

CHAPTER XVIII.

PETRONIUS to VINICIUS :

“Thy case is a bad one, carissime. It is clear that Venus has disturbed thy mind, deprived thee of reason and memory, as well as the power to think of aught else except love. Read some time thy answer to my letter, and thou wilt see how indifferent thy mind is to all except Lygia; how exclusively it is occupied with her, how it returns to her always, and circles above her, as a falcon above chosen prey. By Pollux! find her quickly, or that of thee which fire has not turned into ashes will become an Egyptian sphinx, which, enamoured, as 'tis said, of pale Isis, grew deaf and indifferent to all things, waiting only for night, so as to gaze with stony eyes at the loved one.

“Run disguised through the city in the evening, even honor Christian houses of prayer in thy philosopher's company. Whatever excites hope and kills time is praiseworthy. But for my friendship's sake do this one thing: Ursus, Lygia's slave, is a man of uncommon strength very likely; hire Croton, and go out three together; that will be safer and wiser. The Christians, since Pomponia and Lygia belong to them, are surely not such scoundrels as most people imagine. But when a lamb of their flock is in question they are no triflers, as they have shown by carrying away Lygia. When thou seest Lygia thou wilt not restrain thyself, I am sure, and wilt try to bear her away on the spot. But how wilt thou and Chilonides do it? Croton would take care of himself, even though ten like Ursus defended the maiden. Be not plundered by Chilo, but be not sparing of money on Croton. Of all counsels which I can give this is the best one.

“Here they have ceased to speak of the infant Augusta, or to say that she perished through witchcraft. Poppæa mentions her at times yet; but Cæsar's mind is stuffed with something else. Moreover, if it be true that the divine Augusta is in a changed state again, the memory of that child will be blown away without trace. We have been in Naples for some days, or rather in Baia. If thou art capable of any thought, echoes of our life must strike thy ear,

for surely Rome talks of naught else. We went directly to Baia, where at first memories of the mother attacked us, and reproaches of conscience. But dost thou know to what Ahenobarbus has gone already? To this, that for him even the murder of his mother is a mere theme for verses, and a reason for buffoonish tragic scenes. Formerly he felt real reproaches only in so far as he was a coward; now, when he is convinced that the earth is under his feet as before, and that no god is taking vengeance, he feigns them only to move people by his fate. He springs up at night sometimes declaring that the Furies are hunting him; he rouses us, looks around, assumes the posture of an actor playing the rôle of Orestes, and the posture of a bad actor too; he declaims Greek verses, and looks to see if we are admiring him. We admire him apparently; and instead of saying to him, Go to sleep, thou buffoon! we bring ourselves also to the tone of tragedy, and protect the great artist from the Furies. By Castor! this news at least must have reached thee, that he has appeared in public at Naples. They drove in from the city and the surrounding towns all the Greek ruffians, who filled the arena with such a vile odor of sweat and garlic that I thank the gods that, instead of sitting in the first rows with the Augustians, I was behind the scenes with Ahenobarbus. And wilt thou believe it, he was afraid really! He took my hand and put it to his heart, which was beating with increased pulsation; his breath was short; and at the moment when he had to appear he grew as pale as a parchment, and his forehead was covered with drops of sweat. Still he saw that in every row of seats were pretorians, armed with clubs, to rouse enthusiasm if the need came. But there was no need. No herd of monkeys from the environs of Carthage could howl as did this rabble. I tell thee that the smell of garlic came to the stage; but Nero bowed, pressed his hand to his heart, sent kisses from his lips, and shed tears. Then he rushed in among us, who were waiting behind the scenes, like a drunken man, crying, ‘What were the triumphs of Julius compared with this triumph of mine?’ But the rabble was howling yet and applauding, knowing that it would applaud to itself favors, gifts, banquets, lottery tickets, and a fresh exhibition by the Imperial buffoon. I do not wonder that they applauded, for such a sight had not been seen till that evening. And every moment he repeated: ‘See what the Greeks are! see what the Greeks are!’ From that evening

it has seemed to me that his hatred for Rome is increasing. Meanwhile special couriers were hurried to Rome announcing the triumph, and we expect thanks from the Senate one of these days. Immediately after Nero's first exhibition, a strange event happened here. The theatre fell in on a sudden, but just after the audience had gone. I was there, and did not see even one corpse taken from the ruins. Many, even among the Greeks, see in this event the anger of the gods, because the dignity of Cæsar was disgraced; he, on the contrary, finds in it favor of the gods, who have his song, and those who listen to it, under their evident protection. Hence there are offerings in all the temples, and great thanks. For Nero it is a great encouragement to make the journey to Achæa. A few days since he told me, however, that he had doubts as to what the Roman people might say; that they might revolt out of love for him, and fear touching the distribution of grain and touching the games, which might fail them in case of his prolonged absence.

"We are going, however, to Beneventum to look at the cobbler magnificence which Vatinius will exhibit, and thence to Greece, under the protection of the divine brothers of Helen. As to me, I have noted one thing, that when a man is among the mad he grows mad himself, and, what is more, finds a certain charm in mad pranks. Greece and the journey in a thousand ships; a kind of triumphal advance of Bacchus among nymphs and bacchantes crowned with myrtle, vine, and honeysuckle; there will be women in tiger skins harnessed to chariots; flowers, thyrses, garlands, shouts of 'Evoe!' music, poetry, and applauding Hellas. All this is well; but we cherish besides more daring projects. We wish to create a species of Oriental Imperium,—an empire of palm-trees, sunshine, poetry, and reality turned into a dream, reality turned into the delight of life only. We want to forget Rome; to fix the balancing point of the world somewhere between Greece, Asia, and Egypt; to live the life not of men but of gods; not to know what commonness is; to wander in golden galleys under the shadow of purple sails along the Archipelago; to be Apollo, Osiris, and Baal in one person; to be rosy with the dawn, golden with the sun, silver with the moon; to command, to sing, to dream. And wilt thou believe that I, who have still sound judgment to the value of a sestertium, and sense to the value of an as, let myself be borne away by these fantasies, and I do this for the reason that, if they are not possible, they

are at least grandiose and uncommon? Such a fabulous empire would be a thing which, some time or other, after long ages, would seem a dream to mankind. Except when Venus takes the form of a Lygia, or even of a slave Eunice, or when art beautifies it, life itself is empty, and many a time it has the face of a monkey. But Bronzebeard will not realize his plans, even for this cause, that in his fabulous kingdom of poetry and the Orient no place is given to treason, meanness, and death; and that in him with the poses of a poet sits a wretched comedian, a dull charioteer, and a frivolous tyrant. Meanwhile we are killing people whenever they displease us in any way. Poor Torquatus Silanus is now a shade; he opened his veins a few days since. Lecanius and Licinus will enter on the consulate with terror. Old Thrasea will not escape death, for he dares to be honest. Tigellinus is not able yet to frame a command for me to open my veins. I am still needed not only as *elegantiae arbiter*, but as a man without whose counsel and taste the expedition to Achæa might fail. More than once, however, I think that sooner or later it must end in opening my veins; and knowest thou what the question will be then with me?—that Bronzebeard should not get my goblet, which thou knowest and admirest. Shouldst thou be near at the moment of my death, I will give it to thee; shouldst thou be at a distance, I will break it. But meanwhile I have before me yet Beneventum of the cobblers and Olympian Greece; I have Fate too, which, unknown and unforeseen, points out the road to every one.

"Be well, and engage Croton; otherwise they will snatch Lygia from thee a second time. When Chilonides ceases to be needful, send him to me wherever I may be. Perhaps I shall make him a second Vatinius, and consuls and senators may tremble before him yet, as they trembled before that knight Dratevka. It would be worth while to live to see such a spectacle. When thou hast found Lygia, let me know, so that I may offer for you both a pair of swans and a pair of doves in the round temple of Venus here. Once I saw Lygia in a dream, sitting on thy knee, seeking thy kisses. Try to make that dream prophetic. May there be no clouds on thy sky; or if there be, let them have the color and the odor of roses! Be in good health, and farewell!"

CHAPTER XIX.

BARELY had Vinicius finished reading when Chilo pushed quietly into his library, unannounced by any one, for the servants had the order to admit him at every hour of the day or night.

"May the divine mother of thy magnanimous ancestor Æneas be full of favor to thee, as the son of Maia was kind to me."

"What dost thou mean?" asked Vinicius, springing from the table at which he was sitting.

Chilo raised his head and said, "Eureka!"

The young patrician was so excited that for a long time he could not utter a word.

"Hast thou seen her?" asked he, at last.

"I have seen Ursus, lord, and have spoken with him."

"Dost thou know where they are secreted?"

"No, lord. Another, through boastfulness, would have let the Lygian know that he divined who he was; another would have tried to extort from him the knowledge of where he lived, and would have received either a stroke of the fist, — after which all earthly affairs would have become indifferent to him, — or he would have roused the suspicion of the giant and caused this, — that a new hiding-place would be found for the girl, this very night perhaps. I did not act thus. It suffices me to know that Ursus works near the Emporium, for a miller named Demas, the same name as that borne by thy freedman; now any trusted slave of thine may go in the morning on his track, and discover their hiding place. I bring thee merely the assurance that, since Ursus is here, the divine Lygia also is in Rome, and a second news that she will be in Ostrianum to-night, almost certainly —"

"In Ostrianum? Where is that?" interrupted Vinicius, wishing evidently to run to the place indicated.

"An old hypogeum between the Viæ Salaria and Nomentana. That pontifex maximus of the Christians, of whom I spoke to thee, and whom they expected somewhat later, has come, and to-night he will teach and baptize in that cemetery. They hide their religion, for, though there are no edicts to prohibit it as yet, the people hate them, so they

must be careful. Ursus himself told me that all, to the last soul, would be in Ostrianum to-night, for every one wishes to see and hear him who was the foremost disciple of Christ, and whom they call Apostle. Since among them women hear instruction as well as men, Pomponia alone perhaps of women will not be there; she could not explain to Aulus, a worshipper of the ancient gods, her absence from home at night. But Lygia, lord, who is under the care of Ursus and the Christian elders, will go undoubtedly with other women."

Vinicius, who had lived hitherto in a fever, and upheld as it were, by hope alone, now that his hope seemed fulfilled felt all at once the weakness that a man feels after a journey which has proved beyond his strength. Chilo noticed this, and resolved to make use of it.

"The gates are watched, it is true, by thy people, and the Christians must know that. But they do not need gates. The Tiber, too, does not need them; and though it is far from the river to those roads, it is worth while to walk one road more to see the 'Great Apostle.' Moreover they may have a thousand ways of going beyond the walls, and I know that they have. In Ostrianum thou wilt find Lygia; and even should she not be there, which I will not admit, Ursus will be there, for he has promised to kill Glaucus. He told me himself that he would be there, and that he would kill him. Dost hear, noble tribune? either thou wilt follow Ursus and learn where Lygia dwells, or thou wilt command thy people to seize him as a murderer, and, having him in thy hand, thou wilt make him confess where he has hidden Lygia. I have done my best! Another would have told thee that he had drunk ten cantars of the best wine with Ursus before he wormed the secret out of him; another would have told thee that he had lost a thousand sestertia to him in *scriptæ duodecim*, or that he had bought the intelligence for two thousand; I know that thou wouldst repay me doubly, but in spite of that, once in my life — I mean, as always in my life — I shall be honest, for I think, as the magnanimous Petronius says, that thy bounty exceeds all my hopes and expectations."

Vinicius, who was a soldier and accustomed not only to take counsel of himself in all cases, but to act, was overcome by a momentary weakness and said, —

"Thou wilt not deceive thyself as to my liberality, but first thou wilt go with me to Ostrianum."

"I, to Ostrianum?" inquired Chilo, who had not the least wish to go there. "I, noble tribune, promised thee to point out Lygia, but I did not promise to take her away for thee. Think, lord, what would happen to me if that Lygian bear, when he had torn Glaucus to pieces, should convince himself straightway that he had torn him not altogether justly? Would he not look on me (of course without reason) as the cause of the accomplished murder? Remember, lord, that the greater philosopher a man is, the more difficult it is for him to answer the foolish questions of common people; what should I answer him were he to ask me why I calumniated Glaucus? But if thou suspect that I deceive thee, I say, pay me only when I point out the house in which Lygia lives; show me to-day only a part of thy liberality, so that if thou, lord (which may all the gods ward from thee), succumb to some accident, I shall not be entirely without recompense. Thy heart could not endure that."

Vinicius went to a casket called "arca," standing on a marble pedestal, and, taking out a purse, threw it to Chilo.

"There are scrupula," said he; "when Lygia shall be in my house, thou wilt get the same full of aurei."

"Thou art Jove!" exclaimed Chilo.

But Vinicius frowned.

"Thou wilt receive food here," said he; "then thou mayest rest. Thou wilt not leave this house till evening, and when night falls thou wilt go with me to Ostrianum."

Fear and hesitation were reflected on the Greek's face for a time; but afterward he grew calm, and said,—

"Who can oppose thee, lord! Receive these my words as of good omen, just as our great hero received words like them in the temple of Ammon. As to me, these 'scruples' (here he shook the purse) 'have outweighed mine, not to mention thy society, which for me is delight and happiness.'"

Vinicius interrupted him impatiently, and asked for details of his conversation with Ursus. From them it seemed clear that either Lygia's hiding-place would be discovered that night, or he would be able to seize her on the road back from Ostrianum. At thought of this, Vinicius was borne away by wild delight. Now, when he felt clearly sure of finding Lygia, his anger against her, and his feeling of offence almost vanished. In return for that delight he forgave her every fault. He thought of her only as dear and desired, and he had the same impression as if she were returning after a long journey. He wished to summon his

slaves and command them to deck the house with garlands. In that hour he had not a complaint against Ursus, even. He was ready to forgive all people everything. Chilo, for whom, in spite of his services, he had felt hitherto a certain repulsion, seemed to him for the first time an amusing and also an uncommon person. His house grew radiant; his eyes and his face became bright. He began again to feel youth and the pleasure of life. His former gloomy suffering had not given him yet a sufficient measure of how he loved Lygia. He understood this now for the first time, when he hoped to possess her. His desires woke in him, as the earth, warmed by the sun, wakes in spring; but his desires this time were less blind and wild, as it were, and more joyous and tender. He felt also within himself energy without bounds, and was convinced that should he but see Lygia with his own eyes, all the Christians on earth could not take her from him, nor could Cæsar himself.

Chilo, emboldened by the young tribune's delight, regained power of speech and began to give advice. According to him, it behooved Vinicius not to look on the affair as won, and to observe the greatest caution, without which all their work might end in nothing. He implored Vinicius not to carry off Lygia from Ostrianum. They ought to go there with hoods on their heads, with their faces hidden, and restrict themselves to looking at all who were present from some dark corner. When they saw Lygia, it would be safest to follow her at a distance, see what house she entered, surround it next morning at daybreak, and take her away in open daylight. Since she was a hostage and belonged specially to Cæsar, they might do that without fear of law. In the event of not finding her in Ostrianum they could follow Ursus, and the result would be the same. To go to the cemetery with a crowd of attendants was impracticable,—that might draw attention to them easily; then the Christians need only put out the lights, as they did when she was intercepted, and scatter in the darkness, or betake themselves to places known to them only. But Vinicius and he should arm, and, still better, take a couple of strong, trusty men to defend them in case of need.

Vinicius saw the perfect truth of what he said, and, recalling Petronius's counsel, commanded his slaves to bring Croton. Chilo, who knew every one in Rome, was set at rest notably when he heard the name of the famous athlete, whose superhuman strength in the arena he had wondered at

more than once, and he declared that he would go to Ostri-
anum. The purse filled with great aurei seemed to him much
easier of acquisition through the aid of Croton.

Hence he sat down in good spirits at the table to which,
after a time, he was called by the chief of the atrium.

While eating, he told the slaves that he had obtained for
their master a miraculous ointment. The worst horse, if
rubbed on the hoofs with it, would leave every other far
behind. A certain Christian had taught him how to prepare
that ointment, for the Christian elders were far more skilled
in enchantment and miracles than even the Thessalians,
though Thessaly was renowned for its witches. The Chris-
tians had immense confidence in him — why, any one easily
understands who knows what a fish means. While speaking
he looked sharply at the eyes of the slaves, in the hope of
discovering a Christian among them and informing Vinicius.
But when the hope failed him, he fell to eating and drinking
uncommon quantities, not sparing praises on the cook, and
declaring that he would endeavor to buy him of Vinicius.
His joyfulness was dimmed only by the thought that at night
he must go to Ostriatum. He comforted himself, however,
as he would go in disguise, in darkness, and in the company
of two men, one of whom was so strong that he was the idol
of Rome; the other a patrician, a man of high dignity in the
army. "Even should they discover Vinicius," said he to
himself, "they will not dare to raise a hand on him; as to
me, they will be wise if they see the tip of my nose even."

He fell then to recalling his conversation with the laborer;
and the recollection of that filled him again with delight.
He had not the least doubt that that laborer was Ursus. He
knew of the uncommon strength of the man, from the narra-
tives of Vinicius, and those who had brought Lygia from
Cæsar's palace. When he inquired of Euricius touching men
of exceptional strength, there was nothing remarkable in this,
that they pointed out Ursus. Then the confusion and rage
of the laborer at mention of Vinicius and Lygia left him no
doubt that those persons concerned him particularly; the
laborer had mentioned also his penance for killing a man, —
Ursus had killed Atacinus; finally, the appearance of the
laborer answered perfectly to the account which Vinicius had
given of the Lygian. The change of name was all that
could provoke doubt, but Chilo knew that frequently Chris-
tians took new names at baptism.

"Should Ursus kill Glaucus," said Chilo to himself, "that

will be better still; but should he not kill him, that will be a
good sign, for it will show how difficult it is for Christians to
murder. I described Glaucus as a real son of Judas, and a trai-
tor to all Christians; I was so eloquent that a stone would have
been moved, and would have promised to fall on the head of
Glaucus. Still I hardly moved that Lygian bear to put his paw
on him. He hesitated, was unwilling, spoke of his penance and
compunction. Evidently murder is not common among them.
Offences against one's self must be forgiven, and there is not
much freedom in taking revenge for others. *Ergo*, stop!
think, Chilo, what can threaten thee? Glaucus is not free to
avenge himself on thee. If Ursus will not kill Glaucus for
such a great crime as the betrayal of all Christians, so much the
more will he not kill thee for the small offence of betraying
one Christian. Moreover, when I have once pointed out to
this ardent wood-pigeon the nest of that turtle-dove, I will
wash my hands of everything, and transfer myself to Naples.
The Christians talk, also, of a kind of washing of the hands;
that is evidently a method by which, if a man has an affair
with them, he may finish it decisively. What good people
these Christians are, and how ill men speak of them! O
God! such is the justice of this world. But I love that reli-
gion, since it does not permit killing; but if it does not
permit killing, it certainly does not permit stealing, deceit,
or false testimony; hence I will not say that it is easy. It
teaches, evidently, not only to die honestly, as the Stoics
teach, but to live honestly also. If ever I have property and
a house, like this, and slaves in such numbers as Vinicius,
perhaps I shall be a Christian as long as may be convenient.
For a rich man can permit himself everything, even virtue.
This is a religion for the rich; hence I do not understand
how there are so many poor among its adherents. What
good is it for them, and why do they let virtue tie their hands?
I must think over this sometime. Meanwhile praise to thee,
Hermes! for helping me discover this badger. But if thou
hast done so for the two white yearling heifers with gilded
horns, I know thee not. Be ashamed, O slayer of Argos!
such a wise god as thou, and not foresee that thou wilt get
nothing! I will offer thee my gratitude; and if thou prefer
two beasts to it, thou art the third beast thyself, and in the
best event thou shouldst be a shepherd, not a god. Have a
care, too, lest I, as a philosopher, prove to men that thou
art non-existent, and then all will cease to bring thee offer-
ings. It is safer to be on good terms with philosophers."

Speaking thus to himself and to Hermes, he stretched on the sofa, put his mantle under his head, and was sleeping when the slave removed the dishes. He woke, — or rather they roused him, — only at the coming of Croton. He went to the atrium, then, and began to examine with pleasure the form of the trainer, an ex-gladiator, who seemed to fill the whole place with his immensity. Croton had stipulated as to the price of the trip, and was just speaking to Vinicius.

“By Hercules! it is well, lord,” said he, “that thou hast sent to-day for me, since I shall start to-morrow for Beneventum, whither the noble Vatinius has summoned me to make a trial, in presence of Cæsar, of a certain Syphax, the most powerful negro that Africa has ever produced. Dost thou imagine, lord, how his spinal column will crack in my arms, or how besides I shall break his black jaw with my fist?”

“By Pollux! Croton, I am sure that thou wilt do that,” answered Vinicius.

“And thou wilt act excellently,” added Chilo. “Yes, to break his jaw, besides! That’s a good idea, and a deed which befits thee. But rub thy limbs with olive oil to-day, my Hercules, and gird thyself, for know this, thou mayst meet a real Cacus. The man who is guarding that girl in whom the worthy Vinicius takes interest, has exceptional strength very likely.”

Chilo spoke thus only to rouse Croton’s ambition.

“That is true,” said Vinicius; “I have not seen him, but they tell me that he can take a bull by the horns and drag him wherever he pleases.”

“Oi!” exclaimed Chilo, who had not imagined that Ursus was so strong.

But Croton laughed, from contempt. “I undertake, worthy lord,” said he, “to bear away with this hand whom-ever thou shalt point out to me, and with this other defend myself against seven such Lygians, and bring the maiden to thy dwelling though all the Christians in Rome were pursuing me like Calabrian wolves. If not, I will let myself be beaten with clubs in this impluvium.”

“Do not permit that, lord,” cried Chilo. “They will hurl stones at us, and what could his strength effect? Is it not better to take the girl from the house, — not expose thyself or her to destruction?”

“This is true, Croton,” said Vinicius.

“I receive thy money, I do thy will! But remember, lord, that to-morrow I go to Beneventum.”

“I have five hundred slaves in the city,” answered Vinicius.

He gave them a sign to withdraw, went to the library himself, and sitting down wrote the following words to Petronius, —

“The Lygian has been found by Chilo. I go this evening with him and Croton to Ostrianum, and shall carry her off from the house to-night or to-morrow. May the gods pour down on thee everything favorable. Be well, O carissime! for joy will not let me write further.”

Laying aside the reed then, he began to walk with quick step; for besides delight, which was overflowing his soul, he was tormented with fever. He said to himself that to-morrow Lygia would be in that house. He did not know how to act with her, but felt that if she would love him he would be her servant. He recalled Acte’s assurance that he had been loved, and that moved him to the uttermost. Hence it would be merely a question of conquering a certain maiden modesty, and a question of certain ceremonies which Christian teaching evidently commanded. But if that were true, Lygia, when once in his house, would yield to persuasion or superior force; she would have to say to herself, ‘It has happened!’ and then she would be amiable and loving.

But Chilo appeared and interrupted the course of these pleasant thoughts.

“Lord,” said the Greek, “this is what has come to my head. Have not the Christians signs, ‘passwords,’ without which no one will be admitted to Ostrianum? I know that it is so in houses of prayer, and I have received those passwords from Euricius; permit me then to go to him, lord, to ask precisely, and receive the needful signs.”

“Well, noble sage,” answered Vinicius, gladly; “thou speakest as a man of forethought, and for that praise belongs to thee. Thou wilt go, then, to Euricius, or whithersoever it may please thee; but as security thou wilt leave on this table here that purse which thou hast received from me.”

Chilo, who always parted with money unwillingly, squirmed; still he obeyed the command and went out. From the Carinæ to the Circus, near which was the little shop of Euricius, it was not very far; hence he returned considerably before evening.

“Here are the signs, lord. Without them they would not

admit us. I have inquired carefully about the road. I told Euricius that I needed the signs only for my friends; that I would not go myself, since it was too far for my advanced age; that, moreover, I should see the Great Apostle myself to-morrow, and he would repeat to me the choicest parts of his sermon."

"How! Thou wilt not be there? Thou must go!" said Vinicius.

"I know that I must; but I will go well hooded, and I advise thee to go in like manner, or we may frighten the birds."

In fact they began soon to prepare, for darkness had come on the world. They put on Gallic cloaks with hoods, and took lanterns; Vinicius, besides, armed himself and his companions with short, curved knives; Chilo put on a wig, which he obtained on the way from the old man's shop, and they went out, hurrying so as to reach the distant Nomentan Gate before it was closed.

CHAPTER XX.

THEY went through the Vicus Patricius, along the Viminal to the former Viminal gate, near the plain on which Diocletian afterward built splendid baths. They passed the remains of the wall of Servius Tullius, and through places more and more deserted they reached the Via Nomentana; there, turning to the left, towards the Via Salaria, they found themselves among hills full of sand-pits, and here and there they found graveyards.

Meanwhile it had grown dark completely, and since the moon had not risen yet, it would have been rather difficult for them to find the road were it not that the Christians themselves indicated it, as Chilo foresaw.

In fact, on the right, on the left, and in front, dark forms were evident, making their way carefully toward sandy hollows. Some of these people carried lanterns, — covering them, however, as far as possible with mantles; others, knowing the road better, went in the dark. The trained military eye of Vinicius distinguished, by their movements, younger men from old ones, who walked with canes, and from women, wrapped carefully in long mantles. The highway police, and villagers leaving the city, took those night wanderers, evidently, for laborers, going to sand-pits; or grave-diggers, who at times celebrated ceremonies of their own in the night-time. In proportion, however, as the young patrician and his attendants pushed forward, more and more lanterns gleamed, and the number of persons grew greater. Some of them sang songs in low voices, which to Vinicius seemed filled with sadness. At moments a separate word or a phrase of the song struck his ear, as, for instance, "Awake, thou that sleepest," or "Rise from the dead;" at times, again, the name of Christ was repeated by men and women.

But Vinicius turned slight attention to the words, for it came to his head that one of those dark forms might be Lygia. Some, passing near, said, "Peace be with thee!" or "Glory be to Christ!" but disquiet seized him, and his heart began to beat with more life, for it seemed to him that he heard Lygia's voice. Forms or movements like hers deceived him in the darkness every moment, and only when

he had corrected mistakes made repeatedly did he begin to distrust his own eyes.

The way seemed long to him. He knew the neighborhood exactly, but could not fix places in the darkness. Every moment they came to some narrow passage, or piece of wall, or booths, which he did not remember as being in the vicinity of the city. Finally the edge of the moon appeared from behind a mass of clouds, and lighted the place better than dim lanterns. Something from afar began at last to glimmer like a fire, or the flame of a torch. Vinicius turned to Chilo.

"Is that Ostrianum?" asked he.

Chilo, on whom night, distance from the city, and those ghostlike forms made a deep impression, replied in a voice somewhat uncertain, —

"I know not, lord; I have never been in Ostrianum. But they might praise God in some spot nearer the city."

After a while, feeling the need of conversation, and of strengthening his courage, he added, —

"They come together like murderers; still they are not permitted to murder, unless that Lygian has deceived me shamefully."

Vinicius, who was thinking of Lygia, was astonished also by the caution and mysteriousness with which her co-religionists assembled to hear their highest priest; hence he said, —

"Like all religions, this has its adherents in the midst of us; but the Christians are a Jewish sect. Why do they assemble here, when in the Trans-Tiber there are temples to which the Jews take their offerings in daylight?"

"The Jews, lord, are their bitterest enemies. I have heard that, before the present Cæsar's time, it came to war, almost, between Jews and Christians. Those outbreaks forced Claudius Cæsar to expel all the Jews, but at present that edict is abolished. The Christians, however, hide themselves from Jews, and from the populace, who, as is known to thee, accuse them of crimes and hate them."

They walked on some time in silence, till Chilo, whose fear increased as he receded from the gates, said, —

"When returning from the shop of Euricius, I borrowed a wig from a barber, and have put two beans in my nostrils. They must not recognize me; but if they do, they will not kill me. They are not malignant! They are even very honest. I esteem and love them."

"Do not win them to thyself by premature praises," retorted Vinicius.

They went now into a narrow depression, closed, as it were, by two ditches on the side, over which an aqueduct was thrown in one place. The moon came out from behind clouds, and at the end of the depression they saw a wall, covered thickly with ivy, which looked silvery in the moonlight. That was Ostrianum.

Vinicius's heart began to beat now with more vigor. At the gate two quarrymen took the signs from them. In a moment Vinicius and his attendants were in a rather spacious place enclosed on all sides by a wall. Here and there were separate monuments, and in the centre was the entrance to the hypogeum itself, or crypt. In the lower part of the crypt, beneath the earth, were graves; before the entrance a fountain was playing. But it was evident that no very large number of persons could find room in the hypogeum; hence Vinicius divined without difficulty that the ceremony would take place outside, in the space where a very numerous throng was soon gathered.

As far as the eye could reach, lantern gleamed near lantern, but many of those who came had no light whatever. With the exception of a few uncovered heads, all were hooded, from fear of treason or the cold; and the young patrician thought with alarm that, should they remain thus, he would not be able to recognize Lygia in that crowd and in the dim light.

But all at once, near the crypt, some pitch torches were ignited and put into a little pile. There was more light. After a while the crowd began to sing a certain strange hymn, at first in a low voice, and then louder. Vinicius had never heard such a hymn before. The same yearning which had struck him in the hymns murmured by separate persons on the way to the cemetery, was heard now in that, but with far more distinctness and power; and at last it became as penetrating and immense as if together with the people, the whole cemetery, the hills, the pits, and the region about, had begun to yearn. It might seem, also, that there was in it a certain calling in the night, a certain humble prayer for rescue in wandering and darkness.

Eyes turned upward seemed to see some one far above, there on high, and outstretched hands seemed to implore him to descend. When the hymn ceased, there followed a moment as it were of suspense, — so impressive that Vinicius and his companions looked unwittingly toward the stars, as if in dread that something uncommon would happen, and that some one would really descend to them.

Vinicius had seen a multitude of temples of most various structure in Asia Minor, in Egypt, and in Rome itself; he had become acquainted with a multitude of religions, most varied in character, and had heard many hymns; but here, for the first time, he saw people calling on a divinity with hymns, — not to carry out a fixed ritual, but calling from the bottom of the heart, with the genuine yearning which children might feel for a father or a mother. One had to be blind not to see that those people not merely honored their God, but loved him with the whole soul. Vinicius had not seen the like, so far, in any land, during any ceremony, in any sanctuary; for in Rome and in Greece those who still rendered honor to the gods did so to gain aid for themselves or through fear; but it had not even entered any one's head to love those divinities.

Though his mind was occupied with Lygia, and his attention with seeking her in the crowd, he could not avoid seeing those uncommon and wonderful things which were happening around him. Meanwhile a few more torches were thrown on the fire, which filled the cemetery with ruddy light and darkened the gleam of the lanterns. That moment an old man, wearing a hooded mantle but with a bare head, issued from the hypogeum. This man mounted a stone which lay near the fire.

The crowd swayed before him. Voices near Vinicius whispered, "Peter! Peter!" Some knelt, others extended their hands toward him. There followed a silence so deep that one heard every charred particle that dropped from the torches, the distant rattle of wheels on the Via Nomentana, and the sound of wind through the few pines which grew close to the cemetery.

Chilo bent toward Vinicius and whispered, —

"This is he! The foremost disciple of Christ — a fisherman!"

The old man raised his hand, and with the sign of the cross blessed those present, who fell on their knees simultaneously. Vinicius and his attendants, not wishing to betray themselves, followed the example of others. The young man could not seize his impressions immediately, for it seemed to him that the form which he saw there before him was both simple and uncommon, and, what was more, the uncommonness flowed just from the simplicity. The old man had no mitre on his head, no garland of oak-leaves on his temples, no palm in his hand, no golden tablet on his

breast, he wore no white robe embroidered with stars; in a word, he bore no insignia of the kind worn by priests — Oriental, Egyptian, or Greek — or by Roman flamens. And Vinicius was struck by that same difference again which he felt when listening to the Christian hymns; for that "fisherman," too, seemed to him, not like some high priest skilled in ceremonial, but as it were a witness, simple, aged, and immensely venerable, who had journeyed from afar to relate a truth which he had seen, which he had touched, which he believed as he believed in existence, and he had come to love this truth precisely because he believed it. There was in his face, therefore, such a power of convincing as truth itself has. And Vinicius, who had been a sceptic, who did not wish to yield to the charm of the old man, yielded, however, to a certain feverish curiosity to know what would flow from the lips of that companion of the mysterious "Christus," and what that teaching was of which Lygia and Pomponia Græcina were followers.

Meanwhile Peter began to speak, and he spoke from the beginning like a father instructing his children and teaching them how to live. He enjoined on them to renounce excess and luxury, to love poverty, purity of life, and truth, to endure wrongs and persecutions patiently, to obey the government and those placed above them, to guard against treason, deceit, and calumny; finally, to give an example in their own society to each other, and even to pagans.

Vinicius, for whom good was only that which could bring back to him Lygia, and evil everything which stood as a barrier between them, was touched and angered by certain of those counsels. It seemed to him that by enjoining purity and a struggle with desires the old man dared, not only to condemn his love, but to rouse Lygia against him and confirm her in opposition. He understood that if she were in the assembly listening to those words, and if she took them to heart, she must think of him as an enemy of that teaching and an outcast.

Anger seized him at this thought. "What have I heard that is new?" thought he. "Is this the new religion? Every one knows this, every one has heard it. The Cynics enjoined poverty and a restriction of necessities; Socrates enjoined virtue as an old thing and a good one; the first Stoic one meets, even such a one as Seneca, who has five hundred tables of lemon-wood, praises moderation, enjoins truth, patience in adversity, endurance in misfortune, — and

all that is like stale, mouse-eaten grain; but people do not wish to eat it because it smells of age."

And besides anger, he had a feeling of disappointment, for he expected the discovery of unknown, magic secrets of some kind, and thought that at least he would hear a rhetor astonishing by his eloquence; meanwhile he heard only words which were immensely simple, devoid of every ornament. He was astonished only by the mute attention with which the crowd listened.

But the old man spoke on to those people sunk in listening, — told them to be kind, poor, peaceful, just, and pure; not that they might have peace during life, but that they might live eternally with Christ after death, in such joy and such glory, in such health and delight, as no one on earth had attained at any time. And here Vinicius, though predisposed unfavorably, could not but notice that still there was a difference between the teaching of the old man and that of the Cynics, Stoics, and other philosophers; for they enjoin good and virtue as reasonable, and the only thing practical in life, while he promised immortality, and that not some kind of hapless immortality beneath the earth, in wretchedness, emptiness, and want, but a magnificent life, equal to that of the gods almost. He spoke meanwhile of it as of a thing perfectly certain; hence, in view of such a faith, virtue acquired a value simply measureless, and the misfortunes of this life became incomparably trivial. To suffer temporarily for inexhaustible happiness is a thing absolutely different from suffering because such is the order of nature. But the old man said further that virtue and truth should be loved for themselves, since the highest eternal good and the virtue existing before ages is God; whose therefore loves them loves God, and by that same becomes a cherished child of His.

Vinicius did not understand this well, but he knew previously, from words spoken by Pomponia Græcina to Petronius, that, according to the belief of Christians, God was one and almighty; when, therefore, he heard now again that He is all good and all just, he thought involuntarily that, in presence of such a demiurge, Jupiter, Saturn, Apollo, Juno, Vesta, and Venus would seem like some vain and noisy rabble, in which all were interfering at once, and each on his or her own account.

But the greatest astonishment seized him when the old man declared that God was universal love also; hence he

who loves man fulfils God's supreme command. But it is not enough to love men of one's own nation, for the God-man shed his blood for all, and found among pagans such elect of his as Cornelius the Centurion; it is not enough either to love those who do good to us, for Christ forgave the Jews who delivered him to death, and the Roman soldiers who nailed him to the cross; we should not only forgive but love those who injure us, and return them good for evil; it is not enough to love the good, we must love the wicked also, since by love alone is it possible to expel from them evil.

Chilo at these words thought to himself that his work had gone for nothing, that never in the world would Ursus dare to kill Glaucus, either that night or any other night. But he comforted himself at once by another inference from the teaching of the old man; namely, that neither would Glaucus kill him, though he should discover and recognize him.

Vinicius did not think now that there was nothing new in the words of the old man, but with amazement he asked himself: "What kind of God is this, what kind of religion is this, and what kind of people are these?" All that he had just heard could not find place in his head simply. For him all was an unheard-of medley of ideas. He felt that if he wished, for example, to follow that teaching, he would have to place on a burning pile all his thoughts, habits, and character, his whole nature up to that moment, burn them into ashes, and then fill himself with a life altogether different, and an entirely new soul. To him the science or the religion which commanded a Roman to love Parthians, Syrians, Greeks, Egyptians, Gauls, and Britons, to forgive enemies, to return them good for evil, and to love them, seemed madness. At the same time he had a feeling that in that madness itself there was something mightier than all philosophies so far. He thought that because of its madness it was impracticable, but because of its impracticability it was divine. In his soul he rejected it; but he felt that he was parting as if from a field full of spikenard, a kind of intoxicating incense; when a man has once breathed of this he must, as in the land of the lotus-eaters, forget all things else ever after, and yearn for it only.

It seemed to him that there was nothing real in that religion, but that reality in presence of it was so paltry that it deserved not the time for thought. Expanses of some kind, of which hitherto he had not had a suspicion, surrounded

him, — certain immensities, certain clouds. That cemetery began to produce on him the impression of a meeting-place for madmen, but also of a place mysterious and awful, in which, as on a mystic bed, something was in progress of birth the like of which had not been in the world so far. He brought before his mind all that, which from the first moment of his speech, the old man had said touching life, truth, love, God; and his thoughts were dazed from the brightness, as the eyes are blinded from lightning flashes which follow each other unceasingly.

As is usual with people for whom life has been turned into one single passion, Vinicius thought of all this through the medium of his love for Lygia; and in the light of those flashes he saw one thing distinctly, that if Lygia was in the cemetery, if she confessed that religion, obeyed and felt it, she never could and never would be his mistress.

For the first time, then, since he had made her acquaintance at Aulus's, Vinicius felt that though now he had found her he would not get her. Nothing similar had come to his head so far, and he could not explain it to himself then, for that was not so much an express understanding as a dim feeling of irreparable loss and misfortune. There rose in him an alarm, which was turned soon into a storm of anger against the Christians in general, and against the old man in particular. That fisherman, whom at the first cast of the eye he considered a peasant, now filled him with fear almost, and seemed some mysterious power deciding his fate inexorably and therefore tragically.

The quarrymen again, unobserved, added torches to the fire; the wind ceased to sound in the pines; the flame rose evenly, with a slender point toward the stars, which were twinkling in a clear sky. Having mentioned the death of Christ, the old man talked now of Him only. All held the breath in their breasts, and a silence set in which was deeper than the preceding one, so that it was possible almost to hear the beating of hearts. That man had seen! and he narrated as one in whose memory every moment had been fixed in such a way that were he to close his eyes he would see yet. He told, therefore, how on their return from the Cross he and John had sat two days and nights in the supper-chamber, neither sleeping nor eating, in suffering, in sorrow, in doubt, in alarm, holding their heads in their hands, and thinking that He had died. Oh, how grievous, how grievous that was! The third day had dawned and the light whitened

the walls, but he and John were sitting in the chamber, without hope or comfort. How desire for sleep tortured them (for they had spent the night before the Passion without sleep)! They roused themselves then, and began again to lament. But barely had the sun risen when Mary of Magdala, panting, her hair dishevelled, rushed in with the cry, "They have taken away the Lord!" When they heard this, he and John sprang up and ran toward the sepulchre. But John, being younger, arrived first; he saw the place empty, and dared not enter. Only when there were three at the entrance did he, the person now speaking to them, enter, and find on the stone a shirt with a winding sheet; but the body he found not.

Fear fell on them then, because they thought that the priests had borne away Christ, and both returned home in greater grief still. Other disciples came later and raised a lament, now in company, so that the Lord of Hosts might hear them more easily, and now separately and in turn. The spirit died within them, for they had hoped that the Master would redeem Israel, and it was now the third day since his death; hence they did not understand why the Father had deserted the Son, and they preferred not to look at the daylight, but to die, so grievous was the burden.

The remembrance of those terrible moments pressed even then from the eyes of the old man two tears, which were visible by the light of the fire, coursing down his gray beard. His hairless and aged head was shaking, and the voice died in his breast.

"That man is speaking the truth and is weeping over it," said Vinicius in his soul. Sorrow seized by the throat the simple-hearted listeners also. They had heard more than once of Christ's sufferings, and it was known to them that joy succeeded sorrow; but since an apostle who had seen it told this, they wrung their hands under the impression, and sobbed or beat their breasts.

But they calmed themselves gradually, for the wish to hear more gained the mastery. The old man closed his eyes, as if to see distant things more distinctly in his soul, and continued, —

"When the disciples had lamented in this way, Mary of Magdala rushed in a second time, crying that she had seen the Lord. Unable to recognize him, she thought him the gardener; but He said, 'Mary!' She cried 'Rabboni!'

and fell at his feet. He commanded her to go to the disciples, and vanished. But they, the disciples, did not believe her; and when she wept for joy, some upbraided her, some thought that sorrow had disturbed her mind, for she said, too, that she had seen angels at the grave, but they, running thither a second time, saw the grave empty. Later in the evening appeared Cleopas, who had come with another from Emmaus, and they returned quickly, saying: 'The Lord has indeed risen!' And they discussed with closed doors, out of fear of the Jews. Meanwhile He stood among them, though the doors had made no sound, and when they feared, He said, 'Peace be with you!'

.....

"And I saw Him, as did all, and He was like light, and like the happiness of our hearts, for we believed that He had risen from the dead, and that the seas will dry and the mountains turn to dust, but His glory will not pass.

.....

"After eight days Thomas Didymus put his finger in the Lord's wounds and touched His side; Thomas fell at His feet then, and cried, 'My Lord and my God!' 'Because thou hast seen me thou hast believed; blessed are they who have not seen and have believed!' said the Lord. And we heard those words, and our eyes looked at Him, for He was among us."

Vinicius listened, and something wonderful took place in him. He forgot for a moment where he was; he began to lose the feeling of reality, of measure, of judgment. He stood in the presence of two impossibilities. He could not believe what the old man said; and he felt that it would be necessary either to be blind or renounce one's own reason, to admit that that man who said "I saw" was lying. There was something in his movements, in his tears, in his whole figure, and in the details of the events which he narrated, which made every suspicion impossible. To Vinicius it seemed at moments that he was dreaming. But round about he saw the silent throng; the odor of lanterns came to his nostrils; at a distance the torches were blazing; and before him on the stone stood an aged man near the grave, with a head trembling somewhat, who, while bearing witness, repeated, "I saw!"

And he narrated to them everything up to the Ascension into heaven. At moments he rested, for he spoke very

circumstantially; but it could be felt that each minute detail had fixed itself in his memory, as a thing is fixed in a stone into which it has been engraved. Those who listened to him were seized by ecstasy. They threw back their hoods to hear him better, and not lose a word of those which for them were priceless. It seemed to them that some superhuman power had borne them to Galilee; that they were walking with the disciples through those groves and on those waters; that the cemetery was turned into the lake of Tiberius; that on the bank, in the mist of morning, stood Christ, as he stood when John, looking from the boat, said, "It is the Lord," and Peter cast himself in to swim, so as to fall the more quickly at the beloved feet. In the faces of those present were evident enthusiasm beyond bounds, oblivion of life, happiness, and love immeasurable. It was clear that during Peter's long narrative some of them had visions. When he began to tell how, at the moment of Ascension, the clouds closed in under the feet of the Saviour, covered Him, and hid Him from the eyes of the Apostles, all heads were raised toward the sky unconsciously, and a moment followed as it were of expectation, as if those people hoped to see Him or as if they hoped that He would descend again from the fields of heaven, and see how the old Apostle was feeding the sheep confided to him, and bless both the flock and him.

Rome did not exist for those people, nor did the man Cæsar; there were no temples of pagan gods; there was only Christ, who filled the land, the sea, the heavens, and the world.

At the houses scattered here and there along the Via Nomentana, the cocks began to crow, announcing midnight. At that moment Chilo pulled the corner of Vinicius's mantle and whispered, —

"Lord, I see Urban over there, not far from the old man, and with him is a maiden."

Vinicius shook himself, as if out of a dream, and, turning in the direction indicated by the Greek, he saw Lygia.