

the wall, raised their hands, and began to repeat with groaning, —

“Aaaa! — aa!”

Vinicius sprang toward them.

“Where is Lygia?” cried he, with a terrible and changed voice.

“Aaaa!”

Then Gulo pushed forward with his bloody face, and exclaimed, in haste and pitifully, —

“See our blood, lord! We fought! See our blood! See our blood!”

But he had not finished when Vinicius seized a bronze lamp, and with one blow shattered the skull of the slave; then, seizing his own head with both hands, he drove his fingers into his hair, repeating hoarsely, —

“Me miserum! me miserum!”

His face became blue, his eyes turned in his head, foam came out on his lips.

“Whips!” roared he at last, with an unearthly voice.

“Lord! Aaaa! Take pity!” groaned the slaves.

Petronius stood up with an expression of disgust on his face. “Come, Chrysothemis!” said he. “If ’t is thy wish to look on raw flesh, I will give command to open a butcher’s stall on the Carinæ.”

And he walked out of the atrium. But through the whole house, ornamented in the green of ivy and prepared for a feast, were heard, from moment to moment, groans and the whistling of whips, which lasted almost till morning.

CHAPTER XI.

VINICIUS did not lie down that night. Some time after the departure of Petronius, when the groans of his flogged slaves could allay neither his rage nor his pain, he collected a crowd of other servants, and, though the night was far advanced, rushed forth at the head of these to look for Lygia. He visited the district of the Esquiline, then the Subura, Vicus Sceleratus, and all the adjoining alleys. Passing next around the Capitol, he went to the island over the bridge of Fabricius; after that he passed through a part of the Trans-Tiber. But that was a pursuit without object, for he himself had no hope of finding Lygia, and if he sought her it was mainly to fill out with something a terrible night. In fact he returned home about daybreak, when the carts and mules of dealers in vegetables began to appear in the city, and when bakers were opening their shops.

On returning he gave command to put away Gulo’s corpse, which no one had ventured to touch. The slaves from whom Lygia had been taken he sent to rural prisons, — a punishment almost more dreadful than death. Throwing himself at last on a couch in the atrium, he began to think confusedly of how he was to find and seize Lygia.

To resign her, to lose her, not to see her again, seemed to him impossible; and at this thought alone frenzy took hold of him. For the first time in life the imperious nature of the youthful soldier met resistance, met another unbending will, and he could not understand simply how any one could have the daring to thwart his wishes. Vinicius would have chosen to see the world and the city sink in ruins rather than fail of his purpose. The cup of delight had been snatched from before his lips almost; hence it seemed to him that something unheard of had happened, something crying to divine and human laws for vengeance.

But, first of all, he was unwilling and unable to be reconciled with fate, for never in life had he so desired anything as Lygia. It seemed to him that he could not exist without her. He could not tell himself what he was to do without her on the morrow, how he was to survive the days following. At moments he was transported by a rage against her, which approached madness. He wanted to

have her, to beat her, to drag her by the hair to the cubiculum, and gloat over her; then, again, he was carried away by a terrible yearning for her voice, her form, her eyes, and he felt that he would be ready to lie at her feet. He called to her, gnawed his fingers, clasped his head with his hands. He strove with all his might to think calmly about searching for her, — and was unable. A thousand methods and means flew through his head, but one wilder than another. At last the thought flashed on him that no one else had intercepted her but Aulus, that in every case Aulus must know where she was hiding. And he sprang up to run to the house of Aulus.

If they will not yield her to him, if they have no fear of his threats, he will go to Cæsar, accuse the old general of disobedience, and obtain a sentence of death against him; but before that, he will gain from them a confession of where Lygia is. If they give her, even willingly, he will be revenged. They received him, it is true, in their house and nursed him, — but that is nothing! With this one injustice they have freed him from every debt of gratitude. Here his vengeful and stubborn soul began to take pleasure at the despair of Pomponia Græcina, when the centurion would bring the death sentence to old Aulus. He was almost certain that he would get it. Petronius would assist him. Moreover, Cæsar never denies anything to his intimates, the Augustians, unless personal dislike or desire enjoins a refusal.

Suddenly his heart almost died within him, under the influence of this terrible supposition, —

“But if Cæsar himself has taken Lygia?”

All knew that Nero from tedium sought recreation in night attacks. Even Petronius took part in these amusements. Their main object was to seize women and toss each on a soldier's mantle till she fainted. Even Nero himself on occasions called these expeditions “pearl hunts,” for it happened that in the depth of districts occupied by a numerous and needy population they caught a real pearl of youth and beauty sometimes. Then the “sagatio,” as they termed the tossing, was changed into a genuine carrying away, and the pearl was sent either to the Palatine or to one of Cæsar's numberless villas, or finally Cæsar yielded it to one of his intimates. So might it happen also with Lygia. Cæsar had seen her during the feast; and Vinicius doubted not for an instant that she must have seemed to him the most beautiful

woman he had seen yet. How could it be otherwise? It is true that Lygia had been in Nero's own house on the Palatine, and he might have kept her openly. But, as Petronius said truly, Cæsar had no courage in crime, and, with power to act openly, he chose to act always in secret. This time fear of Poppæa might incline him also to secrecy. It occurred now to the young soldier that Aulus would not have dared, perhaps, to carry off forcibly a girl given him, Vinicius, by Cæsar. Besides, who would dare? Would that gigantic blue-eyed Lygian, who had the courage to enter the triclinium and carry her from the feast on his arm? But where could he hide with her; whither could he take her? No! a slave would not have ventured that far. Hence no one had done the deed except Cæsar.

At this thought it grew dark in his eyes, and drops of sweat covered his forehead. In that case Lygia was lost to him forever. It was possible to wrest her from the hands of any one else, but not from the hands of Cæsar. Now, with greater truth than ever, could he exclaim, “Væ misero mihi!” His imagination represented Lygia in Nero's arms, and, for the first time in life, he understood that there are thoughts which are simply beyond man's endurance. He knew then, for the first time, how he loved her. As his whole life flashes through the memory of a drowning man, so Lygia began to pass through his. He saw her, heard every word of hers, — saw her at the fountain, saw her at the house of Aulus, and at the feast; felt her near him, felt the odor of her hair, the warmth of her body, the delight of the kisses which at the feast he had pressed on her innocent lips. She seemed to him a hundred times sweeter, more beautiful, more desired than ever, — a hundred times more the only one, the one chosen from among all mortals and divinities. And when he thought that all this which had become so fixed in his heart, which had become his blood and life, might be possessed by Nero, a pain seized him, which was purely physical, and so piercing that he wanted to beat his head against the wall of the atrium, until he should break it. He felt that he might go mad; and he would have gone mad beyond doubt, had not vengeance remained to him. But as hitherto he had thought that he could not live unless he got Lygia, he thought now that he would not die till he had avenged her. This gave him a certain kind of comfort. “I will be thy Cassius Chærea!”¹

¹ The slayer of Caligula.

said he to himself in thinking of Nero. After a while, seizing earth in his hands from the flower vases surrounding the impluvium, he made a dreadful vow to Erebus, Hecate, and his own household lares, that he would have vengeance.

And he received a sort of consolation. He had at least something to live for and something with which to fill his nights and days. Then, dropping his idea of visiting Aulus, he gave command to bear him to the Palatine. Along the way he concluded that if they would not admit him to Cæsar, or if they should try to find weapons on his person, it would be a proof that Cæsar had taken Lygia. He had no weapons with him. He had lost presence of mind in general; but as is usual with persons possessed by a single idea, he preserved it in that which concerned his revenge. He did not wish his desire of revenge to fall away prematurely. He wished above all to see Acte, for he expected to learn the truth from her. At moments the hope flashed on him that he might see Lygia also, and at that thought he began to tremble. For if Cæsar had carried her away without knowledge of whom he was taking, he might return her that day. But after a while he cast aside this supposition. Had there been a wish to return her to him, she would have been sent yesterday. Acte was the only person who could explain everything, and there was need to see her before others.

Convinced of this, he commanded the slaves to hasten; and along the road he thought without order, now of Lygia, now of revenge. He had heard that Egyptian priests of the goddess Pasht could bring disease on whomever they wished, and he determined to learn the means of doing this. In the Orient they had told him, too, that Jews have certain invocations by which they cover their enemies' bodies with ulcers. He had a number of Jews among his domestic slaves; hence he promised himself to torture them on his return till they divulged the secret. He found most delight, however, in thinking of the short Roman sword which lets out a stream of blood such as had gushed from Caius Caligula and made ineffaceable stains on the columns of the portico. He was ready to exterminate all Rome; and had vengeful gods promised that all people should die except him and Lygia, he would have accepted the promise.

In front of the arch he regained presence of mind, and thought when he saw the pretorian guard, "If they make the least difficulty in admitting me, they will prove that Lygia is in the palace by the will of Cæsar."

But the chief centurion smiled at him in a friendly manner, then advanced a number of steps, and said, —

"A greeting, noble tribune. If thou desire to give an obeisance to Cæsar, thou hast found an unfortunate moment; I do not think that thou wilt be able to see him."

"What has happened?" inquired Vinicius.

"The infant Augusta fell ill yesterday on a sudden. Cæsar and the august Poppæa are attending her, with physicians whom they have summoned from the whole city."

This was an important event. When that daughter was born to him, Cæsar was simply wild from delight, and received her with *extra humanum gaudium*. Previously the senate had committed the womb of Poppæa to the gods with the utmost solemnity. A votive offering was made at Antium, where the delivery took place; splendid games were celebrated, and besides a temple was erected to the two Fortunes. Nero, unable to be moderate in anything, loved the infant beyond measure; to Poppæa the child was dear also, even for this, that it strengthened her position and made her influence irresistible.

The fate of the whole empire might depend on the health and life of the infant Augusta; but Vinicius was so occupied with himself, his own case and his love, that without paying attention to the news of the centurion he answered, "I only wish to see Acte." And he passed in.

But Acte was occupied also near the child, and he had to wait a long time to see her. She came only about midday, with a face pale and wearied, which grew paler still at sight of Vinicius.

"Acte!" cried Vinicius, seizing her hand and drawing her to the middle of the atrium, "where is Lygia?"

"I wanted to ask thee touching that," answered she, looking him in the eyes with reproach.

But though he had promised himself to inquire of her calmly, he pressed his head with his hands again, and said, with a face distorted by pain and anger. —

"She is gone. She was taken from me on the way!"

After a while, however, he recovered, and thrusting his face up to Acte's, said through his set teeth, —

"Acte! If life be dear to thee, if thou wish not to cause misfortunes which thou art unable even to imagine, answer me truly. Did Cæsar take her?"

"Cæsar did not leave the palace yesterday."

"By the shade of thy mother, by all the gods, is she not in the palace?"

"By the shade of my mother, Marcus, she is not in the palace, and Cæsar did not intercept her. The infant Augusta is ill since yesterday, and Nero has not left her cradle."

Vinicius drew breath. That which had seemed the most terrible ceased to threaten him.

"Ah, then," said he, sitting on the bench and clinching his fists, "Aulus intercepted her, and in that case woe to him!"

"Aulus Plantius was here this morning. He could not see me, for I was occupied with the child; but he inquired of Epaphroditus, and others of Cæsar's servants, touching Lygia, and told them that he would come again to see me."

"He wished to turn suspicion from himself. If he knew not what happened, he would have come to seek Lygia in my house."

"He left a few words on a tablet, from which thou wilt see that, knowing Lygia to have been taken from his house by Cæsar, at thy request and that of Petronius, he expected that she would be sent to thee, and this morning early he was at thy house, where they told him what had happened."

When she had said this, she went to the cubiculum and returned soon with the tablet which Aulus had left.

Vinicius read the tablet, and was silent; Acte seemed to read the thoughts on his gloomy face, for she said after a while, —

"No, Marcus. That has happened which Lygia herself wished."

"It was known to thee that she wished to flee!" burst out Vinicius.

"I knew that she would not become thy concubine."

And she looked at him with her misty eyes almost sternly.

"And thou, — what hast thou been all thy life?"

"I was a slave, first of all."

But Vinicius did not cease to be enraged. Cæsar had given him Lygia; hence he had no need to inquire what she had been before. He would find her, even under the earth, and he would do what he liked with her. He would indeed! She should be his concubine. He would give command to flog her as often as he pleased. If she grew distasteful to him, he would give her to the lowest of his slaves, or he would command her to turn a handmill on his lands in Africa. He would seek her out now, and find her only to bend her, to trample on her, and conquer her.

And, growing more and more excited, he lost every sense of measure, to the degree that even Acte saw that he was promising more than he could execute; that he was talking because of pain and anger. She might have had even compassion on him, but his extravagance exhausted her patience, and at last she inquired why he had come to her.

Vinicius did not find an answer immediately. He had come to her because he wished to come, because he judged that she would give him information; but really he had come to Cæsar, and, not being able to see him, he came to her. Lygia, by fleeing, opposed the will of Cæsar; hence he would implore him to give an order to search for her throughout the city and the empire, even if it came to using for that purpose all the legions, and to ransacking in turn every house within Roman dominion. Petronius would support his prayer, and the search would begin from that day.

"Have a care," answered Acte, "lest thou lose her forever the moment she is found, at command of Cæsar."

Vinicius wrinkled his brows. "What does that mean?" inquired he.

"Listen to me, Marcus. Yesterday Lygia and I were in the gardens here, and we met Poppæa, with the infant Augusta, borne by an African woman, Lilith. In the evening the child fell ill, and Lilith insists that she was bewitched; that that foreign woman whom they met in the garden bewitched her. Should the child recover, they will forget this, but in the opposite case Poppæa will be the first to accuse Lygia of witchcraft, and wherever she is found there will be no rescue for her."

A moment of silence followed; then Vinicius said, —

"But perhaps she did bewitch her, and has bewitched me."

"Lilith repeats that the child began to cry the moment she carried her past us. And really the child did begin to cry. It is certain that she was sick when they took her out of the garden. Marcus, seek for Lygia whenever it may please thee, but till the infant Augusta recovers, speak not of her to Cæsar, or thou wilt bring on her Poppæa's vengeance. Her eyes have wept enough because of thee already, and may all the gods guard her poor head."

"Dost thou love her, Acte?" inquired Vinicius, gloomily.

"Yes, I love her." And tears glittered in the eyes of the freedwoman.

"Thou lovest her because she has not repaid thee with hatred, as she has me."

Acte looked at him for a time as if hesitating, or as if wishing to learn if he spoke sincerely; then she said, —

"O blind and passionate man — she loved thee."

Vinicius sprang up under the influence of those words, as if possessed.

"It is not true."

She hated him. How could Acte know? Would Lygia make a confession to her after one day's acquaintance? What love is that which prefers wandering, the disgrace of poverty, the uncertainty of to-morrow, or a shameful death even, to a wreath-bedecked house, in which a lover is waiting with a feast? It is better for him not to hear such things, for he is ready to go mad. He would not have given that girl for all Cæsar's treasures, and she fled. What kind of love is that which dreads delight and gives pain? Who can understand it? Who can fathom it? Were it not for the hope that he should find her, he would sink a sword in himself. Love surrenders; it does not take away. There were moments at the house of Aulus when he himself believed in near happiness, but now he knows that she hated him, that she hates him, and will die with hatred in her heart.

But Acte, usually mild and timid, burst forth in her turn with indignation. How had he tried to win Lygia? Instead of bowing before Aulus and Pomponia to get her, he took the child away from her parents by stratagem. He wanted to make, not a wife, but a concubine of her, the foster daughter of an honorable house, and the daughter of a king. He had her brought to this abode of crime and infamy; he defiled her innocent eyes with the sight of a shameful feast; he acted with her as with a wanton. Had he forgotten the house of Aulus and Pomponia Græcina, who had reared Lygia? Had he not sense enough to understand that there are women different from Nigidia or Calvia Crispinilla or Poppæa, and from all those whom he meets in Cæsar's house? Did he not understand at once on seeing Lygia that she is an honest maiden, who prefers death to infamy? Whence does he know what kind of gods she worships, and whether they are not purer and better than the wanton Venus, or than Isis, worshipped by the profligate women of Rome? No! Lygia had made no confession to her, but she had said that she looked for rescue to him, to Vinicius; she

had hoped that he would obtain for her permission from Cæsar to return home, that he would restore her to Pomponia. And while speaking of this, Lygia blushed like a maiden who loves and trusts. Lygia's heart beat for him; but he, Vinicius, had terrified and offended her; had made her indignant; let him seek her now with the aid of Cæsar's soldiers, but let him know that should Poppæa's child die, suspicion will fall on Lygia, whose destruction will then be inevitable.

Emotion began to force its way through the anger and pain of Vinicius. The information that he was loved by Lygia shook him to the depth of his soul. He remembered her in Aulus's garden, when she was listening to his words with blushes on her face and her eyes full of light. It seemed to him then that she had begun to love him; and all at once, at that thought, a feeling of certain happiness embraced him, a hundred times greater than that which he desired. He thought that he might have won her gradually, and besides as one loving him. She would have wreathed his door, rubbed it with wolf's fat, and then sat as his wife by his hearth on the sheepskin. He would have heard from her mouth the sacramental: "Where thou art, Caius, there am I, Caia." And she would have been his forever. Why did he not act thus? True, he had been ready so to act. But now she is gone, and it may be impossible to find her; and should he find her, perhaps he will cause her death, and should he not cause her death, neither she nor Aulus nor Pomponia Græcina will favor him. Here anger raised the hair on his head again; but his anger turned now, not against the house of Aulus, or Lygia, but against Petronius. Petronius was to blame for everything. Had it not been for him Lygia would not have been forced to wander; she would be his betrothed, and no danger would be hanging over her dear head. But now all is past, and it is too late to correct the evil which will not yield to correction.

"Too late!" And it seemed to him that a gulf had opened before his feet. He did not know what to begin, how to proceed, whither to betake himself. Acte repeated as an echo the words, "Too late," which from another's mouth sounded like a death sentence. He understood one thing, however, that he must find Lygia, or something evil would happen to him.

And wrapping himself mechanically in his toga, he was about to depart without taking farewell even of Acte, when

suddenly the curtain separating the entrance from the atrium was pushed aside, and he saw before him the pensive figure of Pomponia Græcina.

Evidently she too had heard of the disappearance of Lygia, and, judging that she could see Acte more easily than Aulus, had come for news to her.

But, seeing Vinicius, she turned her pale, delicate face to him, and said, after a pause, —

“May God forgive thee the wrong, Marcus, which thou hast done to us and to Lygia.”

He stood with drooping head, with a feeling of misfortune and guilt, not understanding what God was to forgive him or could forgive him. Pomponia had no cause to mention forgiveness; she ought to have spoken of revenge.

At last he went out with a head devoid of counsel, full of grievous thoughts, immense care, and amazement.

In the court and under the gallery were crowds of anxious people. Among slaves of the palace were knights and senators who had come to inquire about the health of the infant, and at the same time to show themselves in the palace, and exhibit a proof of their anxiety, even in presence of Nero's slaves. News of the illness of the “divine” had spread quickly it was evident, for new forms appeared in the gateway every moment, and through the opening of the arcade whole crowds were visible. Some of the newly arrived, seeing that Vinicius was coming from the palace, attacked him for news; but he hurried on without answering their questions, till Petronius, who had come for news too, almost struck his breast and stopped him.

Beyond doubt Vinicius would have become enraged at sight of Petronius, and let himself do some lawless act in Cæsar's palace, had it not been that when he had left Acte he was so crushed, so weighed down and exhausted, that for the moment even his innate irascibility had left him. He pushed Petronius aside and wished to pass; but the other detained him, by force almost.

“How is the divine infant?” asked he.

But this constraint angered Vinicius a second time, and roused his indignation in an instant.

“May Hades swallow her and all this house!” said he, gritting his teeth.

“Silence, hapless man!” said Petronius, and looking around he added hurriedly, —

“If thou wish to know something of Lygia, come with

me; I will tell nothing here! Come with me; I will tell my thoughts in the litter.”

And putting his arm around the young tribune, he conducted him from the palace as quickly as possible. That was his main concern, for he had no news whatever; but being a man of resources, and having, in spite of his indignation of yesterday, much sympathy for Vinicius, and finally feeling responsible for all that had happened, he had undertaken something already, and when they entered the litter he said, —

“I have commanded my slaves to watch at every gate. I gave them an accurate description of the girl, and that giant who bore her from the feast at Cæsar's, — for he is the man, beyond doubt, who intercepted her. Listen to me: Perhaps Aulus and Pomponia wish to secrete her in some estate of theirs; in that case we shall learn the direction in which they took her. If my slaves do not see her at some gate, we shall know that she is in the city yet, and shall begin this very day to search in Rome for her.”

“Aulus does not know where she is,” answered Vinicius.

“Art thou sure of that?”

“I saw Pomponia. She too is looking for her.”

“She could not leave the city yesterday, for the gates are closed at night. Two of my people are watching at each gate. One is to follow Lygia and the giant, the other to return at once and inform me. If she is in the city, we shall find her, for that Lygian is easily recognized, even by his stature and his shoulders. Thou art lucky that it was not Cæsar who took her, and I can assure thee that he did not; for there are no secrets from me on the Palatine.”

But Vinicius burst forth in sorrow still more than in anger, and in a voice broken by emotion told Petronius what he had heard from Acte, and what new dangers were threatening Lygia, — dangers so dreadful that because of them there would be need to hide her from Poppæa most carefully, in case they discovered her. Then he reproached Petronius bitterly for his counsel. Had it not been for him, everything would have gone differently. Lygia would have been at the house of Aulus, and he, Vinicius, might have seen her every day, and he would have been happier at that moment than Cæsar. And carried away as he went on with his narrative, he yielded more and more to emo-

tion, till at last tears of sorrow and rage began to fall from his eyes.

Petronius, who had not even thought that the young man could love and desire to such a degree, when he saw the tears of despair said to himself, with a certain astonishment, —

“O mighty Lady of Cyprus, thou alone art ruler of gods and men!”

CHAPTER XII.

WHEN they alighted in front of the arbiter's house, the chief of the atrium answered them that of slaves sent to the gates none had returned yet. The atriensis had given orders to take food to them, and a new command, that under penalty of rods they were to watch carefully all who left the city.

“Thou seest,” said Petronius, “that they are in Rome, beyond doubt, and in that case we shall find them. But command thy people also to watch at the gates, — those, namely, who were sent for Lygia, as they will recognize her easily.”

“I have given orders to send them to rural prisons,” said Vinicius, “but I will recall the orders at once, and let them go to the gates.”

And writing a few words on a wax-covered tablet, he handed it to Petronius, who gave directions to send it at once to the house of Vinicius. Then they passed into the interior portico, and, sitting on a marble bench, began to talk. The golden-haired Eunice and Iras pushed bronze footstools under their feet, and poured wine for them into goblets, out of wonderful narrow-necked pitchers from Volaterræ and Cæcina.

“Hast thou among thy people any one who knows that giant Lygian?” asked Petronius.

“Atacinus and Gulo knew him; but Atacinus fell yesterday at the litter, and Gulo I killed.”

“I am sorry for him,” said Petronius. “He carried not only thee, but me, in his arms.”

“I intended to free him,” answered Vinicius; “but do not mention him. Let us speak of Lygia. Rome is a sea —”

“A sea is just the place where men fish for pearls. Of course we shall not find her to-day, or to-morrow, but we shall find her surely. Thou hast accused me just now of giving thee this method; but the method was good in itself, and became bad only when turned to bad. Thou hast heard

from Aulus himself, that he intends to go to Sicily with his whole family. In that case the girl would be far from thee."

"I should follow them," said Vinicius, "and in every case she would be out of danger; but now, if that child dies, Poppæa will believe, and will persuade Cæsar, that she died because of Lygia."

"True; that alarmed me, too. But that little doll may recover. Should she die, we shall find some way of escape."

Here Petronius meditated a while and added, —

"Poppæa, it is said, follows the religion of the Jews, and believes in evil spirits. Cæsar is superstitious. If we spread the report that evil spirits carried off Lygia, the news will find belief, especially as neither Cæsar nor Aulus Plautius intercepted her; her escape was really mysterious. The Lygian could not have effected it alone; he must have had help. And where could a slave find so many people in the course of one day?"

"Slaves help one another in Rome."

"Some person pays for that with blood at times. True, they support one another, but not some against others. In this case it was known that responsibility and punishment would fall on thy people. If thou give thy people the idea of evil spirits, they will say at once that they saw such with their own eyes, because that will justify them in thy sight. Ask one of them, as a test, if he did not see spirits carrying off Lygia through the air, he will swear at once by the ægis of Zeus that he saw them."

Vinicius, who was superstitious also, looked at Petronius with sudden and great fear.

"If Ursus could not have men to help him, and was not able to take her alone, who could take her?"

Petronius began to laugh.

"See," said he, "they will believe, since thou art half a believer thyself. Such is our society, which ridicules the gods. They, too, will believe, and they will not look for her. Meanwhile we shall put her away somewhere far off from the city, in some villa of mine or thine."

"But who could help her?"

"Her co-religionists," answered Petronius.

"Who are they? What deity does she worship? I ought to know that better than thou."

"Nearly every woman in Rome honors a different one. It is almost beyond doubt that Pomponia reared her in the

religion of that deity which she herself worships; what one she worships I know not. One thing is certain, that no person has seen her make an offering to our gods in any temple. They have accused her even of being a Christian; but that is not possible; a domestic tribunal cleared her of the charge. They say that Christians not only worship an ass's head, but are enemies of the human race, and permit the foulest crimes. Pomponia cannot be a Christian, as her virtue is known, and an enemy of the human race could not treat slaves as she does."

"In no house are they treated as at Aulus's," interrupted Vinicius.

"Ah! Pomponia mentioned to me some god, who must be one powerful and merciful. Where she has put away all the others is her affair; it is enough that that Logos of hers cannot be very mighty, or rather he must be a very weak god, since he has had only two adherents, — Pomponia and Lygia, — and Ursus in addition. It must be that there are more of those adherents, and that they assisted Lygia."

"That faith commands forgiveness," said Vinicius. "At Acte's I met Pomponia, who said to me: 'May God forgive thee the evil which thou hast done to us and to Lygia.'"

"Evidently their God is some *curator* who is very mild. Ha! let him forgive thee, and in sign of forgiveness return thee the maiden."

"I would offer him a hecatomb to-morrow! I have no wish for food, or the bath, or sleep. I will take a dark lantern and wander through the city. Perhaps I shall find her in disguise. I am sick."

Petronius looked at him with commiseration. In fact, there was blue under his eyes, his pupils were gleaming with fever, his unshaven beard indicated a dark strip on his firmly outlined jaws, his hair was in disorder, and he was really like a sick man. Iras and the golden-haired Eunice looked at him also with sympathy; but he seemed not to see them, and he and Petronius took no notice whatever of the slave women, just as they would not have noticed dogs moving around them.

"Fever is tormenting thee," said Petronius.

"It is."

"Then listen to me. I know not what the doctor has prescribed to thee, but I know how I should act in thy place. Till this lost one is found I should seek in another that which for the moment has gone from me with her. I saw

splendid forms at thy villa. Do not contradict me. I know what love is; and I know that when one is desired another cannot take her place. But in a beautiful slave it is possible to find even momentary distraction."

"I do not need it," said Vinicius.

But Petronius, who had for him a real weakness, and who wished to soften his pain, began to meditate how he might do so.

"Perhaps thine have not for thee the charm of novelty," said he, after a while (and here he began to look in turn at Iras and Eunice, and finally he placed his palm on the hip of the golden-haired Eunice). "Look at this grace! for whom some days since Fonteius Capiton the younger offered three wonderful boys from Clazomene. A more beautiful figure than hers even Skopas himself has not chiselled. I myself cannot tell why I have remained indifferent to her thus far, since thoughts of Chrysothemis have not restrained me. Well, I give her to thee; take her for thyself!"

When the golden-haired Eunice heard this, she grew pale in one moment, and, looking with frightened eyes on Vinicius, seemed to wait for his answer without breath in her breast.

But he sprang up suddenly, and, pressing his temples with his hands, said quickly, like a man who is tortured by disease, and will not hear anything, —

"No, no! I care not for her! I care not for others! I thank thee, but I do not want her. I will seek that one through the city. Give command to bring me a Gallic cloak with a hood. I will go beyond the Tiber — if I could see even Ursus."

And he hurried away. Petronius, seeing that he could not remain in one place, did not try to detain him. Taking, however, his refusal as a temporary dislike for all women save Lygia, and not wishing his own magnanimity to go for naught, he said, turning to the slave, —

"Eunice, thou wilt bathe and anoint thyself, then dress: after that thou wilt go to the house of Vinicius."

But she dropped before him on her knees, and with joined palms implored him not to remove her from the house. She would not go to Vinicius, she said. She would rather carry fuel to the hypocaustum in his house than be chief servant in that of Vinicius. She would not, she could not go; and she begged him to have pity on her. Let him give command to flog her daily, only not send her away.

And trembling like a leaf with fear and excitement, she

stretched her hands to him, while he listened with amazement. A slave who ventured to beg relief from the fulfilment of a command, who said "I will not and I cannot," was something so unheard-of in Rome that Petronius could not believe his own ears at first. Finally he frowned. He was too refined to be cruel. His slaves, especially in the department of pleasure, were freer than others, on condition of performing their service in an exemplary manner, and honoring the will of their master, like that of a god. In case they failed in these two respects, he was able not to spare punishment, to which, according to general custom, they were subject. Since, besides this, he could not endure opposition, nor anything which ruffled his calmness, he looked for a while at the kneeling girl, and then said, —

"Call Tiresias, and return with him."

Eunice rose, trembling, with tears in her eyes, and went out; after a time she returned with the chief of the atrium, Tiresias, a Cretan.

"Thou wilt take Eunice," said Petronius, "and give her five-and-twenty lashes, in such fashion, however, as not to harm her skin."

When he had said this, he passed into the library, and, sitting down at a table of rose-colored marble, began to work on his "Feast of Trimalchion." But the flight of Lygia and the illness of the infant Augusta had disturbed his mind so much that he could not work long. That illness, above all, was important. It occurred to Petronius that were Cæsar to believe that Lygia had cast spells on the infant, the responsibility might fall on him also, for the girl had been brought at his request to the palace. But he could reckon on this, that at the first interview with Cæsar he would be able in some way to show the utter absurdity of such an idea; he counted a little, too, on a certain weakness which Poppæa had for him, — a weakness hidden carefully, it is true, but not so carefully that he could not divine it. After a while he shrugged his shoulders at these fears, and decided to go to the triclinium to strengthen himself, and then order the litter to bear him once more to the palace, after that to the Campus Martius, and then to Chrysothemis.

But on the way to the triclinium, at the entrance to the corridor assigned to servants, he saw unexpectedly the slender form of Eunice standing, among other slaves, at the wall; and forgetting that he had given Tiresias no order beyond flogging her, he wrinkled his brow again, and looked

around for the atriensis. Not seeing him among the servants, he turned to Eunice.

"Hast thou received the lashes?"

She cast herself at his feet a second time, pressed the border of his toga to her lips, and said, —

"Oh, yes, lord, I have received them! Oh, yes, lord!"

In her voice were heard, as it were, joy and gratitude. It was clear that she looked on the lashes as a substitute for her removal from the house, and that now she might stay there. Petronius, who understood this, wondered at the passionate resistance of the girl; but he was too deeply versed in human nature not to know that love alone could call forth such resistance.

"Dost thou love some one in this house?" asked he.

She raised her blue, tearful eyes to him, and answered, in a voice so low that it was hardly possible to hear her, —

"Yes, lord."

And with those eyes, with that golden hair thrown back, with fear and hope in her face, she was so beautiful, she looked at him so entreatingly, that Petronius, who, as a philosopher, had proclaimed the might of love, and who, as a man of æsthetic nature, had given homage to all beauty, felt for her a certain species of compassion.

"Whom of those dost thou love?" inquired he, indicating the servants with his head.

There was no answer to that question. Eunice inclined her head to his feet and remained motionless.

Petronius looked at the slaves, among whom were beautiful and stately youths. He could read nothing on any face; on the contrary, all had certain strange smiles. He looked then for a while on Eunice lying at his feet, and went in silence to the triclinium.

After he had eaten, he gave command to bear him to the palace, and then to Chrysothemis, with whom he remained till late at night. But when he returned, he gave command to call Tiresias.

"Did Eunice receive the flogging?" inquired he.

"She did, lord. Thou didst not let the skin be cut, however."

"Did I give no other command touching her?"

"No, lord," answered the atriensis with alarm.

"That is well. Whom of the slaves does she love?"

"No one, lord."

"What dost thou know of her?"

Tiresias began to speak in a somewhat uncertain voice:

"At night Eunice never leaves the cubiculum in which she lives with old Acrisona and Ifida; after thou art dressed she never goes to the bath-rooms. Other slaves ridicule her, and call her Diana."

"Enough," said Petronius. "My relative, Vinicius, to whom I offered her to-day, did not accept her; hence she may stay in the house. Thou art free to go."

"Is it permitted me to speak more of Eunice, lord?"

"I have commanded thee to say all thou knowest."

"The whole familia are speaking of the flight of the maiden who was to dwell in the house of the noble Vinicius. After thy departure, Eunice came to me and said that she knew a man who could find her."

"Ah! What kind of man is he?"

"I know not, lord; but I thought that I ought to inform thee of this matter."

"That is well. Let that man wait to-morrow in my house for the arrival of the tribune, whom thou wilt request in my name to meet me here."

The atriensis bowed and went out. But Petronius began to think of Eunice. At first it seemed clear to him that the young slave wished Vinicius to find Lygia for this reason only, that she would not be forced from his house. Afterward, however, it occurred to him that the man whom Eunice was pushing forward might be her lover, and all at once that thought seemed to him disagreeable. There was, it is true, a simple way of learning the truth, for it was enough to summon Eunice; but the hour was late, Petronius felt tired after his long visit with Chrysothemis, and was in a hurry to sleep. But on the way to the cubiculum he remembered — it is unknown why — that he had noticed wrinkles, that day, in the corners of Chrysothemis's eyes. He thought, also, that her beauty was more celebrated in Rome than it deserved; and that Fonteius Capiton, who had offered him three boys from Clazomene for Eunice, wanted to buy her too cheaply.