

CHAPTER XXI.

EVERY drop of blood quivered in the young patrician at sight of her. He forgot the crowd, the old man, his own astonishment at the incomprehensible things which he had heard, — he saw only her. At last, after all his efforts, after long days of alarm, trouble, and suffering, he had found her! For the first time he realized that joy might rush at the heart, like a wild beast, and squeeze it till breath was lost. He, who had supposed hitherto that on "Fortuna" had been imposed a kind of duty to accomplish all his wishes, hardly believed his own eyes now and his own happiness. Were it not for that disbelief, his passionate nature might have urged him to some unconsidered step; but he wished to convince himself first that that was not the continuation of those miracles with which his head was filled, and that he was not dreaming. But there was no doubt, — he saw Lygia, and an interval of barely a few steps divided them. She stood in perfect light, so that he could rejoice in the sight of her as much as he liked. The hood had fallen from her head and dishevelled her hair; her mouth was open slightly, her eyes raised toward the Apostle, her face fixed in listening and delighted. She was dressed in a dark woollen mantle, like a daughter of the people, but never had Vinicius seen her more beautiful; and notwithstanding all the disorder which had risen in him, he was struck by the nobility of that wonderful patrician head in distinction to the dress, almost that of a slave. Love flew over him like a flame, immense, mixed with a marvellous feeling of yearning, homage, honor, and desire. He felt the delight which the sight of her caused him; he drank of her as of life-giving water after long thirst. Standing near the gigantic Lygian, she seemed to him smaller than before, almost a child; he noticed, too, that she had grown more slender. Her complexion had become almost transparent; she made on him the impression of a flower, and a spirit. But all the more did he desire to possess that woman, so different from all women whom he had seen or possessed in Rome or the Orient. He felt that for her he would have given them all, and with them Rome and the world in addition.

He would have lost himself in gazing, and forgotten himself altogether, had it not been for Chilo, who pulled the corner of his mantle, out of fear that he might do something to expose them to danger. Meanwhile the Christians began to pray and sing. After a while Maranatha thundered forth, and then the Great Apostle baptized with water from the fountain those whom the presbyters presented as ready for baptism. It seemed to Vinicius that that night would never end. He wished now to follow Lygia as soon as possible, and seize her on the road or at her house.

At last some began to leave the cemetery, and Chilo whispered, —

"Let us go out before the gate, lord, we have not removed our hoods, and people look at us."

Such was the case, for during the discourse of the Apostle all had cast aside their hoods so as to hear better, and they had not followed the general example. Chilo's advice seemed wise, therefore. Standing before the gate, they could look at all who passed; Ursus it was easy to recognize by his form and size.

"Let us follow them," said Chilo; "we shall see to what house they go. To-morrow, or rather to-day, thou wilt surround the entrances with slaves and take her."

"No!" said Vinicius.

"What dost thou wish to do, lord?"

"We will follow her to the house and take her now, if thou wilt undertake that task, Croton?"

"I will," replied Croton, "and I will give myself to thee as a slave if I do not break the back of that bison who is guarding her."

But Chilo fell to dissuading and entreating them by all the gods not to do so. Croton was taken only for defence against attack in case they were recognized, not to carry off the girl. To take her when there were only two of them was to expose themselves to death, and, what was worse, they might let her out of their hands, and then she would hide in another place or leave Rome. And what could they do? Why not act with certainty? Why expose themselves to destruction and the whole undertaking to failure?

Though Vinicius restrained himself with the greatest effort from seizing Lygia in his arms at once, right there in the cemetery, he felt that the Greek was right, and would have lent ear, perhaps, to his counsels, had it not been for Croton, to whom reward was the question.

"Lord, command that old goat to be silent," said he, "or let me drop my fist on his head. Once in Buxentum, whither Lucius Saturnius took me to a play, seven drunken gladiators fell on me at an inn, and none of them escaped with sound ribs. I do not say to take the girl now from the crowd, for they might throw stones before our feet, but once she is at home I will seize her, carry her away, and take her whithersoever thou shalt indicate."

Vinicius was pleased to hear those words, and answered, —

"Thus let it be, by Hercules! To-morrow we may not find her at home; if we surprise them they will remove the girl surely."

"This Lygian seems tremendously strong!" groaned Chilo.

"No one will ask thee to hold his hands," answered Croton.

But they had to wait long yet, and the cocks had begun to crow before dawn when they saw Ursus coming through the gate, and with him Lygia. They were accompanied by a number of other persons. It seemed to Chilo that he recognized among them the Great Apostle; next to him walked another old man, considerably lower in stature, two women who were not young, and a boy, who lighted the way with a lantern. After that handful followed a crowd, about two hundred in number; Vinicius, Chilo, and Croton walked with these people.

"Yes, lord," said Chilo, "thy maiden is under powerful protection. That is the Great Apostle with her, for see how passing people kneel to him."

People did in fact kneel before him, but Vinicius did not look at them. He did not lose Lygia from his eyes for a moment; he thought only of bearing her away and, accustomed as he had been in wars to stratagems of all sorts, he arranged in his head the whole plan of seizure with soldierly precision. He felt that the step on which he had decided was bold, but he knew well that bold attacks give success generally.

The way was long; hence at moments he thought too of the gulf which that wonderful religion had dug between him and Lygia. Now he understood everything that had happened in the past, and why it had happened. He was sufficiently penetrating for that. Lygia he had not known hitherto. He had seen in her a maiden wonderful beyond others, a maiden toward whom his feelings were inflamed; he knew now that

her religion made her different from other women, and his hope that feeling, desire, wealth, luxury, would attract her he knew now to be a vain illusion. Finally he understood this, which he and Petronius had not understood, that the new religion ingrafted into the soul something unknown to that world in which he lived, and that Lygia, even if she loved him, would not sacrifice any of her Christian truths for his sake, and that, if pleasure existed for her, it was a pleasure different altogether from that which he and Petronius and Cæsar's court and all Rome were pursuing. Every other woman whom he knew might become his mistress, but that Christian would become only his victim. And when he thought of this, he felt anger and burning pain, for he felt that his anger was powerless. To carry off Lygia seemed to him possible; he was almost sure that he could take her, but he was equally sure that, in view of her religion, he himself with his bravery was nothing, that his power was nothing, and that through it he could effect nothing. That Roman military tribune, convinced that the power of the sword and the fist which had conquered the world, would command it forever, saw for the first time in life that beyond that power there might be something else; hence he asked himself with amazement what it was. And he could not answer distinctly; through his head flew merely pictures of the cemetery, the assembled crowd, and Lygia, listening with her whole soul to the words of the old man, as he narrated the passion, death, and resurrection of the God-man, who had redeemed the world, and promised it happiness on the other shore of the Styx.

When he thought of this, chaos rose in his head. But he was brought out of this chaos by Chilo, who fell to lamenting his own fate. He had agreed to find Lygia. He had sought for her in peril of his life, and he had pointed her out. But what more do they want? Had he offered to carry the maiden away? Who could ask anything like this of a maimed man deprived of two fingers, an old man, devoted to meditation, to science, and virtue? What would happen were a lord of such dignity as Vinicius to meet some mishap while bearing the maiden away? It is true that the gods are bound to watch over their chosen ones, — but have not such things happened more than once, as if the gods were playing games instead of watching what was passing in the world? Fortune is blindfold, as is well known, and does not see even in daylight; what must the case be at night? Let something

happen, — let that Lygian bear hurl a millstone at the noble Vinicius, or a keg of wine, or, still worse, water, — who will give assurance that instead of a reward blame will not fall on the hapless Chilo? He, the poor sage, has attached himself to the noble Vinicius as Aristotle to Alexander of Macedon. If the noble lord should give him at least that purse which he had thrust into his girdle before leaving home, there would be something with which to invoke aid in case of need, or to influence the Christians. Oh, why not listen to the counsels of an old man, counsels dictated by experience and prudence?

Vinicius, hearing this, took the purse from his belt, and threw it to the fingers of Chilo.

“Thou hast it; be silent!”

The Greek felt that it was unusually heavy, and gained confidence.

“My whole hope is in this,” said he, “that Hercules or Theseus performed deeds still more arduous; what is my personal, nearest friend, Croton, if not Hercules? Thee, worthy lord, I will not call a demigod, for thou art a full god, and in future thou wilt not forget a poor, faithful servant, whose needs it will be necessary to provide for from time to time, for once he is sunk in books, he thinks of nothing else; some few stadia of garden land and a little house, even with the smallest portico, for coolness in summer would befit such a donor. Meanwhile I shall admire thy heroic deeds from afar, and invoke Jove to befriend thee, and if need be I will make such an outcry that half Rome will be roused to thy assistance. What a wretched, rough road! The olive oil is burned out in the lantern; and if Croton, who is as noble as he is strong, would bear me to the gate in his arms, he would learn, to begin with, whether he will carry the maiden easily; second, he would act like Æneas, and win all the good gods to such a degree that touching the result of the enterprise I should be thoroughly satisfied.”

“I should rather carry a sheep which died of mange a month ago,” answered the gladiator; “but give that purse, bestowed by the worthy tribune, and I will bear thee to the gate.”

“Mayst thou knock the great toe from thy foot,” replied the Greek; “what profit hast thou from the teachings of that worthy old man, who described poverty and charity as the two foremost virtues? Has he not commanded thee ex-

pressly to love me? Never shall I make thee, I see, even a poor Christian; it would be easier for the sun to pierce the walls of the Mamertine prison than for truth to penetrate thy skull of a hippopotamus.”

“Never fear!” said Croton, who with the strength of a beast had no human feeling. “I shall not be a Christian! I have no wish to lose my bread.”

“But if thou knew even the rudiments of philosophy, thou wouldst know that gold is vanity.”

“Come to me with thy philosophy. I will give thee one blow of my head in the stomach; we shall see then who wins.”

“An ox might have said the same to Aristotle,” retorted Chilo.

It was growing gray in the world. The dawn covered with pale light the outlines of the walls. The trees along the wayside, the buildings, and the gravestones scattered here and there began to issue from the shade. The road was no longer quite empty. Marketmen were moving toward the gates, leading asses and mules laden with vegetables; here and there moved creaking carts in which game was conveyed. On the road and along both sides of it was a light mist at the very earth, which promised good weather. People at some distance seemed like apparitions in that mist. Vinicius stared at the slender form of Lygia, which became more silvery as the light increased.

“Lord,” said Chilo, “I should offend thee were I to foresee the end of thy bounty, but now, when thou hast paid me, I may not be suspected of speaking for my own interest only. I advise thee once more to go home for slaves and a litter, when thou hast learned in what house the divine Lygia dwells; listen not to that elephant trunk, Croton, who undertakes to carry off the maiden only to squeeze thy purse as if it were a bag of curds.”

“I have a blow of the fist to be struck between the shoulders, which means that thou wilt perish,” said Croton.

“I have a cask of Cephalonian wine, which means that I shall be well,” answered Chilo.

Vinicius made no answer, for he approached the gate, at which a wonderful sight struck his eyes. Two soldiers knelt when the Apostle was passing; Peter placed his hand on their iron helmets for a moment, and then made the sign of the cross on them. It had never occurred to the patrician before that there could be Christians in the army; with

astonishment he thought that as fire in a burning city takes in more and more houses, so to all appearances that doctrine embraces new souls every day, and extends itself over all human understandings. This struck him also with reference to Lygia, for he was convinced that, had she wished to flee from the city, there would be guards willing to facilitate her flight. He thanked the gods then that this had not happened.

After they had passed vacant places beyond the wall, the Christians began to scatter. There was need, therefore, to follow Lygia more from a distance, and more carefully, so as not to rouse attention. Chilo fell to complaining of wounds, of pains in his legs, and dropped more and more to the rear. Vinicius did not oppose this, judging that the cowardly and incompetent Greek would not be needed. He would even have permitted him to depart, had he wished; but the worthy sage was detained by circumspection. Curiosity pressed him evidently, since he continued behind, and at moments even approached with his previous counsels; he thought too that the old man accompanying the Apostle might be Glaucus, were it not for his rather low stature.

They walked a good while before reaching the Trans-Tiber, and the sun was near rising when the group surrounding Lygia dispersed. The Apostle, an old woman, and a boy went up the river; the old man of lower stature, Ursus, and Lygia entered a narrow vicus, and, advancing still about a hundred yards, went into a house in which were two shops,—one for the sale of olives, the other for poultry.

Chilo, who walked about fifty yards behind Vinicius and Croton, halted all at once, as if fixed to the earth, and, squeezing up to the wall, began to hiss at them to turn.

They did so, for they needed to take counsel.

"Go, Chilo," said Vinicius, "and see if this house fronts on another street."

Chilo, though he had complained of wounds in his feet, sprang away as quickly as if he had had the wings of Mercury on his ankles, and returned in a moment.

"No," said he, "there is but one entrance."

Then, putting his hands together, he said, "I implore thee, lord, by Jupiter, Apollo, Vesta, Cybele, Isis, Osiris, Mithra Baal, and all the gods of the Orient and the Occident to drop this plan. Listen to me—"

But he stopped on a sudden, for he saw that Vinicius's

face was pale from emotion, and that his eyes were glittering like the eyes of a wolf. It was enough to look at him to understand that nothing in the world would restrain him from the undertaking. Croton began to draw air into his herculean breast, and to sway his undeveloped skull from side to side as bears do when confined in a cage, but on his face not the least fear was evident.

"I will go in first," said he.

"Thou wilt follow me," said Vinicius, in commanding tones.

And after a while both vanished in the dark entrance.

Chilo sprang to the corner of the nearest alley and watched from behind it, waiting for what would happen.

CHAPTER XXII.

ONLY inside the entrance did Vinicius comprehend the whole difficulty of the undertaking. The house was large, of several stories, one of the kind of which thousands were built in Rome, in view of profit from rent; hence, as a rule, they were built so hurriedly and badly that scarcely a year passed in which numbers of them did not fall on the heads of tenants. Real hives, too high and too narrow, full of chambers and little dens, in which poor people fixed themselves too numerously. In a city where many streets had no names, those houses had no numbers; the owners committed the collection of rent to slaves, who, not obliged by the city government to give names of occupants, were ignorant themselves of them frequently. To find some one by inquiry in such a house was often very difficult, especially when there was no gate-keeper.

Vinicius and Croton came to a narrow, corridor-like passage walled in on four sides, forming a kind of common atrium for the whole house, with a fountain in the middle whose stream fell into a stone basin fixed in the ground. At all the walls were internal stairways, some of stone, some of wood, leading to galleries from which there were entrances to lodgings. There were lodgings on the ground, also; some provided with wooden doors, others separated from the yard by woollen screens only. These, for the greater part, were worn, rent, or patched.

The hour was early, and there was not a living soul in the yard. It was evident that all were asleep in the house except those who had returned from Ostrianum.

"What shall we do, lord?" asked Croton, halting.

"Let us wait here; some one may appear," replied Vinicius. "We should not be seen in the yard."

At this moment, he thought Chilo's counsel practical. If there were some tens of slaves present, it would be easy to occupy the gate, which seemed the only exit, search all the lodgings simultaneously, and thus come to Lygia's; otherwise Christians, who surely were not lacking in that house, might give notice that people were seeking her. In view of this, there was risk in inquiring of strangers. Vinicius

stopped to think whether it would not be better to go for his slaves. Just then, from behind a screen hiding a remoter lodging, came a man with a sieve in his hand, and approached the fountain.

At the first glance the young tribune recognized Ursus.

"That is the Lygian!" whispered Vinicius.

"Am I to break his bones now?"

"Wait awhile!"

Ursus did not notice the two men, as they were in the shadow of the entrance, and he began quietly to sink in water vegetables which filled the sieve. It was evident that, after a whole night spent in the cemetery, he intended to prepare a meal. After a while the washing was finished; he took the wet sieve and disappeared behind the screen. Croton and Vinicius followed him, thinking that they would come directly to Lygia's lodgings. Their astonishment was great when they saw that the screen divided from the court, not lodgings, but another dark corridor, at the end of which was a little garden containing a few cypresses, some myrtle bushes, and a small house fixed to the windowless stone wall of another stone building.

Both understood at once that this was for them a favoring circumstance. In the courtyard all the tenants might assemble; the seclusion of the little house facilitated the enterprise. They would set aside defenders, or rather Ursus, quickly, and would reach the street just as quickly with the captured Lygia; and there they would help themselves. It was likely that no one would attack them; if attacked, they would say that a hostage was fleeing from Cæsar. Vinicius would declare himself then to the guards, and summon their assistance.

Ursus was almost entering the little house, when the sound of steps attracted his attention; he halted, and, seeing two persons, put his sieve on the balustrade and turned to them.

"What do ye want here?" asked he.

"Thee!" said Vinicius.

Then, turning to Croton, he said in a low, hurried voice:

"Kill!"

Croton rushed at him like a tiger, and in one moment, before the Lygian was able to think or to recognize his enemies, Croton had caught him in his arms of steel.

Vinicius was too confident in the man's preternatural strength to wait for the end of the struggle. He passed the two, sprang to the door of the little house, pushed it open

and found himself in a room a trifle dark, lighted, however, by a fire burning in the chimney. A gleam of this fire fell on Lygia's face directly. A second person, sitting at the fire, was that old man who had accompanied the young girl and Ursus on the road from Ostrianum.

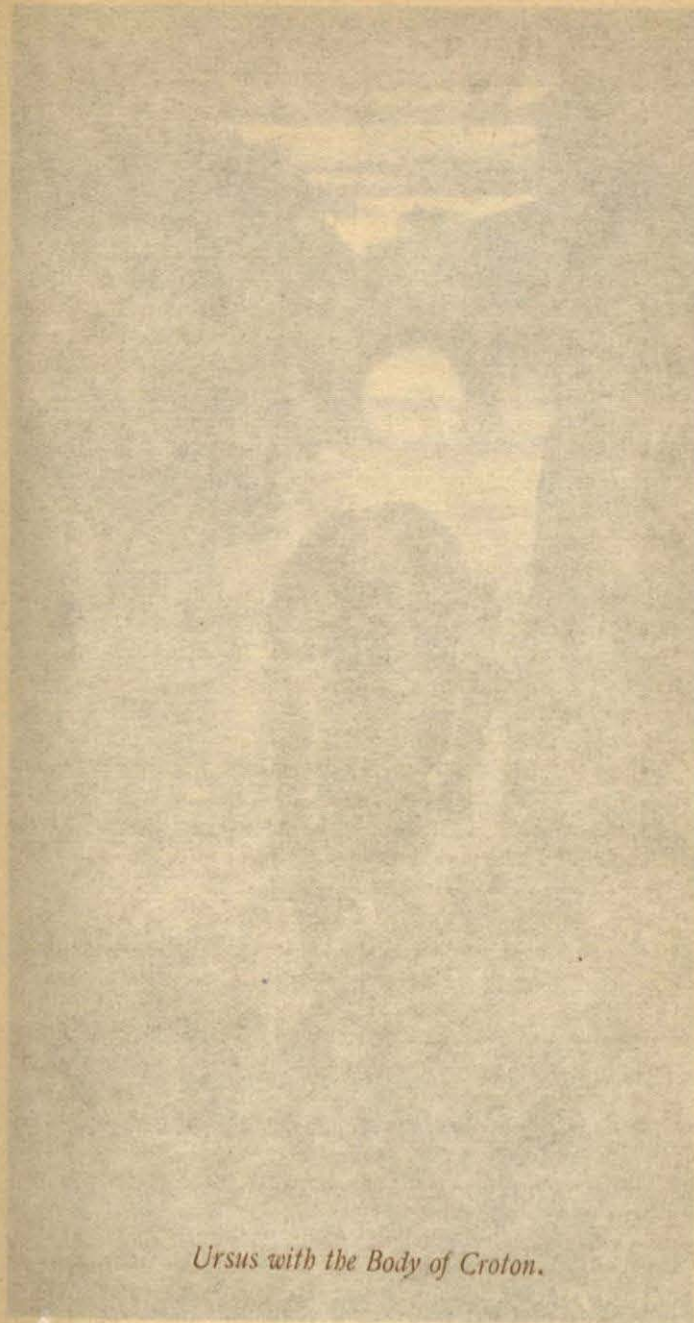
Vinicius rushed in so suddenly that before Lygia could recognize him he had seized her by the waist, and, raising her, rushed toward the door again. The old man barred the way, it is true; but pressing the girl with one arm to his breast, Vinicius pushed him aside with the other, which was free. The hood fell from his head, and at sight of that face, which was known to her and which at that moment was terrible, the blood grew cold in Lygia from fright, and the voice died in her throat. She wished to summon aid, but had not the power. Equally vain was her wish to grasp the door, to resist. Her fingers slipped along the stone, and she would have fainted but for the terrible picture which struck her eyes when Vinicius rushed into the garden.

Ursus was holding in his arms some man doubled back completely, with hanging head and mouth filled with blood. When he saw them, he struck the head once more with his fist, and in the twinkle of an eye sprang toward Vinicius like a raging wild beast.

"Death!" thought the young patrician.

Then he heard, as through a dream, the scream of Lygia, "Kill not!" He felt that something, as it were a thunderbolt, opened the arms with which he held Lygia; then the earth turned round with him, and the light of day died in his eyes.

Chilo, hidden behind the angle of the corner house, was waiting for what would happen, since curiosity was struggling with fear in him. He thought that if they succeeded in carrying off Lygia, he would fare well near Vinicius. He feared Urban no longer, for he also felt certain that Croton would kill him. And he calculated that in case a gathering should begin on the streets, which so far were empty, — if Christians, or people of any kind, should offer resistance, — he, Chilo, would speak to them as one representing authority, as an executor of Cæsar's will, and if need came, call the guards to aid the young patrician against the street rabble — thus winning to himself fresh favor. In his soul he judged yet that the young tribune's method was unwise; considering, however, Croton's terrible strength, he admitted that it might succeed, and thought, "If it go hard with him, Vinicius can



Ursus with the Body of Croton.

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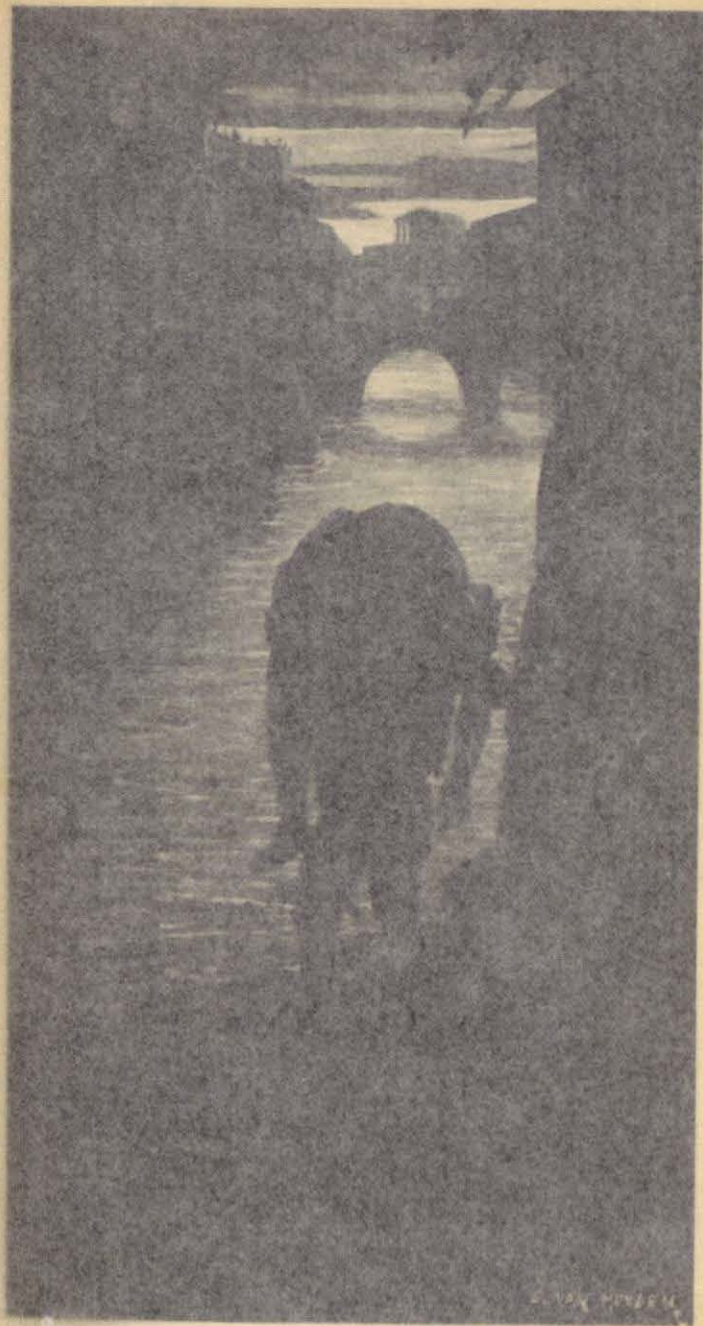
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Cato hid behind the angle of the corner house, was watching for what would happen, since curiosity was struggling with fear in him. He thought that if they succeeded in carrying off Lygia, he would fare well near Vinicius. He knew Ursus no longer, for he also felt certain that Ursus would kill him. And he calculated that in case a gathering should arise on the streets, which as far were empty, — if Christians, or people of any kind, should offer resistance, — he would speak to them as one possessing authority, as an exponent of Cato's will, and if need came, call the guards or the young men of the street rabble — but wishing to avoid all such scenes, he would be judged by the people as a man of peace, and would be considered, however, that his will was strong, he admitted that it might succeed, and thought, "If it go hard with him, Vinicius can



carry the girl, and Croton clear the way." Delay grew wearisome, however; the silence of the entrance which he watched alarmed him.

"If they do not hit upon her hiding-place, and make an uproar, they will frighten her."

But this thought was not disagreeable; for Chilo understood that in that event he would be necessary again to Vinicius, and could squeeze afresh a goodly number of sestertia from the tribune.

"Whatever they do," said he to himself, "they will work for me, though no one divines that. O gods! O gods! only permit me —"

And he stopped suddenly, for it seemed to him that some one was bending forward through the entrance; then, squeezing up to the wall, he began to look, holding the breath in his breast.

And he had not deceived himself, for a head thrust itself half out of the entrance and looked around. After a while, however, it vanished.

"That is Vinicius, or Croton," thought Chilo; "but if they have taken the girl, why does she not scream, and why are they looking out to the street? They must meet people anyhow, for before they reach the Carinæ there will be movement in the city — What is that? By the immortal gods!"

And suddenly the remnant of his hair stood on end.

In the door appeared Ursus, with the body of Croton hanging on his arm, and, looking around once more, he began to run, bearing it along the empty street toward the river.

Chilo made himself as flat against the wall as a bit of mud.

"I am lost if he sees me!" thought he.

But Ursus ran past the corner quickly, and disappeared beyond the neighboring house. Chilo, without further waiting, his teeth chattering from terror, ran along the cross street with a speed which even in a young man might have roused admiration.

"If he sees me from a distance when he is returning, he will catch and kill me," said he to himself. "Save me, Zeus; save me, Apollo; save me, Hermes; save me, O God of the Christians! I will leave Rome, I will return to Mesembria, but save me from the hands of that demon!"

And that Lygian who had killed Croton seemed to him at

that moment some superhuman being. While running, he thought that he might be some god who had taken the form of a barbarian. At that moment he believed in all the gods of the world, and in all myths, at which he jeered usually. It flew through his head, too, that it might be the God of the Christians who had killed Croton; and his hair stood on end again at the thought that he was in conflict with such a power.

Only when he had run through a number of alleys, and saw some workmen coming toward him from a distance, was he calmed somewhat. Breath failed in his breast; so he sat on the threshold of a house and began to wipe, with a corner of his mantle, his sweat-covered forehead.

"I am old, and need calm," said he.

The people coming toward him turned into some little side street, and again the place round about was empty. The city was sleeping yet. In the morning movement began earlier in the wealthier parts of the city, where the slaves of rich houses were forced to rise before daylight; in portions inhabited by a free population, supported at the cost of the State, hence unoccupied, they woke rather late, especially in winter. Chilo, after he had sat some time on the threshold, felt a piercing cold; so he rose, and, convincing himself that he had not lost the purse received from Vinicius, turned toward the river with a step now much slower.

"I may see Croton's body somewhere," said he to himself. "O gods! that Lygian, if he is a man, might make millions of sestertia in the course of one year; for if he choked Croton, like a whelp, who can resist him? They would give for his every appearance in the arena as much gold as he himself weighs. He guards that maiden better than Cerberus does Hades. But may Hades swallow him, for all that! I will have nothing to do with him. He is too bony. But where shall I begin in this case? A dreadful thing has happened. If he has broken the bones of such a man as Croton, beyond a doubt the soul of Vinicius is puling above that cursed house now, awaiting his burial. By Castor! but he is a patrician, a friend of Cæsar, a relative of Petronius, a man known in all Rome, a military tribune. His death cannot pass without punishment. Suppose I were to go to the pretorian camp, or the guards of the city, for instance?"

Here he stopped and began to think, but said after a while, —

"Woe is me! Who took him to that house if not I? His freedmen and his slaves know that I came to his house, and some of them know with what object. What will happen if they suspect me of having pointed out to him purposely the house in which his death met him? Though it appear afterward, in the court, that I did not wish his death, they will say that I was the cause of it. Besides, he is a patrician; hence in no event can I avoid punishment. But if I leave Rome in silence, and go far away somewhere, I shall place myself under still greater suspicion."

It was bad in every case. The only question was to choose the less evil. Rome was immense; still Chilo felt that it might become too small for him. Any other man might go directly to the prefect of the city guards and tell what had happened, and, though some suspicion might fall on him, await the issue calmly. But Chilo's whole past was of such character that every closer acquaintance with the prefect of the city or the prefect of the guard must cause him very serious trouble, and confirm also every suspicion which might enter the heads of officials.

On the other hand, to flee would be to confirm Petronius in the opinion that Vinicius had been betrayed and murdered through conspiracy. Petronius was a powerful man, who could command the police of the whole Empire, and who beyond doubt would try to find the guilty parties even at the ends of the earth. Still, Chilo thought to go straight to him, and tell what had happened. Yes; that was the best plan. Petronius was calm, and Chilo might be sure of this, at least, that he would hear him to the end. Petronius, who knew the affair from its inception, would believe in Chilo's innocence more easily than would the prefects.

But to go to him, it was needful to know with certainty what had happened to Vinicius. Chilo did not know that. He had seen, it is true, the Lygian stealing with Croton's body to the river, but nothing more. Vinicius might be killed; but he might be wounded or detained. Now it occurred to Chilo for the first time, that surely the Christians would not dare to kill a man so powerful,—a friend of Cæsar, and a high military official,—for that kind of act might draw on them a general persecution. It was more likely that they had detained him by superior force, to give Lygia means to hide herself a second time.

This thought filled Chilo with hope.

"If that Lygian dragon has not torn him to pieces at the

first attack, he is alive, and if he is alive he himself will testify that I have not betrayed him; and then not only does nothing threaten me, but—O Hermes, count again on two heifers—a fresh field is opening. I can inform one of the freedmen where to seek his lord; and whether he goes to the prefect or not is his affair, the only point being that I should not go. Also, I can go to Petronius, and count on a reward. I have found Lygia; now I shall find Vinicius, and then again Lygia. It is needful to know first whether Vinicius is dead or living.”

Here, it occurred to him that he might go in the night to the baker Demas and inquire about Ursus. But he rejected that thought immediately. He preferred to have nothing to do with Ursus. He might suppose, justly, that if Ursus had not killed Glaucus he had been warned, evidently, by the Christian elder to whom he had confessed his design,—warned that the affair was an unclean one, to which some traitor had persuaded him. In every case, at the mere recollection of Ursus, a shiver ran through Chilo’s whole body. But he thought that in the evening he would send Euricius for news to that house in which the thing had happened. Meanwhile he needed refreshment, a bath, and rest. The sleepless night, the journey to Ostrianum, the flight from the Trans-Tiber, had wearied him exceedingly.

One thing gave him permanent comfort: he had on his person two purses,—that which Vinicius had given him at home, and that which he had thrown him on the way from the cemetery. In view of this happy circumstance, and of all the excitement through which he had passed, he resolved to eat abundantly, and drink better wine than he drank usually.

When the hour for opening the wine-shop came at last, he did so in such a marked measure that he forgot the bath; he wished to sleep, above all, and drowsiness overcame his strength so that he returned with tottering step to his dwelling in the Subura, where a slave woman, purchased with money obtained from Vinicius, was waiting for him.

When he had entered a sleeping-room, as dark as the den of a fox, he threw himself on the bed, and fell asleep in one instant. He woke only in the evening, or rather he was roused by the slave woman, who called him to rise, for some one was inquiring, and wished to see him on urgent business.

The watchful Chilo came to himself in one moment, threw

on his hooded mantle hastily, and, commanding the slave woman to stand aside, looked out cautiously.

And he was benumbed! for he saw before the door of the sleeping-room the gigantic form of Ursus.

At that sight he felt his feet and head grow icy-cold, the heart ceased to beat in his bosom, and shivers were creeping along his back. For a time he was unable to speak; then with chattering teeth he said, or rather groaned,—

“Syra—I am not at home—I don’t know that—good man—”

“I told him that thou wert at home, but asleep, lord,” answered the girl; “he asked to rouse thee.”

“O gods! I will command that thou—”

But Ursus, as if impatient of delay, approached the door of the sleeping-room, and, bending, thrust in his head.

“O Chilo Chilonides!” said he.

“*Pax tecum! pax! pax!*” answered Chilo. “O best of Christians! Yes, I am Chilo; but this is a mistake,—I do not know thee!”

“Chilo Chilonides,” repeated Ursus, “thy lord, Vinicius, summons thee to go with me to him.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

A **PIERCING** pain roused Vinicius. At the first moment he could not understand where he was, nor what was happening. He felt a roaring in his head, and his eyes were covered as if with mist. Gradually, however, his consciousness returned, and at last he beheld through that mist three persons bending over him. Two he recognized: one was Ursus, the other the old man whom he had thrust aside when carrying off Lygia. The third, an utter stranger, was holding his left arm, and feeling it from the elbow upward as far as the shoulder-blade. This caused so terrible a pain that Vinicius, thinking it a kind of revenge which they were taking, said through his set teeth, "Kill me!" But they paid no apparent heed to his words, just as though they heard them not, or considered them the usual groans of suffering. Ursus, with his anxious and also threatening face of a barbarian, held a bundle of white cloth torn in long strips. The old man spoke to the person who was pressing the arm of Vinicius, —

"Glaucus, art thou certain that the wound in the head is not mortal?"

"Yes, worthy Crispus," answered Glaucus. "While serving in the fleet as a slave, and afterward while living at Naples, I cured many wounds, and with the pay which came to me from that occupation I freed myself and my relatives at last. The wound in the head is slight. When this one [here he pointed to Ursus with his head] took the girl from the young man, he pushed him against the wall; the young man while falling put out his arm, evidently to save himself; he broke and disjoined it, but by so doing saved his head and his life."

"Thou hast had more than one of the brotherhood in thy care," added Crispus, "and hast the repute of a skilful physician; therefore I sent Ursus to bring thee."

"Ursus, who on the road confessed that yesterday he was ready to kill me!"

"He confessed his intention earlier to me than to thee; but I, who know thee and thy love for Christ, explained to

him that the traitor is not thou, but the unknown, who tried to persuade him to murder."

"That was an evil spirit, but I took him for an angel," said Ursus, with a sigh.

"Some other time thou wilt tell me, but now we must think of this wounded man." Thus speaking, he began to set the arm. Though Crispus sprinkled water on his face, Vinicius fainted repeatedly from suffering; that was, however, a fortunate circumstance, since he did not feel the pain of putting his arm into joint, nor of setting it. Glaucus fixed the limb between two strips of wood, which he bound quickly and firmly, so as to keep the arm motionless. When the operation was over, Vinicius recovered consciousness again and saw Lygia above him. She stood there at the bed holding a brass basin with water, in which from time to time Glaucus dipped a sponge and moistened the head of his patient.

Vinicius gazed and could not believe his eyes. What he saw seemed a dream, or the pleasant vision brought by fever, and only after a long time could he whisper, —

"Lygia!"

The basin trembled in her hand at that sound, but she turned on him eyes full of sadness.

"Peace be with thee!" answered she, in a low voice.

She stood there with extended arms, her face full of pity and sorrow. But he gazed, as if to fill his sight with her, so that after his lids were closed the picture might remain under them. He looked at her face, paler and smaller than it had been, at the tresses of dark hair, at the poor dress of a laboring woman; he looked so intently that her snowy forehead began to grow rose-colored under the influence of his look. And first he thought that he would love her always; and second, that that paleness of hers and that poverty were his work, — that it was he who had driven her from a house where she was loved, and surrounded with plenty and comfort, and thrust her into that squalid room, and clothed her in that poor robe of dark wool.

He would have arrayed her in the costliest brocade, in all the jewels of the earth; hence astonishment, alarm, and pity seized him, and sorrow so great that he would have fallen at her feet had he been able to move.

"Lygia," said he, "thou didst not permit my death."

"May God return health to thee," she answered, with sweetness.

For Vinicius, who had a feeling both of those wrongs