

CHAPTER XIII.

NEXT morning, Petronius had barely finished dressing in the unctorium when Vinicius came, called by Tiresias. He knew that no news had come from the gates. This information, instead of comforting him, as a proof that Lygia was still in Rome, weighed him down still more, for he began to think that Ursus might have conducted her out of the city immediately after her seizure, and hence before Petronius's slaves had begun to keep watch at the gates. It is true that in autumn, when the days become shorter, the gates are closed rather early; but it is true, also, that they are opened for persons going out, and the number of these is considerable. It was possible, also, to pass the walls by other ways, well known, for instance, to slaves who wish to escape from the city. Vinicius had sent out his people to all roads leading to the provinces, to watchmen in the smaller towns, proclaiming a pair of fugitive slaves, with a detailed description of Ursus and Lygia, coupled with the offer of a reward for seizing them. But it was doubtful whether that pursuit would reach the fugitives; and even should it reach them, whether the local authorities would feel justified in making the arrest at the private instance of Vinicius, without the support of a pretor. Indeed, there had not been time to obtain such support. Vinicius himself, disguised as a slave, had sought Lygia the whole day before, through every corner of the city, but had been unable to find the least indication or trace of her. He had seen Aulus's servants, it is true; but they seemed to be seeking something also, and that confirmed him in the belief that it was not Aulus who had intercepted the maiden, and that the old general did not know what had happened to her.

When Tiresias announced to him, then, that there was a man who would undertake to find Lygia, he hurried with all speed to the house of Petronius; and barely had he finished saluting his uncle, when he inquired for the man.

"We shall see him at once, Eunice knows him," said Petronius. "She will come this moment to arrange the folds of my toga, and will give nearer information concerning him."

"Oh! she whom thou hadst the wish to bestow on me yesterday?"

"The one whom thou didst reject; for which I am grateful, for she is the best vestiplica in the whole city."

In fact, the vestiplica came in before he had finished speaking, and taking the toga, laid on a chair inlaid with pearl, she opened the garment to throw it on Petronius's shoulder. Her face was clear and calm; joy was in her eyes.

Petronius looked at her. She seemed to him very beautiful. After a while, when she had covered him with the toga, she began to arrange it, bending at times to lengthen the folds. He noticed that her arms had a marvellous pale rose-color, and her bosom and shoulders the transparent reflections of pearl or alabaster.

"Eunice," said he, "has the man come to Tiresias whom thou didst mention yesterday?"

"He has, lord."

"What is his name?"

"Chilo Chilonides."

"Who is he?"

"A physician, a sage, a soothsayer, who knows how to read people's fates and predict the future."

"Has he predicted the future to thee?"

Eunice was covered with a blush which gave a rosy color to her ears and her neck even.

"Yes, lord."

"What has he predicted?"

"That pain and happiness would meet me."

"Pain met thee yesterday at the hands of Tiresias; hence happiness also should come."

"It has come, lord, already."

"What?"

"I remain," said she in a whisper.

Petronius put his hand on her golden head.

"Thou hast arranged the folds well to-day, and I am satisfied with thee, Eunice."

Under that touch her eyes were mist-covered in one instant from happiness, and her bosom began to heave quickly.

Petronius and Vinicius passed into the atrium, where Chilo Chilonides was waiting. When he saw them, he made a low bow. A smile came to the lips of Petronius at thought of his suspicion of yesterday, that this man might be Eunice's

lover. The man who was standing before him could not be any one's lover. In that marvellous figure there was something both foul and ridiculous. He was not old; in his dirty beard and curly locks a gray hair shone here and there. He had a lank stomach and stooping shoulders, so that at the first cast of the eye he appeared to be hunchbacked; above that hump rose a large head, with the face of a monkey and also of a fox; the eye was penetrating. His yellowish complexion was varied with pimples; and his nose, covered with them completely, might indicate too great a love for the bottle. His neglected apparel, composed of a dark tunic of goat's wool and a mantle of similar material with holes in it, showed real or simulated poverty. At sight of him, Homer's Thersites came to the mind of Petronius. Hence, answering with a wave of the hand to his bow, he said, —

"A greeting, divine Thersites! How are the lumps which Ulysses gave thee at Troy, and what is he doing himself in the Elysian Fields?"

"Noble lord," answered Chilo Chilonides, "Ulysses, the wisest of the dead, sends a greeting through me to Petronius, the wisest of the living, and the request to cover my lumps with a new mantle."

"By Hecate Triformis!" exclaimed Petronius, "the answer deserves a new mantle."

But further conversation was interrupted by the impatient Vinicius, who inquired directly, —

"Dost thou know clearly what thou art undertaking?"

"When two households in two lordly mansions speak of naught else, and when half Rome is repeating the news, it is not difficult to know," answered Chilo. "The night before last a maiden named Lygia, but specially Callina, and reared in the house of Aulus Plautius, was intercepted. Thy slaves were conducting her, O lord, from Caesar's palace to thy 'insula,' and I undertake to find her in the city, or, if she has left the city — which is little likely — to indicate to thee, noble tribune, whither she has fled and where she has hidden."

"That is well," said Vinicius, who was pleased with the precision of the answer. "What means hast thou to do this?"

Chilo smiled cunningly. "Thou hast the means, lord; I have the wit only."

Petronius smiled also, for he was perfectly satisfied with his guest.

"That man can find the maiden," thought he.

Meanwhile Vinicius wrinkled his joined brows, and said, —

"Wretch, in case thou deceive me for gain, I will give command to beat thee with clubs."

"I am a philosopher, lord, and a philosopher cannot be greedy of gain, especially of such as thou hast just offered magnanimously."

"Oh, art thou a philosopher?" inquired Petronius. "Eunice told me that thou art a physician and a soothsayer. Whence knowest thou Eunice?"

"She came to me for aid, for my fame struck her ears."

"What aid did she want?"

"Aid in love, lord. She wanted to be cured of unrequited love."

"Didst thou cure her?"

"I did more, lord. I gave her an amulet which secures mutuality. In Paphos, on the island of Cyprus, is a temple, O lord, in which is preserved a zone of Venus. I gave her two threads from that zone, enclosed in an almond shell."

"And didst thou make her pay well for them?"

"One can never pay enough for mutuality, and I, who lack two fingers on my right hand, am collecting money to buy a slave copyist to write down my thoughts, and preserve my wisdom for mankind."

"Of what school art thou, divine sage?"

"I am a Cynic, lord, because I wear a tattered mantle; I am a Stoic, because I bear poverty patiently; I am a Peripatetic, for, not owning a litter, I go on foot from one wine-shop to another, and on the way teach those who promise to pay for a pitcher of wine."

"And at the pitcher thou dost become a rhetor?"

"Heraclitus declares that 'all is fluid,' and canst thou deny, lord, that wine is fluid?"

"And he declared that fire is a divinity; divinity, therefore, is blushing in thy nose."

"But the divine Diogenes from Apollonia declared that air is the essence of things, and the warmer the air the more perfect the beings it makes, and from the warmest come the souls of sages. And since the autumns are cold, a genuine sage should warm his soul with wine; and wouldst thou hinder, O lord, a pitcher of even the stuff produced in Capua or Telesia from bearing heat to all the bones of a perishable human body?"

"Chilo Chilonides, where is thy birthplace?"

"On the Euxine Pontus. I come from Mesembria."

"Oh, Chilo, thou art great!"

"And unrecognized," said the sage, pensively.

But Vinicius was impatient again. In view of the hope which had gleamed before him, he wished Chilo to set out at once on his work; hence the whole conversation seemed to him simply a vain loss of time, and he was angry at Petronius.

"When wilt thou begin the search?" asked he, turning to the Greek.

"I have begun it already," answered Chilo. "And since I am here, and answering thy affable question, I am searching yet. Only have confidence, honored tribune, and know that if thou wert to lose the string of thy sandal I should find it, or him who picked it up on the street."

"Hast thou been employed in similar services?" asked Petronius.

The Greek raised his eyes. "To-day men esteem virtue and wisdom too low, for a philosopher not to be forced to seek other means of living."

"What are thy means?"

"To know everything, and to serve those with news who are in need of it."

"And who pay for it?"

"Ah, lord, I need to buy a copyist. Otherwise my wisdom will perish with me."

"If thou hast not collected enough yet to buy a sound mantle, thy services cannot be very famous."

"Modesty hinders me. But remember, lord, that to-day there are not such benefactors as were numerous formerly; and for whom it was as pleasant to cover service with gold as to swallow an oyster from Puteoli. No; my services are not small, but the gratitude of mankind is small. At times, when a valued slave escapes, who will find him, if not the only son of my father? When on the walls there are inscriptions against the divine Poppæa, who will indicate those who composed them? Who will discover at the bookstalls verses against Cæsar? Who will declare what is said in the houses of knights and senators? Who will carry letters which the writers will not intrust to slaves? Who will listen to news at the doors of barbers? For whom have wine-shops and bake-shops no secret? In whom do slaves trust? Who can see through every house, from the atrium to the garden? Who knows every street, every alley and hiding-place? Who knows what they say in the baths, in the circus, in the mar-

kets, in the fencing-schools, in slave-dealers' sheds, and even in the arenas?"

"By the gods! enough, noble sage!" cried Petronius; "we are drowning in thy services, thy virtue, thy wisdom, and thy eloquence. Enough! We wanted to know who thou art, and we know!"

But Vinicius was glad, for he thought that this man, like a hound, once put on the trail, would not stop till he had found out the hiding-place.

"Well," said he, "dost thou need indications?"

"I need arms."

"Of what kind?" asked Vinicius, with astonishment.

The Greek stretched out one hand; with the other he made the gesture of counting money.

"Such are the times, lord," said he, with a sigh.

"Thou wilt be the ass, then," said Petronius, "to win the fortress with bags of gold?"

"I am only a poor philosopher," answered Chilo, with humility; "ye have the gold."

Vinicius tossed him a purse, which the Greek caught in the air, though two fingers were lacking on his right hand.

He raised his head then, and said: "I know more than thou thinkest. I have not come empty-handed. I know that Aulus did not intercept the maiden, for I have spoken with his slaves. I know that she is not on the Palatine, for all are occupied with the infant Augusta; and perhaps I may even divine why ye prefer to search for the maiden with my help rather than that of the city guards and Cæsar's soldiers. I know that her escape was effected by a servant, — a slave coming from the same country as she. He could not find assistance among slaves, for slaves all stand together, and would not act against thy slaves. Only a co-religionist would help him."

"Dost hear, Vinicius?" broke in Petronius. "Have I not said the same, word for word, to thee?"

"That is an honor for me," said Chilo. "The maiden, lord," continued he, turning again to Vinicius, "worships beyond a doubt the same divinity as that most virtuous of Roman ladies, that genuine matron, Pomponia. I have heard this, too, that Pomponia was tried in her own house for worshipping some kind of foreign god, but I could not learn from her slaves what god that is, or what his worshippers are called. If I could learn that, I should go to them, become the most devoted among them, and gain their confi-

dence. But thou, lord, who hast passed, as I know too, a number of days in the house of the noble Aulus, canst thou not give me some information thereon?"

"I cannot," said Vinicius.

"Ye have asked me long about various things, noble lords, and I have answered the questions; permit me now to give one. Hast thou not seen, honored tribune, some statuette, some offering, some token, some amulet on Pomponia or thy divine Lygia? Hast thou not seen them making signs to each other, intelligible to them alone?"

"Signs? Wait! Yes; I saw once that Lygia made a fish on the sand."

"A fish? A-a! O-o-o! Did she do that once, or a number of times?"

"Only once."

"And art thou certain, lord, that she outlined a fish? O-o?"

"Yes," answered Vinicius, with roused curiosity. "Dost thou divine what that means?"

"Do I divine!" exclaimed Chilo. And bowing in sign of farewell, he added: "May Fortune scatter on you both equally all gifts, worthy lords!"

"Give command to bring thee a mantle," said Petronius to him at parting.

"Ulysses gives thee thanks for Thersites," said the Greek; and bowing a second time, he walked out.

"What wilt thou say of that noble sage?" inquired Petronius.

"This, that he will find Lygia," answered Vinicius, with delight; "but I will say, too, that were there a kingdom of rogues he might be the king of it."

"Most certainly. I shall make a nearer acquaintance with this stoic; meanwhile I must give command to perfume the atrium."

But Chilo Chilonides, wrapping his new mantle about him, threw up on his palm, under its folds, the purse received from Vinicius, and admired both its weight and its jingle. Walking on slowly, and looking around to see if they were not looking at him from the house, he passed the portico of Livia, and, reaching the corner of the Clivus Virbius, turned toward the Subura.

"I must go to Sporus," said he to himself, "and pour out a little wine to Fortuna. I have found at last what I have been seeking this long time. He is young, irascible,

bounteous as mines in Cyprus, and ready to give half his fortune for that Lygian linnnet. Just such a man have I been seeking this long time. It is needful, however, to be on one's guard with him, for the wrinkling of his brow forebodes no good. Ah! the wolf-whelps lord it over the world to-day! I should fear that Petronius less. O gods! but the trade of procurer pays better at present than virtue. Ah! she drew a fish on the sand! If I know what that means, may I choke myself with a piece of goat's cheese! But I shall know. Fish live under water, and searching under water is more difficult than on land, *ergo* he will pay me separately for this fish. Another such purse and I might cast aside the beggar's wallet and buy myself a slave. But what wouldst thou say, Chilo, were I to advise thee to buy not a male but a female slave? I know thee; I know that thou wouldst consent. If she were beautiful, like Eunice, for instance, thou thyself wouldst grow young near her, and at the same time wouldst have from her a good and certain income. I sold to that poor Eunice two threads from my old mantle. She is dull; but if Petronius were to give her to me, I would take her. Yes, yes, Chilo Chilonides, thou hast lost father and mother, thou art an orphan; therefore buy to console thee even a female slave. She must indeed live somewhere, therefore Vinicius will hire her a dwelling, in which thou too mayest find shelter; she must dress, hence Vinicius will pay for the dress; and must eat, hence he will support her. Och! what a hard life! Where are the times in which for an obolus a man could buy as much pork and beans as he could hold in both hands, or a piece of goat's entrails as long as the arm of a boy twelve years old, and filled with blood? But here is that villain Sporus! In the wine-shop it will be easier to learn something."

Thus conversing, he entered the wine-shop and ordered a pitcher of "dark" for himself. Seeing the sceptical look of the shopkeeper, he took a gold coin from his purse, and, putting it on the table, said, —

"Sporus, I toiled to-day with Seneca from dawn till mid-day, and this is what my friend gave me at parting."

The plump eyes of Sporus became plumper still at this sight, and the wine was soon before Chilo. Moistening his fingers in it, he drew a fish on the table, and said, —

"Knowest what that means?"

"A fish? Well, a fish, — yes, that's a fish."

"Thou art dull; though thou dost add so much water to

the wine that thou mightst find a fish in it. This is a symbol which, in the language of philosophers, means 'the smile of fortune.' If thou hadst divined it, thou too mightst have made a fortune. Honor philosophy, I tell thee, or I shall change my wine-shop, — an act to which Petronius, my personal friend, has been urging me this long time."

CHAPTER XIV.

FOR a number of days after the interview, Chilo did not show himself anywhere. Vinicius, since he had learned from Acte that Lygia loved him, was a hundred times more eager to find her, and began himself to search. He was unwilling, and also unable, to ask aid of Cæsar, who was in great fear because of the illness of the infant Augusta.

Sacrifices in the temples did not help, neither did prayers and offerings, nor the art of physicians, nor all the means of enchantment to which they turned finally. In a week the child died. Mourning fell upon the court and Rome. Cæsar, who at the birth of the infant was wild with delight, was wild now from despair, and, confining himself in his apartments, refused food for two days; and though the palace was swarming with senators and Augustians, who hastened with marks of sorrow and sympathy, he denied audience to every one. The senate assembled in an extraordinary session, at which the dead child was pronounced divine. It was decided to rear to her a temple and appoint a special priest to her service. New sacrifices were offered in other temples in honor of the deceased; statues of her were cast from precious metals; and her funeral was one immense solemnity, during which the people wondered at the unrestrained marks of grief which Cæsar exhibited; they wept with him, stretched out their hands for gifts, and above all amused themselves with the unparalleled spectacle.

That death alarmed Petronius. All knew in Rome that Poppæa ascribed it to enchantment. The physicians, who were thus enabled to explain the vanity of their efforts, supported her; the priests, whose sacrifices proved powerless, did the same, as well as the sorcerers, who were trembling for their lives, and also the people. Petronius was glad now that Lygia had fled; for he wished no evil to Aulus and Pomponia, and he wished good to himself and Vinicius; therefore when the cypress, set out before the Palatine as a sign of mourning, was removed, he went to the reception appointed for the senators and Augustians to learn how far Nero had lent ear to reports of spells, and to neutralize results which might come from his belief.

Knowing Nero, he thought, too, that though he did not believe in charms, he would feign belief, so as to magnify his own suffering, and take vengeance on some one, finally, to escape the suspicion that the gods had begun to punish him for crimes. Petronius did not think that Cæsar could love really and deeply even his own child; though he loved her passionately, he felt certain, however, that he would exaggerate his suffering. He was not mistaken. Nero listened, with stony face and fixed eyes, to the consolation offered by knights and senators. It was evident that, even if he suffered, he was thinking of this: What impression would his suffering make upon others? He was posing as a Niobe, and giving an exhibition of parental sorrow, as an actor would give it on the stage. He had not the power even then to endure in his silent and as it were petrified sorrow, for at moments he made a gesture as if to cast the dust of the earth on his head, and at moments he groaned deeply; but seeing Petronius, he sprang up and cried in a tragic voice, so that all present could hear him, —

“Eheu! And thou art guilty of her death! At thy advice the evil spirit entered these walls, — the evil spirit which, with one look, drew the life from her breast! Woe is me! Would that my eyes had not seen the light of Helios! Woe is me! Eheu! ehheu!”

And raising his voice still more, he passed into a despairing shout; but Petronius resolved at that moment to put everything on one cast of the dice; hence, stretching out his hand, he seized the silk kerchief which Nero wore around his neck always, and, placing it on the mouth of the Emperor, said solemnly, —

“Lord, Rome and the world are benumbed with pain; but do thou preserve thy voice for us!”

Those present were amazed; Nero himself was amazed for a moment. Petronius alone was unmoved; he knew too well what he was doing. He remembered, besides, that Terpnos and Diodorus had a direct order to close Cæsar’s mouth whenever he raised his voice too much and exposed it to danger.

“O Cæsar!” continued he, with the same seriousness and sorrow, “we have suffered an immeasurable loss; let even this treasure of consolation remain to us!”

Nero’s face quivered, and after a while tears came from his eyes. All at once he rested his hands on Petronius’s

shoulders, and, dropping his head on his breast, began to repeat, amid sobs, —

“Thou alone of all thought of this, — thou alone, O Petronius! thou alone!”

Tigellinus grew yellow from envy; but Petronius continued, —

“Go to Antium! there she came to the world, there joy flowed in on thee, there solace will come to thee. Let the sea air freshen thy divine throat; let thy breast breathe the salt dampness. We, thy devoted ones, will follow thee everywhere; and when we assuage thy pain with friendship, thou wilt comfort us with song.”

“True!” answered Nero, sadly, “I will write a hymn in her honor, and compose music for it.”

“And then thou wilt find the warm sun in Baïæ.”

“And afterward — forgetfulness in Greece.”

“In the birthplace of poetry and song.”

And his stony, gloomy state of mind passed away gradually, as clouds pass that are covering the sun; and then a conversation began which, though full of sadness, yet was full of plans for the future, — touching a journey, artistic exhibitions, and even the receptions required at the promised coming of Tiridates, King of Armenia. Tigellinus tried, it is true, to bring forward again the enchantment; but Petronius, sure now of victory, took up the challenge directly.

“Tigellinus,” said he, “dost thou think that enchantments can injure the gods?”

“Cæsar himself has mentioned them,” answered the courtier.

“Pain was speaking, not Cæsar; but thou — what is thy opinion of the matter?”

“The gods are too mighty to be subject to charms.”

“Then wouldst thou deny divinity to Cæsar and his family?”

“Peractum est!” muttered Eprius Marcellus, standing near, repeating that shout which the people gave always when a gladiator in the arena received such a blow that he needed no other.

Tigellinus gnawed his own anger. Between him and Petronius there had long existed a rivalry touching Nero. Tigellinus had this superiority, that Nero acted with less ceremony, or rather with none whatever in his presence; while thus far Petronius overcame Tigellinus at every encounter with wit and intellect.

So it happened now. Tigellinus was silent, and simply recorded in his memory those senators and knights who, when Petronius withdrew to the depth of the chamber, surrounded him straightway, supposing that after this incident he would surely be Cæsar's first favorite.

Petronius, on leaving the palace, betook himself to Vinicius, and described his encounter with Cæsar and Tigellinus.

"Not only have I turned away danger," said he, "from Aulus Plautius, Pomponia, and us, but even from Lygia, whom they will not seek, even for this reason, that I have persuaded Bronzebeard, the monkey, to go to Antium, and thence to Naples or Baiæ; and he will go. I know that he has not ventured yet to appear in the theatre publicly; I have known this long time that he intends to do so at Naples. He is dreaming, moreover, of Greece, where he wants to sing in all the more prominent cities, and then make a triumphal entry into Rome, with all the crowns which the 'Græculi' will bestow on him. During that time we shall be able to seek Lygia unhindered and secrete her in safety. But has not our noble philosopher been here yet?"

"Thy noble philosopher is a cheat. No; he has not shown himself, and he will not show himself again!"

"But I have a better understanding, if not of his honesty, of his wit. He has drawn blood once from thy purse, and will come even for this, to draw it a second time."

"Let him beware lest I draw his own blood."

"Draw it not; have patience till thou art convinced surely of his deceit. Do not give him more money, but promise a liberal reward if he brings thee certain information. Wilt thou thyself undertake something?"

"My two freedmen, Nymphidius and Demas, are searching for her with sixty men. Freedom is promised the slave who finds her. Besides I have sent out special persons by all roads leading from Rome to inquire at every inn for the Lygian and the maiden. I course through the city myself day and night, counting on a chance meeting."

"Whenever thou hast tidings let me know, for I must go to Antium."

"I will do so."

"And if thou wake up some morning and say, 'It is not worth while to torment myself for one girl, and take so much trouble because of her,' come to Antium. There will be no lack of women there, or amusement."

Vinicius began to walk with quick steps. Petronius looked for some time at him, and said at last, —

"Tell me sincerely, not as a mad head, who talks something into his brain and excites himself, but as a man of judgment who is answering a friend: Art thou concerned as much as ever about this Lygia?"

Vinicius stopped a moment, and looked at Petronius as if he had not seen him before; then he began to walk again. It was evident that he was restraining an outburst. At last, from a feeling of helplessness, sorrow, anger, and invincible yearning, two tears gathered in his eyes, which spoke with greater power to Petronius than the most eloquent words.

Then, meditating for a moment, he said, —

"It is not Atlas who carries the world on his shoulders, but woman; and sometimes she plays with it as with a ball."

"True," said Vinicius.

And they began to take farewell of each other. But at that moment a slave announced that Chilo Chilonides was waiting in the antechamber, and begged to be admitted to the presence of the lord.

Vinicius gave command to admit him immediately, and Petronius said, —

"Ha! have I not told thee? By Hercules! keep thy calmness; or he will command thee, not thou him."

"A greeting and honor to the noble tribune of the army, and to thee, lord," said Chilo, entering. "May your happiness be equal to your fame, and may your fame course through the world from the pillars of Hercules to the boundaries of the Arsacidæ."

"A greeting, O lawgiver of virtue and wisdom," answered Petronius.

But Vinicius inquired with affected calmness, "What dost thou bring?"

"The first time I came I brought thee hope, O lord; at present, I bring certainty that the maiden will be found."

"That means that thou hast not found her yet?"

"Yes, lord; but I have found what that sign means which she made. I know who the people are who rescued her, and I know the God among whose worshippers to seek her."

Vinicius wished to spring from the chair in which he was sitting; but Petronius placed his hand on his shoulder, and turning to Chilo said, —

"Speak on!"

"Art thou perfectly certain, lord, that she drew a fish on the sand?"

"Yes," burst out Vinicius.

"Then she is a Christian and Christians carried her away."

A moment of silence followed.

"Listen, Chilo," said Petronius. "My relative has predestined to thee a considerable sum of money for finding the girl, but a no less considerable number of rods if thou deceive him. In the first case thou wilt purchase not one, but three scribes; in the second, the philosophy of all the seven sages, with the addition of thy own, will not suffice to get thee ointment."

"The maiden is a Christian, lord," cried the Greek.

"Stop, Chilo. Thou art not a dull man. We know that Junia and Calvia Crispinilla accused Pomponia Græcina of confessing the Christian superstition; but we know too, that a domestic court acquitted her. Wouldst thou raise this again? Wouldst thou persuade us that Pomponia, and with her Lygia, could belong to the enemies of the human race, to the poisoners of wells and fountains, to the worshippers of an ass's head, to people who murder infants and give themselves up to the foulest license? Think, Chilo, if that thesis which thou art announcing to us will not rebound as an antithesis on thy own back."

Chilo spread out his arms in sign that that was not his fault, and then said, —

"Lord, utter in Greek the following sentence: Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour."¹

"Well, I have uttered it. What comes of that?"

"Now take the first letters of each of those words and put them into one word."

"Fish!" said Petronius with astonishment.²

"There, that is why fish has become the watchword of the Christians," answered Chilo, proudly.

A moment of silence followed. But there was something so striking in the conclusions of the Greek that the two friends could not guard themselves from amazement.

"Vinicius, art thou not mistaken?" asked Petronius.

"Did Lygia really draw a fish for thee?"

"By all the infernal gods, one might go mad!" cried the

¹ Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, Θεοῦ Υἱός, Σωτήρ (Iēsous Christos, Theou Uios, Sōtēr).

² ἰχθύς (Ichthus), the Greek word for "fish."

young man, with excitement. "If she had drawn a bird for me, I should have said a bird."

"Therefore she is a Christian," repeated Chilo.

"This signifies," said Petronius, "that Pomponia and Lygia poison wells, murder children caught on the street, and give themselves up to dissoluteness! Folly! Thou, Vinicius, wert at their house for a time, I was there a little while; but I know Pomponia and Aulus enough, I know even Lygia enough, to say monstrous and foolish! If a fish is the symbol of the Christians, which it is difficult really to deny, and if those women are Christians, then, by Proserpina! evidently Christians are not what we hold them to be."

"Thou speakest like Socrates, lord," answered Chilo.

"Who has ever examined a Christian? Who has learned their religion? When I was travelling three years ago from Naples hither to Rome (oh, why did I not stay in Naples!), a man joined me, whose name was Glaucus, of whom people said that he was a Christian; but in spite of that I convinced myself that he was a good and virtuous man."

"Was it not from that virtuous man that thou hast learned now what the fish means?"

"Unfortunately, lord, on the way, at an inn, some one thrust a knife into that honorable old man; and his wife and child were carried away by slave-dealers. I lost in their defence these two fingers; since, as people say, there is no lack among Christians of miracles, I hope that the fingers will grow out on my hand again."

"How is that? Hast thou become a Christian?"

"Since yesterday, lord, since yesterday! The fish made me a Christian. But see what a power there is in it. For some days I shall be the most zealous of the zealous, so that they may admit me to all their secrets; and when they admit me to their secrets, I shall know where the maiden is hiding. Perhaps then my Christianity will pay me better than my philosophy. I have made a vow also to Mercury, that if he helps me to find the maiden, I will sacrifice to him two heifers of the same size and color and will gild their horns."

"Then thy Christianity of yesterday and thy philosophy of long standing permit thee to believe in Mercury?"

"I believe always in that in which I need to believe; that is my philosophy, which ought to please Mercury. Unfortunately (ye know, worthy lords, what a suspicious god he is), he does not trust the promises even of blameless philosophers, and prefers the heifers in advance; meanwhile this outlay is

immense. Not every one is a Seneca, and I cannot afford the sacrifice; should the noble Vinicius, however, wish to give something, on account of that sum which he promised —”

“Not an obolus, Chilo!” said Petronius, “not an obolus. The bounty of Vinicius will surpass thy expectations, but only when Lygia is found, — that is, when thou shalt indicate to us her hiding-place. Mercury must trust thee for the two heifers, though I am not astonished at him for not wishing to do so; in this I recognize his acuteness.”

“Listen to me, worthy lords. The discovery which I have made is great; for though I have not found the maiden yet, I have found the way in which I must seek her. Ye have sent freedmen and slaves throughout the city and into the country; has any one given you a clew? No! I alone have given one. I tell you more. Among your slaves there may be Christians, of whom ye have no knowledge, for this superstition has spread everywhere; and they, instead of aiding, will betray you. It is unfortunate that they see me here; do thou therefore, noble Petronius, enjoin silence on Eunice; and thou too, noble Vinicius, spread a report that I sell thee an ointment which insures victory in the circus to horses rubbed with it. I alone will search for her, and single-handed I will find the fugitives; and do ye trust in me, and know that whatever I receive in advance will be for me simply an encouragement, for I shall hope always for more, and shall feel the greater certainty that the promised reward will not fail me. Ah, it is true! As a philosopher I despise money, though neither Seneca, nor even Musonius, nor Cornutus despises it, though they have not lost fingers in any one’s defence, and are able themselves to write and leave their names to posterity. But, aside from the slave, whom I intend to buy, and besides Mercury, to whom I have promised the heifers, — and ye know how dear cattle have become in these times, — the searching itself involves much outlay. Only listen to me patiently. Well, for the last few days my feet are wounded from continual walking. I have gone to wine-shops to talk with people, to bakeries, to butcher-shops, to dealers in olive oil, and to fishermen. I have run through every street and alley; I have been in the hiding-places of fugitive slaves; I have lost money, nearly a hundred ases, in playing *mora*; I have been in laundries, in drying-sheds, in cheap kitchens; I have seen mule-drivers and carvers; I have seen people who cure bladder complaints and pull teeth; I have talked with dealers in dried figs; I

have been at cemeteries; and do ye know why? This is why; so as to outline a fish everywhere, look people in the eyes, and hear what they would say of that sign. For a long time I was unable to learn anything, till at last I saw an old slave at a fountain. He was drawing water with a bucket, and weeping. Approaching him, I asked the cause of his tears. When we had sat down on the steps of the fountain, he answered that all his life he had been collecting sestertium after sestertium, to redeem his beloved son; but his master, a certain Pansa, when the money was delivered to him, took it, but kept the son in slavery. ‘And so I am weeping,’ said the old man, ‘for though I repeat, Let the will of God be done, I, poor sinner, am not able to keep down my tears.’ Then, as if penetrated by a forewarning, I moistened my finger in the water and drew a fish for him. To this he answered, ‘My hope, too, is in Christ.’ I asked him then, ‘Hast thou confessed to me by that sign?’ ‘I have,’ said he; ‘and peace be with thee.’ I began then to draw him out, and the honest old man told me everything. His master, that Pansa, is himself a freedman of the great Pansa; and he brings stones by the Tiber to Rome, where slaves and hired persons unload them from the boats, and carry them to buildings in the night time, so as not to obstruct movement in the streets during daylight. Among these people many Christians work, and also his son; as the work is beyond his son’s strength, he wished to redeem him. But Pansa preferred to keep both the money and the slave. While telling me this, he began again to weep; and I mingled my tears with his, — tears came to me easily because of my kind heart, and the pain in my feet, which I got from walking excessively. I began also to lament that as I had come from Naples only a few days since, I knew no one of the brotherhood, and did not know where they assembled for prayer. He wondered that Christians in Naples had not given me letters to their brethren in Rome; but I explained to him that the letters were stolen from me on the road. Then he told me to come to the river at night, and he would acquaint me with brethren who would conduct me to houses of prayer and to elders who govern the Christian community. When I heard this, I was so delighted that I gave him the sum needed to redeem his son, in the hope that the lordly Vinicius would return it to me twofold.”

“Chilo,” interrupted Petronius, “in thy narrative falsehood appears on the surface of truth, as oil does on water.

Thou hast brought important information; I do not deny that. I assert, even, that a great step is made toward finding Lygia; but do not cover thy news with falsehood. What is the name of that old man from whom thou hast learned that the Christians recognize each other through the sign of a fish?"

"Euricius. A poor, unfortunate old man! He reminded me of Glaucus, whom I defended from murderers, and he touched me mainly by this."

"I believe that thou didst discover him, and wilt be able to make use of the acquaintance; but thou hast given him no money. Thou hast not given him an as; dost understand me? Thou hast not given anything."

"But I helped him to lift the bucket, and I spoke of his son with the greatest sympathy. Yes, lord, what can hide before the penetration of Petronius? Well, I did not give him money, or rather, I gave it to him, but only in spirit, in intention, which, had he been a real philosopher, should have sufficed him. I gave it to him because I saw that such an act was indispensable and useful; for think, lord, how this act has won all the Christians at once to me, what access to them it has opened, and what confidence it has roused in them."

"True," said Petronius, "and it was thy duty to do it."

"For this very reason I have come to get the means to do it."

Petronius turned to Vinicius, —

"Give command to count out to him five thousand sesteria, but in spirit, in intention."

"I will give thee a young man," said Vinicius, "who will take the sum necessary; thou wilt say to Euricius that the youth is thy slave, and thou wilt count out to the old man, in the youth's presence, this money. Since thou hast brought important tidings, thou wilt receive the same amount for thyself. Come for the youth and the money this evening."

"Thou art a real Cæsar!" said Chilo. "Permit me, lord, to dedicate my work to thee; but permit also that this evening I come only for the money, since Euricius told me that all the boats had been unloaded, and that new ones would come from Ostia only after some days. Peace be with you! Thus do Christians take farewell of one another. I will buy myself a slave woman, — that is, I wanted to say a slave man. Fish are caught with a bait, and Christians with fish. *Pax vobiscum! pax! pax! pax!*"

CHAPTER XV.

PETRONIUS TO VINICIUS:

"I send to thee from Antium, by a trusty slave, this letter, to which, though thy hand is more accustomed to the sword and the javelin than the pen, I think that thou wilt answer through the same messenger without needless delay. I left thee on a good trail, and full of hope; hence I trust that thou hast either satisfied thy pleasant desires in the embraces of Lygia, or wilt satisfy them before the real wintry wind from the summits of Soracte shall blow on the Campania. Oh, my Vinicius! may thy preceptress be the golden goddess of Cyprus; be thou, on thy part, the preceptor of that Lygian Aurora, who is fleeing before the sun of love. And remember always that marble, though most precious, is nothing of itself, and acquires real value only when the sculptor's hand turns it into a masterpiece. Be thou such a sculptor, carissime! To love is not sufficient; one must know how to love; one must know how to teach love. Though the plebs, too, and even animals, experience pleasure, a genuine man differs from them in this especially, that he makes love in some way a noble art, and, admiring it, knows all its divine value, makes it present in his mind, thus satisfying not his body merely, but his soul. More than once, when I think here of the emptiness, the uncertainty, the dreariness of life, it occurs to me that perhaps thou hast chosen better, and that not Cæsar's court, but war and love, are the only objects for which it is worth while to be born and to live.

"Thou wert fortunate in war, be fortunate also in love; and if thou art curious as to what men are doing at the court of Cæsar, I will inform thee from time to time. We are living here at Antium, and nursing our heavenly voice; we continue to cherish the same hatred of Rome, and think of betaking ourselves to Baia for the winter, to appear in public at Naples, whose inhabitants, being Greeks, will appreciate us better than that wolf brood on the banks of the Tiber. People will hasten thither from Baia, from Pompeii, Puteoli, Cumæ, and Stabia; neither applause nor