the sacred city Hierosolyma.

The rocky cliffs of this barren range glowed at this moment like the fire in the heart of the great ruby which had clasped the festal robe of King Euergetes across his bull-neck, as it reflected the shimmer of the tapers: and Lysias saw the day-star rising behind the range with blinding radiance, shooting forth rays like myriads of golden arrows, to rout and destroy his foe, the darkness of night.

Eos, Helios, Phoebus Apollo—these had long been to him no more than names, with which he associated certain phenomena, certain processes and ideas; for he when he was not luxuriating in the bath, amusing himself in the gymnasium, at cock or quail-fights, in the theatre or at Dionysiac processions—was wont to exercise his wits in the schools of the philosophers, so as to be able to shine in bandying words at entertainments; but to-day, and face to face with this sunrise, he believed as in the days of his childhood—he saw in his mind's eye the god riding in his golden chariot, and curbing his foaming steeds, his shining train floating lightly round him, bearing torches or scattering flowers—he threw up his arms with an impulse of devotion, praying aloud:

"To-day I am happy and light of heart. To thy presence do I owe this, O! Phoebus Apollo, for thou art light itself. Oh! let thy favors continue—"

But he here broke off in his invocation, and dropped his arms, for he heard approaching footsteps. Smiling at his childish weakness—for such he deemed it that he should have prayed—and yet content from his pious impulse, he turned his back on the sun, now quite risen, and stood face to face with Irene who called out to him:

"I was beginning to think that you had got out of patience and had gone away, when I found you no longer by the well. That distressed me—but you were only watching Helios rise. I see it every day, and yet it always grieves me to see it as red as it was to-day, for our Egyptian nurse used to tell me that when the east was very red in the morning it was because the Sun-god had slain his enemies, and it was their blood that colored the heavens, and the clouds and the hills."

"But you are a Greek," said Lysias, "and you must know that it is Eos that causes these tints when she touches the horizon with her rosy fingers before Helios appears. Now to-day you are, to me, the rosy dawn presaging a fine day."

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“Such a ruddy glow as this,” said Irene, “forebodes great heat, storms, and perhaps heavy rain, so the gatekeeper says; and he is always with the astrologers who observe the stars and the signs in the heavens from the towers near the temple-gates. He is poor little Philo’s father. I wanted to bring Klea with me, for she knows more about our parents than I do; but he begged me not to call her away, for the child’s throat is almost closed up, and if it cries much the physician says it will choke, and yet it is never quiet but when it is lying in Klea’s arms. She is so good—and she never thinks of herself; she has been ever since midnight till now rocking that heavy child on her lap.”

“We will talk with her presently,” said the Corinthian. “But to-day it was for your sake that I came; you have such merry eyes, and your little mouth looks as if it were made for laughing, and not to sing lamentations. How can you bear being always in that shut up dungeon with all those solemn men in their black and white robes?”

There are some very good and kind ones among them. I am most fond of old Krates, he looks gloomy enough at every one else; but with me only he jokes and talks, and he often shows me such pretty and elegantly wrought things.”

“Ah! I told you just now you are like the rosy dawn before whom all darkness must vanish.”

“If only you could know how thoughtless I can be, and how often I give trouble to Klea, who never scolds me for it, you would be far from comparing me with a goddess. Little old Krates, too, often compares me to all sorts of pretty things, but that always sounds so comical that I cannot help laughing. I had much rather listen to you when you flatter me.”

“Because I am young and youth suits with youth. Your sister is older, and so much graver than you are. Have you never had a companion of your own age whom you could play with, and to whom you could tell everything?”

“Oh! yes when I was still very young; but since my parents fell into trouble, and we have lived here in the temple, I have always been alone with Klea. What do you want to know about my father?”

“That I will ask you by-and-by. Now only tell me, have you never played at hide and seek with other girls? May you never look on at the merry doings in the streets at the Dionysiac festivals? Have you ever ridden in a chariot?”

“I dare say I have, long ago—but I have forgotten it. How should I have any chance of such things here in the temple? Klea says it is no good even to think of them. She tells me a great deal about our parents—how my mother took care of us, and what my father used to say. Has anything happened that may turn out favorably for him? Is it possible

that the king should have learned the truth? Make haste and ask your questions at once, for I have already been too long out here."

The impatient steeds neighed again as she spoke, and Lysias, to whom this chat with Irene was perfectly enchanting, but who nevertheless had not for a moment lost sight of his object, hastily pointed to the spot where his horses were standing, and said:

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“Did you hear the neighing of those mettlesome horses? They brought me hither, and I can guide them well; nay, at the last Isthmian games I won the crown with my own quadriga. You said you had never ridden standing in a chariot. How would you like to try for once how it feels? I will drive you with pleasure up and down behind the grove for a little while.”

Irene heard this proposal with sparkling eyes and cried, as she clapped her hands:

“May I ride in a chariot with spirited horses, like the queen? Oh! impossible! Where are your horses standing?”

In this instant she had forgotten Klea, the duty which called her back to the temple, even her parents, and she followed the Corinthian with winged steps, sprang into the two-wheeled chariot, and clung fast to the breastwork, as Lysias took his place by her side, seized the reins, and with a strong and practised hand curbed the mettle of his spirited steeds.

She stood perfectly guileless and undoubting by his side, and wholly at his mercy as the chariot rattled off; but, unknown to herself, beneficent powers were shielding her with buckler and armor—her childlike innocence, and that memory of her parents which her tempter himself had revived in her mind, and which soon came back in vivid strength.

Breathing deep with excitement, and filled with such rapture as a bird may feel when it first soars from its narrow nest high up into the ether she cried out again and again:

“Oh, this is delightful! this is splendid!” and then:

“How we rush through the air as if we were swallows! Faster, Lysias, faster! No, no—-that is too fast; wait a little that I may not fall! Oh, I am not frightened; it is too delightful to cut through the air just as a Nile boat cuts through the stream in a storm, and to feel it on my face and neck.”

Lysias was very close to her; when, at her desire, he urged his horses to their utmost pace, and saw her sway, he involuntarily put out his hand to hold her by the girdle; but Irene avoided his grasp, pressing close against the side of the chariot next her, and every time he touched her she drew her arm close up to her body, shrinking together like the fragile leaf of a sensitive plant when it is touched by some foreign object.

She now begged the Corinthian to allow her to hold the reins for a little while, and he immediately acceded to her request, giving them into her hand, though, stepping behind her, he carefully kept the ends of them in his own. He could now see her shining hair, the graceful oval of her head, and her white throat eagerly bent forward; an indescribable longing came over him to press a kiss on her head; but he forbore, for he remembered his friend’s words that he would fulfil the part of a guardian to these girls.

He too would be a protector to her, aye and more than that, he would care for her as a father might. Still, as often as the chariot jolted over a stone,

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and he touched her to support her, the suppressed wish revived, and once when her hair was blown quite close to his lips he did indeed kiss it—but only as a friend or a brother might. Still, she must have felt the breath from his lips, for she turned round hastily, and gave him back the reins; then, pressing her hand to her brow, she said in a quite altered voice—not unmixed with a faint tone of regret:

“This is not right—please now to turn the horses round.”

Lysias, instead of obeying her, pulled at the reins to urge the horses to a swifter pace, and before he could find a suitable answer, she had glanced up at the sun, and pointing to the east she exclaimed:

“How late it is already! what shall I say if I have been looked for, and they ask me where I have been so long? Why don’t you turn round—nor ask me anything about my parents?”

The last words broke from her with vehemence, and as Lysias did not immediately reply nor make any attempt to check the pace of the horses, she herself seized the reins exclaiming:

“Will you turn round or no?”

“No!” said the Greek with decision. “But—”

“And this is what you intended!” shrieked the girl, beside herself. “You meant to carry me off by stratagem—but wait, only wait—”

And before Lysias could prevent her she had turned round, and was preparing to spring from the chariot as it rushed onwards; but her companion was quicker than she; he clutched first at her robe and then her girdle, put his arm round her waist, and in spite of her resistance pulled her back into the chariot.

Trembling, stamping her little feet and with tears in her eyes, she strove to free her girdle from his grasp; he, now bringing his horses to a stand-still, said kindly but earnestly:

“What I have done is the best that could happen to you, and I will even turn the horses back again if you command it, but not till you have heard me; for when I got you into the chariot by stratagem it was because I was afraid that you would refuse to accompany me, and yet I knew that every delay would expose you to the most hideous peril. I did not indeed take a base advantage of your father’s name, for my friend Publius Scipio, who is very influential, intends to do everything in his power to procure his freedom and

to reunite you to him. But, Irene, that could never have happened if I had left you where you have hitherto lived."

During this discourse the girl had looked at Lysias in bewilderment, and she interrupted him with the exclamation:

"But I have never done any one an injury! Who can gain any benefit by persecuting a poor creature like me:

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“Your father was the most righteous of men,” replied Lysias, “and nevertheless he was carried off into torments like a criminal. It is not only the unrighteous and the wicked that are persecuted. Have you ever heard of King Euergetes, who, at his birth, was named the ‘well-doer,’ and who has earned that of the ‘evil doer’ by his crimes? He has heard that you are fair, and he is about to demand of the high-priest that he should surrender you to him. If Asclepiodorus agrees—and what can he do against the might of a king—you will be made the companion of flute-playing girls and painted women, who riot with drunken men at his wild carousals and orgies, and if your parents found you thus, better would it be for them—”

“Is it true, all you are telling me?” asked Irene with flaming cheeks.

“Yes,” answered Lysias firmly. “Listen Irene—I have a father and a dear mother and a sister, who is like you, and I swear to you by their heads— by those whose names never passed my lips in the presence of any other woman I ever sued to—that I am speaking the simple truth; that I seek nothing but only to save you; that if you desire it, as soon as I have hidden you I will never see you again, terribly hard as that would be to me—for I love you so dearly, so deeply—poor sweet little Irene—as you can never imagine.”

Lysias took the girl’s hand, but she withdrew it hastily, and raising her eyes, full of tears, to meet his she said clearly and firmly:

“I believe you, for no man could speak like that and betray another. But how do you know all this? Where are you taking me? Will Klea follow me?”

“At first you shall be concealed with the family of a worthy sculptor. We will let Klea know this very day of all that has happened to you, and when we have obtained the release of your parents then—but—Help us, protecting Zeus! Do you see the chariot yonder? I believe those are the white horses of the Eunuch Eulaeus, and if he were to see us here, all would be lost! Hold tight, we must go as fast as in a chariot race. There, now the hill hides us, and down there, by the little temple of Isis, the wife of your future host is already waiting for you; she is no doubt sitting in the closed chariot near the palm-trees.

“Yes, certainly, certainly, Klea shall hear all, so that she may not be uneasy about you! I must say farewell to you directly and then, afterwards, sweet Irene, will you sometimes think of the unhappy Lysias; or did Aurora, who greeted him this morning, so bright and full of happy promise, usher in a day not of joy but of sorrow and regret?” The Greek drew in rein as he spoke, bringing his horses to a sober pace, and looked tenderly in Irene’s eyes. She returned his gaze with heart-felt emotion, but her gunny glance was dimmed with tears.

“Say something,” entreated the Greek. “Will you not forget me? And may I soon visit you in your new retreat?”

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Irene would so gladly have said yes—and yes again, a thousand times yes; and yet she, who was so easily carried away by every little emotion of her heart, in this supreme moment found strength enough to snatch her hand from that of the Greek, who had again taken it, and to answer firmly:

“I will remember you for ever and ever, but you must not come to see me till I am once more united to my Klea.”

“But Irene, consider, if now—” cried Lysias much agitated.

“You swore to me by the heads of your nearest kin to obey my wishes,” interrupted the girl. “Certainly I trust you, and all the more readily because you are so good to me, but I shall not do so any more if you do not keep your word. Look, here comes a lady to meet us who looks like a friend. She is already waving her hand to me. Yes, I will go with her gladly, and yet I am so anxious—so troubled, I cannot tell you—but I am so thankful too! Think of me sometimes, Lysias, and of our journey here, and of our talk, and of my parents: I entreat you, do for them all you possibly can. I wish I could help crying—but I cannot!”

CHAPTER XV.

Lysias eyes had not deceived him. The chariot with white horses which he had evaded during his flight with Irene belonged to Eulaeus. The morning being cool—and also because Cleopatra’s lady-in-waiting was with him—he had come out in a closed chariot, in which he sat on soft cushions side by side with the Macedonian lady, endeavoring to win her good graces by a conversation, witty enough in its way.

“On the way there,” thought he, “I will make her quite favorable to me, and on the way back I will talk to her of my own affairs.”

The drive passed quickly and pleasantly for both, and they neither of them paid any heed to the sound of the hoofs of the horses that were bearing away Irene.

Eulaeus dismounted behind the acacia-grove, and expressed a hope that Zoe would not find the time very long while he was engaged with the high-priest; perhaps indeed, he remarked, she might even make some use of the time by making advances to the representative of Hebe.

But Irene had been long since warmly welcomed in the house of Apollodorus, the sculptor, by the time they once more found themselves together in the chariot; Eulaeus feigning, and Zoe in reality feeling, extreme dissatisfaction at all that had taken place in the temple. The high-priest had rejected Philometor’s demand that he should send the water-bearer to the palace on King Euergetes’ birthday, with a decisiveness which

Eulaeus would never have given him credit for, for he had on former occasions shown a disposition to measures of compromise; while Zoe had not even seen the waterbearer.

“I fancy,” said the queen’s shrewd friend, “that I followed you somewhat too late, and that when I entered the temple about half an hour after you—having been detained first by Imhotep, the old physician, and then by an assistant of Apollodorus, the sculptor, with some new busts of the philosophers—the high-priest had already given orders that the girl should be kept concealed; for when I asked to see her, I was conducted first to her miserable room, which seemed more fit for peasants or goats than for a Hebe, even for a sham one—but I found it perfectly deserted.

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“Then I was shown into the temple of Serapis, where a priest was instructing some girls in singing, and then sent hither and thither, till at last, finding no trace whatever of the famous Irene, I came to the dwelling-house of the gate-keeper of the temple.

“An ungainly woman opened the door, and said that Irene had been gone from thence for some long time, but that her elder sister was there, so I desired she might be fetched to speak with me. And what, if you please, was the answer I received? The goddess Klea—I call her so as being sister to a Hebe—had to nurse a sick child, and if I wanted to see her I might go in and find her.

“The tone of the message quite conveyed that the distance from her down to me was as great as in fact it is the other way. However, I thought it worth the trouble to see this supercilious water-bearing girl, and I went into a low room—it makes me sick now to remember how it smelt of poverty—and there she sat with an idiotic child, dying on her lap. Everything that surrounded me was so revolting and dismal that it will haunt my dreams with terror for weeks to come and spoil all my cheerful hours.

“I did not remain long with these wretched creatures, but I must confess that if Irene is as like to Hebe as her elder sister is to Hera, Euergetes has good grounds for being angry if Asclepiodorus keeps the girl from him.

“Many a queen—and not least the one whom you and I know so intimately-would willingly give half of her kingdom to possess such a figure and such a mien as this serving-girl. And then her eyes, as she looked at me when she rose with that little gasping corpse in her arms, and asked me what I wanted with her sister!

“There was an impressive and lurid glow in those solemn eyes, which looked as if they had been taken out of some Medusa’s head to be set in her beautiful face. And there was a sinister threat in them too which seemed to say: ’Require nothing of her that I do not approve of, or you will be turned into stone on the spot.’ She did not answer twenty words to my questions, and when I once more tasted the fresh air outside, which never seemed to me so pleasant as by contrast with that horrible hole, I had learnt no more than that no one knew—or chose to know—in what corner the fair Irene was hidden, and that I should do well to make no further enquiries.

“And now, what will Philometor do? What will you advise him to do?”

“What cannot be got at by soft words may sometimes be obtained by a sufficiently large present,” replied Eulaeus. “You know very well that of all words none is less familiar to these gentry than the little word ‘enough’; but who indeed is really ready to say it?

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“You speak of the haughtiness and the stern repellent demeanor of our Hebe’s sister. I have seen her too, and I think that her image might be set up in the Stoa as a happy impersonation of the severest virtue: and yet children generally resemble their parents, and her father was the veriest peculator and the most cunning rascal that ever came in my way, and was sent off to the gold-mines for very sufficient reasons. And for the sake of the daughter of a convicted criminal you have been driven through the dust and the scorching heat, and have had to submit to her scorn and contemptuous airs, while I am threatened with grave peril on her account, for you know that Cleopatra’s latest whim is to do honor to the Roman, Publius Scipio; he, on the other hand, is running after our Hebe, and, having promised her that he will obtain an unqualified pardon for her father, he will do his utmost to throw the odium of his robbery upon me.

“The queen is to give him audience this very day, and you cannot know how many enemies a man makes who, like me, has for many years been one of the leading men of a great state. The king acknowledges, and with gratitude, all that I have done for him and for his mother; but if, at the moment when Publius Scipio accuses me, he is more in favor with her than ever, I am a lost man.

“You are always with the queen; do you tell her who these girls are, and what motives the Roman has for loading me with their father’s crimes; and some opportunity must offer for doing you and your belongings some friendly office or another.”

“What a shameless crew!” exclaimed Zoe. “Depend upon it I will not be silent, for I always do what is just. I cannot bear seeing others suffering an injustice, and least of all that a man of your merit and distinction should be wounded in his honor, because a haughty foreigner takes a fancy to a pretty little face and a conceited doll of a girl.”

Zoe was in the right when she found the air stifling in the gate-keeper’s house, for poor Irene, unaccustomed to such an atmosphere, could no more endure it than the pretentious maid of honor. It cost even Klea an effort to remain in the wretched room, which served as the dwelling-place of the whole family; where the cooking was carried on at a smoky hearth, while, at night, it also sheltered a goat and a few fowls; but she had endured even severer trials than this for the sake of what she deemed right, and she was so fond of little Philo—her anxious care in arousing by degrees his slumbering intelligence had brought her so much soothing satisfaction, and the child’s innocent gratitude had been so tender a reward—that she wholly forgot the repulsive surroundings as soon as she felt that her presence and care were indispensable to the suffering little one.

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Imhotep, the most famous of the priest-physicians of the temple of Asclepius—a man who was as learned in Greek as in Egyptian medical lore, and who had been known by the name of “the modern Herophilus” since King Philometor had summoned him from Alexandria to Memphis—had long since been watchful of the gradual development of the dormant intelligence of the gate-keeper’s child, whom he saw every day in his visits to the temple. Now, not long after Zoe had quitted the house, he came in to see the sick child for the third time. Klea was still holding the boy on her lap when he entered. On a wooden stool in front of her stood a brazier of charcoal, and on it a small copper kettle the physician had brought with him; to this a long tube was attached. The tube was in two parts, joined together by a leather joint, also tubular, in such a way that the upper portion could be turned in any direction. Klea from time to time applied it to the breast of the child, and, in obedience to Imhotep’s instructions, made the little one inhale the steam that poured out of it.

“Has it had the soothing effect it ought to have?” asked the physician.

“Yes, indeed, I think so,” replied Klea, “There is not so much noise in the chest when the poor little fellow draws his breath.”

The old man put his ear to the child’s mouth, laid his hand on his brow, and said:

“If the fever abates I hope for the best. This inhaling of steam is an excellent remedy for these severe catarrhs, and a venerable one besides; for in the oldest writings of Hermes we find it prescribed as an application in such cases. But now he has had enough of it. “Ah! this steam—this steam! Do you know that it is stronger than horses or oxen, or the united strength of a whole army of giants? That diligent enquirer Hero of Alexandria discovered this lately.

“But our little invalid has had enough of it, we must not overheat him. Now, take a linen cloth—that one will do though it is not very fine. Fold it together, wet it nicely with cold water—there is some in that miserable potsherd there—and now I will show you how to lay it on the child’s throat.

“You need not assure me that you understand me, Klea, for you have hands —neat hands—and patience without end! Sixty-five years have I lived, and have always had good health, but I could almost wish to be ill for once, in order to be nursed by you. That poor child is well off better than many a king’s child when it is sick; for him hireling nurses, no doubt, fetch and do all that is necessary, but one thing they cannot give, for they have it not; I mean the loving and indefatigable patience by which you have worked a miracle on this child’s mind, and are now working another on his body. Aye, aye, my girl; it is to you and not me that this woman will owe her child if it is preserved to her. Do you hear me, woman? and tell your husband so too; and if you do not reverence Klea as a goddess, and do not lay your hands beneath her feet, may you be—no—I will wish you no ill, for you have not too much of the good things of life as it is!”

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As he spoke the gate-keeper's wife came timidly up to the physician and the sick child, pushed her rough and tangled hair off her forehead a little, crossed her lean arms at full length behind her back, and, looking down with out-stretched neck at the boy, stared in dumb amazement at the wet cloths. Then she timidly enquired:

"Are the evil spirits driven out of the child?"

"Certainly," replied the physician. "Klea there has exorcised them, and I have helped her; now you know."

"Then I may go out for a little while? I have to sweep the pavement of the forecourt."

Klea nodded assent, and when the woman had disappeared the physician said:

"How many evil demons we have to deal with, alas! and how few good ones. Men are far more ready and willing to believe in mischievous spirits than in kind or helpful ones; for when things go ill with them—and it is generally their own fault when they do—it comforts them and flatters their vanity if only they can throw the blame on the shoulders of evil spirits; but when they are well to do, when fortune smiles on them of course, they like to ascribe it to themselves, to their own cleverness or their superior insight, and they laugh at those who admonish them of the gratitude they owe to the protecting and aiding demons. I, for my part, think more of the good than of the evil spirits, and you, my child, without doubt are one of the very best.

"You must change the compress every quarter of an hour, and between whiles go out into the open air, and let the fresh breezes fan your bosom—your cheeks look pale. At mid-day go to your own little room, and try to sleep. Nothing ought to be overdone, so you are to obey me."

Klea replied with a friendly and filial nod, and Imhotep stroked down her hair; then he left; she remained alone in the stuffy hot room, which grew hotter every minute, while she changed the wet cloths for the sick child, and watched with delight the diminishing hoarseness and difficulty of his breathing. From time to time she was overcome by a slight drowsiness, and closed her eyes for a few minutes, but only for a short while; and this half-awake and half-asleep condition, chequered by fleeting dreams, and broken only by an easy and pleasing duty, this relaxation of the tension of mind and body, had a certain charm of which, through it all, she remained perfectly conscious. Here she was in her right place; the physicians kind words had done her good, and her anxiety for the little life she loved was now succeeded by a well-founded hope of its preservation.

During the night she had already come to a definite resolution, to explain to the high-priest that she could not undertake the office of the twin-sisters, who wept by the bier of Osiris, and that she would rather endeavor to earn bread by the labor of her hands for herself and Irene—for that Irene should do any real work never entered her mind— at

Alexandria, where even the blind and the maimed could find occupation. Even this prospect, which only yesterday had terrified her, began now to smile upon her, for it opened to her the possibility of proving independently the strong energy which she felt in herself.

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Now and then the figure of the Roman rose before her mind's eye, and every time that this occurred she colored to her very forehead. But to-day she thought of this disturber of her peace differently from yesterday; for yesterday she had felt herself overwhelmed by him with shame, while to-day it appeared to her as though she had triumphed over him at the procession, since she had steadily avoided his glance, and when he had dared to approach her she had resolutely turned her back upon him. This was well, for how could the proud foreigner expose himself again to such humiliation.

"Away, away—for ever away!" she murmured to herself, and her eyes and brow, which had been lighted up by a transient smile, once more assumed the expression of repellent sternness which, the day before, had so startled and angered the Roman. Soon however the severity of her features relaxed, as she saw in fancy the young man's beseeching look, and remembered the praise given him by the recluse, and as—in the middle of this train of thought—her eyes closed again, slumber once more falling upon her spirit for a few minutes, she saw in her dream Publius himself, who approached her with a firm step, took her in his arms like a child, held her wrists to stop her struggling hands, gathered her up with rough force, and then flung her into a canoe lying at anchor by the bank of the Nile.

She fought with all her might against this attack and seizure, screamed aloud with fury, and woke at the sound of her own voice. Then she got up, dried her eyes that were wet with tears, and, after laying a freshly wetted cloth on the child's throat, she went out of doors in obedience to the physician's advice.

The sun was already at the meridian, and its direct rays were fiercely reflected from the slabs of yellow sandstone that paved the forecourt. On one side only of the wide, unroofed space, one of the colonnades that surrounded it threw a narrow shade, hardly a span wide; and she would not go there, for under it stood several beds on which lay pilgrims who, here in the very dwelling of the divinity, hoped to be visited with dreams which might give them an insight into futurity.

Klea's head was uncovered, and, fearing the heat of noon, she was about to return into the door-keeper's house, when she saw a young white-robed scribe, employed in the special service of Asclepiodorus, who came across the court beckoning eagerly to her. She went towards him, but before he had reached her he shouted out an enquiry whether her sister Irene was in the gate-keeper's lodge; the high-priest desired to speak with her, and she was nowhere to be found. Klea told him that a grand lady from the queen's court had already enquired for her, and that the last time she had seen her had been before daybreak, when she was going to fill the jars for the altar of the god at the Well of the Sun.

"The water for the first libation," answered the priest, "was placed on the altar at the right time, but Doris and her sister had to fetch it for the second and third. Asclepiodorus is angry—not with you, for he knows from Imhotep that you are taking

care of a sick child—but with Irene. Try and think where she can be. Something serious must have occurred that the high-priest wishes to communicate to her."

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Klea was startled, for she remembered Irene's tears the evening before, and her cry of longing for happiness and freedom. Could it be that the thoughtless child had yielded to this longing, and escaped without her knowledge, though only for a few hours, to see the city and the gay life there?

She collected herself so as not to betray her anxiety to the messenger, and said with downcast eyes:

"I will go and look for her."

She hurried back into the house, once more looked to the sick child, called his mother and showed her how to prepare the compresses, urging her to follow Imhotep's directions carefully and exactly till she should return; she pressed one loving kiss on little Philo's forehead—feeling as she did so that he was less hot than he had been in the morning—and then she left, going first to her own dwelling.

There everything stood or lay exactly as she had left it during the night, only the golden jars were wanting. This increased Klea's alarm, but the thought that Irene should have taken the precious vessels with her, in order to sell them and to live on the proceeds, never once entered her mind, for her sister, she knew, though heedless and easily persuaded, was incapable of any base action.

Where was she to seek the lost girl? Serapion, the recluse, to whom she first addressed herself, knew nothing of her.

On the altar of Serapis, whither she next went, she found both the vessels, and carried them back to her room.

Perhaps Irene had gone to see old Krates, and while watching his work and chattering to him, had forgotten the flight of time—but no, the priest-smith, whom she sought in his workshop, knew nothing of the vanished maiden. He would willingly have helped Klea to seek for his favorite, but the new lock for the tombs of the Apis had to be finished by mid-day, and his swollen feet were painful.

Klea stood outside the old man's door sunk in thought, and it occurred to her that Irene had often, in her idle hours, climbed up into the dove-cot belonging to the temple, to look out from thence over the distant landscape, to visit the sitting birds, to stuff food into the gaping beaks of the young ones, or to look up at the cloud of soaring doves. The pigeon-house, built up of clay pots and Nile-mud, stood on the top of the storehouse, which lay adjoining the southern boundary wall of the temple.

She hastened across the sunny courts and slightly shaded alleys, and mounted to the flat roof of the storehouse, but she found there neither the old dove-keeper nor his two

grandsons who helped him in his work, for all three were in the anteroom to the kitchen, taking their dinner with the temple-servants.

Klea shouted her sister's name; once, twice, ten times—but no one answered. It was just as if the fierce heat of the sun burnt up the sound as it left her lips. She looked into the first pigeon-house, the second, the third, all the way to the last. The numberless little clay tenements of the brisk little birds threw out a glow like a heated oven; but this did not hinder her from hunting through every nook and corner. Her cheeks were burning, drops of perspiration stood on her brow, and she had much difficulty in freeing herself from the dust of the pigeon-houses, still she was not discouraged.

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Perhaps Irene had gone into the Anubidium, or sanctuary of Asclepius, to enquire as to the meaning of some strange vision, for there, with the priestly physicians, lived also a priestess who could interpret the dreams of those who sought to be healed even better than a certain recluse who also could exercise that science. The enquirers often had to wait a long time outside the temple of Asclepius, and this consideration encouraged Klea, and made her insensible to the burning southwest wind which was now rising, and to the heat of the sun; still, as she returned to the Pastophorium—slowly, like a warrior returning from a defeat—she suffered severely from the heat, and her heart was wrung with anguish and suspense.

Willingly would she have cried, and often heaved a groan that was more like a sob, but the solace of tears to relieve her heart was still denied to her.

Before going to tell Asclepiodorus that her search had been unsuccessful, she felt prompted once more to talk with her friend, the anchorite; but before she had gone far enough even to see his cell, the high-priest's scribe once more stood in her way, and desired her to follow him to the temple. There she had to wait in mortal impatience for more than an hour in an ante room. At last she was conducted into a room where Asclepiodorus was sitting with the whole chapter of the priesthood of the temple of Serapis.

Klea entered timidly, and had to wait again some minutes in the presence of the mighty conclave before the high-priest asked her whether she could give any information as to the whereabouts of the fugitive, and whether she had heard or observed anything that could guide them on her track, since he, Asclepiodorus, knew that if Irene had run away secretly from the temple she must be as anxious about her as he was.

Klea had much difficulty in finding words, and her knees shook as she began to speak, but she refused the seat which was brought for her by order of Asclepiodorus. She recounted in order all the places where she had in vain sought her sister, and when she mentioned the sanctuary of Asclepius, and a recollection came suddenly and vividly before her of the figure of a lady of distinction, who had come there with a number of slaves and waiting-maids to have a dream interpreted, Zoe's visit to herself flashed upon her memory; her demeanor—at first so over-friendly and then so supercilious—-and her haughty enquiries for Irene.

She broke off in her narrative, and exclaimed:

"I am sure, holy father, that Irene has not fled of her own free impulse, but some one perhaps may have lured her into quitting the temple and me; she is still but a child with a wavering mind. Could it possibly be that a lady of rank should have decoyed her into going with her? Such a person came to-day to see me at the door-keeper's lodge. She was richly dressed and wore a gold crescent in her light wavy hair, which was plaited with a silk ribband, and she asked me urgently about my sister. Imhotep, the physician,

who often visits at the king’s palace, saw her too, and told me her name is Zoe, and that she is lady-in-waiting to Queen Cleopatra.”

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These words occasioned the greatest excitement throughout the conclave of priests, and Asclepiodorus exclaimed:

“Oh! women, women! You indeed were right, Philammon; I could not and would not believe it! Cleopatra has done many things which are forgiven only in a queen, but that she should become the tool of her brother’s basest passions, even you, Philammon, could hardly regard as likely, though you are always prepared to expect evil rather than good. But now, what is to be done? How can we protect ourselves against violence and superior force?”

Klea had appeared before the priests with cheeks crimson and glowing from the noontide heat, but at the high-priest’s last words the blood left her face, she turned ashy-pale, and a chill shiver ran through her trembling limbs. Her father’s child—her bright, innocent Irene—basely stolen for Euergetes, that licentious tyrant of whose wild deeds Serapion had told her only last evening, when he painted the dangers that would threaten her and Irene if they should quit the shelter of the sanctuary.

Alas, it was too true! They had tempted away her darling child, her comfort and delight, lured her with splendor and ease, only to sink her in shame! She was forced to cling to the back of the chair she had disdained, to save herself from falling.

But this weakness overmastered her for a few minutes only; she boldly took two hasty steps up to the table behind which the high-priest was sitting, and, supporting herself with her right hand upon it, she exclaimed, while her voice, usually so full and sonorous, had a hoarse tone:

“A woman has been the instrument of making another woman unworthy of the name of woman! and you—you, the protectors of right and virtue—you who are called to act according to the will and mind of the gods whom you serve—you are too weak to prevent it? If you endure this, if you do not put a stop to this crime you are not worthy —nay, I will not be interrupted—you, I say, are unworthy of the sacred title and of the reverence you claim, and I will appeal—”

“Silence, girl!” cried Asclepiodorus to the terribly excited Klea. “I would have you imprisoned with the blasphemers, if I did not well understand the anguish which has turned your brain. We will interfere on behalf of the abducted girl, and you must wait patiently in silence. You, Callimachus, must at once order Ismael, the messenger, to saddle the horses, and ride to Memphis to deliver a despatch from me to the queen; let us all combine to compose it, and subscribe our names as soon as we are perfectly certain that Irene has been carried off from these precincts. Philammon, do you command that the gong be sounded which calls together all the inhabitants of the temple; and you, my girl, quit this hall, and join the others.”

CHAPTER XVI.

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Klea obeyed the high-priest's command at once, and wandered—not knowing exactly whither—from one corridor to another of the huge pile, till she was startled by the sound of the great brazen plate, struck with mighty blows, which rang out to the remotest nook and corner of the precincts. This call was for her too, and she went forthwith into the great court of assembly, which at every moment grew fuller and fuller. The temple-servants and the keepers of the beasts, the gate-keepers, the litter-bearers, the water-carriers-all streamed in from their interrupted meal, some wiping their mouths as they hurried in, or still holding in their hands a piece of bread, a radish, or a date which they hastily munched; the washer-men and women came in with hands still wet from washing the white robes of the priests, and the cooks arrived with brows still streaming from their unfinished labors. Perfumes floated round from the unwashed hands of the pastophori, who had been busied in the laboratories in the preparation of incense, while from the library and writing-rooms came the curators and scribes and the officials of the temple counting-house, their hair in disorder, and their light working-dress stained with red or black. The troop of singers, male and female, came in orderly array, just as they had been assembled for practice, and with them came the faded twins to whom Klea and Irene had been designated as successors by Asclepiodorus. Then came the pupils of the temple-school, tumbling noisily into the court-yard in high delight at this interruption to their lessons. The eldest of these were sent to bring in the great canopy under which the heads of the establishment might assemble.

Last of all appeared Asclepiodorus, who handed to a young scribe a complete list of all the inhabitants and members of the temple, that he might read it out. This he proceeded to do; each one answered with an audible "Here" as his name was called, and for each one who was absent information was immediately given as to his whereabouts.

Klea had joined the singing-women, and awaited in breathless anxiety a long-endlessly long-time for the name of her sister to be called; for it was not till the very smallest of the school-boys and the lowest of the neat-herds had answered, "Here," that the scribe read out, "Klea, the water-bearer," and nodded to her in answer as she replied "Here!"

Then his voice seemed louder than before as he read. "Irene, the water-bearer."

No answer following on these words, a slight movement, like the bowing wave that flies over a ripe cornfield when the morning breeze sweeps across the ears, was evident among the assembled inhabitants of the temple, who waited in breathless silence till Asclepiodorus stood forth, and said in a distinct and audible voice:

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“You have all met here now at my call. All have obeyed it excepting those holy men consecrated to Serapis, whose vows forbid their breaking their seclusion, and Irene, the water-bearer. Once more I call, ‘Irene,’ a second, and a third time—and still no answer; I now appeal to you all assembled here, great and small, men and women who serve Serapis. Can any one of you give any information as to the whereabouts of this young girl? Has any one seen her since, at break of day, she placed the first libation from the Well of the Sun on the altar of the god? You are all silent! Then no one has met her in the course of this day? Now, one question more, and whoever can answer it stand forth and speak the words of truth.

“By which gate did this lady of rank depart who visited the temple early this morning?—-By the eastern gate—good.

“Was she alone?—She was.

“By which gate did the epistolographer Eulaeus depart?—By the east.

“Was he alone?—He was.

“Did any one here present meet the chariot either of the lady or of Eulaeus?”

“I did,” cried a car-driver, whose daily duty it was to go to Memphis with his oxen and cart to fetch provisions for the kitchen, and other necessaries.

“Speak,” said the high-priest.

“I saw,” replied the man, “the white horses of my Lord Eulaeus hard by the vineyard of Khakem; I know them well. They were harnessed to a closed chariot, in which besides himself sat a lady.”

“Was it Irene?” asked Asclepiodorus.

“I do not know,” replied the tarter, “for I could not see who sat in the chariot, but I heard the voice of Eulaeus, and then a woman’s laugh. She laughed so heartily that I had to screw my mouth up myself, it tickled me so.”

While Klea supposed this description to apply to Irene’s merry laugh-which she had never thought of with regret till this moment—the high-priest exclaimed:

“You, keeper of the eastern gate, did the lady and Eulaeus enter and leave this sanctuary together?”

“No,” was the answer. “She came in half an hour later than he did, and she quitted the temple quite alone and long after the eunuch.”

“And Irene did not pass through your gate, and cannot have gone out by it?—I ask you in the name of the god we serve!”

“She may have done so, holy father,” answered the gate-keeper in much alarm. “I have a sick child, and to look after him I went into my room several times; but only for a few minutes at a time-still, the gate stands open, all is quiet in Memphis now.”

“You have done very wrong,” said Asclepiodorus severely, “but since you have told the truth you may go unpunished. We have learned enough. All you gate-keepers now listen to me. Every gate of the temple must be carefully shut, and no one—not even a pilgrim nor any dignitary from Memphis, however high a personage he may be—is to enter or go out without my express permission; be as alert as if you feared an attack, and now go each of you to his duties.”

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The assembly dispersed; these to one side, those to another.

Klea did not perceive that many looked at her with suspicion as though she were responsible for her sister's conduct, and others with compassion; she did not even notice the twin-sisters, whose place she and Irene were to have filled, and this hurt the feelings of the good elderly maidens, who had to perform so much lamenting which they did not feel at all, that they eagerly seized every opportunity of expressing their feelings when, for once in a way, they were moved to sincere sorrow. But neither these sympathizing persons nor any other of the inhabitants of the temple, who approached Klea with the purpose of questioning or of pitying her, dared to address her, so stern and terrible was the solemn expression of her eyes which she kept fixed upon the ground.

At last she remained alone in the great court; her heart beat faster unusual, and strange and weighty thoughts were stirring in her soul. One thing was clear to her: Eulaeus—-her father's ruthless foe and destroyer—was now also working the fall of the child of the man he had ruined, and, though she knew it not, the high-priest shared her suspicions. She, Klea, was by no means minded to let this happen without an effort at defence, and it even became clearer and clearer to her mind that it was her duty to act, and without delay. In the first instance she would ask counsel of her friend Serapion; but as she approached his cell the gong was sounded which summoned the priests to service, and at the same time warned her of her duty of fetching water.

Mechanically, and still thinking of nothing but Irene's deliverance, she fulfilled the task which she was accustomed to perform every day at the sound of this brazen clang, and went to her room to fetch the golden jars of the god.

As she entered the empty room her cat sprang to meet her with two leaps of joy, putting up her back, rubbing her soft head against her feet with her fine bushy tail ringed with black stripes set up straight, as cats are wont only when they are pleased. Klea was about to stroke the coaxing animal, but it sprang back, stared at her shyly, and, as she could not help thinking, angrily with its green eyes, and then shrank back into the corner close to Irene's couch.

"She mistook me!" thought Klea. "Irene is more lovable than I even to a beast, and Irene, Irene—" She sighed deeply at the name, and would have sunk down on her trunk there to consider of new ways and means—all of which however she was forced to reject as foolish and impracticable— but on the chest lay a little shirt she had begun to make for little Philo, and this reminded her again of the sick child and of the duty of fetching the water.

Without further delay she took up the jars, and as she went towards the well she remembered the last precepts that had been given her by her father, whom she had once been permitted to visit in prison. Only a few detached sentences of this, his last

warning speech, now came into her mind, though no word of it had escaped her memory; it ran much as follows:

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“It may seem as though I had met with an evil recompense from the gods for my conduct in adhering to what I think just and virtuous; but it only seems so, and so long as I succeed in living in accordance with nature, which obeys an everlasting law, no man is justified in accusing me. My own peace of mind especially will never desert me so long as I do not set myself to act in opposition to the fundamental convictions of my inmost being, but obey the doctrines of Zeno and Chrysippus. This peace every one may preserve, aye, even you, a woman, if you constantly do what you recognize to be right, and fulfil the duties you take upon yourself. The very god himself is proof and witness of this doctrine, for he grants to him who obeys him that tranquillity of spirit which must be pleasing in his eyes, since it is the only condition of the soul in which it appears to be neither fettered and hindered nor tossed and driven; while he, on the contrary, who wanders from the paths of virtue and of her daughter, stern duty, never attains peace, but feels the torment of an unsatisfied and hostile power, which with its hard grip drags his soul now on and now back.

“He who preserves a tranquil mind is not miserable, even in misfortune, and thankfully learns to feel con tented in every state of life; and that because he is filled with those elevated sentiments which are directly related to the noblest portion of his being—those, I mean—of justice and goodness. Act then, my child, in conformity with justice and duty, regardless of any ulterior object, without considering whether your action will bring you pleasure or pain, without fear of the judgment of men or the envy of the gods, and you will win that peace of mind which distinguishes the wise from the unwise, and may be happy even in adverse circumstances; for the only real evil is the dominion of wickedness, that is to say the unreason which rebels against nature, and the only true happiness consists in the possession of virtue. He alone, however, can call virtue his who possesses it wholly, and sins not against it in the smallest particular; for there is no difference of degrees either in good or in evil, and even the smallest action opposed to duty, truth or justice, though punishable by no law, is a sin, and stands in opposition to virtue.

“Irene,” thus Philotas had concluded his injunctions, “cannot as yet understand this doctrine, but you are grave and have sense beyond your years. Repeat this to her daily, and when the time comes impress on your sister—towards whom you must fill the place of a mother—impress on her heart these precepts as your father’s last will and testament.”

And now, as Klea went towards the well within the temple-wall to fetch water, she repeated to herself many of these injunctions; she felt herself encouraged by them, and firmly resolved not to give her sister up to the seducer without a struggle.

As soon as the vessels for libation at the altar were filled she returned to little Philo, whose state seemed to her to give no further cause for anxiety; after staying with him for more than an hour she left the gate-keeper’s dwelling to seek Serapion’s advice, and

to divulge to him all she had been able to plan and consider in the quiet of the sick-room.

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The recluse was wont to recognize her step from afar, and to be looking out for her from his window when she went to visit him; but to-day he heard her not, for he was stepping again and again up and down the few paces which the small size of his tiny cell allowed him to traverse. He could reflect best when he walked up and down, and he thought and thought again, for he had heard all that was known in the temple regarding Irene's disappearance; and he would, he must rescue her—but the more he tormented his brain the more clearly he saw that every attempt to snatch the kidnapped girl from the powerful robber must in fact be vain.

"And it must not, it shall not be!" he had cried, stamping his great foot, a few minutes before Klea reached his cell; but as soon as he was aware of her presence he made an effort to appear quite easy, and cried out with the vehemence which characterized him even in less momentous circumstances:

"We must consider, we must reflect, we must puzzle our brains, for the gods have been napping this morning, and we must be doubly wide-awake. Irene—our little Irene—and who would have thought it yesterday! It is a good-for-nothing, unspeakably base knave's trick—and now, what can we do to snatch the prey from the gluttonous monster, the savage wild beast, before he can devour our child, our pet little one?

"Often and often I have been provoked at my own stupidity, but never, never have I felt so stupid, such a godforsaken blockhead as I do now. When I try to consider I feel as if that heavy shutter had been nailed clown on my head. Have you had any ideas? I have not one which would not disgrace the veriest ass—not a single one."

"Then you know everything? "asked Klea, "even that it is probably our father's enemy, Eulaeus, who has treacherously decoyed the poor child to go away with him?"

"Yes, Yes!" cried Serapion, "wherever there is some scoundrel's trick to be played he must have a finger in the pie, as sure as there must be meal for bread to be made. But it is a new thing to me that on this occasion he should be Euergetes' tool. Old Philammon told me all about it. Just now the messenger came back from Memphis, and brought a paltry scrap of papyrus on which some wretched scribbler had written in the name of Philometer, that nothing was known of Irene at court, and complaining deeply that Asclepiodorus had not hesitated to play an underhand game with the king. So they have no idea whatever of voluntarily releasing our child."

"Then I shall proceed to do my duty," said Klea resolutely. "I shall go to Memphis, and fetch my sister."

"The anchorite stared at the girl in horror, exclaiming: "That is folly, madness, suicide! Do you want to throw two victims into his jaws instead of one?"

“I can protect myself, and as regards Irene, I will claim the queen’s assistance. She is a woman, and will never suffer—”

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“What is there in this world that she will not suffer if it can procure her profit or pleasure? Who knows what delightful thing Euergetes may not have promised her in return for our little maid? No, by Serapis! no, Cleopatra will not help you, but—and that is a good idea—there is one who will to a certainty. We must apply to the Roman Publius Scipio, and he will have no difficulty in succeeding.”

“From him,” exclaimed Klea, coloring scarlet, “I will accept neither good nor evil; I do not know him, and I do not want to know him.”

“Child, child!” interrupted the recluse with grave chiding. “Does your pride then so far outweigh your love, your duty, and concern for Irene? What, in the name of all the gods, has Publius done to you that you avoid him more anxiously than if he were covered with leprosy? There is a limit to all things, and now—aye, indeed—I must out with it come what may, for this is not the time to pretend to be blind when I see with both eyes what is going on—your heart is full of the Roman, and draws you to him; but you are an honest girl, and, in order to remain so, you fly from him because you distrust yourself, and do not know what might happen if he were to tell you that he too has been hit by one of Eros’ darts. You may turn red and white, and look at me as if I were your enemy, and talking contemptible nonsense. I have seen many strange things, but I never saw any one before you who was a coward out of sheer courage, and yet of all the women I know there is not one to whom fear is less known than my bold and resolute Klea. The road is a hard one that you must take, but only cover your poor little heart with a coat of mail, and venture in all confidence to meet the Roman, who is an excellent good fellow. No doubt it will be hard to you to crave a boon, but ought you to shrink from those few steps over sharp stones? Our poor child is standing on the edge of the abyss; if you do not arrive at the right time, and speak the right words to the only person who is able to help in this matter, she will be thrust into the foul bog and sink in it, because her brave sister was frightened at—herself!”

Klea had cast down her eyes as the anchorite addressed her thus; she stood for some time frowning at the ground in silence, but at last she said, with quivering lips and as gloomily as if she were pronouncing a sentence on herself.

“Then I will ask the Roman to assist me; but how can I get to him?”

“Ah!—now my Klea is her father’s daughter once more,” answered Serapion, stretching out both his arms towards her from the little window of his cell; and then he went on: “I can make the painful path somewhat smoother for you. My brother Glaucus, who is commander of the civic guard in the palace, you already know; I will give you a few words of recommendation to him, and also, to lighten your task, a little letter to Publius Scipio, which shall contain a short account of the matter in hand. If Publius wishes to speak with you yourself go to him and trust him, but still more trust yourself.

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“Now go, and when you have once more filled the water-jars come back to me, and fetch the letters. The sooner you can go the better, for it would be well that you should leave the path through the desert behind you before nightfall, for in the dark there are often dangerous tramps about. You will find a friendly welcome at my sister Leukippa’s; she lives in the toll-house by the great harbor—show her this ring and she will give you a bed, and, if the gods are merciful, one for Irene too.”

“Thank you, father,” said Klea, but she said no more, and then left him with a rapid step.

Serapion looked lovingly after her; then he took two wooden tablets faced with wax out of his chest, and, with a metal style, he wrote on one a short letter to his brother, and on the other a longer one to the Roman, which ran as follows:

“Serapion, the recluse of Serapis, to Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica, the Roman.

“Serapion greets Publius Scipio, and acquaints him that Irene, the younger sister of Klea, the water-bearer, has disappeared from this temple, and, as Serapion suspects, by the wiles of the epistolographer Eulaeus, whom we both know, and who seems to have acted under the orders of King Ptolemy Euergetes. Seek to discover where Irene can be. Save her if thou canst from her ravishers, and conduct her back to this temple or deliver her in Memphis into the hands of my sister Leukippa, the wife of the overseer of the harbor, named Hipparchus, who dwells in the toll-house. May Serapis preserve thee and thine.”

The recluse had just finished his letters when Klea returned to him. The girl hid them in the folds of the bosom of her robe, said farewell to her friend, and remained quite grave and collected, while Serapion, with tears in his eyes, stroked her hair, gave her his parting blessing, and finally even hung round her neck an amulet for good luck, that his mother had worn—it was an eye in rock-crystal with a protective inscription. Then, without any further delay, she set out towards the temple gate, which, in obedience to the commands of the high priest, was now locked. The gate-keeper—little Philo’s father—sat close by on a stone bench, keeping guard. In a friendly tone Klea asked him to open the gate; but the anxious official would not immediately comply with her request, but reminded her of Asclepiodorus’ strict injunctions, and informed her that the great Roman had demanded admission to the temple about three hours since, but had been refused by the high-priest’s special orders. He had asked too for her, and had promised to return on the morrow.

The hot blood flew to Klea’s face and eyes as she heard this news. Could Publius no more cease to think of her than she of him? Had Serapion guessed rightly? “The darts of Eros”—the recluse’s phrase flashed through her mind, and struck her heart as if it were itself a winged arrow; it frightened her and yet she liked it, but only for one brief instant, for the utmost distrust of her own weakness came over her again directly, and

she told herself with a shudder that she was on the high-road to follow up and seek out the importunate stranger.

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All the horrors of her undertaking stood vividly before her, and if she had now retraced her steps she would not have been without an excuse to offer to her own conscience, since the temple-gate was closed, and might not be opened to any one, not even to her.

For a moment she felt a certain satisfaction in this flattering reflection, but as she thought again of Irene her resolve was once more confirmed, and going closer up to the gate-keeper she said with great determination:

“Open the gate to me without delay; you know that I am not accustomed to do or to desire anything wrong. I beg of you to push back the bolt at once.”

The man to whom Klea had done many kindnesses, and whom Imhotep had that very day told that she was the good spirit of his house, and that he ought to venerate her as a divinity—obeyed her orders, though with some doubt and hesitation. The heavy bolt flew back, the brazen gate opened, the water-bearer stepped out, flung a dark veil over her head, and set out on her walk.

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If you want to catch mice you must waste bacon
Man works with all his might for no one but himself
Nothing permanent but change
Nothing so certain as that nothing is certain
Priests that they should instruct the people to be obedient

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