

with wonder for the religion, was disagreeable to him. He would rather that Lygia acted thus out of love for him, his face, his eyes, his statuesque form, — in a word for reasons because of which more than once snow-white Grecian and Roman arms had been wound around his neck.

Still he felt all at once, that, were she like other women, something would be lacking in her. He was amazed, and knew not what was happening in him; for he saw that new feelings of some kind were rising in him, new likings, strange to the world in which he had lived hitherto.

She opened her eyes then, and, seeing that Vinicius was gazing at her, she approached him and said, —

“I am with thee.”

“I saw thy soul in a dream,” replied he.

CHAPTER XXVI.

NEXT morning he woke up weak, but with a cool head and free of fever. It seemed to him that a whispered conversation had roused him; but when he opened his eyes, Lygia was not there. Ursus, stooping before the chimney, was raking apart the gray ashes, and seeking live coals beneath them. When he found some, he began to blow, not with his mouth, but as it were with the bellows of a blacksmith. Vinicius, remembering how that man had crushed Croton the day before, examined with attention befitting a lover of the arena his gigantic back, which resembled the back of a Cyclops, and his limbs strong as columns.

“Thanks to Mercury that my neck was not broken by him,” thought Vinicius. “By Pollux! if the other Lygians are like this one, the Danubian legions will have heavy work some time!”

But aloud he said, “Hei, slave!”

Ursus drew his head out of the chimney, and, smiling in a manner almost friendly, said, —

“God give thee a good day, lord, and good health; but I am a free man, not a slave.”

On Vinicius, who wished to question Ursus touching Lygia's birthplace, these words produced a certain pleasant impression; for discourse with a free though a common man was less disagreeable to his Roman and patrician pride, than with a slave, in whom neither law nor custom recognized human nature.

“Then thou dost not belong to Aulus?” asked he.

“No, lord, I serve Callina, as I served her mother, of my own will.”

Here he hid his head again in the chimney, to blow the coals, on which he had placed some wood. When he had finished, he took it out and said, —

“With us there are no slaves.”

“Where is Lygia?” inquired Vinicius.

“She has gone out, and I am to cook food for thee. She watched over thee the whole night.”

“Why didst thou not relieve her?”

“Because she wished to watch, and it is for me to obey.”

Here his eyes grew gloomy, and after a while he added :

“If I had disobeyed her, thou wouldst not be living.”

“Art thou sorry for not having killed me?”

“No, lord. Christ has not commanded us to kill.”

“But Atacinus and Croton?”

“I could not do otherwise,” muttered Ursus. And he looked with regret on his hands, which had remained pagan evidently, though his soul had accepted the cross. Then he put a pot on the crane, and fixed his thoughtful eyes on the fire.

“That was thy fault, lord,” said he at last. “Why didst thou raise thy hand against her, a king’s daughter?”

Pride boiled up, at the first moment, in Vinicius, because a common man and a barbarian had not merely dared to speak to him thus familiarly, but to blame him in addition. To those uncommon and improbable things which had met him since yesterday, was added another. But being weak and without his slaves, he restrained himself, especially since a wish to learn some details of Lygia’s life gained the upper hand in him.

When he had calmed himself, therefore, he inquired about the war of the Lygians against Vannius and the Suevi. Ursus was glad to converse, but could not add much that was new to what in his time Aulus Plautius had told. Ursus had not been in battle, for he had attended the hostages to the camp of Atelius Hister. He knew only that the Lygians had beaten the Suevi and the Yazygi, but that their leader and king had fallen from the arrows of the Yazygi. Immediately after they received news that the Semnoncs had set fire to forests on their boundaries, they returned in haste to avenge the wrong, and the hostages remained with Atelius, who ordered at first to give them kingly honors. Afterward Lygia’s mother died. The Roman commander knew not what to do with the child. Ursus wished to return with her to their own country, but the road was unsafe because of wild beasts and wild tribes. When news came that an embassy of Lygians had visited Pomponius, offering him aid against the Marcomani, Hister sent him with Lygia to Pomponius. When they came to him they learned, however, that no ambassadors had been there, and in that way they remained in the camp; whence Pomponius took them to Rome, and at the conclusion of his triumph he gave the king’s daughter to Pomponia Græcina.

Though only certain small details of this narrative had

been unknown to Vinicius, he listened with pleasure, for his enormous pride of family was pleased that an eye-witness had confirmed Lygia’s royal descent. As a king’s daughter she might occupy a position at Cæsar’s court equal to the daughters of the very first families, all the more since the nation whose ruler her father had been, had not warred with Rome so far, and, though barbarian, it might become terrible; for, according to Atelius Hister himself, it possessed an immense force of warriors. Ursus, moreover, confirmed this completely.

“We live in the woods,” said he, in answer to Vinicius, “but we have so much land that no man knows where the end is, and there are many people on it. There are also wooden towns in the forest, in which there is great plenty; for what the Semnoncs, the Marcomani, the Vandals, and the Quadi plunder through the world, we take from them. They dare not come to us; but when the wind blows from their side, they burn our forests. We fear neither them nor the Roman Cæsar.”

“The gods gave Rome dominion over the earth,” said Vinicius, severely.

“The gods are evil spirits,” replied Ursus, with simplicity, “and where there are no Romans, there is no supremacy.”

Here he fixed the fire, and said, as if to himself, —

“When Cæsar took Callina to the palace, and I thought that harm might meet her, I wanted to go to the forest and bring Lygians to help the king’s daughter. And Lygians would have moved toward the Danube, for they are virtuous people though pagan. There I should have given them ‘good tidings.’ But as it is, if ever Callina returns to Pomponia Græcina I will bow down to her for permission to go to them; for Christus was born far away, and they have not even heard of Him. He knew better than I where He should be born; but if He had come to the world with us, in the forests, we would not have tortured Him to death, that is certain. We would have taken care of the Child, and guarded Him, so that never should He want for game, mushrooms, beaver-skins, or amber. And what we plundered from the Suevi and the Marcomani we would have given Him, so that He might have comfort and plenty.”

Thus speaking, he put near the fire the vessel with food for Vinicius, and was silent. His thoughts wandered evidently, for a time yet, through the Lygian wildernesses, till

the liquid began to boil; then he poured it into a shallow plate, and, cooling it properly, said, —

“Glaucus advises thee, lord, to move even thy sound arm as little as possible; Callina has commanded me to give thee food.”

Lygia commanded! There was no answer to that. It did not even come to Vinicius's head to oppose her will, just as if she had been the daughter of Cæsar or a goddess. He uttered not a word, therefore; and Ursus, sitting near his bed, took out the liquid with a small cup, and put it to his mouth. He did this so carefully, and with such a kindly smile, that Vinicius could not believe his own eyes, could not think him the same terrible Titan who the day before had crushed Croton, and, rushing on him like a storm, would have torn him to pieces but for Lygia's pity. The young patrician, for the first time in life, began to ponder over this: What can take place in the breast of a simple man, a barbarian, and a servant?

But Ursus proved to be a nurse as awkward as painstaking; the cup was lost among his herculean fingers so completely that there was no place left for the mouth of the sick man. After a few fruitless efforts the giant was troubled greatly, and said, —

“Ei! it would be easier to lead an aurochs out of a snare.”

The anxiety of the Lygian amused Vinicius, but his remark did not interest him less. He had seen in circuses the terrible urus, brought from wildernesses of the north, against which the most daring bestiarii went with dread, and which yielded only to elephants in size and strength.

“Hast thou tried to take such beasts by the horns?” inquired he, with astonishment.

“Till the twentieth winter passed over me, I was afraid,” answered Ursus; “but after that it happened.”

And he began to feed Vinicius still more awkwardly than before.

“I must ask Miriam or Nazarius,” said he.

But now Lygia's pale face appeared from behind the curtain.

“I will assist directly,” said she. And after a while she came from the cubiculum, in which she had been preparing to sleep, as it seemed, for she was in a single close tunic, called by the ancients *capitium*, covering the breast completely, and her hair was unbound. Vinicius, whose heart beat with more quickness at sight of her, began to

upbraid her for not thinking of sleep yet; but she answered joyously, —

“I was just preparing to sleep, but first I will take the place of Ursus.”

She took the cup, and, sitting on the edge of the bed, began to give food to Vinicius, who felt at once overcome and delighted. When she inclined toward him, the warmth of her body struck him, and her unbound hair fell on his breast. He grew pale from the impression; but in the confusion and impulse of desires he felt also that that was a head dear above all and magnified above all, in comparison with which the whole world was nothing. At first he had desired her; now he began to love her with a full breast. Before that, as generally in life and in feeling, he had been, like all people of that time, a blind, unconditional egotist, who thought only of himself; at present he began to think of her.

After a while, therefore, he refused further nourishment; and though he found inexhaustible delight in her presence and in looking at her, he said, —

“Enough! Go to rest, my divine one.”

“Do not address me in that way,” answered Lygia; “it is not proper for me to hear such words.”

She smiled at him, however, and said that sleep had fled from her, that she felt no toil, that she would not go to rest till Glaucus came. He listened to her words as to music; his heart rose with increasing delight, increasing gratitude, and his thought was struggling to show her that gratitude.

“Lygia,” said he, after a moment of silence, “I did not know thee hitherto. But I know now that I wished to attain thee by a false way; hence I say, return to Pomponia Græcina, and be assured that in future no hand will be raised against thee.”

Her face became sad on a sudden. “I should be happy,” answered she, “could I look at her, even from a distance; but I cannot return to her now.”

“Why?” inquired Vinicius, with astonishment.

“We Christians know, through Acte, what is done on the Palatine. Hast thou not heard that Cæsar, soon after my flight and before his departure for Naples, summoned Aulus and Pomponia, and, thinking that they had helped me, threatened them with his anger? Fortunately Aulus was able to say to him, ‘Thou knowest, lord, that a lie has never passed my lips; I swear to thee now that we did not help

her to escape, and we do not know, as thou dost not, what has happened to her.' Cæsar believed, and afterward forgot. By the advice of the elders I have never written to mother where I am, so that she might take an oath boldly at all times that she has no knowledge of me. Thou wilt not understand this, perhaps, O Vinicius; but it is not permitted us to lie, even in a question involving life. Such is the religion on which we fashion our hearts; therefore I have not seen Pomponia from the hour when I left her house. From time to time distant echoes barely reach her that I am alive and not in danger."

Here a longing seized Lygia, and her eyes were moist with tears; but she calmed herself quickly, and said, —

"I know that Pomponia, too, yearns for me; but we have consolation which others have not."

"Yes," answered Vinicius, "Christ is your consolation, but I do not understand that."

"Look at us! For us there are no partings, no pains, no sufferings; or if they come they are turned into pleasure. And death itself, which for you is the end of life, is for us merely its beginning, — the exchange of a lower for a higher happiness, a happiness less calm for one calmer and eternal. Consider what must a religion be which enjoins on us love even for our enemies, forbids falsehood, purifies our souls from hatred, and promises happiness inexhaustible after death."

"I heard those teachings in Ostrianum, and I have seen how ye acted with me and with Chilo; when I remember your deeds, they are like a dream, and it seems to me that I ought not to believe my ears or eyes. But answer me this question: Art thou happy?"

"I am," answered Lygia. "One who confesses Christ cannot be unhappy."

Vinicius looked at her, as though what she said passed every measure of human understanding.

"And hast thou no wish to return to Pomponia?"

"I should like, from my whole soul, to return to her; and shall return, if such be God's will."

"I say to thee, therefore, return; and I swear by my lares that I will not raise a hand against thee."

Lygia thought for a moment, and answered, —

"No, I cannot expose those near me to danger. Cæsar does not like the Plautiuses. Should I return — thou knowest how every news is spread throughout Rome by slaves —

my return would be noised about in the city. Nero would hear of it surely through his slaves, and punish Aulus and Pomponia, — at least take me from them a second time."

"True," answered Vinicius, frowning, "that would be possible. He would do so, even to show that his will must be obeyed. It is true that he only forgot thee, or would remember thee, because the loss was not his, but mine. Perhaps, if he took thee from Aulus and Pomponia, he would send thee to me and I could give thee back to them."

"Vinicius, wouldst thou see me again on the Palatine?" inquired Lygia.

He set his teeth, and answered, —

"No. Thou art right. I spoke like a fool! No!"

And all at once he saw before him a precipice, as it were without bottom. He was a patrician, a military tribune, a powerful man; but above every power of that world to which he belonged was a madman whose will and malignity it was impossible to foresee. Only such people as the Christians might cease to reckon with Nero or fear him, — people for whom this whole world, with its separations and sufferings, was as nothing; people for whom death itself was as nothing. All others had to tremble before him. The terrors of the time in which they lived showed themselves to Vinicius in all their monstrous extent. He could not return Lygia to Aulus and Pomponia, then, through fear that the monster would remember her, and turn on her his anger; for the very same reason, if he should take her as wife, he might expose her, himself, and Aulus. A moment of ill-humor was enough to ruin all. Vinicius felt, for the first time in life, that either the world must change and be transformed, or life would become impossible altogether. He understood also this, which a moment before had been dark to him, that in such times only Christians could be happy.

But above all, sorrow seized him, for he understood, too, that it was he who had so involved his own life and Lygia's that out of the complication there was scarcely an outcome. And under the influence of that sorrow he began to speak:

"Dost thou know that thou art happier than I? Thou art in poverty, and in this one chamber, among simple people, thou hast thy religion and thy Christ; but I have only thee, and when I lacked thee I was like a beggar without a roof above him and without bread. Thou art dearer to me than the whole world. I sought thee, for I could not live without thee. I wished neither feasts nor sleep. Had it not been

for the hope of finding thee, I should have cast myself on a sword. But I fear death, for if dead I could not see thee. I speak the pure truth in saying that I shall not be able to live without thee. I have lived so far only in the hope of finding and beholding thee. Dost thou remember our conversations at the house of Aulus? Once thou didst draw a fish for me on the sand, and I knew not what its meaning was. Dost thou remember how we played ball? I loved thee then above life, and thou hadst begun already to divine that I loved thee. Aulus came, frightened us with Libitina, and interrupted our talk. Pomponia, at parting, told Petronius that God is one, all-mighty and all-merciful, but it did not even occur to us that Christ was thy God and hers. Let Him give thee to me and I will love Him, though He seems to me a god of slaves, foreigners, and beggars. Thou sittest near me, and thinkest of Him only. Think of me too, or I shall hate Him. For me thou alone art a divinity. Blessed be thy father and mother; blessed the land which produced thee! I should wish to embrace thy feet and pray to thee, give thee honor, homage, offerings, thou thrice divine! Thou knowest not, or canst not know, how I love thee."

Thus speaking, he placed his hand on his pale forehead and closed his eyes. His nature never knew bounds in love or anger. He spoke with enthusiasm, like a man who, having lost self-control, has no wish to observe any measure in words or feelings. But he spoke from the depth of his soul, and sincerely. It was to be felt that the pain, ecstasy, desire, and homage accumulated in his breast had burst forth at last in an irresistible torrent of words. To Lygia his words appeared blasphemous, but still her heart began to beat as if it would tear the tunic enclosing her bosom. She could not resist pity for him and his suffering. She was moved by the homage with which he spoke to her. She felt beloved and deified without bounds; she felt that that unbending and dangerous man belonged to her now, soul and body, like a slave; and that feeling of his submission and her own power filled her with happiness. Her recollections revived in one moment. He was for her again that splendid Vinicius, beautiful as a pagan god; he, who in the house of Aulus had spoken to her of love, and roused as if from sleep her heart half childlike at that time; he from whose embraces Ursus had wrested her on the Palatine, as he might have wrested her from flames. But at present, with ecstasy,

and at the same time with pain in his eagle face, with pale forehead and imploring eyes, — wounded, broken by love, loving, full of homage and submissive, — he seemed to her such as she would have wished him, and such as she would have loved with her whole soul, therefore dearer than he had ever been before.

All at once she understood that a moment might come in which his love would seize her and bear her away, as a whirlwind; and when she felt this, she had the same impression that he had a moment before, — that she was standing on the edge of a precipice. Was it for this that she had left the house of Aulus? Was it for this that she had saved herself by flight? Was it for this that she had hidden so long in wretched parts of the city? Who was that Vinicius? An Augustian, a soldier, a courtier of Nero! Moreover he took part in his profligacy and madness, as was shown by that feast, which she could not forget; and he went with others to the temples, and made offerings to vile gods, in whom he did not believe, perhaps, but still he gave them official honor. Still more he had pursued her to make her his slave and mistress, and at the same time to thrust her into that terrible world of excess, luxury, crime, and dishonor which calls for the anger and vengeance of God. He seemed changed, it is true, but still he had just said to her that if she would think more of Christ than of him, he was ready to hate Christ. It seemed to Lygia that the very idea of any other love than the love of Christ was a sin against Him and against religion. When she saw then that other feelings and desires might be roused in the depth of her soul, she was seized by alarm for her own future and her own heart.

At this moment of internal struggle appeared Glaucus, who had come to care for the patient and study his health. In the twinkle of an eye, anger and impatience were reflected on the face of Vinicius. He was angry that his conversation with Lygia had been interrupted; and when Glaucus questioned him, he answered with contempt almost. It is true that he moderated himself quickly; but if Lygia had any illusions as to this, — that what he had heard in Ostrianum might have acted on his unyielding nature, — those illusions must vanish. He had changed only for her; but beyond that single feeling there remained in his breast the former harsh and selfish heart, truly Roman and wolfish, incapable not only of the sweet sentiment of Christian teaching but even of gratitude.

She went away at last filled with internal care and anxiety. Formerly in her prayers she had offered to Christ a heart calm, and really pure as a tear. Now that calmness was disturbed. To the interior of the flower a poisonous insect had come and began to buzz. Even sleep, in spite of the two nights passed without sleep, brought her no relief. She dreamed that at Ostrianum Nero, at the head of a whole band of Augustians, bacchantes, corybantes, and gladiators, was trampling crowds of Christians with his chariot wreathed in roses; and Vinicius seized her by the arm, drew her to the quadriga, and, pressing her to his bosom, whispered "Come with us."

CHAPTER XXVII.

FROM that moment Lygia showed herself more rarely in the common chamber, and approached his couch less frequently. But peace did not return to her. She saw that Vinicius followed her with imploring glance; that he was waiting for every word of hers, as for a favor; that he suffered and dared not complain, lest he might turn her away from him; that she alone was his health and delight. And then her heart swelled with compassion. Soon she observed, too, that the more she tried to avoid him, the more compassion she had for him; and by this itself the more tender were the feelings which rose in her. Peace left her. At times she said to herself that it was her special duty to be near him always, first, because the religion of God commands return of good for evil; second, that by conversing with him, she might attract him to the faith. But at the same time conscience told her that she was tempting herself; that only love for him and the charm which he exerted were attracting her, nothing else. Thus she lived in a ceaseless struggle, which was intensified daily. At times it seemed that a kind of net surrounded her, and that in trying to break through it she entangled herself more and more. She had also to confess that for her the sight of him was becoming more needful, his voice was becoming dearer, and that she had to struggle with all her might against the wish to sit at his bedside. When she approached him, and he grew radiant, delight filled her heart. On a certain day she noticed traces of tears on his eyelids, and for the first time in life the thought came to her, to dry them with kisses. Terrified by that thought, and full of self-contempt, she wept all the night following.

He was as enduring as if he had made a vow of patience. When at moments his eyes flashed with petulance, self-will, and anger, he restrained those flashes promptly, and looked with alarm at her, as if to implore pardon. This acted still more on her. Never had she such a feeling of being greatly loved as then; and when she thought of this, she felt at once guilty and happy. Vinicius, too, had changed essentially. In his conversations with Glaucus there was less pride. It occurred to him frequently that even that poor slave physician

and that foreign woman, old Miriam, who surrounded him with attention, and Crispus, whom he saw absorbed in continual prayer, were still human. He was astonished at such thoughts, but he had them. After a time he conceived a liking for Ursus, with whom he conversed entire days; for with him he could talk about Lygia. The giant, on his part, was inexhaustible in narrative, and while performing the most simple services for the sick man, he began to show him also some attachment. For Vinicius, Lygia had been at all times a being of another order, higher a hundred times than those around her: nevertheless, he began to observe simple and poor people, — a thing which he had never done before, — and he discovered in them various traits the existence of which he had never suspected.

Nazarius, however, he could not endure, for it seemed to him that the young lad had dared to fall in love with Lygia. He had restrained his aversion for a long time, it is true; but once when he brought her two quails, which he had bought in the market with his own earned money, the descendant of the Quirites spoke out in Vinicius, for whom one who had wandered in from a strange people had less worth than the meanest worm. When he heard Lygia's thanks, he grew terribly pale; and when Nazarius went out to get water for the birds, he said, —

“Lygia, canst thou endure that he should give thee gifts? Dost thou not know that the Greeks call people of his nation Jewish dogs?”

“I do not know what the Greeks call them; but I know that Nazarius is a Christian and my brother.”

When she had said this she looked at Vinicius with astonishment and regret, for he had disaccustomed her to similar outbursts; and he set his teeth, so as not to tell her that he would have given command to beat such a brother with sticks, or would have sent him as a *compeditus*¹ to dig earth in his Sicilian vineyards. He restrained himself, however, throttled the anger within him, and only after a while did he say, —

“Pardon me, Lygia. For me thou art the daughter of a king and the adopted child of Plautius.” And he subdued himself to that degree that when Nazarius appeared in the chamber again, he promised him, on returning to his villa, the gift of a pair of peacocks or flamingoes, of which he had a garden full.

¹ A man who labors with chained feet.

Lygia understood what such victories over himself must have cost him; but the oftener he gained them the more her heart turned to him. His merit with regard to Nazarius was less, however, than she supposed. Vinicius might be indignant for a moment, but he could not be jealous of him. In fact the son of Miriam did not, in his eyes, mean much more than a dog; besides, he was a child yet, who, if he loved Lygia, loved her unconsciously and servilely. Greater struggles must the young tribune have with himself to submit, even in silence, to that honor with which among those people the name of Christ and His religion was surrounded. In this regard wonderful things took place in Vinicius. That was in every case a religion which Lygia believed; hence for that single reason he was ready to receive it. Afterward, the more he returned to health, the more he remembered the whole series of events which had happened since that night at Ostrianum, and the whole series of thoughts which had come to his head from that time, the more he was astonished at the superhuman power of that religion which changed the souls of men to their foundations. He understood that in it there was something uncommon, something which had not been on earth before, and he felt that could it embrace the whole world, could it ingraft on the world its love and charity, an epoch would come recalling that in which not Jupiter, but Saturn had ruled. He did not dare either to doubt the supernatural origin of Christ, or His resurrection, or the other miracles. The eye-witnesses who spoke of them were too trustworthy and despised falsehood too much to let him suppose that they were telling things that had not happened. Finally, Roman scepticism permitted disbelief in the gods, but believed in miracles. Vinicius, therefore, stood before a kind of marvellous puzzle which he could not solve. On the other hand, however, that religion seemed to him opposed to the existing state of things, impossible of practice, and mad in a degree beyond all others. According to him, people in Rome and in the whole world might be bad, but the order of things was good. Had Cæsar, for example, been an honest man, had the Senate been composed, not of insignificant libertines, but of men like Thræsea, what more could one wish? Nay, Roman peace and supremacy were good; distinction among people just and proper. But that religion, according to the understanding of Vinicius, would destroy all order, all supremacy, every distinction. What would happen then to the dominion and lordship of Rome? Could

the Romans cease to rule, or could they recognize a whole herd of conquered nations as equal to themselves? That was a thought which could find no place in the head of a patrician. As regarded him personally, that religion was opposed to all his ideas and habits, his whole character and understanding of life. He was simply unable to imagine how he could exist were he to accept it. He feared and admired it; but as to accepting it, his nature shuddered at that. He understood, finally, that nothing save that religion separated him from Lygia; and when he thought of this, he hated it with all the powers of his soul.

Still he acknowledged to himself that it had adorned Lygia with that exceptional, unexplained beauty which in his heart had produced, besides love, respect, besides desire, homage, and had made of that same Lygia a being dear to him beyond all others in the world. And then he wished anew to love Christ. And he understood clearly that he must either love or hate Him; he could not remain indifferent. Meanwhile two opposing currents were as if driving him: he hesitated in thoughts, in feelings; he knew not how to choose; he bowed his head, however, to that God by him uncomprehended, and paid silent honor for this sole reason, that He was Lygia's God.

Lygia saw what was happening in him; she saw how he was breaking himself, how his nature was rejecting that religion; and though this mortified her to the death, compassion, pity, and gratitude for the silent respect which he showed Christ inclined her heart to him with irresistible force. She recalled Pomponia Græcina and Aulus. For Pomponia a source of ceaseless sorrow and tears that never dried was the thought that beyond the grave she would not find Aulus. Lygia began now to understand better that pain, that bitterness. She too had found a being dear to her, and she was threatened by eternal separation from this dear one.

At times, it is true, she was self-deceived, thinking that his soul would open itself to Christ's teaching; but these illusions could not remain. She knew and understood him too well. Vinicius a Christian! — These two ideas could find no place together in her unenlightened head. If the thoughtful, discreet Aulus had not become a Christian under the influence of the wise and perfect Pomponia, how could Vinicius become one? To this there was no answer, or rather there was only one, — that for him there was neither hope nor salvation.

But Lygia saw with terror that that sentence of condemnation which hung over him instead of making him repulsive made him still dearer simply through compassion. At moments the wish seized her to speak to him of his dark future; but once, when she had sat near him and told him that outside Christian truth there was no life, he, having grown stronger at that time, rose on his sound arm and placed his head on her knees suddenly. "Thou art life!" said he. And that moment breath failed in her breast, presence of mind left her, a certain quiver of ecstasy rushed over her from head to feet. Seizing his temples with her hands, she tried to raise him, but bent the while so that her lips touched his hair; and for a moment both were overcome with delight, with themselves, and with love, which urged them the one to the other.

Lygia rose at last and rushed away, with a flame in her veins and a giddiness in her head; but that was the drop which overflowed the cup filled already to the brim. Vinicius did not divine how dearly he would have to pay for that happy moment, but Lygia understood that now she herself needed rescue. She spent the night after that evening without sleep, in tears and in prayer, with the feeling that she was unworthy to pray and could not be heard. Next morning she went from the cubiculum early, and, calling Crispus to the garden summer-house, covered with ivy and withered vines, opened her whole soul to him, imploring him at the same time to let her leave Miriam's house, since she could not trust herself longer, and could not overcome her heart's love for Vinicius.

Crispus, an old man, severe and absorbed in endless enthusiasm, consented to the plan of leaving Miriam's house, but he had no words of forgiveness for that love, to his thinking sinful. His heart swelled with indignation at the very thought that Lygia, whom he had guarded since the time of her flight, whom he had loved, whom he had confirmed in the faith, and on whom he looked now as a white lily grown up on the field of Christian teaching undefiled by any earthly breath, could have found a place in her soul for love other than heavenly. He had believed hitherto that nowhere in the world did there beat a heart more purely devoted to the glory of Christ. He wanted to offer her to Him as a pearl, a jewel, the precious work of his own hands; hence the disappointment which he felt filled him with grief and amazement.

“Go and beg God to forgive thy fault,” said he, gloomily. “Flee before the evil spirit who involved thee bring thee to utter fall, and before thou oppose the Saviour. God died on the cross to redeem thy soul with His blood, but thou hast preferred to love him who wished to make thee his concubine. God saved thee by a miracle of His own hands, but thou hast opened thy heart to impure desire, and hast loved the son of darkness. Who is he? The friend and servant of Antichrist, his copartner in crime and profligacy. Whither will he lead thee, if not to that abyss and to that Sodom in which he himself is living, but which God will destroy with the flame of His anger? But I say to thee, would thou hadst died, would the walls of this house had fallen on thy head before that serpent had crept into thy bosom and beslimed it with the poison of iniquity.”

And he was borne away more and more, for Lygia's fault filled him not only with anger but with loathing and contempt for human nature in general, and in particular for women, whom even Christian truth could not save from Eve's weakness. To him it seemed nothing that the maiden had remained pure, that she wished to flee from that love, that she had confessed it with compunction and penitence. Crispus had wished to transform her into an angel, to raise her to heights where love for Christ alone existed, and she had fallen in love with an Augustian. The very thought of that filled his heart with horror, strengthened by a feeling of disillusion and disappointment. No, no, he could not forgive her. Words of horror burned his lips like glowing coals; he struggled still with himself not to utter them, but he shook his emaciated hands over the terrified girl. Lygia felt guilty, but not to that degree. She had judged even that withdrawal from Miriam's house would be her victory over temptation, and would lessen her fault. Crispus rubbed her into the dust; showed her all the misery and insignificance of her soul, which she had not suspected hitherto. She had judged even that the old presbyter, who from the moment of her flight from the Palatine had been to her as a father, would show some compassion, console her, give her courage, and strengthen her.

“I offer my pain and disappointment to God,” said he, “but thou hast deceived the Saviour also, for thou hast gone as it were to a quagmire which has poisoned thy soul with its miasma. Thou mightst have offered it to Christ as a costly vessel, and said to Him, ‘Fill it with grace, O

Lord!’ but thou hast preferred to offer it to the servant of the evil one. May God forgive thee and have mercy on thee; for till thou cast out the serpent, I who held thee as chosen —”

But he ceased suddenly to speak, for he saw that they were not alone. Through the withered vines and the ivy, which was green alike in summer and winter, he saw two men, one of whom was Peter the Apostle. The other he was unable to recognize at once, for a mantle of coarse woollen stuff, called cilicium, concealed a part of his face. It seemed to Crispus for a moment that that was Chilo.

They, hearing the loud voice of Crispus, entered the summer-house and sat on a stone bench. Peter's companion had an emaciated face; his head, which was growing bald, was covered at the sides with curly hair; he had reddened eyelids and a crooked nose; in the face, ugly and at the same time inspired, Crispus recognized the features of Paul of Tarsus.

Lygia, casting herself on her knees, embraced Peter's feet, as if from despair, and, sheltering her tortured head in the fold of his mantle, remained thus in silence.

“Peace to your souls!” said Peter.

And seeing the child at his feet he asked what had happened. Crispus began then to narrate all that Lygia had confessed to him, — her sinful love, her desire to flee from Miriam's house, — and his sorrow that a soul which he had thought to offer to Christ pure as a tear had defiled itself with earthly feelings for a sharer in all those crimes into which the pagan world had sunk, and which called for God's vengeance.

Lygia during his speech embraced with increasing force the feet of the Apostle, as if wishing to seek refuge near them, and to beg even a little compassion.

But the Apostle, when he had listened to the end, bent down and placed his aged hand on her head; then he raised his eyes to the old presbyter, and said, —

“Crispus, hast thou not heard that our beloved Master was in Cana, at a wedding, and blessed love between man and woman?”

Crispus's hands dropped, and he looked with astonishment on the speaker, without power to utter one word. After a moment's silence Peter asked again, —

“Crispus, dost thou think that Christ, who permitted Mary of Magdala to lie at his feet, and who forgave the public

sinner, would turn from this maiden, who is as pure as a lily of the field?"

Lygia nestled up more urgently to the feet of Peter, with sobbing, understanding that she had not sought refuge in vain. The Apostle raised her face, which was covered with tears, and said to her, —

"While the eyes of him whom thou lovest are not open to the light of truth, avoid him, lest he bring thee to sin, but pray for him, and know that there is no sin in thy love. And since it is thy wish to avoid temptation, this will be accounted to thee as a merit. Do not suffer, and do not weep; for I tell thee that the grace of the Redeemer has not deserted thee, and that thy prayers will be heard; after sorrow will come days of gladness."

When he had said this, he placed both hands on her head, and, raising his eyes, blessed her. From his face there shone a goodness beyond that of earth.

The penitent Crispus began humbly to explain himself; "I have sinned against mercy," said he; "but I thought that by admitting to her heart an earthly love she had denied Christ."

"I denied Him thrice," answered Peter, "and still He forgave me, and commanded me to feed His sheep."

"And because," concluded Crispus, "Vinicius is an Augustian."

"Christ softened harder hearts than his," replied Peter.

Then Paul of Tarsus, who had been silent so far, placed his finger on his breast, pointing to himself, and said, —

"I am he who persecuted and hurried servants of Christ to their death; I am he who during the stoning of Stephen kept the garments of those who stoned him; I am he who wished to root out the truth in every part of the inhabited earth, and yet the Lord predestined me to declare it in every land. I have declared it in Judea, in Greece, on the Islands, and in this godless city, where first I resided as a prisoner. And now when Peter, my superior, has summoned me, I enter this house to bend that proud head to the feet of Christ, and cast a grain of seed in that stony field, which the Lord will fertilize, so that it may bring forth a bountiful harvest."

And he rose. To Crispus that diminutive hunchback seemed then that which he was in reality, — a giant, who was to stir the world to its foundations and gather in lands and nations.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PETRONIUS TO VINICIUS:—

"Have pity, carissime; imitate not in thy letters the Lacedemonians or Julius Cæsar! Couldst thou, like Julius, write *Veni, vidi, vici* (I came, I saw, I conquered), I might understand thy brevity. But thy letter means absolutely *Veni, vidi, fugi* (I came, I saw, I fled). Since such a conclusion of the affair is directly opposed to thy nature, since thou art wounded, and since, finally, uncommon things are happening to thee, thy letter needs explanation. I could not believe my eyes when I read that the Lygian giant killed Croton as easily as a Caledonian dog would kill a wolf in the defiles of Hibernia. That man is worth as much gold as he himself weighs, and it depends on him alone to become a favorite of Cæsar. When I return to the city, I must gain a nearer acquaintance with that Lygian, and have a bronze statue of him made for myself. Ahenobarbus will burst from curiosity, when I tell him that it is from nature. Bodies really athletic are becoming rarer in Italy and in Greece; of the Orient no mention need be made; the Germans, though large, have muscles covered with fat, and are greater in bulk than in strength. Learn from the Lygian if he is an exception, or if in his country there are more men like him. Should it happen sometime to thee or me to organize games officially, it would be well to know where to seek for the best bodies.

"But praise to the gods of the Orient and the Occident that thou hast come out of such hands alive. Thou hast escaped, of course, because thou art a patrician, and the son of a consul; but everything which has happened astonishes me in the highest degree, — that cemetery where thou wert among the Christians, they, their treatment of thee, the subsequent flight of Lygia; finally, that peculiar sadness and disquiet which breathes from thy short letter. Explain, for there are many points which I cannot understand; and if thou wish the truth, I will tell thee plainly, that I understand neither the Christians nor thee nor Lygia. Wonder not that I, who care for few things on earth except my own person,