

## CHAPTER LVIII.

"LORD," said Chilo, "the sea is like olive oil, the waves seem to sleep. Let us go to Achæa. There the glory of Apollo is awaiting thee, crowns and triumph are awaiting thee, the people will deify thee, the gods will receive thee as a guest, their own equal; but here, O lord —"

And he stopped, for his lower lip began to quiver so violently that his words passed into meaningless sounds.

"We will go when the games are over," replied Nero. "I know that even now some call the Christians *innocia corpora*. If I were to go, all would repeat this. What dost thou fear?"

Then he frowned, but looked with inquiring glance at Chilo, as if expecting an answer, for he only feigned cool blood. At the last exhibition he himself feared the words of Crispus; and when he had returned to the Palatine, he could not sleep from rage and shame, but also from fear.

Then Vestinius, who heard their conversation in silence, looked around, and said in a mysterious voice, —

"Listen, lord, to this old man. There is something strange in those Christians. Their deity gives them an easy death, but he may be vengeful."

"It was not I who arranged the games, but Tigellinus," replied Nero, quickly.

"True! it was I," added Tigellinus, who heard Cæsar's answer, "and I jeer at all Christian gods. Vestinius is a bladder full of prejudices, and this valiant Greek is ready to die of terror at sight of a hen with feathers up in defence of her chickens."

"True!" said Nero; "but henceforth give command to cut the tongues out of Christians and stop their mouths."

"Fire will stop them, O divinity."

"Woe is me!" groaned Chilo.

But Cæsar, to whom the insolent confidence of Tigellinus gave courage, began to laugh, and said, pointing to the old Greek, —

"See how the descendant of Achilles looks!"

Indeed Chilo looked terribly. The remnant of hair on his head had grown white; on his face was fixed an expression of some immense dread, alarm, and oppression. He seemed at times, too, as if stunned and only half conscious. Often he gave no answer to questions; then again he fell into anger, and became so insolent that the Augustians preferred not to attack him. Such a moment had come to him then.

"Do what ye like with me, but I will not go to the games!" cried he, in desperation.

Nero looked at him for a while, and, turning to Tigellinus, said, —

"Have a care that this Stoic is near me in the gardens. I want to see what impression our torches will make on him."

Chilo was afraid of the threat which quivered in Cæsar's voice. "O lord," said he, "I shall see nothing, for I cannot see in the night-time."

"The night will be as bright as day," replied Cæsar, with a threatening laugh.

Turning then to the Augustians, Nero talked about races which he intended to have when the games were over.

Petronius approached Chilo, and asked, pushing him on the shoulder, —

"Have I not said that thou wouldst not hold out?"

"I wish to drink," said Chilo, stretching his trembling hand toward a goblet of wine; but he was unable to raise it to his lips. Seeing this, Vestinius took the vessel; but later he drew near, and inquired with curious and frightened face, —

"Are the Furies pursuing thee?"

The old man looked at him a certain time with open lips, as if not understanding what he said. But Vestinius repeated, —

"Are the Furies pursuing thee?"

"No," answered Chilo; "but night is before me."

"How, night? May the gods have mercy on thee. How night?"

"Night, ghastly and impenetrable, in which something is moving, something coming toward me; but I know not what it is, and I am terrified."

"I have always been sure that there are witches. Dost thou not dream of something?"

"No, for I do not sleep. I did not think that they would be punished thus."

"Art thou sorry for them?"

"Why do ye shed so much blood? Hast heard what that one said from the cross? Woe to us!"

"I heard," answered Vestinius, in a low voice. "But they are incendiaries."

"Not true!"

"And enemies of the human race."

"Not true!"

"And poisoners of water."

"Not true!"

"And murderers of children."

"Not true!"

"How?" inquired Vestinius, with astonishment. "Thou hast said so thyself, and given them into the hands of Tigellinus."

"Therefore night has surrounded me, and death is coming toward me. At times it seems to me that I am dead already, and ye also."

"No! it is they who are dying; we are alive. But tell me, what do they see when they are dying?"

"Christ."

"That is their god. Is he a mighty god?"

But Chilo answered with a question, —

"What kind of torches are to burn in the gardens? Hast thou heard what Cæsar said?"

"I heard, and I know. Those torches are called Samentitii and Semaxii. They are made by arraying men in painful tunics, steeped in pitch, and binding them to pillars, to which fire is set afterward. May their god not send misfortune on the city. Semaxii! that is a dreadful punishment!"

"I would rather see it, for there will not be blood," answered Chilo. "Command a slave to hold the goblet to my mouth. I wish to drink, but I spill the wine; my hand trembles from age."

Others also were speaking of the Christians. Old Domitius Afer reviled them.

"There is such a multitude of them," said he, "that they might raise a civil war; and, remember, there were fears lest they might arm. But they die like sheep."

"Let them try to die otherwise!" said Tigellinus.

To this Petronius answered, "Ye deceive yourselves. They are arming."

"With what?"

"With patience."

"That is a new kind of weapon."

"True. But can ye say that they die like common criminals? No! They die as if the criminals were those who condemned them to death, — that is, we and the whole Roman people."

"What raving!" said Tigellinus.

"Hic Abdera!"<sup>1</sup> answered Petronius.

But others, struck by the justice of his remark, began to look at one another with astonishment, and repeat, —

"True! there is something peculiar and strange in their death."

"I tell you that they see their divinity!" cried Vestinius, from one side.

Thereupon a number of Augustians turned to Chilo, —

"Hai, old man, thou knowest them well; tell us what they see."

The Greek spat out wine on his tunic, and answered, —

"The resurrection." And he began to tremble so that the guests sitting nearer burst into loud laughter.

<sup>1</sup> A proverbial expression meaning "the dullest of the dull." — *Note by the Author.*

## CHAPTER LIX.

FOR some time Vinicius had spent his nights away from home. It occurred to Petronius that perhaps he had formed a new plan, and was working to liberate Lygia from the Esquiline dungeon; he did not wish, however, to inquire about anything, lest he might bring misfortune to the work. This sceptical exquisite had become in a certain sense superstitious. He had failed to snatch Lygia from the Mamertine prison, hence had ceased to believe in his own star.

Besides, he did not count this time on a favorable outcome for the efforts of Vinicius. The Esquiline prison, formed in a hurry from the cellars of houses thrown down to stop the fire, was not, it is true, so terrible as the old Tullianum near the Capitol, but it was a hundred times better guarded. Petronius understood perfectly that Lygia had been taken there only to escape death and not escape the amphitheatre. He could understand at once that for this very reason they were guarding her as a man guards the eye in his head.

"Evidently," said he to himself, "Cæsar and Tigellinus have reserved her for some special spectacle, more dreadful than all others, and Vinicius is more likely to perish than rescue her."

Vinicius, too, had lost hope of being able to free Lygia. Christ alone could do that. The young tribune now thought only of seeing her in prison.

For some time the knowledge that Nazarius had penetrated the Mamertine prison as a corpse-bearer had given him no peace; hence he resolved to try that method also.

The overseer of the "Putrid Pits," who had been bribed for an immense sum of money, admitted him at last among servants whom he sent nightly to prisons for corpses. The danger that Vinicius might be recognized was really small. He was preserved from it by night, the dress of a slave, and the defective illumination of the prison. Besides, into whose head could it enter that a patrician, the grandson of one

consul, the son of another, could be found among servants, corpse-bearers, exposed to the miasma of prisons and the "Putrid Pits"? And he began work to which men were forced only by slavery or the direst need.

When the desired evening came, he girded his loins gladly, covered his head with a cloth steeped in turpentine, and with throbbing heart betook himself, with a crowd of others, to the Esquiline.

The pretorian guards made no trouble, for all had brought proper tesseræ, which the centurion examined by the light of a lantern. After a while the great iron doors opened before them, and they entered.

Vinicius saw an extensive vaulted cellar, from which they passed to a series of others. Dim tapers illuminated the interior of each, which was filled with people. Some of these were lying at the walls sunk in sleep, or dead, perhaps. Others surrounded large vessels of water, standing in the middle, out of which they drank as people tormented with fever; others were sitting on the ground, their elbows on their knees, their heads on their palms; here and there children were sleeping, nestled up to their mothers. Groans, loud hurried breathing of the sick, weeping, whispered prayers, hymns in an undertone, the curses of overseers were heard round about. In this dungeon was the odour of crowds and corpses. In its gloomy depth dark figures were swarming; nearer, close to flickering lights, were visible faces, pale, terrified, hungry, and cadaverous, with eyes dim, or else flaming with fever, with lips blue, with streams of sweat on their foreheads, and with clammy hair. In corners the sick were moaning loudly; some begged for water; others, to be led to death. And still that prison was less terrible than the old Tullianum. The legs bent under Vinicius when he saw all this, and breath was failing in his breast. At the thought that Lygia was in the midst of this misery and misfortune, the hair rose on his head, and he stifled a cry of despair. The amphitheatre, the teeth of wild beasts, the cross, — anything was better than those dreadful dungeons filled with the odor of corpses, places in which imploring voices called from every corner, —

"Lead us to death!"

Vinicius pressed his nails into his palms, for he felt that he was growing weak, and that presence of mind was deserting him. All that he had felt till then, all his love and pain, changed in him to one desire for death.

Just then near his side was heard the overseer of the "Putrid Pits,"—

"How many corpses have ye to-day?"

"About a dozen," answered the guardian of the prison, "but there will be more before morning; some are in agony at the walls."

And he fell to complaining of women who concealed dead children so as to keep them near and not yield them to the "Putrid Pits." "We must discover corpses first by the odor; through this the air, so terrible already, is spoiled still more. I would rather be a slave in some rural prison than guard these dogs rotting here while alive—"

The overseer of the pits comforted him, saying that his own service was no easier. By this time the sense of reality had returned to Vinicius. He began to search the dungeon; but sought in vain for Lygia, fearing meanwhile that he would never see her alive. A number of cellars were connected by newly made passages; the corpse-bearers entered only those from which corpses were to be carried. Fear seized Vinicius lest that privilege which had cost so much trouble might serve no purpose. Luckily his patron aided him.

"Infection spreads most through corpses," said he. "Ye must carry out the bodies at once, or die yourselves, together with the prisoners."

"There are only ten of us for all the cellars," said the guardian, "and we must sleep."

"I will leave four men of mine, who will go through the cellars at night to see if these are dead."

"We will drink to-morrow if thou do that. Everybody must be taken to the test; for an order has come to pierce the neck of each corpse, and then to the 'Putrid Pits' at once with it."

"Very well, but we will drink," said the overseer.

Four men were selected, and among them Vinicius; the others he took to put the corpses on the biers.

Vinicius was at rest; he was certain now at least of finding Lygia. The young tribune began by examining the first dungeon carefully; he looked into all the dark corners hardly reached by the light of his torch; he examined figures sleeping at the walls under coarse cloths; he saw that the most grievously ill were drawn into a corner apart. But Lygia he found in no place. In a second and third dungeon his search was equally fruitless.

Meanwhile the hour had grown late; all corpses had been carried out. The guards, disposing themselves in the corridors between cellars, were asleep; the children, wearied with crying, were silent; nothing was heard save the breathing of troubled breasts, and here and there the murmur of prayer.

Vinicius went with his torch to the fourth dungeon, which was considerably smaller. Raising the light, he began to examine it, and trembled all at once, for it seemed to him that he saw, near a latticed opening in the wall, the gigantic form of Ursus. Then, blowing out the light, he approached him, and asked,—

"Ursus, art thou here?"

"Who art thou?" asked the giant, turning his head.

"Dost not know me?"

"Thou hast quenched the torch; how could I know thee?"

But at that moment Vinicius saw Lygia lying on a cloak near the wall; so, without speaking further, he knelt near her. Ursus recognized him, and said,—

"Praise be to Christ! but do not wake her, lord."

Vinicius, kneeling down, gazed at her through his tears. In spite of the darkness he could distinguish her face, which seemed to him as pale as alabaster, and her emaciated arms. At that sight he was seized by a love which was like a rending pain, a love which shook his soul to its uttermost depth, and which at the same time was so full of pity, respect, and homage that he fell on his face, and pressed to his lips the hem of the cloak on which rested that head dearer to him than all else on earth.

Ursus looked at Vinicius for a long time in silence, but at last he pulled his tunic.

"Lord," asked he, "how didst thou come, and hast thou come here to save her?"

Vinicius rose, and struggled for a time with his emotion. "Show me the means," replied he.

"I thought that thou wouldst find them, lord. Only one method came to my head—"

Here he turned toward the grating in the wall, as if in answer to himself, and said,—

"In that way—but there are soldiers outside—"

"A hundred pretorians."

"Then we cannot pass?"

"No!"

The Lygian rubbed his forehead, and asked again, —  
 “How didst thou enter?”

“I have a tessera from the overseer of the ‘Putrid Pits.’”  
 Then Vinicius stopped suddenly, as if some idea had  
 flashed through his head.

“By the Passion of the Redeemer,” said he, in a hurried  
 voice, “I will stay here. Let her take my tessera; she can  
 wrap her head in a cloth, cover her shoulders with a mantle,  
 and pass out. Among the slaves who carry out corpses  
 there are several youths not full grown; hence the preto-  
 rians will not notice her, and once at the house of Petronius  
 she is safe.”

But the Lygian dropped his head on his breast, and  
 said, —

“She would not consent, for she loves thee; besides,  
 she is sick, and unable to stand alone. If thou and the  
 noble Petronius cannot save her from prison, who can?”  
 said he, after a while.

“Christ alone.”

Then both were silent.

“Christ could save all Christians,” thought the Lygian,  
 in his simple heart; “but since He does not save them, it  
 is clear that the hour of torture and death has come.”

He accepted it for himself, but was grieved to the depth  
 of his soul for that child who had grown up in his arms,  
 and whom he loved beyond life.

Vinicius knelt again near Lygia. Through the grating  
 in the wall moonbeams came in, and gave better light than  
 the one candle burning yet over the entrance. Lygia opened  
 her eyes now, and said, placing her feverish hand on the  
 arm of Vinicius, —

“I see thee; I knew that thou wouldst come.”

He seized her hands, pressed them to his forehead and his  
 heart, raised her somewhat, and held her to his breast.

“I have come, dearest. May Christ guard and free thee,  
 beloved Lygia!”

He could say no more, for the heart began to whine in  
 his breast from pain and love, and he would not show pain  
 in her presence.

“I am sick, Marcus,” said Lygia, “and I must die either  
 on the arena or here in prison — I have prayed to see thee  
 before death; thou hast come, — Christ has heard me.”

Unable to utter a word yet, he pressed her to his bosom,  
 and she continued, —

“I saw thee through the window in the Tullianum. I  
 saw that thou hadst the wish to come to me. Now the  
 Redeemer has given me a moment of consciousness, so that  
 we may take farewell of each other. I am going to Him,  
 Marcus, but I love thee, and shall love always.”

Vinicius conquered himself; he stifled his pain and began  
 to speak in a voice which he tried to make calm, —

“No, dear Lygia, thou wilt not die. The Apostle com-  
 manded me to believe, and he promised to pray for thee;  
 he knew Christ, — Christ loved him and will not refuse  
 him. Hadst thou to die, Peter would not have commanded  
 me to be confident; but he said, ‘Have confidence!’ — No,  
 Lygia! Christ will have mercy. He does not wish thy  
 death. He will not permit it. I swear to thee by the name  
 of the Redeemer that Peter is praying for thee.”

Silence followed. The one candle hanging above the  
 entrance went out, but moonlight entered through the whole  
 opening. In the opposite corner of the cellar a child  
 whined and was silent. From outside came the voices of  
 pretorians, who, after watching their turn out, were play-  
 ing under the wall at *scriptæ duodecim*.

“O Marcus,” said Lygia, “Christ Himself called to the  
 Father, ‘Remove this bitter cup from Me;’ still He drank  
 it. Christ Himself died on the cross, and thousands are  
 perishing for His sake. Why, then, should He spare me  
 alone? Who am I, Marcus? I have heard Peter say that  
 he too would die in torture. Who am I, compared with  
 Peter? When the pretorians came to us, I dreaded death  
 and torture, but I dread them no longer. See what a  
 terrible prison this is, but I am going to heaven. Think  
 of it: Cæsar is here, but there the Redeemer, kind and  
 merciful. And there is no death there. Thou lovest me;  
 think, then, how happy I shall be. Oh, dear Marcus, think  
 that thou wilt come to me there.”

Here she stopped to get breath in her sick breast, and  
 then raised his hand to her lips, —

“Marcus?”

“What, dear one?”

“Do not weep for me, and remember this, — thou wilt  
 come to me. I have lived a short time, but God gave thy  
 soul to me; hence I shall tell Christ that though I died, and  
 thou wert looking at my death, though thou wert left in  
 grief, thou didst not blaspheme against His will, and that  
 thou lovest Him always. Thou wilt love Him, and endure

my death patiently? For then He will unite us. I love thee and I wish to be with thee."

Breath failed her then, and in a barely audible voice she finished, —

"Promise me this, Marcus!"

Vinicius embraced her with trembling arms, and said, —

"By thy sacred head! I promise."

Her pale face became radiant in the sad light of the moon, and once more she raised his hand to her lips, and whispered, —

"I am thy wife!"

Beyond the wall the pretorians playing *scriptæ duodecim* raised a louder dispute; but Vinicius and Lygia forgot the prison, the guards, the world, and, feeling within them the souls of angels, they began to pray.

## CHAPTER LX.

FOR three days, or rather three nights, nothing disturbed their peace. When the usual prison work was finished, which consisted in separating the dead from the living and the grievously sick from those in better health, when the wearied guards had lain down to sleep in the corridors, Vinicius entered Lygia's dungeon and remained there till daylight. She put her head on his breast, and they talked in low voices of love and of death. In thought and speech, in desires and hopes even, both were removed unconsciously more and more from life, and they lost the sense of it. Both were like people who, having sailed from land in a ship, saw the shore no more, and were sinking gradually into infinity. Both changed by degrees into sad souls in love with each other and with Christ, and ready to fly away. Only at times did pain start up in the heart of Vinicius like a whirlwind, at times there flashed in him like lightning, hope, born of love and faith in the crucified God; but he tore himself away more and more each day from the earth, and yielded to death. In the morning, when he went from the prison, he looked on the world, on the city, on acquaintances, on vital interests, as through a dream. Everything seemed to him strange, distant, vain, fleeting. Even torture ceased to terrify, since one might pass through it while sunk in thought and with eyes fixed on another thing. It seemed to both that eternity had begun to receive them. They conversed of how they would love and live together, but beyond the grave; and if their thoughts returned to the earth at intervals, these were thoughts of people who, setting out on a long journey, speak of preparations for the road. Moreover they were surrounded by such silence as in some desert surrounds two columns far away and forgotten. Their only care was that Christ should not separate them; and as each moment strengthened their conviction that He would not, they loved Him as a link uniting them in endless happiness and peace. While still on earth, the dust of earth fell from them. The

soul of each was as pure as a tear. Under terror of death, amid misery and suffering, in that prison den, heaven had begun, for she had taken him by the hand, and, as if saved and a saint, had led him to the source of endless life.

Petronius was astonished at seeing in the face of Vinicius increasing peace and a certain wonderful serenity which he had not noted before. At times even he supposed that Vinicius had found some mode of rescue, and he was piqued because his nephew had not confided his hopes to him. At last, unable to restrain himself, he said, —

“Now thou hast another look; do not keep from me secrets, for I wish and am able to aid thee. Hast thou arranged anything?”

“I have,” said Vinicius; “but thou canst not help me. After her death I will confess that I am a Christian and follow her.”

“Then thou hast no hope?”

“On the contrary, I have. Christ will give her to me, and I shall never be separated from her.”

Petronius began to walk in the atrium; disillusion and impatience were evident on his face.

“Thy Christ is not needed for this, — our Thanatos<sup>1</sup> can render the same service.”

Vinicius smiled sadly, and said, —

“No, my dear, thou art unwilling to understand.”

“I am unwilling and unable. It is not the time for discussion, but remember what I said when we failed to free her from the Tullianum. I lost all hope, and on the way home thou didst say, ‘But I believe that Christ can restore her to me.’ Let Him restore her. If I throw a costly goblet into the sea, no god of ours can give it back to me; if yours is no better, I know not why I should honor Him beyond the old ones.”

“But He will restore her to me.”

Petronius shrugged his shoulders. “Dost know,” inquired he, “that Christians are to illuminate Cæsar’s gardens to-morrow?”

“To-morrow?” repeated Vinicius.

And in view of the near and dreadful reality his heart trembled with pain and fear. “This is the last night, perhaps, which I can pass with Lygia,” thought he. So bidding farewell to Petronius, he went hurriedly to the

<sup>1</sup> Death.

overseer of the “Putrid Pits” for his tessera. But disappointment was in waiting, — the overseer would not give the tessera.

“Pardon me,” said he, “I have done what I could for thee, but I cannot risk my life. To-night they are to conduct the Christians to Cæsar’s gardens. The prisons will be full of soldiers and officials. Shouldst thou be recognized, I and my children would be lost.”

Vinicius understood that it would be vain to insist. The hope gleamed in him, however, that the soldiers who had seen him before would admit him even without a tessera; so, with the coming of night, he disguised himself as usual in the tunic of a corpse-bearer, and, winding a cloth around his head, betook himself to the prison.

But that day the tesserae were verified with greater care than usual; and what was more, the centurion Scevinus, a strict soldier, devoted soul and body to Cæsar, recognized Vinicius. But evidently in his iron-clad breast there glimmered yet some spark of pity for misfortunes. Instead of striking his spear in token of alarm, he led Vinicius aside and said, —

“Return to thy house, lord. I recognize thee; but not wishing thy ruin, I am silent. I cannot admit thee; go thy way, and may the gods send thee solace.”

“Thou canst not admit me,” said Vinicius; “but let me stand here and look at those who are led forth.”

“My order does not forbid that,” said Scevinus.

Vinicius stood before the gate and waited. About midnight the prison gate was opened widely, and whole ranks of prisoners appeared, — men, women, and children, surrounded by armed pretorians. The night was very bright; hence it was possible to distinguish not only the forms, but the faces of the unfortunates. They went two abreast, in a long, gloomy train, amid stillness broken only by the clatter of weapons. So many were led out that all the dungeons must be empty, as it seemed. In the rear of the line Vinicius saw Glaucus the physician distinctly, but Lygia and Ursus were not among the condemned.

## CHAPTER LXI.

DARKNESS had not come when the first waves of people began to flow into Cæsar's gardens. The crowds, in holiday costume, crowned with flowers, joyous, singing, and some of them drunk, were going to look at the new, magnificent spectacle. Shouts of "Semaxii! Sarmentitii!" were heard on the Via Tecta, on the bridge of Æmilius, and from the other side of the Tiber, on the Triumphal Way, around the Circus of Nero, and off towards the Vatican Hill. In Rome people had been seen burnt on pillars before, but never had any one seen such a number of victims.

Cæsar and Tigellinus, wishing to finish at once with the Christians and also to avoid infection, which from the prisons was spreading more and more through the city, had given command to empty all dungeons, so that there remained in them barely a few tens of people intended for the close of the spectacles. So, when the crowds had passed the gates, they were dumb with amazement. All the main and side alleys, which lay through dense groves and along lawns, thickets, ponds, fields, and squares filled with flowers, were packed with pillars smeared with pitch, to which Christians were fastened. In higher places, where the view was not hindered by trees, one could see whole rows of pillars and bodies decked with flowers, myrtle, and ivy, extending into the distance on high and low places, so far that, though the nearest were like masts of ships, the farthest seemed colored darts, or staffs thrust into the earth. The number of them surpassed the expectation of the multitude. One might suppose that a whole nation had been lashed to pillars for Rome's amusement and for Cæsar's. The throng of spectators stopped before single masts when their curiosity was roused by the form or the sex of the victim; they looked at the faces, the crowns, the garlands of ivy; then they went farther and farther, asking themselves with amazement, "Could there have been so many criminals, or how could children barely

able to walk have set fire to Rome?" and astonishment passed by degrees into fear.

Meanwhile darkness came, and the first stars twinkled in the sky. Near each condemned person a slave took his place, torch in hand; when the sound of trumpets was heard in various parts of the gardens, in sign that the spectacle was to begin, each slave put his torch to the foot of a pillar. The straw, hidden under the flowers and steeped in pitch, burned at once with a bright flame which, increasing every instant, withered the ivy, and rising embraced the feet of the victims. The people were silent; the gardens resounded with one immense groan and with cries of pain. Some victims, however, raising their faces toward the starry sky, began to sing, praising Christ. The people listened. But the hardest hearts were filled with terror when, on smaller pillars, children cried with shrill voices, "Mamma! Mamma!" A shiver ran through even spectators who were drunk when they saw little heads and innocent faces distorted with pain, or children fainting in the smoke which began to stifle them. But the flames rose, and seized new crowns of roses and ivy every instant. The main and side alleys were illuminated; the groups of trees, the lawns, and the flowery squares were illuminated; the water in pools and ponds was gleaming, the trembling leaves on the trees had grown rose-colored, and all was as visible as in daylight. When the odor of burnt bodies filled the gardens, slaves sprinkled between the pillars myrrh and aloes prepared purposely. In the crowds were heard here and there shouts, — whether of sympathy or delight and joy, it was unknown; and they increased every moment with the fire, which embraced the pillars, climbed to the breasts of the victims, shrivelled with burning breath the hair on their heads, threw veils over their blackened faces, and then shot up higher, as if showing the victory and triumph of that power which had given command to rouse it.

At the very beginning of the spectacle Cæsar had appeared among the people in a magnificent quadriga of the Circus, drawn by four white steeds. He was dressed as a charioteer in the color of the Greens, — the court party and his. After him followed other chariots filled with courtiers in brilliant array, senators, priests, bacchantes, naked and crowned, holding pitchers of wine, and partly drunk, uttering wild shouts. At the side of these were musicians dressed as fauns and satyrs, who played on citharas, formingas, flutes, and horns. In other chariots advanced matrons and maidens of

Rome, drunk also and half naked. Around the quadriga ran men who shook thyrses ornamented with ribbons; others beat drums; others scattered flowers.

All that brilliant throng moved forward, shouting, "Evoe!" on the widest road of the garden, amidst smoke and processions of people. Cæsar, keeping near him Tigellinus and also Chilo, in whose terror he sought to find amusement, drove the steeds himself, and, advancing at a walk, looked at the burning bodies, and heard the shouts of the multitude. Standing on the lofty gilded chariot, surrounded by a sea of people who bent to his feet, in the glitter of the fire, in the golden crown of a circus-victor, he was a head above the courtiers and the crowd. He seemed a giant. His immense arms, stretched forward to hold the reins, seemed to bless the multitude. There was a smile on his face and in his blinking eyes; he shone above the throng as a sun or a deity, terrible but commanding and mighty.

At times he stopped to look with more care at some maiden whose bosom had begun to shrink in the flames, or at the face of a child distorted by convulsions; and again he drove on, leading behind him a wild, excited retinue. At times he bowed to the people, then again he bent backward, drew in the golden reins, and spoke to Tigellinus. At last, when he had reached the great fountain in the middle of two crossing streets he stepped from the quadriga, and, nodding to his attendants, mingled with the throng.

He was greeted with shouts and plaudits. The bacchantes, the nymphs, the senators and Augustians, the priests, the fauns, satyrs, and soldiers surrounded him at once in an excited circle; but he, with Tigellinus on one side and Chilo on the other, walked around the fountain, about which were burning some tens of torches; stopping before each one, he made remarks on the victims, or jeered at the old Greek, on whose face boundless despair was depicted.

At last he stood before a lofty mast decked with myrtle and ivy. The red tongues of fire had risen only to the knees of the victim; but it was impossible to see his face, for the green burning twigs had covered it with smoke. After a while, however, the light breeze of night turned away the smoke and uncovered the head of a man with gray beard falling on his breast.

At sight of him Chilo was twisted into a lump like a wounded snake, and from his mouth came a cry more like cawing than a human voice.

"Glaucus! Glaucus!"

In fact, Glaucus the physician looked down from the burning pillar at him.

Glaucus was alive yet. His face expressed pain, and was inclined forward, as if to look closely for the last time at his executioner, at the man who had betrayed him, robbed him of wife and children, set a murderer on him, and who, when all this had been forgiven in the name of Christ, had delivered him to executioners. Never had one person inflicted more dreadful or bloody wrongs on another. Now the victim was burning on the pitched pillar, and the executioner was standing at his feet. The eyes of Glaucus did not leave the face of the Greek. At moments they were hidden by smoke; but when the breeze blew this away, Chilo saw again those eyes fixed on him. He rose and tried to flee, but had not strength. All at once his legs seemed of lead; an invisible hand seemed to hold him at that pillar with superhuman force. He was petrified. He felt that something was overflowing in him, something giving way; he felt that he had had a surfeit of blood and torture, that the end of his life was approaching, that everything was vanishing, Cæsar, the court, the multitude, and around him was only a kind of bottomless, dreadful black vacuum with no visible thing in it, save those eyes of a martyr which were summoning him to judgment. But Glaucus, bending his head lower down, looked at him fixedly. Those present divined that something was taking place between those two men. Laughter died on their lips, however, for in Chilo's face there was something terrible: such pain and fear had distorted it as if those tongues of fire were burning his body. On a sudden he staggered, and, stretching his arms upward, cried in a terrible and piercing voice, —

"Glaucus! in Christ's name! forgive me!"

It grew silent round about, a quiver ran through the spectators, and all eyes were raised involuntarily.

The head of the martyr moved slightly, and from the top of the mast was heard a voice like a groan, —

"I forgive!"

Chilo threw himself on his face, and howled like a wild beast; grasping earth in both hands, he sprinkled it on his head. Meanwhile the flames shot up, seizing the breast and face of Glaucus; they unbound the myrtle crown on his head, and seized the ribbons on the top of the pillar, the whole of which shone with great blazing.

Chilo stood up after a while with face so changed that to the Augustians he seemed another man. His eyes flashed with a light new to him, ecstasy issued from his wrinkled forehead; the Greek, incompetent a short time before, looked now like some priest visited by a divinity and ready to reveal unknown truths.

"What is the matter? Has he gone mad?" asked a number of voices.

But he turned to the multitude, and, raising his right hand, cried, or rather shouted, in a voice so piercing that not only the Augustians but the multitude heard him, —

"Roman people! I swear by my death, that innocent persons are perishing here. That is the incendiary!"

And he pointed his finger at Nero.

Then came a moment of silence. The courtiers were benumbed. Chilo continued to stand with outstretched, trembling arm, and with finger pointed at Nero. All at once a tumult arose. The people, like a wave, urged by a sudden whirlwind, rushed toward the old man to look at him more closely. Here and there were heard cries, "Hold!" In another place, "Woe to us!" In the throng a hissing and uproar began. "Ahenobarbus! Matricide! Incendiary!" Disorder increased every instant. The bacchantes screamed in heaven-piercing voices, and began to hide in the chariots. Then some pillars which were burned through, fell, scattered sparks, and increased the confusion. A blind dense wave of people swept away Chilo, and bore him to the depth of the garden.

The pillars began to burn through in every direction and fall across the streets, filling alleys with smoke, sparks, the odor of burnt wood and burnt flesh. The nearer lights died. The gardens began to grow dark. The crowds, alarmed, gloomy, and disturbed, pressed toward the gates. News of what had happened passed from mouth to mouth, distorted and increased. Some said that Cæsar had fainted; others that he had confessed, saying that he had given command to burn Rome; others that he had fallen seriously ill; and still others that he had been borne out, as if dead, in the chariot. Here and there were heard voices of sympathy for the Christians: "If they had not burned Rome, why so much blood, torture, and injustice? Will not the gods avenge the innocent, and what *piacula* can mollify them now?" The words *innocia corpora* were repeated oftener and oftener. Women expressed aloud their pity for chil-

dren thrown in such numbers to wild beasts, nailed to crosses, or burned in those cursed gardens! And finally pity was turned into abuse of Cæsar and Tigellinus. There were persons, too, who, stopping suddenly, asked themselves or others the question, "What kind of divinity is that which gives such strength to meet torture and death?" And they returned home in meditation.

But Chilo was wandering about in the gardens, not knowing where to go or where to turn. Again he felt himself a weak, helpless, sick old man.

Now he stumbled against partly burnt bodies; now he struck a torch, which sent a shower of sparks after him; now he sat down, and looked around with vacant stare. The gardens had become almost dark. The pale moon moving among the trees shone with uncertain light on the alleys, the dark pillars lying across them, and the partly burnt victims turned into shapeless lumps. But the old Greek thought that in the moon he saw the face of Glaucus, whose eyes were looking at him yet persistently, and he hid before the light. At last he went out of the shadow, in spite of himself; as if pushed by some hidden power, he turned toward the fountain where Glaucus had yielded up the spirit.

Then some hand touched his shoulder. He turned, and saw an unknown person before him.

"Who art thou?" exclaimed he, with terror.

"Paul of Tarsus."

"I am accursed! — What dost thou wish?"

"I wish to save thee," answered the Apostle.

Chilo supported himself against a tree. His legs bent under him, and his arms hung parallel with his body.

"For me there is no salvation," said he, gloomily.

"Hast thou heard how God forgave the thief on the cross who pitied Him?" inquired Paul.

"Dost thou know what I have done?"

"I saw thy suffering, and heard thy testimony to the truth."

"O Lord!"

"And if a servant of Christ forgave thee in the hour of torture and death, why should Christ not forgive thee?"

Chilo seized his head with both hands, as if in bewilderment.

"Forgiveness! for me, forgiveness!"

"Our God is a God of mercy," said Paul.

"For me?" repeated Chilo; and he began to groan like a man who lacks strength to control his pain and suffering.

"Lean on me," said Paul, "and go with me."

And taking him he went to the crossing of the streets, guided by the voice of the fountain, which seemed to weep in the night stillness over the bodies of those who had died in torture.

"Our God is a God of mercy," repeated the Apostle. "Wert thou to stand at the sea and cast in pebbles, couldst thou fill its depth with them? I tell thee that the mercy of Christ is as the sea, and that the sins and faults of men sink in it as pebbles in the abyss; I tell thee that it is like the sky which covers mountains, lands, and seas, for it is everywhere and has neither end nor limit. Thou hast suffered at the pillar of Glaucus. Christ saw thy suffering. Without reference to what may meet thee to-morrow, thou didst say, 'That is the incendiary,' and Christ remembers thy words. Thy malice and falsehood are gone; in thy heart is left only boundless sorrow. Follow me and listen to what I say. I am he who hated Christ and persecuted His chosen ones. I did not want Him, I did not believe in Him till He manifested Himself and called me. Since then He is, for me, mercy. He has visited thee with compunction, with alarm, and with pain, to call thee to Himself. Thou didst hate Him, but He loved thee. Thou didst deliver His confessors to torture, but He wishes to forgive and save thee."

Immense sobbing shook the breast of the wretched man, sobbing by which the soul in him was rent to its depths; but Paul took possession of him, mastered him, led him away, as a soldier leads a captive.

After a while the Apostle began again to speak:—

"Come with me; I will lead thee to Him. For why else have I come to thee? Christ commanded me to gather in souls in the name of love; hence I perform His service. Thou thinkest thyself accursed, but I say: Believe in Him, and salvation awaits thee. Thou thinkest that thou art hated, but I repeat that He loves thee. Look at me. Before I had Him I had nothing save malice, which dwelt in my heart, and now His love suffices me instead of father and mother, wealth and power. In Him alone is refuge. He alone will see thy sorrow, believe in thy misery, remove thy alarm, and raise thee to Himself."

Thus speaking, he led him to the fountain, the silver stream of which gleamed from afar in the moonlight. Round about was silence; the gardens were empty, for

slaves had removed the charred pillars and the bodies of the martyrs.

Chilo threw himself on his knees with a groan, and hiding his face in his hands remained motionless. Paul raised his face to the stars. "O Lord," prayed he, "look on this wretched man, on his sorrow, his tears, and his suffering! O God of mercy, who hast shed Thy blood for our sins, forgive him, through Thy torment, Thy death and resurrection!"

Then he was silent; but for a long time he looked toward the stars, and prayed.

Meanwhile from under his feet was heard a cry which resembled a groan,—

"O Christ! O Christ! forgive me!"

Paul approached the fountain then, and, taking water in his hand, turned to the kneeling wretch,—

"Chilo! — I baptize thee in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit. Amen!"

Chilo raised his head, opened his arms, and remained in that posture. The moon shone with full light on his white hair and on his equally white face, which was as motionless as if dead or cut out of stone. The moments passed one after another. From the great aviaries in the gardens of Domitian came the crowing of cocks; but Chilo remained kneeling, like a statue on a monument. At last he recovered, spoke to the Apostle, and asked,—

"What am I to do before death?"

Paul was roused also from meditation on the measureless power which even such spirits as that of this Greek could not resist, and answered,—

"Have faith, and bear witness to the truth."

They went out together. At the gate the Apostle blessed the old man again, and they parted. Chilo himself insisted on this, for after what had happened he knew that Cæsar and Tigellinus would give command to pursue him.

Indeed he was not mistaken. When he returned home, he found the house surrounded by pretorians, who led him away, and took him under direction of Scævinius to the Palatine.

Cæsar had gone to rest, but Tigellinus was waiting. When he saw the unfortunate Greek, he greeted him with a calm but ominous face.

"Thou hast committed the crime of treason," said he, "and punishment will not pass thee; but if to-morrow thou testify in the amphitheatre that thou wert drunk and mad,

and that the authors of the conflagration are Christians, thy punishment will be limited to stripes and exile."

"I cannot do that," answered Chilo, calmly.

Tigellinus approached him with slow step, and with a voice also low but terrible, —

"How is that?" asked he. "Thou canst not, Greek dog? Wert thou not drunk, and dost thou not understand what is waiting for thee? Look there!" and he pointed to a corner of the atrium in which, near a long wooden bench, stood four Thracian slaves in the shade with ropes, and with pincers in their hands.

But Chilo answered, —

"I cannot!"

Rage seized Tigellinus, but he restrained himself yet.

"Hast thou seen," inquired he, "how Christians die? Dost wish to die in that way?"

The old man raised his pale face; for a time his lips moved in silence, and he answered, —

"I too believe in Christ."

Tigellinus looked at him with amazement.

"Dog, thou hast gone mad in fact!"

And suddenly the rage in his breast broke its bonds. Springing at Chilo, he caught him by the beard with both hands, hurled him to the floor, trampled him, repeating, with foam on his lips, —

"Thou wilt retract! thou wilt!"

"I cannot!" answered Chilo from the floor.

"To the tortures with him!"

At this command the Thracians seized the old man, and placed him on the bench; then, fastening him with ropes to it, they began to squeeze his thin shanks with pincers. But when they were tying him he kissed their hands with humility; then he closed his eyes, and seemed dead.

He was alive, though; for when Tigellinus bent over him and inquired once again, "Wilt thou retract?" his white lips moved slightly, and from them came the barely audible whisper, —

"I cannot."

Tigellinus gave command to stop the torture, and began to walk up and down in the atrium with a face distorted by anger, but helpless. At last a new idea came to his head, for he turned to the Thracians and said, —

"Tear out his tongue!"

## CHAPTER LXII.

THE drama "Aureolus" was given usually in theatres or amphitheatres, so arranged that they could open and present as it were two separate stages. But after the spectacle in the gardens of Cæsar the usual method was omitted; for in this case the problem was to let the greatest number of people look at a slave who, in the drama, is devoured by a bear. In the theatres the rôle of the bear is played by an actor sewed up in a skin, but this time the representation was to be real. This was a new idea of Tigellinus. At first Cæsar refused to come, but changed his mind at persuasion of the favorite. Tigellinus explained that after what had happened in the gardens it was all the more his duty to appear before the people, and he guaranteed that the crucified slave would not insult him as had Crispus. The people were somewhat sated and tired of blood-spilling; hence a new distribution of lottery tickets and gifts was promised, as well as a feast, for the spectacle was to be in the evening, in a brilliantly lighted amphitheatre.

About dusk the whole amphitheatre was packed; the Augustians, with Tigellinus at the head of them, came to a man, — not only for the spectacle itself, but to show their devotion to Cæsar and their opinion of Chilo, of whom all Rome was then talking.

They whispered to one another that Cæsar, when returning from the gardens, had fallen into a frenzy and could not sleep, that terrors and wonderful visions had attacked him; therefore he had announced on the following morning his early journey to Achæa. But others denied this, declaring that he would be all the more pitiless to the Christians. Cowards, however, were not lacking, who foresaw that the accusation which Chilo had thrown into Cæsar's face might have the worst result possible. In conclusion, there were those who through humanity begged Tigellinus to stop persecution.

"See whither ye are going," said Barcus Soranus. "Ye wished to allay people's anger and convince them that punishment was falling on the guilty; the result is just the opposite."

"True!" added Antistius Verus, "all whisper to one