

CHAPTER LXVI.

FOUR Bithynians carried Lygia carefully to the house of Petronius. Vinicius and Ursus walked at her side, hurrying so as to give her into the hands of the Greek physician as quickly as possible. They walked in silence, for after the events of the day they had not power to speak. Vinicius so far was as if half-conscious. He kept repeating to himself that Lygia was saved; that she was threatened no longer by imprisonment, or death in the Circus; that their misfortunes had ended once and forever; that he would take her home and not separate again from her. This appeared to him the beginning of some other life rather than reality. From moment to moment he bent over the open litter to look on the beloved face, which in the moonlight seemed sleeping, and he repeated mentally, "This is she! Christ has saved her!" He remembered also that while he and Ursus were carrying her from the spoliarium an unknown physician had assured him that she was living and would recover. At this thought delight so filled his breast that at moments he grew weak, and being unable to walk with his own strength leaned on the arm of Ursus. Ursus meanwhile was looking into the sky filled with stars, and was praying.

They advanced hurriedly along streets where newly erected white buildings shone brightly in the moonlight. The city was empty, save here and there where crowds of people crowned with ivy, sang and danced before porticos to the sound of flutes, thus taking advantage of the wonderful night and the festive season, unbroken from the beginning of the games. Only when they were near the house did Ursus stop praying, and say in a low voice, as if he feared to waken Lygia, —

"Lord, it was the Saviour who rescued her from death. When I saw her on the horns of the aurochs, I heard a voice in my soul saying, 'Defend her!' and that was the voice of the Lamb. The prison took strength from me, but He gave it back in that moment, and inspired that cruel people to take her part. Let His will be done!"

And Vinicius answered, —

"Magnified be His name!"

He had not power to continue, for all at once he felt that a mighty weeping was swelling his breast. He was seized by an overpowering wish to throw himself on the earth and thank the Saviour for His miracles and His mercy.

Meanwhile they had come to the house; the servants, informed by a slave despatched in advance, crowded out to meet them. Paul of Tarsus had sent back from Antium the greater part of those people. The misfortune of Vinicius was known to them perfectly; therefore their delight at seeing those victims which had been snatched from the malice of Nero was immense, and increased still more when the physician Theocles declared that Lygia had not suffered serious injury, and that when the weakness caused by prison fever had passed, she would regain health.

Consciousness returned to her that night. Waking in the splendid chamber lighted by Corinthian lamps, amidst the odor of verbena and nard, she knew not where she was, or what was taking place with her. She remembered the moment in which she had been lashed to the horns of the chained bull; and now, seeing above her the face of Vinicius, lighted by the mild rays of the lamp, she supposed herself no longer on earth. The thoughts were confused in her weakened head; it seemed to her natural to be detained somewhere on the way to heaven, because of her tortures and weakness. Feeling no pain, however, she smiled at Vinicius, and wanted to ask where they were; but from her lips came merely a low whisper in which he could barely detect his own name.

Then he knelt near her, and, placing his hand on her forehead lightly, he said, —

"Christ saved thee, and returned thee to me!"

Her lips moved again with a meaningless whisper; her lids closed after a moment, her breast rose with a light sigh, and she fell into a deep sleep, for which the physician had been waiting, and after which she would return to health, he said.

Vinicius remained kneeling near her, however, sunk in prayer. His soul was melting with a love so immense that he forgot himself utterly. Theocles returned often to the chamber, and the golden-haired Eunice appeared behind the raised curtain a number of times; finally cranes, reared in the gardens, began to call, heralding the coming day;

but Vinicius was still embracing in his mind the feet of Christ, neither seeing nor hearing what was passing around him, with a heart turned into a thanksgiving, sacrificial flame, sunk in ecstasy, and though alive, half seized into heaven.

CHAPTER LXVII.

PETRONIUS, after the liberation of Lygia, not wishing to irritate Cæsar, went to the Palatine with other Augustians. He wanted to hear what they were saying, and especially to learn if Tigellinus was devising something new to destroy Lygia. Both she and Ursus had passed under the protection of the people, it is true, and no one could place a hand on them without raising a riot; still Petronius, knowing the hatred toward him of the all-powerful pretorian prefect, considered that very likely Tigellinus, while unable to strike him directly, would strive to find some means of revenge against his nephew.

Nero was angry and irritated, since the spectacle had ended quite differently from what he had planned. At first he did not wish even to look at Petronius; but the latter, without losing cool blood, approached him, with all the freedom of the "arbiter elegantiarum," and said, —

"Dost thou know, divinity, what occurs to me? Write a poem on the maiden who, at command of the lord of the world, was freed from the horns of the wild bull and given to her lover. The Greeks are sensitive, and I am sure that the poem will enchant them."

This thought pleased Nero in spite of all his irritation, and it pleased him doubly, first, as a subject for a poem, and second, because in it he could glorify himself as the magnanimous lord of the earth; hence he looked for a time at Petronius, and then said, —

"Yes! perhaps thou art right. But does it become me to celebrate my own goodness?"

"There is no need to give names. In Rome all will know who is meant, and from Rome reports go through the whole world."

"But art thou sure that this will please the people in Achæa?"

"By Pollux, it will!" said Petronius.

And he went away satisfied, for he felt certain that Nero, whose whole life was an arrangement of reality to literary plans, would not spoil the subject, and by this alone he would tie the hands of Tigellinus. This, however, did not

change his plan of sending Vinicius out of Rome as soon as Lygia's health should permit. So when he saw him next day, he said, —

“Take her to Sicily. As things have happened, on Cæsar's part thou art threatened by nothing; but Tigellinus is ready to use even poison, — if not out of hatred to you both, out of hatred to me.”

Vinicius smiled at him, and said: “She was on the horns of the wild bull; still Christ saved her.”

“Then honor Him with a hecatomb,” replied Petronius, with an accent of impatience, “but do not beg Him to save her a second time. Dost remember how Eolus received Ulysses when he returned to ask a second time for favoring winds? Deities do not like to repeat themselves.”

“When her health returns, I will take her to Pomponia Græcina,” said Vinicius.

“And thou wilt do that all the better since Pomponia is ill; Antistius, a relative of Aulus, told me so. Meanwhile things will happen here to make people forget thee, and in these times the forgotten are the happiest. May Fortune be thy sun in winter, and thy shade in summer.”

Then he left Vinicius to his happiness, but went himself to inquire of Theocles touching the life and health of Lygia.

Danger threatened her no longer. Emaciated as she was in the dungeon after prison fever, foul air and discomfort would have killed her; but now she had the most tender care, and not only plenty, but luxury. At command of Theocles they took her to the gardens of the villa after two days; in these gardens she remained for hours. Vinicius decked her litter with anemones, and especially with irises, to remind her of the atrium of the house of Aulus. More than once, hidden in the shade of spreading trees, they spoke of past sufferings and fears, each holding the other's hand. Lygia said that Christ had conducted him through suffering purposely to change his soul and raise it to Himself. Vinicius felt that this was true, and that there was in him nothing of the former patrician, who knew no law but his own desire. In those memories there was nothing bitter, however. It seemed to both that whole years had gone over their heads, and that the dreadful past lay far behind. At the same time such a calmness possessed them as they had never known before. A new life of immense happiness had come and taken them into itself. In Rome Cæsar might rage and

fill the world with terror — they felt above them a guardianship a hundred times mightier than his power, and had no further fear of his rage or his malice, just as if for them he had ceased to be the lord of life or death. Once, about sunset, the roar of lions and other beasts reached them from distant vivaria. Formerly those sounds filled Vinicius with fear because they were ominous; now he and Lygia merely looked at each other and raised their eyes to the evening twilight. At times Lygia, still very weak and unable to walk alone, fell asleep in the quiet of the garden; he watched over her, and, looking at her sleeping face, thought involuntarily that she was not that Lygia whom he had met at the house of Aulus. In fact, imprisonment and disease had to some extent quenched her beauty. When he saw her at the house of Aulus, and later, when he went to Miriam's house to seize her, she was as wonderful as a statue and also as a flower; now her face had become almost transparent, her hands thin, her body reduced by disease, her lips pale, and even her eyes seemed less blue than formerly. The golden-haired Eunice who brought her flowers, and rich stuffs to cover her feet was a divinity of Cyprus in comparison. Petronius tried in vain to find the former charms in her, and, shrugging his shoulders, thought that that shadow from Elysian fields was not worth those struggles, those pains, and those tortures which had almost sucked the life out of Vinicius. But Vinicius, in love now with her spirit, loved it all the more; and when he was watching over her while asleep, it seemed to him that he was watching over the whole world.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

News of the miraculous rescue of Lygia was circulated quickly among those scattered Christians who had escaped destruction. Confessors came to look at her to whom Christ's favor had been shown clearly. First came Nazarius and Miriam, with whom Peter the Apostle was hiding thus far; after them came others. All, as well as Vinicius, Lygia, and the Christian slaves of Petronius, listened with attention to the narrative of Ursus about the voice which he had heard in his soul, and which commanded him to struggle with the wild bull. All went away consoled, hoping that Christ would not let His followers be exterminated on earth before His coming at the day of judgment. And hope sustained their hearts, for persecution had not ceased yet. Whoever was declared a Christian by public report was thrown into prison at once by the city watches. It is true that the victims were fewer, for the majority of confessors had been seized and tortured to death. The Christians who remained had either left Rome to wait out the storm in distant provinces, or had hidden most carefully, not daring to assemble in common prayer, unless in sand-pits outside the city. They were persecuted yet, however, and though the games were at an end, the newly arrested were reserved for future games or punished specially. Though it was believed in Rome no longer that Christians had caused the conflagration, they were declared enemies of humanity and the State, and the edict against them remained in former force.

The Apostle Peter did not venture for a long time to appear in the house of Petronius, but at last on a certain evening Nazarius announced his arrival. Lygia, who was able to walk alone now, and Vinicius ran out to meet him, and fell to embracing his feet. He greeted them with emotion all the greater that not many sheep in that flock over which Christ had given him authority, and over the fate of which his great heart was weeping, remained to him. So when Vinicius said: "Lord, because of thee the Redeemer returned her to me," he answered: "He returned her because of thy faith, and so that not all the lips which profess His name should grow silent." And evidently he was thinking then of those thou-

sands of his children torn by wild beasts, of those crosses with which the arena had been filled, and those fiery pillars in the gardens of the "Beast;" for he spoke with great sadness. Vinicius and Lygia noticed also that his hair had grown entirely white, that his whole form was bent, and that in his face there was as much sadness and suffering as if he had passed through all those pains and torments which the victims of Nero's rage and madness had endured. But both understood that since Christ had given Himself to torture and to death, no one was permitted to avoid it. Still their hearts were cut at sight of the Apostle, bent by years, toil, and pain. So Vinicius, who intended to take Lygia soon to Naples, where they would meet Pomponia and go to Sicily, implored him to leave Rome in their company.

But the Apostle placed his hand on the tribune's head and answered, —

"In my soul I hear these words of the Lord, which He spoke to me on the Lake of Tiberias: 'When thou wert young, thou didst gird thyself, and walk whither thou wouldst; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not.' Therefore it is proper that I follow my flock."

And when they were silent, not knowing the sense of his speech, he added, —

"My toil is nearing its end; I shall find entertainment and rest only in the house of the Lord."

Then he turned to them saying: "Remember me, for I have loved you as a father loves his children; and whatever ye do in life, do it for the glory of God."

Thus speaking, he raised his aged, trembling hands and blessed them; they nestled up to him, feeling that to be the last blessing, perhaps, which they should receive from him.

It was destined them, however, to see him once more. A few days later Petronius brought terrible news from the Palatine. It had been discovered there that one of Cæsar's freedmen was a Christian; and on this man were found letters of the Apostles Peter and Paul, with letters of James, John, and Judas. Peter's presence in Rome was known formerly to Tigellinus, but he thought that the Apostle had perished with thousands of other confessors. Now it transpired that the two leaders of the new faith were alive and in the capital. It was determined, therefore, to seize them at all costs, for it was hoped that with their death the last root of the hated sect would be plucked out. Petronius heard from Vestinius

that Cæsar himself had issued an order to put Peter and Paul in the Mamertine prison within three days, and that whole detachments of pretorians had been sent to search every house in the Trans-Tiber.

When he heard this, Vinicius resolved to warn the Apostle. In the evening he and Ursus put on Gallic mantles and went to the house of Miriam, where Peter was living. The house was at the very edge of the Trans-Tiber division of the city, at the foot of the Janiculum. On the road they saw houses surrounded by soldiers, who were guided by certain unknown persons. This division of the city was alarmed, and in places crowds of curious people had assembled. Here and there centurions interrogated prisoners touching Simon Peter and Paul of Tarsus.

Ursus and Vinicius were in advance of the soldiers, and went safely to Miriam's house, in which they found Peter surrounded by a handful of the faithful. Timothy, Paul's assistant, and Linus were at the side of the Apostle.

At news of the approaching danger, Nazarius led all by a hidden passage to the garden gate, and then to deserted stone quarries, a few hundred yards distant from the Janiculum Gate. Ursus had to carry Linus, whose bones, broken by torture, had not grown together yet. But once in the quarry, they felt safe; and by the light of a torch ignited by Nazarius they began to consult, in a low voice, how to save the life of the Apostle who was so dear to them.

"Lord," said Vinicius, "let Nazarius guide thee at day-break to the Alban Hills. There I will find thee, and we will take thee to Antium, where a ship is ready to take us to Naples and Sicily. Blessed will the day and the hour be in which thou shalt enter my house, and thou wilt bless my hearth."

The others heard this with delight, and pressed the Apostle, saying, —

"Hide thyself, sacred leader; remain not in Rome. Preserve the living truth, so that it perish not with us and thee. Hear us, who entreat thee as a father."

"Do this in Christ's name!" cried others, grasping at his robes.

"My children," answered Peter, "who knows the time when the Lord will mark the end of his life?"

But he did not say that he would not leave Rome, and he hesitated what to do; for uncertainty, and even fear, had been creeping into his soul for some time. His flock was

scattered; the work was wrecked; that church, which before the burning of the city had been flourishing like a splendid tree, was turned into dust by the power of the "Beast." Nothing remained save tears, nothing save memories of torture and death. The sowing had yielded rich fruit, but Satan had trampled it into the earth. Legions of angels had not come to aid the perishing, — and Nero was extending in glory over the earth, terrible, mightier than ever, the lord of all seas and all lands. More than once had that fisherman of the Lord stretched his hands heavenward in loneliness and asked: "Lord, what must I do? How must I act? And how am I, a feeble old man, to fight with this invincible power of Evil, which Thou hast permitted to rule, and have victory?"

And he called out thus in the depth of his immense pain, repeating in spirit: "Those sheep which Thou didst command me to feed are no more, Thy church is no more; loneliness and mourning are in Thy capital; what dost Thou command me to do now? Am I to stay here, or lead forth the remnant of the flock to glorify Thy name in secret somewhere beyond the sea?"

And he hesitated. He believed that the living truth would not perish, that it must conquer; but at moments he thought that the hour had not come yet, that it would come only when the Lord should descend to the earth in the day of judgment in glory and power a hundred times greater than the might of Nero.

Frequently it seemed to him that if he left Rome, the faithful would follow; that he would lead them then far away to the shady groves of Galilee, to the quiet surface of the Lake of Tiberias, to shepherds as peaceful as doves, or as sheep, who feed there among thyme and pepperwort. And an increasing desire for peace and rest, an increasing yearning for the lake and Galilee, seized the heart of the fisherman; tears came more frequently to the old man's eyes.

But at the moment when he made the choice, sudden alarm and fear came on him. How was he to leave that city, in which so much martyrs' blood had sunk into the earth, and where so many lips had given the true testimony of the dying? Was he alone to yield? And what would he answer the Lord on hearing the words, "These have died for the faith, but thou didst flee"?

Nights and days passed for him in anxiety and suffering. Others, who had been torn by lions, who had been fastened

to crosses, who had been burnt in the gardens of Cæsar, had fallen asleep in the Lord after moments of torture; but he could not sleep, and he felt greater tortures than any of those invented by executioners for victims. Often was the dawn whitening the roofs of houses while he was still crying from the depth of his mourning heart: "Lord, why didst Thou command me to come hither and found Thy capital in the den of the 'Beast'?"

For thirty-three years after the death of his Master he knew no rest. Staff in hand, he had gone through the world and declared the "good tidings." His strength had been exhausted in journeys and toil, till at last, when in that city, which was the head of the world, he had established the work of his Master, one bloody breath of wrath had burned it, and he saw that there was need to take up the struggle anew. And what a struggle! On one side Cæsar, the Senate, the people, the legions holding the world with a circle of iron, countless cities, countless lands, — power such as the eye of man had not seen; on the other side he, so bent with age and toil that his trembling hand was hardly able to carry his staff.

At times, therefore, he said to himself that it was not for him to measure with the Cæsar of Rome, — that Christ alone could do that.

All these thoughts were passing through his care-filled head, when he heard the prayers of the last handful of the faithful. They, surrounding him in an ever narrowing circle, repeated with voices of entreaty, —

"Hide thyself, Rabbi, and lead us away from the power of the 'Beast.'"

Finally Linus also bowed his tortured head before him.

"O lord," said he, "the Redeemer commanded thee to feed His sheep, but they are here no longer, or to-morrow they will not be here; go, therefore, where thou mayst find them yet. The word of God is living still in Jerusalem, in Antioch, in Ephesus, and in other cities. What wilt thou do by remaining in Rome? If thou fall, thou wilt merely swell the triumph of the 'Beast.' The Lord has not designated the limit of John's life; Paul is a Roman citizen, they cannot condemn him without trial; but if the power of hell rise up against thee, O teacher, those whose hearts are dejected will ask, 'Who is above Nero?' Thou art the rock on which the church of God is founded. Let us die, but permit not the victory of Antichrist over the vicegerent

of God, and return not hither till the Lord has crushed him who shed innocent blood."

"Look at our tears!" repeated all who were present.

Tears flowed over Peter's face too. After a while he rose, and, stretching his hands over the kneeling figures, said, —

"May the name of the Lord be magnified, and may His will be done!"

CHAPTER LXIX.

ABOUT dawn of the following day two dark figures were moving along the Appian Way toward the Campania.

One of them was Nazarius; the other the Apostle Peter, who was leaving Rome and his martyred co-religionists.

The sky in the east was assuming a light tinge of green, bordered gradually and more distinctly on the lower edge with saffron color. Silver-leafed trees, the white marble of villas, and the arches of aqueducts, stretching through the plain toward the city, were emerging from shade. The greenness of the sky was clearing gradually, and becoming permeated with gold. Then the east began to grow rosy and illuminate the Alban Hills, which seemed marvellously beautiful, lily-colored, as if formed of rays of light alone.

The light was reflected in trembling leaves of trees, in the dew-drops. The haze grew thinner, opening wider and wider views on the plain, on the houses dotting it, on the cemeteries, on the towns, and on groups of trees, among which stood white columns of temples.

The road was empty. The villagers who took vegetables to the city had not succeeded yet, evidently, in harnessing beasts to their vehicles. From the stone blocks with which the road was paved as far as the mountains, there came a low sound from the bark shoes on the feet of the two travellers.

Then the sun appeared over the line of hills; but at once a wonderful vision struck the Apostle's eyes. It seemed to him that the golden circle, instead of rising in the sky, moved down from the heights and was advancing on the road. Peter stopped, and asked,—

“Seest thou that brightness approaching us?”

“I see nothing,” replied Nazarius.

But Peter shaded his eyes with his hand, and said after a while,—

“Some figure is coming in the gleam of the sun.”

But not the slightest sound of steps reached their ears. It was perfectly still all around. Nazarius saw only that the trees were quivering in the distance, as if some one were

shaking them, and the light was spreading more broadly over the plain. He looked with wonder at the Apostle.

“Rabbi! what ails thee?” cried he, with alarm.

The pilgrim's staff fell from Peter's hands to the earth; his eyes were looking forward, motionless; his mouth was open; on his face were depicted astonishment, delight, rapture.

Then he threw himself on his knees, his arms stretched forward; and this cry left his lips,—

“O Christ! O Christ!”

He fell with his face to the earth, as if kissing some one's feet.

The silence continued long; then were heard the words of the aged man, broken by sobs,—

“*Quo vadis, Domine?*”

Nazarius did not hear the answer; but to Peter's ears came a sad and sweet voice, which said,—

“If thou desert my people, I am going to Rome to be crucified a second time.”

The Apostle lay on the ground, his face in the dust, without motion or speech. It seemed to Nazarius that he had fainted or was dead; but he rose at last, seized the staff with trembling hands, and turned without a word toward the seven hills of the city.

The boy, seeing this, repeated as an echo,—

“*Quo vadis, Domine?*”

“To Rome,” said the Apostle, in a low voice. And he returned.

Paul, John, Linus, and all the faithful received him with amazement; and the alarm was the greater, since at day-break, just after his departure, pretorians had surrounded Miriam's house and searched it for the Apostle. But to every question he answered only with delight and peace,—

“I have seen the Lord!”

And that same evening he went to the Ostian cemetery to teach and baptize those who wished to bathe in the water of life.

And thenceforward he went there daily, and after him went increasing numbers. It seemed that out of every tear of a martyr new confessors were born, and that every groan on the arena found an echo in thousands of breasts. Cæsar was swimming in blood, Rome and the whole pagan world was mad. But those who had had enough of transgression and

madness, those who were trampled upon, those whose lives were misery and oppression, all the weighed down, all the sad, all the unfortunate, came to hear the wonderful tidings of God, who out of love for men had given Himself to be crucified and redeem their sins.

When they found a God whom they could love, they had found that which the society of the time could not give any one, — happiness and love.

And Peter understood that neither Cæsar nor all his legions could overcome the living truth, — that they could not overwhelm it with tears or blood, and that now its victory was beginning. He understood with equal force why the Lord had turned him back on the road. That city of pride, crime, wickedness, and power was beginning to be His city, and the double capital, from which would flow out upon the world government of souls and bodies.

CHAPTER LXX.

At last the hour was accomplished for both Apostles. But, as if to complete his service, it was given to the fisherman of the Lord to win two souls even in confinement. The soldiers, Processus and Martinianus, who guarded him in the Mamertine prison, received baptism. Then came the hour of torture. Nero was not in Rome at that time. Sentence was passed by Helius and Polythetes, two freedmen to whom Cæsar had confided the government of Rome during his absence.

On the aged Apostle had been inflicted the stripes prescribed by law; and next day he was led forth beyond the walls of the city, toward the Vatican Hill, where he was to suffer the punishment of the cross assigned to him. Soldiers were astonished by the crowd which had gathered before the prison, for in their minds the death of a common man, and besides a foreigner, should not rouse such interest; they did not understand that that retinue was composed not of sightseers, but confessors, anxious to escort the great Apostle to the place of execution. In the afternoon the gates of the prison were thrown open at last, and Peter appeared in the midst of a detachment of pretorians. The sun had inclined somewhat toward Ostia already; the day was clear and calm. Because of his advanced age, Peter was not required to carry the cross; it was supposed that he could not carry it; they had not put the fork on his neck, either, so as not to retard his pace. He walked without hindrance, and the faithful could see him perfectly.

At moments when his white head showed itself among the iron helmets of the soldiers, weeping was heard in the crowd; but it was restrained immediately, for the face of the old man had in it so much calmness, and was so bright with joy, that all understood him to be not a victim going to destruction, but a victor celebrating his triumph.

And thus it was really. The fisherman, usually humble and stooping, walked now erect, taller than the soldiers, full of dignity. Never had men seen such majesty in his bearing. It might have seemed that he was a monarch attended by people and military. From every side voices were raised, —

"There is Peter going to the Lord!"

All forgot, as it were, that torture and death were waiting for him. He walked with solemn attention, but with calmness, feeling that since the death on Golgotha nothing equally important had happened, and that as the first death had redeemed the whole world, this was to redeem the city.

Along the road people halted from wonder at sight of that old man; but believers, laying hands on their shoulders, said with calm voices, —

"See how a just man goes to death, — one who knew Christ and proclaimed love to the world."

These became thoughtful, and walked away, saying to themselves, "He cannot, indeed, be unjust!"

Along the road noise was hushed, and the cries of the street. The retinue moved on before houses newly reared, before white columns of temples, over whose summits hung the deep sky, calm and blue. They went in quiet; only at times the weapons of the soldiers clattered, or the murmur of prayer rose. Peter heard the last, and his face grew bright with increasing joy, for his glance could hardly take in those thousands of confessors. He felt that he had done his work, and he knew now that that truth which he had been declaring all his life would overwhelm everything, like a sea, and that nothing would have power to restrain it. And thus thinking, he raised his eyes, and said: "O Lord, Thou didst command me to conquer this world-ruling city; hence I have conquered it. Thou hast commanded me to found here Thy capital; hence I have founded it. This is Thy city now, O Lord, and I go to Thee, for I have toiled greatly."

As he passed before temples, he said to them, "Ye will be temples of Christ." Looking at throngs of people moving before his eyes, he said to them, "Your children will be servants of Christ;" and he advanced with the feeling that he had conquered, conscious of his service, conscious of his strength, solaced, — great. The soldiers conducted him over the Pons Triumphalis, as if giving involuntary testimony to his triumph, and they led him farther toward the Naumachia and the Circus. The faithful from beyond the Tiber joined the procession; and such a throng of people was formed that the centurion commanding the pretorians understood at last that he was leading a high-priest surrounded by believers, and grew alarmed because of the small number of soldiers. But no cry of indignation or rage was

given out in the throng. Men's faces were penetrated with the greatness of the moment, solemn and full of expectation. Some believers, remembering that when the Lord died the earth opened from fright and the dead rose from their graves, thought that now some evident signs would appear, after which the death of the Apostle would not be forgotten for ages. Others said to themselves, "Perhaps the Lord will select the hour of Peter's death to come from heaven as He promised, and judge the world." With this idea they recommended themselves to the mercy of the Redeemer.

But round about there was calm. The hills seemed to be warming themselves, and resting in the sun. The procession stopped at last between the Circus and the Vatican Hill. Soldiers began now to dig a hole; others placed on the ground the cross, hammers, and nails, waiting till all preparations were finished. The crowd, continuing quiet and attentive, knelt round about.

The Apostle, with his head in the sun-rays and golden light, turned for the last time toward the city. At a distance lower down was seen the gleaming Tiber; beyond was the Campus Martius; higher up, the Mausoleum of Augustus; below that, the gigantic baths just begun by Nero; still lower, Pompey's theatre; and beyond them were visible in places, and in places hidden by other buildings, the Septa Julia, a multitude of porticos, temples, columns, great edifices; and, finally, far in the distance, hills covered with houses, a gigantic resort of people, the borders of which vanished in the blue haze, — an abode of crime, but of power; of madness, but of order, — which had become the head of the world, its oppressor, but its law and its peace, almighty, invincible, eternal.

But Peter, surrounded by soldiers, looked at the city as a ruler and king looks at his inheritance. And he said to it, "Thou art redeemed and mine!" And no one, not merely among the soldiers digging the hole in which to plant the cross, but even among believers, could divine that standing there among them was the true ruler of that moving life; that Cæsars would pass away, waves of barbarians go by, and ages vanish, but that old man would be lord there unbrokenly.

The sun had sunk still more toward Ostia, and had become large and red. The whole western side of the sky had begun to glow with immense brightness. The soldiers approached Peter to strip him.

But he, while praying, straightened himself all at once, and stretched his right hand high. The executioners stopped, as if made timid by his posture; the faithful held the breath in their breasts, thinking that he wished to say something, and silence unbroken followed.

But he, standing on the height, with his extended right hand made the sign of the cross, blessing in the hour of death, —

Urbi et orbi! (the city and the world).

In that same wonderful evening another detachment of soldiers conducted along the Ostian Way Paul of Tarsus toward a place called *Aquæ Salviæ*. And behind him also advanced a crowd of the faithful whom he had converted; but when he recognized near acquaintances, he halted and conversed with them, for, being a Roman citizen, the guard showed more respect to him. Beyond the gate called *Tergemina* he met *Plautilla*, the daughter of the prefect *Flavius Sabinus*, and, seeing her youthful face covered with tears, he said: "Plautilla, daughter of Eternal Salvation, depart in peace. Only give me a veil with which to bind my eyes when I am going to the Lord." And taking it, he advanced with a face as full of delight as that of a laborer who when he has toiled the whole day successfully is returning home. His thoughts, like those of Peter, were as calm and quiet as that evening sky. His eyes gazed with thoughtfulness upon the plain which stretched out before him, and to the Alban Hills, immersed in light. He remembered his journeys, his toils, his labor, the struggles in which he had conquered, the churches which he had founded in all lands and beyond all seas; and he thought that he had earned his rest honestly, that he had finished his work. He felt now that the seed which he had planted would not be blown away by the wind of malice. He was leaving this life with the certainty that in the battle which his truth had declared against the world it would conquer; and a mighty peace settled down on his soul.

The road to the place of execution was long, and evening was coming. The mountains became purple, and the bases of them went gradually into the shade. Flocks were returning home. Here and there groups of slaves were walking with the tools of labor on their shoulders. Children, playing on the road before houses, looked with

curiosity at the passing soldiers. But in that evening, in that transparent golden air, there were not only peace and lovingness, but a certain harmony, which seemed to lift from earth to heaven. Paul felt this; and his heart was filled with delight at the thought that to that harmony of the world he had added one note which had not been in it hitherto, but without which the whole earth was like sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

He remembered how he had taught people love, — how he had told them that though they were to give their property to the poor, though they knew all languages, all secrets, and all sciences, they would be nothing without love, which is kind, enduring, which does not return evil, which does not desire honor, suffers all things, believes all things, hopes all things, is patient of all things.

And so his life had passed in teaching people this truth. And now he said in spirit: What power can equal it, what can conquer it? Could *Cæsar* stop it, though he had twice as many legions and twice as many cities, seas, lands, and nations?

And he went to his reward like a conqueror.

The detachment left the main road at last, and turned toward the east on a narrow path leading to the *Aquæ Salviæ*. The red sun was lying now on the heather. The centurion stopped the soldiers at the fountain, for the moment had come.

Paul placed *Plautilla's* veil on his arm, intending to bind his eyes with it; for the last time he raised those eyes, full of unspeakable peace, toward the eternal light of the evening, and prayed. Yes, the moment had come; but he saw before him a great road in the light, leading to heaven; and in his soul he repeated the same words which formerly he had written in the feeling of his own finished service and his near end, —

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."