

going to the Apostles directly, — an idea which came to him while they were flogging Chilo.

At mention of this, Petronius, who began to be drowsy, placed his hand on his forehead, and said, —

“The thought was good, since the object was good. But as to Chilo, I should have given him five pieces of gold; but as it was thy will to flog him, it was better to flog him, for who knows but in time senators will bow to him, as to-day they are bowing to our cobbler-knight, Vatinius. Good-night.”

And, removing his wreath, he, with Eunice, prepared for home. When they had gone, Vinicius went to his library and wrote to Lygia as follows: —

“When thou openest thy beautiful eyes, I wish this letter to say Good-day! to thee. Hence I write now, though I shall see thee to-morrow. Cæsar will go to Antium after to-morrow, — and I, eheu! must go with him. I have told thee already that not to obey would be to risk life — and at present I could not find courage to die. But if thou wish me not to go, write one word, and I will stay. Petronius will turn away danger from me with a speech. To-day, in the hour of my delight, I gave rewards to all my slaves; those who have served in the house twenty years I shall take to the pretor to-morrow and free. Thou, my dear, shouldst praise me, since this act as I think will be in accord with that mild religion of thine; secondly, I do this for thy sake. They are to thank thee for their freedom. I shall tell them so to-morrow, so that they may be grateful to thee and praise thy name. I give myself in bondage to happiness and thee. God grant that I never see liberation. May Antium be cursed, and the journey of Ahenobarbus! Thrice and four times happy am I in not being so wise as Petronius; if I were, I should be forced to go to Greece perhaps. Meanwhile the moment of separation will sweeten my memory of thee. Whenever I can tear myself away, I shall sit on a horse, and rush back to Rome, to gladden my eyes with sight of thee, and my ears with thy voice. When I cannot come I shall send a slave with a letter, and an inquiry about thee. I salute thee, divine one, and embrace thy feet. Be not angry that I call thee divine. If thou forbid, I shall obey, but to-day I cannot call thee otherwise. I congratulate thee on thy future house with my whole soul.”

CHAPTER XXXVI.

It was known in Rome that Cæsar wished to see Ostia on the journey, or rather the largest ship in the world, which had brought wheat recently from Alexandria, and from Ostia to go by the Via Littoralis to Antium. Orders had been given a number of days earlier; hence at the Porta Ostiensis, from early morning, crowds made up of the local rabble and of all nations of the earth had collected to feast their eyes with the sight of Cæsar's retinue, on which the Roman populace could never gaze sufficiently. The road to Antium was neither difficult nor long. In the place itself, which was composed of palaces and villas built and furnished in a lordly manner, it was possible to find everything demanded by comfort, and even the most exquisite luxury of the period. Cæsar had the habit, however, of taking with him on a journey every object in which he found delight, beginning with musical instruments and domestic furniture, and ending with statues and mosaics, which were taken even when he wished to remain on the road merely a short time for rest or recreation. He was accompanied, therefore, on every expedition by whole legions of servants, without reckoning divisions of pretorian guards, and Augustians; of the latter each had a personal retinue of slaves.

Early on the morning of that day herdsmen from the Campania, with sunburnt faces, wearing goat-skins on their legs, drove forth five hundred she-asses through the gates, so that Poppæa on the morrow of her arrival at Antium might have her bath in their milk. The rabble gazed with delight and ridicule at the long ears swaying amid clouds of dust, and listened with pleasure to the whistling of whips and the wild shouts of the herdsmen. After the asses had gone by, crowds of youths rushed forth, swept the road carefully, and covered it with flowers and needles from pine-trees. In the crowds people whispered to each other, with a certain feeling of pride, that the whole road to Antium would be strewn in that way with flowers taken from private gardens round about, or bought at high prices from dealers at the Porta Mugionis. As the morning hours passed, the throng increased every moment. Some had brought their whole

families, and, lest the time might seem tedious, they spread provisions on stones intended for the new temple of Ceres, and ate their prandium beneath the open sky. Here and there were groups, in which the lead was taken by persons who had travelled; they talked of Cæsar's present trip, of his future journeys, and journeys in general. Sailors and old soldiers narrated wonders which during distant campaigns they had heard about countries which a Roman foot had never touched. Home-stayers, who had never gone beyond the Appian Way, listened with amazement to marvellous tales of India, of Arabia, of archipelagos surrounding Britain in which, on a small island inhabited by spirits, Briareus had imprisoned the sleeping Saturn. They heard of hyperborean regions of stiffened seas, of the hisses and roars which the ocean gives forth when the sun plunges into his bath. Stories of this kind found ready credence among the rabble, stories believed by such men even as Tacitus and Pliny. They spoke also of that ship which Cæsar was to look at, — a ship which had brought wheat to last for two years, without reckoning four hundred passengers, an equal number of soldiers, and a multitude of wild beasts to be used during the summer games. This produced general good feeling toward Cæsar, who not only nourished the populace, but amused it. Hence a greeting full of enthusiasm was waiting for him.

Meanwhile came a detachment of Numidian horse, who belonged to the pretorian guard. They wore yellow uniforms, red girdles, and great earrings, which cast a golden gleam on their black faces. The points of their bamboo spears glittered like flames, in the sun. After they had passed, a procession-like movement began. The throng crowded forward to look at it more nearly; but divisions of pretorian foot were there, and, forming in line on both sides of the gate, prevented approach to the road. In advance moved wagons carrying tents, purple, red, and violet, and tents of byssus woven from threads as white as snow; and oriental carpets, and tables of citrus, and pieces of mosaic, and kitchen utensils, and cages with birds from the East, North, and West, birds whose tongues or brains were to go to Cæsar's table, and vessels with wine and baskets with fruit. But objects not to be exposed to bruising or breaking in vehicles were borne by slaves. Hence hundreds of people were seen on foot, carrying vessels, and statues of Corinthian bronze. There were companies appointed specially to Etruscan vases; others to Grecian; others to golden

or silver vessels, or vessels of Alexandrian glass. These were guarded by small detachments of pretorian infantry and cavalry; over each division of slaves were taskmasters, holding whips armed at the end with lumps of lead or iron, instead of snappers. The procession, formed of men bearing with importance and attention various objects, seemed like some solemn religious procession; and the resemblance grew still more striking when the musical instruments of Cæsar and the court were borne past. There were seen harps, Grecian lutes, lutes of the Hebrews and Egyptians, lyres, formingas, citharas, flutes, long, winding buffalo horns, and cymbals. While looking at that sea of instruments, gleaming beneath the sun in gold, bronze, precious stones, and pearls, it might be imagined that Apollo and Bacchus had set out on a journey through the world. After the instruments came rich chariots filled with acrobats, dancers male and female, grouped artistically, with wands in their hands. After them followed slaves intended, not for service, but excess; so there were boys and little girls, selected from all Greece and Asia Minor, with long hair, or with winding curls arranged in golden nets, children resembling Cupids, with wonderful faces, but faces covered completely with a thick coating of cosmetics, lest the wind of the Campania might tan their delicate complexions.

And again appeared a pretorian cohort of gigantic Sicambrians, blue-eyed, bearded, blond and red haired. In front of them Roman eagles were carried by banner-bearers called "imaginarii," tablets with inscriptions, statues of German and Roman gods, and finally statues and busts of Cæsar. From under the skins and armor of the soldier appeared limbs sunburnt and mighty, looking like military engines capable of wielding the heavy weapons with which guards of that kind were furnished. The earth seemed to bend beneath their measured and weighty tread. As if conscious of strength which they could use against Cæsar himself, they looked with contempt on the rabble of the street, forgetting, it was evident, that many of themselves had come to that city in manacles. But they were insignificant in numbers, for the pretorian force had remained in camp specially to guard the city and hold it within bounds. When they had marched past, Nero's chained lions and tigers were led by, so that, should the wish come to him of imitating Dionysus, he would have them to attach to his chariots. They were led in chains of steel by Arabs and Hindoos, but

the chains were so entwined with garlands that the beasts seemed led with flowers. The lions and tigers, tamed by skilled trainers, looked at the crowds with green and seemingly sleepy eyes; but at moments they raised their giant heads, and breathed through wheezing nostrils the exhalations of the multitude, licking their jaws the while with spiny tongues.

Now came Cæsar's vehicles and litters, great and small, gold or purple, inlaid with ivory or pearls, or glittering with diamonds; after them came another small cohort of pretorians in Roman armor, pretorians composed of Italian volunteers only;¹ then crowds of select slave servants, and boys; and at last came Cæsar himself, whose approach was heralded from afar by the shouts of thousands.

In the crowd was the Apostle Peter, who wished to see Cæsar once in life. He was accompanied by Lygia, whose face was hidden by a thick veil, and Ursus, whose strength formed the surest defence of the young girl in the wild and boisterous crowd. The Lygian seized a stone to be used in building the temple, and brought it to the Apostle, so that by standing on it he might see better than others.

The crowd muttered when Ursus pushed it apart, as a ship pushes waves; but when he carried the stone, which four of the strongest men could not raise, the muttering was turned into wonderment, and cries of "Macte!" were heard round about.

Meanwhile Cæsar appeared. He was sitting in a chariot drawn by six white Idumean stallions shod with gold. The chariot had the form of a tent with sides open, purposely, so that the crowds could see Cæsar. A number of persons might have found place in the chariot; but Nero, desiring that attention should be fixed on him exclusively, passed through the city alone, having at his feet merely two deformed dwarfs. He wore a white tunic, and a toga of amethyst color, which cast a bluish tinge on his face. On his head was a laurel wreath. Since his departure from Naples he had increased notably in body. His face had grown wide; under his lower jaw hung a double chin, by which his mouth, always too near his nose, seemed to touch

¹ The inhabitants of Italy were freed from military service by Augustus, in consequence of which the so-called *cohors Italica*, stationed generally in Asia, was composed of volunteers. The pretorian guards, in so far as they were not composed of foreigners, were made up of volunteers.

his nostrils. His bulky neck was protected, as usual, by a silk kerchief, which he arranged from moment to moment with a white and fat hand grown over with red hair, forming as it were bloody stains; he would not permit epilatores to pluck out this hair, since he had been told that to do so would bring trembling of the fingers and injure his lute-playing. Measureless vanity was depicted then, as at all times, on his face, together with tedium and suffering. On the whole, it was a face both terrible and trivial. While advancing he turned his head from side to side, blinking at times, and listening carefully to the manner in which the multitude greeted him. He was met by a storm of shouts and applause: "Hail, divine Cæsar! Imperator, hail, conqueror! hail, incomparable! — Son of Apollo, Apollo himself!"

When he heard these words, he smiled; but at moments a cloud, as it were, passed over his face, for the Roman rabble was satirical and keen in reckoning, and let itself criticise even great triumphators, even men whom it loved and respected. It was known that on a time they shouted during the entrance to Rome of Julius Cæsar: "Citizens, hide your wives; the old libertine is coming!" But Nero's monstrous vanity could not endure the least blame or criticism; meanwhile in the throng, amid shouts of applause were heard cries of "Ahenobarbus, Ahenobarbus! Where hast thou put thy flaming beard? Dost thou fear that Rome might catch fire from it?" And those who cried out in that fashion knew not that their jest concealed a dreadful prophecy.

These voices did not anger Cæsar overmuch, since he did not wear a beard, for long before he had devoted it in a golden cylinder to Jupiter Capitolinus. But other persons, hidden behind piles of stones and the corners of temples, shouted: "Matricide! Nero! Orestes! Alcæon!" and still others: "Where is Octavia?" "Surrender the purple!" At Poppæa, who came directly after him, they shouted, "Flava coma (yellow hair)!" with which name they indicated a street-walker. Cæsar's musical ear caught these exclamations also, and he raised the polished emerald to his eyes as if to see and remember those who uttered them. While looking thus, his glance rested on the Apostle standing on the stone.

For a while those two men looked at each other. It occurred to no one in that brilliant retinue, and to no one in that immense throng, that at that moment two powers of

the earth were looking at each other, one of which would vanish quickly as a bloody dream, and the other, dressed in simple garments, would seize in eternal possession the world and the city.

Meanwhile Cæsar had passed; and immediately after him eight Africans bore a magnificent litter, in which sat Poppæa, who was detested by the people. Arrayed, as was Nero, in amethyst color, with a thick application of cosmetics on her face, immovable, thoughtful, indifferent, she looked like some beautiful and wicked divinity carried in procession. In her wake followed a whole court of servants, male and female, next a line of wagons bearing materials of dress and use. The sun had sunk sensibly from midday when the passage of Augustians began, — a brilliant glittering line gleaming like an endless serpent. The indolent Petronius, greeted kindly by the multitude, had given command to bear him and his godlike slave in a litter. Tigellinus went in a chariot drawn by ponies ornamented with white and purple feathers. They saw him as he rose in the chariot repeatedly, and stretched his neck to see if Cæsar was preparing to give him the sign to pass to his chariot. Among others the crowd greeted Licinianus with applause, Vitellius with laughter, Vatinius with hissing. Toward Licinus and Lecanius the consuls they were indifferent, but Tullius Senecio they loved, it was unknown why, and Vestinius received applause.

The court was innumerable. It seemed that all that was richest, most brilliant and noted in Rome, was migrating to Antium. Nero never travelled otherwise than with thousands of vehicles; the society which accompanied him almost always exceeded the number of soldiers in a legion.¹ Hence Domitius Afer appeared, and the decrepit Lucius Saturninus; and Vespasian, who had not gone yet on his expedition to Judea, from which he returned for the crown of Cæsar, and his sons, and young Nerva, and Lucan, and Annus Gallo, and Quintianus, and a multitude of women renowned for wealth, beauty, luxury, and vice.

The eyes of the multitude were turned to the harness, the chariots, the horses, the strange livery of the servants, made up of all peoples of the earth. In that procession of pride and grandeur one hardly knew what to look at; and not only the eye, but the mind, was dazzled by such gleaming of gold, purple, and violet, by the flashing of precious stones, the glitter of brocade, pearls, and ivory. It seemed that the

¹ In the time of the Cæsars a legion was always 12,000 men.

very rays of the sun were dissolving in that abyss of brilliancy. And though wretched people were not lacking in that throng, people with sunken stomachs, and with hunger in their eyes, that spectacle inflamed not only their desire of enjoyment and their envy, but filled them with delight and pride, because it gave a feeling of the might and invincibility of Rome, to which the world contributed, and before which the world knelt. Indeed there was not on earth any one who ventured to think that that power would not endure through all ages, and outlive all nations, or that there was anything in existence that had strength to oppose it.

Vinicius, riding at the end of the retinue, sprang out of his chariot at sight of the Apostle and Lygia, whom he had not expected to see, and, greeting them with a radiant face, spoke with hurried voice, like a man who has no time to spare, —

“Hast thou come? I know not how to thank thee, O Lygia! God could not have sent me a better omen. I greet thee even while taking farewell, but not farewell for a long time. On the road I shall dispose relays of horses, and every free day I shall come to thee till I get leave to return. — Farewell!”

“Farewell, Marcus!” answered Lygia; then she added in a lower voice: “May Christ go with thee, and open thy soul to Paul’s word.”

He was glad at heart that she was concerned about his becoming a Christian soon; hence he answered, —

“Ocelle mi! let it be as thou sayest. Paul prefers to travel with my people, but he is with me, and will be to me a companion and master. Draw aside thy veil, my delight, let me see thee before my journey. Why art thou thus hidden?”

She raised the veil, and showed him her bright face and her wonderfully smiling eyes, inquiring, —

“Is the veil bad?”

And her smile had in it a little of maiden opposition; but Vinicius, while looking at her with delight, answered, —

“Bad for my eyes, which till death would look on thee only.”

Then he turned to Ursus and said, —

“Ursus, guard her as the sight in thy eye, for she is my domina as well as thine.”

Seizing her hand then, he pressed it with his lips, to the great astonishment of the crowd, who could not understand

signs of such honor from a brilliant Augustian to a maiden arrayed in simple garments, almost those of a slave.

"Farewell!"

Then he departed quickly, for Cæsar's whole retinue had pushed forward considerably. The Apostle Peter blessed him with a slight sign of the cross; but the kindly Ursus began at once to glorify him, glad that his young mistress listened eagerly and was grateful to him for those praises.

The retinue moved on and hid itself in clouds of golden dust; they gazed long after it, however, till Demas the miller approached, he for whom Ursus worked in the night-time. When he had kissed the Apostle's hand, he entreated them to enter his dwelling for refreshment, saying that it was near the Emporium, that they must be hungry and wearied since they had spent the greater part of the day at the gate.

They went with him, and, after rest and refreshment in his house, returned to the Trans-Tiber only toward evening. Intending to cross the river by the Æmilian bridge, they passed through the Clivus Publicus, going over the Aventine, between the temples of Diana and Mercury. From that height the Apostle looked on the edifices about him, and on those vanishing in the distance. Sunk in silence he meditated on the immensity and dominion of that city, to which he had come to announce the word of God. Hitherto he had seen the rule of Rome and its legions in various lands through which he had wandered, but they were single members as it were of the power, which that day for the first time he had seen impersonated in the form of Nero. That city, immense, predatory, ravenous, unrestrained, rotten to the marrow of its bones, and unassailable in its preterhuman power; that Cæsar, a fratricide, a matricide, a wife-slayer, after him dragged a retinue of bloody spectres no less in number than his court. That profligate, that buffoon, but also lord of thirty legions, and through them of the whole earth; those courtiers covered with gold and scarlet, uncertain of the morrow, but mightier meanwhile than kings, — all this together seemed a species of hellish kingdom of wrong and evil. In his simple heart he marvelled that God could give such inconceivable almightiness to Satan, that He could yield the earth to him to knead, overturn, and trample it, to squeeze blood and tears from it, to twist it like a whirlwind, to storm it like a tempest, to consume it like a flame. And his Apostle-heart was alarmed by those thoughts, and in spirit he spoke to the Master: "O Lord, how shall I begin

in this city, to which Thou hast sent me? To it belong seas and lands, the beasts of the field, and the creatures of the water; it owns other kingdoms and cities, and thirty legions which guard them; but I, O Lord, am a fisherman from a lake! How shall I begin, and how shall I conquer its malice?"

Thus speaking, he raised his gray, trembling head toward heaven, praying and exclaiming from the depth of his heart to his Divine Master, himself full of sadness and fear.

Meanwhile his prayer was interrupted by Lygia.

"The whole city is as if on fire," said she.

In fact the sun went down that day in a marvellous manner. Its immense shield had sunk half-way behind the Janiculum, the whole expanse of heaven was filled with a red gleam. From the place on which they were standing, Peter's glance embraced large expanses. Somewhat to the right they saw the long extending walls of the Circus Maximus; above it the towering palaces of the Palatine; and directly in front of them, beyond the Forum Boarium and the Velabrum, the summit of the Capitol, with the temple of Jupiter. But the walls and the columns and the summits of the temples were as if sunk in that golden and purple gleam. The parts of the river visible from afar flowed as if in blood; and as the sun sank moment after moment behind the mountain, the gleam became redder and redder, more and more like a conflagration, and it increased and extended till finally it embraced the seven hills, from which it extended to the whole region about.

"The whole city seems on fire!" repeated Lygia.

Peter shaded his eyes with his hand, and said, —

"The wrath of God is upon it."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

VINICIUS to LYGIA :

“The slave Phlegon, by whom I send this letter, is a Christian; hence he will be one of those to receive freedom from thy hands, my dearest. He is an old servant of our house; so I can write to thee with full confidence, and without fear that the letter will fall into other hands than thine. I write from Laurentum, where we have halted because of heat. Otho owned here a lordly villa, which on a time he presented to Poppæa; and she, though divorced from him, saw fit to retain the magnificent present. When I think of the women who surround me now and of thee, it seems to me that from the stones hurled by Deucalion there must have risen people of various kinds, altogether unlike one another, and that thou art of those born of crystal.

“I admire and love thee from my whole soul, and wish to speak only of thee; hence I am forced to constrain myself to write of our journey, of that which happens to me, and of news of the court. Well, Cæsar was the guest of Poppæa, who prepared for him secretly a magnificent reception. She invited only a few of his favorites, but Petronius and I were among them. After dinner we sailed in golden boats over the sea, which was as calm as if it had been sleeping, and as blue as thy eyes, O divine one. We ourselves rowed, for evidently it flattered the Augusta that men of consular dignity, or their sons, were rowing for her. Cæsar, sitting at the rudder in a purple toga, sang a hymn in honor of the sea; this hymn he had composed the night before, and with Diodorus had arranged music to it. In other boats he was accompanied by slaves from India who knew how to play on sea-shells, while round about appeared numerous dolphins, as if really enticed from Amphitrite's depths by music. Dost thou know what I was doing? I was thinking of thee, and yearning. I wanted to gather in that sea, that calm, and that music, and give the whole to thee.

“Dost thou wish that we should live in some place at the seashore far from Rome, my Augusta? I have land in Sicily, on which there is an almond forest which has rose-colored

blossoms in spring, and this forest goes down so near the sea that the tips of the branches almost touch the water. There I will love thee and magnify Paul's teaching, for I know now that it will not be opposed to love and happiness. Dost thou wish? — But before I hear thy answer I will write further of what happened on the boat.

“Soon the shore was far behind. We saw a sail before us in the distance, and all at once a dispute rose as to whether it was a common fishing-boat or a great ship from Ostia. I was the first to discover what it was, and then the Augusta said that for my eyes evidently nothing was hidden, and, dropping the veil over her face on a sudden, she inquired if I could recognize her thus. Petronius answered immediately that it was not possible to see even the sun behind a cloud; but she said, as if in jest, that love alone could blind such a piercing glance as mine, and, naming various women of the court, she fell to inquiring and guessing which one I loved. I answered calmly, but at last she mentioned thy name. Speaking of thee, she uncovered her face again, and looked at me with evil and inquiring eyes.

“I feel real gratitude to Petronius, who turned the boat at that moment, through which general attention was taken from me; for had I heard hostile or sneering words touching thee, I should not have been able to hide my anger, and should have had to struggle with the wish to break the head of that wicked, malicious woman with my oar. Thou rememberest the incident at the pond of Agrippa about which I told thee at the house of Linus on the eve of my departure. Petronius is alarmed on my account, and to-day again he implored me not to offend the Augusta's vanity. But Petronius does not understand me, and does not realize that, apart from thee, I know no pleasure or beauty or love, and that for Poppæa I feel only disgust and contempt. Thou hast changed my soul greatly, — so greatly that I should not wish now to return to my former life. But have no fear that harm may reach me here. Poppæa does not love me, for she cannot love any one, and her desires arise only from anger at Cæsar, who is under her influence yet, and who is even capable of loving her yet; still, he does not spare her, and does not hide from her his transgressions and shamelessness.

“I will tell thee, besides, something which should pacify thee. Peter told me in parting not to fear Cæsar, since a hair would not fall from my head; and I believe him. Some voice in my soul says that every word of his must be ac-

complished; that since he blessed our love, neither Cæsar, nor all the powers of Hades, nor predestination itself, could take thee from me, O Lygia. When I think of this I am as happy as if I were in heaven, which alone is calm and happy. But what I say of heaven and predestination may offend thee, a Christian. Christ has not washed me yet, but my heart is like an empty chalice, which Paul of Tarsus is to fill with the sweet doctrine professed by thee, — the sweeter for me that it is thine. Thou, divine one, count even this as a merit to me that I have emptied it of the liquid with which I had filled it before, and that I do not withdraw it, but hold it forth as a thirsty man standing at a pure spring. Let me find favor in thy eyes.

“In Antium my days and nights will pass in listening to Paul, who acquired such influence among my people on the first day that they surround him continually, seeing in him not only a wonder-worker, but a being almost supernatural. Yesterday I saw gladness on his face, and when I asked what he was doing, he answered, ‘I am sowing.’ Petronius knows that he is among my people, and wishes to see him, as does Seneca also, who heard of him from Gallo.

“But the stars are growing pale, O Lygia, and ‘Lucifer’ of the morning is bright with growing force. Soon the dawn will make the sea ruddy; all is sleeping round about, but I am thinking of thee and loving thee. Be greeted together with the morning dawn, sponsa mea!”

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

VINICIUS TO LYGIA:

“Hast thou ever been in Antium, my dear one, with Aulus and Pomponia? If not, I shall be happy when I show this place to thee. All the way from Laurentum there is a line of villas along the seashore; and Antium itself is an endless succession of palaces and porticos, whose columns in fair weather see themselves in the water. I, too, have a residence here right over the sea, with an olive garden and a forest of cypresses behind the villa, and when I think that the place will sometime be thine, its marble seems whiter to me, its groves more shady, and the sea bluer. Oh, Lygia, how good it is to live and love! Old Menikles, who manages the villa, planted irises on the ground under myrtles, and at sight of them the house of Aulus, the impluvium, and the garden in which I sat near thee, came to my mind. The irises will remind thee, too, of thy childhood’s home; therefore I am certain that thou wilt love Antium and this villa.

“Immediately after our arrival I talked long with Paul at dinner. We spoke of thee, and afterward he taught. I listened long, and I say only this, that even could I write like Petronius, I should not have power to explain everything which passed through my soul and my mind. I had not supposed that there could be such happiness in this world, such beauty and peace of which hitherto people had no knowledge. But I retain all this for conversation with thee, for at the first free moment I shall be in Rome.

“How could the earth find place at once for the Apostle Peter, Paul of Tarsus, and Cæsar? Tell me this. I ask because I passed the evening after Paul’s teaching with Nero, and dost thou know what I heard there? Well, to begin with, he read his poem on the destruction of Troy, and complained that never had he seen a burning city. He envied Priam, and called him happy just for this, that he saw the conflagration and ruin of his birthplace. Whereupon Tigellinus said, ‘Speak a word, O divinity, I will take a torch, and before the night passes thou shalt see blazing Antium.’ But Cæsar called him a fool. ‘Where,’ asked he,

'should I go to breathe the sea air, and preserve the voice with which the gods have gifted me, and which men say I should preserve for the benefit of mankind? Is it not Rome that injures me; is it not the exhalations of the Subura and the Esquiline which add to my hoarseness? Would not the palaces of Rome present a spectacle a hundredfold more tragic and magnificent than Antium?' Here all began to talk, and to say what an unheard tragedy the picture of a city like that would be, a city which had conquered the world turned now into a heap of gray ashes. Cæsar declared that then his poem would surpass the songs of Homer, and he began to describe how he would rebuild the city, and how coming ages would admire his achievements, in presence of which all other human works would be petty. 'Do that! do that!' exclaimed the drunken company. 'I must have more faithful and more devoted friends,' answered he. I confess that I was alarmed at once when I heard this, for thou art in Rome, carissima. I laugh now at that alarm, and I think that Cæsar and his friends, though mad, would not dare to permit such insanity. Still, see how a man fears for his love; I should prefer that the house of Linus were not in that narrow Trans-Tiber alley, and in a part occupied by common people, who are less considered in such a case. For me, the very palaces on the Palatine would not be a residence fit for thee; hence I should wish also that nothing were lacking thee of those ornaments and comforts to which thou art accustomed from childhood.

"Go to the house of Aulus, my Lygia. I have thought much here over this matter. If Cæsar were in Rome, news of thy return might reach the Palatine through slaves, turn attention to thee, and bring persecution, because thou didst dare to act against the will of Cæsar. But he will remain long in Antium, and before he returns slaves will have ceased to speak of thee. Linus and Ursus can be with thee. Besides, I live in hope that before the Palatine sees Cæsar, thou, my goddess, shalt be dwelling in thy own house on the Carinæ. Blessed be the day, hour, and moment in which thou shalt cross my threshold; and if Christ, whom I am learning to accept, effects this, may His name be blessed also. I shall serve Him, and give life and blood for Him. I speak incorrectly; we shall serve Him, both of us, as long as the threads of life hold.

"I love thee and salute thee with my whole soul."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

URSUS was taking water from a cistern, and while drawing up a double amphora, with a rope, was singing a strange Lygian song in an undertone, looking meanwhile with delighted eyes at Lygia and Vinicius, who, among the cypresses in Linus's garden, seemed as white as two statues. Their clothing was not moved by the least breeze. A golden and lily-colored twilight was sinking on the world while they were conversing in the calm of evening, each holding the other by the hand.

"May not some evil meet thee, Marcus, because thou hast left Antium without Cæsar's knowledge?" asked Lygia.

"No, my dear," answered Vinicius. "Cæsar announced that he would shut himself in for two days with Terpnos, and compose new songs. He acts thus frequently, and at such times neither knows nor remembers aught else. Moreover, what is Cæsar to me since I am near thee and am looking at thee? I have yearned too much already, and these last nights sleep has left me. More than once, when I dozed from weariness, I woke on a sudden, with a feeling that danger was hanging over thee; at times I dreamed that the relays of horses which were to bear me from Antium to Rome were stolen, — horses with which I passed that road more swiftly than any of Cæsar's couriers. Besides, I could not live longer without thee; I love thee too much for that, my dearest."

"I knew that thou wert coming. Twice Ursus ran out, at my request, to the Carinæ, and inquired for thee at thy house. Linus laughed at me, and Ursus also."

It was, indeed, evident that she had expected him; for instead of her usual dark dress, she wore a soft white stola, out of whose beautiful folds her arms and head emerged like primroses out of snow. A few ruddy anemones ornamented her hair.

Vinicius pressed his lips to her hands; then they sat on the stone bench amidst wild grape-vines, and inclining toward each other, were silent, looking at the twilight whose last gleams were reflected in their eyes.

The charm of the quiet evening mastered them completely.

"How calm it is here, and how beautiful the world is," said Vinicius, in a lowered voice. "The night is wonderfully still. I feel happier than ever in life before. Tell me, Lygia, what is this? Never have I thought that there could be such love. I thought that love was merely fire in the blood and desire; but now for the first time I see that it is possible to love with every drop of one's blood and every breath, and feel therewith such sweet and immeasurable calm as if Sleep and Death had put the soul to rest. For me this is something new. I look on this calmness of the trees, and it seems to be within me. Now I understand for the first time that there may be happiness of which people have not known thus far. Now I begin to understand why thou and Pomponia Græcina have such peace. Yes! Christ gives it."

At that moment Lygia placed her beautiful face on his shoulder and said, —

"My dear Marcus —" But she was unable to continue. Joy, gratitude, and the feeling that at last she was free to love deprived her of voice, and her eyes were filled with tears of emotion.

Vinicius, embracing her slender form with his arm, drew her toward him and said, —

"Lygia! May the moment be blessed in which I heard His name for the first time."

"I love thee, Marcus," said she then in a low voice.

Both were silent again, unable to bring words from their overcharged breasts. The last lily reflections had died on the cypresses, and the garden began to be silver-like from the crescent of the moon. After a while Vinicius said, —

"I know. Barely had I entered here, barely had I kissed thy dear hands, when I read in thy eyes the question whether I had received the divine doctrine to which thou art attached, and whether I was baptized. No, I am not baptized yet; but knowest thou, my flower, why? Paul said to me: 'I have convinced thee that God came into the world and gave Himself to be crucified for its salvation; but let Peter wash thee in the fountain of grace, he who first stretched his hands over thee and blessed thee.' And I, my dearest, wish thee to witness my baptism, and I wish Pomponia to be my godmother. This is why I am not baptized yet, though I believe in the Saviour and in His teaching. Paul has convinced me, has converted me; and could it be otherwise? How was I not to believe that Christ came into the world,

since he, who was His disciple, says so, and Paul, to whom He appeared? How was I not to believe that He was God, since He rose from the dead? Others saw Him in the city and on the lake and on the mountain; people saw Him whose lips have not known a lie. I began to believe this the first time I heard Peter in Ostrianum, for I said to myself even then: In the whole world any other man might lie rather than this one who says, 'I saw.' But I feared thy religion. It seemed to me that thy religion would take thee from me. I thought that there was neither wisdom nor beauty nor happiness in it. But to-day, when I know it, what kind of man should I be were I not to wish truth to rule the world instead of falsehood, love instead of hatred, virtue instead of crime, faithfulness instead of unfaithfulness, mercy instead of vengeance? What sort of man would he be who would not choose and wish the same? But your religion teaches this. Others desire justice also; but thy religion is the only one which makes man's heart just, and besides makes it pure, like thine and Pomponia's, makes it faithful, like thine and Pomponia's. I should be blind were I not to see this. But if in addition Christ God has promised eternal life, and has promised happiness as immeasurable as the all-might of God can give, what more can one wish? Were I to ask Seneca why he enjoins virtue, if wickedness brings more happiness, he would not be able to say anything sensible. But I know now that I ought to be virtuous, because virtue and love flow from Christ, and because, when death closes my eyes, I shall find life and happiness, I shall find myself and thee. Why not love and accept a religion which both speaks the truth and destroys death? Who would not prefer good to evil? I thought thy religion opposed to happiness; meanwhile Paul has convinced me that not only does it not take away, but that it gives. All this hardly finds a place in my head; but I feel that it is true, for I have never been so happy, neither could I be, had I taken thee by force and possessed thee in my house. Just see, thou hast said a moment since, 'I love thee,' and I could not have won these words from thy lips with all the might of Rome. O Lygia! Reason declares this religion divine, and the best; the heart feels it, and who can resist two such forces?"

Lygia listened, fixing on him her blue eyes, which in the light of the moon were like mystic flowers, and bedewed like flowers.

“Yes, Marcus, that is true!” said she, nestling her head more closely to his shoulder.

And at that moment they felt immensely happy, for they understood that besides love they were united by another power, at once sweet and irresistible, by which love itself becomes endless, not subject to change, deceit, treason, or even death. Their hearts were filled with perfect certainty that, no matter what might happen, they would not cease to love and belong to each other. For that reason an unspeakable repose flowed in on their souls. Vinicius felt, besides, that that love was not merely profound and pure, but altogether new, — such as the world had not known and could not give. In his head all was combined in this love, — Lygia, the teaching of Christ, the light of the moon resting calmly on the cypresses, and the still night, — so that to him the whole universe seemed filled with it.

After a while he said with a lowered and quivering voice: “Thou wilt be the soul of my soul, and the dearest in the world to me. Our hearts will beat together, we shall have one prayer and one gratitude to Christ. O my dear! To live together, to honor together the sweet God, and to know that when death comes our eyes will open again, as after a pleasant sleep, to a new light, — what better could be imagined? I only marvel that I did not understand this at first. And knowest thou what occurs to me now? That no one can resist this religion. In two hundred or three hundred years the whole world will accept it. People will forget Jupiter, and there will be no God except Christ, and no other temples but Christian. Who would not wish his own happiness? Ah! but I heard Paul’s conversation with Petronius, and dost thou know what Petronius said at the end? ‘That is not for me;’ but he could give no other answer.”

“Repeat Paul’s words to me,” said Lygia.

“It was at my house one evening. Petronius began to speak playfully and to banter, as he does usually, whereupon Paul said to him: ‘How canst thou deny, O wise Petronius, that Christ existed and rose from the dead, since thou wert not in the world at that time, but Peter and John saw Him, and I saw Him on the road to Damascus? Let thy wisdom show, first of all, then, that we are liars, and then only deny our testimony.’ Petronius answered that he had no thought of denying, for he knew that many incomprehensible things were done, which trustworthy people affirmed.

‘But the discovery of some new foreign god is one thing,’ said he, ‘and the reception of his teaching another. I have no wish to know anything which may deform life and mar its beauty. Never mind whether our gods are true or not; they are beautiful, their rule is pleasant for us, and we live without care.’ ‘Thou art willing to reject the religion of love, justice, and mercy through dread of the cares of life,’ replied Paul; ‘but think, Petronius, is thy life really free from anxieties? Behold, neither thou nor any man among the richest and most powerful knows when he falls asleep at night that he may not wake to a death sentence. But tell me, if Cæsar professed this religion, which enjoins love and justice, would not thy happiness be more assured? Thou art alarmed about thy delight, but would not life be more joyous then? As to life’s beauty and ornaments, if ye have reared so many beautiful temples and statues to evil, revengeful, adulterous, and faithless divinities, what would ye not do in honor of one God of truth and mercy? Thou art ready to praise thy lot, because thou art wealthy and living in luxury; but it was possible even in thy case to be poor and deserted, though coming of a great house, and then in truth it would have been better for thee if people confessed Christ. In Rome even wealthy parents, unwilling to toil at rearing children, cast them out of the house frequently; those children are called alumni. And chance might have made thee an alumnus, like one of those. But if parents live according to our religion, this cannot happen. And hadst thou, at manhood’s years, married a woman of thy love, thy wish would be to see her faithful till death. Meanwhile look around, what happens among you, what vileness, what shame, what bartering in the faith of wives! Nay, ye yourselves are astonished when a woman appears whom ye call “univira” (of one husband). But I tell thee that those women who carry Christ in their hearts will not break faith with their husbands, just as Christian husbands will keep faith with their wives. But ye are neither sure of rulers nor fathers nor wives nor children nor servants. The whole world is trembling before you, and ye are trembling before your own slaves, for ye know that any hour may raise an awful war against your oppression, such a war as has been raised more than once. Though rich, thou art not sure that the command may not come to thee to-morrow to leave thy wealth; thou art young, but to-morrow it may be necessary for thee to die. Thou lovest, but treason is in wait for thee;

thou art enamoured of villas and statues, but to-morrow power may thrust thee forth into the empty places of the Pandataria; thou hast thousands of servants, but to-morrow these servants may let thy blood flow. And if that be the case, how canst thou be calm and happy, how canst thou live in delight? But I proclaim love, and I proclaim a religion which commands rulers to love their subjects, masters their slaves, slaves to serve with love, to do justice and be merciful; and at last it promises happiness boundless as a sea without end. How, then, Petronius, canst thou say that that religion spoils life, since it corrects, and since thou thyself wouldst be a hundred times happier and more secure were it to embrace the world as Rome's dominion has embraced it?"

"Thus discussed Paul, and then Petronius said, 'That is not for me.' Feigning drowsiness, he went out, and when going added: 'I prefer my Eunice, O little Jew, but I should not wish to struggle with thee on the platform.' I listened to Paul's words with my whole soul, and when he spoke of our women, I magnified with all my heart that religion from which thou hast sprung as a lily from a rich field in spring-time. And I thought then: There is Poppæa, who cast aside two husbands for Nero, there is Calvia Crispinilla, there is Nigidia, there are almost all whom I know, save only Pomponia; they trafficked with faith and with oaths, but she and my own one will not desert, will not deceive, and will not quench the fire, even though all in whom I place trust should desert and deceive me. Hence I said to thee in my soul, How can I show gratitude to thee, if not with love and honor? Didst thou feel that in Antium I spoke and conversed with thee all the time as if thou hadst been at my side? I love thee a hundred times more for having escaped me from Cæsar's house. Neither do I care for Cæsar's house any longer; I wish not its luxury and music, I wish only thee. Say a word, we will leave Rome to settle somewhere at a distance."

Without removing her head from his shoulder, Lygia, as if meditating, raised her eyes to the silver tops of the cypresses, and answered, —

"Very well, Marcus. Thou hast written to me of Sicily, where Aulus wishes to settle in old age." And Vinicius interrupted her with delight.

"True, my dear! Our lands are adjacent. That is a wonderful coast, where the climate is sweeter and the nights

still brighter than in Rome, odoriferous and transparent. There life and happiness are almost one and the same."

And he began then to dream of the future.

"There we may forget anxieties. In groves, among olive-trees, we shall walk and rest in the shade. O Lygia! what a life to love and cherish each other, to look at the sea together, to look at the sky together, to honor together a kind God, to do in peace what is just and true."

Both were silent, looking into the future; only he drew her more firmly toward him, and the knight's ring on his finger glittered meanwhile in the rays of the moon. In the part occupied by the poor toiling people, all were sleeping; no murmur broke the silence.

"Wilt thou permit me to see Pomponia?" asked Lygia.

"Yes, dear one. We will invite them to our house, or go to them ourselves. If thou wish, we can take Peter the Apostle. He is bowed down with age and work. Paul will visit us also, — he will convert Aulus Plautius; and as soldiers found colonies in distant lands, so we will found a colony of Christians."

Lygia raised her hand and, taking his palm, wished to press it to her lips; but he whispered, as if fearing to frighten happiness, —

"No, Lygia, no! It is I who honor thee and exalt thee; give me thy hands."

"I love thee."

He had pressed his lips to her hands, white as jessamine, and for a time they heard only the beating of their own hearts. There was not the slightest movement in the air; the cypresses stood as motionless as if they too were holding breath in their breasts.

All at once the silence was broken by an unexpected thunder, deep, and as if coming from under the earth. A shiver ran through Lygia's body. Vinicius stood up, and said, —

"Lions are roaring in the vivarium."

Both began to listen. Now the first thunder was answered by a second, a third, a tenth, from all sides and divisions of the city. In Rome several thousand lions were quartered at times in various arenas, and frequently in the night-time they approached the grating, and, leaning their gigantic heads against it, gave utterance to their yearning for freedom and the desert. Thus they began on this occasion, and, answering one another in the stillness of night, they filled

the whole city with roaring. There was something so indescribably gloomy and terrible in those roars that Lygia, whose bright and calm visions of the future were scattered, listened with a straitened heart and with wonderful fear and sadness.

But Vinicius encircled her with his arm, and said, —

“Fear not, dear one. The games are at hand, and all the vivaria are crowded.”

Then both entered the house of Linus, accompanied by the thunder of lions, growing louder and louder.

CHAPTER XL.

IN Antium, meanwhile, Petronius gained new victories almost daily over courtiers vying with him for the favor of Cæsar. The influence of Tigellinus had fallen completely. In Rome, when there was occasion to set aside men who seemed dangerous, to plunder their property or to settle political cases, to give spectacles astounding by their luxury and bad taste, or finally to satisfy the monstrous whims of Cæsar, Tigellinus, as adroit, as he was ready for anything, became indispensable. But in Antium, among palaces reflected in the azure of the sea, Cæsar led a Hellenic existence. From morning till evening Nero and his attendants read verses, discoursed on their structure and finish, were delighted with happy turns of expression, were occupied with music, the theatre, — in a word, exclusively with that which Grecian genius had invented, and with which it had beautified life. Under these conditions Petronius, incomparably more refined than Tigellinus and the other courtiers, — witty, eloquent, full of subtile feelings and tastes, — obtained pre-eminence of necessity. Cæsar sought his society, took his opinion, asked for advice when he composed, and showed a more lively friendship than at any other time whatever. It seemed to courtiers that his influence had won a supreme triumph at last, that friendship between him and Cæsar had entered on a period of certainty which would last for years. Even those who had shown dislike previously to the exquisite Epicurean, began now to crowd around him and vie for his favor. More than one was even sincerely glad in his soul that preponderance had come to a man who knew really what to think of a given person, who received with a sceptical smile the flattery of his enemies of yesterday, but who, either through indolence or culture, was not vengeful, and did not use his power to the detriment or destruction of others. There were moments when he might have destroyed even Tigellinus, but he preferred to ridicule him, and expose his vulgarity and want of refinement. In Rome the Senate drew breath, for no death sentence had been issued for a month and a half. It is true that in Antium and the city people told wonders of the refinement which the profligacy of Cæsar