The Roman Traitor: A True Tale of the Republic, Volume 2

Henry William Herbert

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CHAPTER I. THE OLD PATRICIAN.

A Roman father of the olden time.

MS. Play.

In a small street, not far from the Sacred Way and the Roman Forum, there was a large house, occupying the whole of one *insula*, as the space contained between four intersecting streets was called by the ancients.

But, although by its great size and a certain rude magnificence, arising from the massy stone−work of its walls, and the solemn antiquity of the old Oscan columns which adorned its entrance, it might be recognised at once as the abode of some Patrician family; it was as different in many respects from the abodes of the aristocracy of that day, as if it had been erected in a different age and country.

It had no stately colonnades of foreign marbles, no tesselated pavement to the vestibule, no glowing frescoes on the walls, no long lines of exterior windows, glittering with the new luxury of glass. All was decorous, it is true; but all, at the same time, was stern, and grave, and singular for its antique simplicity.

On either hand of the entrance, there was, in accordance with the custom of centuries long past, when Rome's Consulars were tillers of the ground, a large shop with an open front, devoted to the sale of the produce of the owner's farm. And, strange to say, although the custom had been long disused in these degenerate times, it seemed that the owner of this time−honored mansion adhered sturdily to the ancient usage of his race.

For, in one of these large cold unadorned vaults, a tall grayheaded slave, a rural laborer, as it required no second glance to perceive, was presiding over piles of cheese, stone−jars of honey, baskets of autumn fruits, and sacks of grain, by the red light of a large smoky flambeau; while a younger man, who from his resemblance to the other might safely be pronounced his son, was keeping an account of the sales by a somewhat complicated system of tallies.

In the other apartment, two youths, slaves likewise from the suburban or rustic farm, were giving samples, to such as wished to buy, of different qualities of wine from several amphora or earthen pitchers, which stood on a stone counter forming the sill of the low−browed window.

It was late in the evening already, and the streets were rapidly growing dark; yet there were many passengers abroad, more perhaps than was usual at that hour; and now and then, a little group would form about one or the other of the windows, cheapening and purchasing provisions, and chatting for a few minutes, after their business was finished, with their gossips.

These groups were composed altogether of the lowest order of the free citizens of Rome, artizans, and small shop keepers, and here and there a woman of low origin, or perhaps a slave, the house steward of some noble family, mingling half reluctantly with his superiors. For the time had not arrived, when the soft eunuchs of the East, and the bold bravoes of the heroic North, favorites and tools of some licentious lord, dared to insult the freeborn men of Rome, or gloried in the badges of their servitude.

The conversation ran, as it was natural to expect, on the probable results of the next day's election; and it was a little remarkable, that among these, who should have been the supporters of the democratic faction, there appeared to be far more of alarm and of suspicion, concerning the objects of Catiline, than of enthusiasm for the popular cause.

"He a man of the people, or the people's friend!" said an old grave−looking mechanic; "No, by the Gods! no more than the wolf is the friend of the sheepfold!"

"He may hate the nobles," said another, "or envy the great rich houses; but he loves nothing of the people, unless it be their purses, if he can get a chance to squeeze them"—

"Or their daughters," interrupted a third, "if they be fair and willing"—

"Little cares he for their good−will," cried yet a fourth, "so they are young and handsome. It is but eight days since, that some of his gang carried off Marcus', the butcher's, bride, Icilia, on the night of her bridal. They kept her three days; and on the fourth sent her home dishonored, with a scroll, `that she was *now* a fit wife for a butcher'!"

"By the Gods!" exclaimed one or two of the younger men, "who was it did this thing?"

"One of the people's friends!" answered the other, with a sneer.

"The people have no friends, since Caius Marius died," said the deep voice of Fulvius Flaccus, as he passed casually through the crowd.

"But what befel the poor Icilia?" asked an old matron, who had been listening with greedy sympathy to the dark tale.

"Why, Marcus would yet have taken her to his bosom, seeing she had no share in the guilt; but she bore a heart too Roman to bring disgrace upon one she loved, or to survive her honor. Icilia *is* no longer."

"She died like Lucretia!" said an old man, who stood near, with a clouded brow, which flashed into stormy light, as the same deep voice asked aloud,

"Shall she be so avenged?"

"But the transient gleam faded instantly away, and the sad face was again blank and rayless, as he replied—

"No—for who should avenge her?"

"The people! the people!" shouted several voices, for the mob was gathering, and growing angry—

"The Roman People should avenge her!"

"Tush!" answered Fulvius Flaccus. "There is no Roman people!"

"And who are you," exclaimed two or three of the younger men, "that dare tell us so?"

"The grandson," answered the republican, "of one, who, while there yet *was* a people, loved it"—

"His name? his name?" shouted many voices.

"He hath no name"—replied Fulvius. "He lost that, and his life together."

"Lost them for the people?" inquired the old man, whom he had first addressed, and who had been scrutinizing him narrowly.

"And *by* the people," answered the other. "For the people's cause; and by the people's treason! — as is the case," he added, half scornfully, half sadly, "with all who love the people."

"Hear him, my countrymen," said the old man. "Hear him. If there be any one can save you, it is he. It is Fulvius, the son of Caius, the son of Marcus—Flaccus. Hear him, I say, if he will only lead you."

"Lead us! speak to us! lead us!" shouted the fickle crowd. "Love us, good Fulvius, as your fathers did of old."

"And die, for you, as they died!" replied the other, in a tone of melancholy sarcasm. "Hark you, my masters," he added, "there are none now against whom to lead you; and if there were, I think there would be none to follow. Keep your palms unsoiled by the base bribes of the nobles! Keep your ears closed to the base lies of the demagogues! Keep your hearts true and honest! Keep your eyes open and watchful! Brawl not, one with the other; but be faithful, as brethren should. Be grave, laborious, sober, and above all things humble, as men who once were free and great, and now, by their own fault, are fallen and degraded. Make yourselves fit to be led gloriously; and, when the time shall come, there will be no lack of glorious leaders!"

"But to−morrow? what shall we do to−morrow?" cried several voices; but this time it was the elder men, who asked the question, "for whom shall we vote to−morrow?"

"For the friend of the people!" answered Flaccus.

"Where shall we find him?" was the cry; "who is the friend of the people?"

"Not he who would arm them, one against the other," he replied. "Not he, who would burn their workshops, and destroy their means of daily sustenance! Not he, by all the Gods! who sports with the honor of their wives, the virtue"—

But he was interrupted here, by a stern sullen hum among his audience, increasing gradually to a fierce savage outcry. The mob swayed to and fro; and it was evident that something was occurring in the midst, by which it was tremendously excited.

Breaking off suddenly in his speech, the democrat leaped on a large block of stone, standing at the corner of the large house in front of which the multitude was gathered, and looked out anxiously, if he might descry the cause of the tumult.

Nor was it long ere he succeeded.

A young man, tall and of a slender frame, with features singularly handsome, was making his way, as best he could, with unsteady steps, and a face haggard and pale with debauchery, through the tumultuous and angry concourse.

His head, which had no other covering than its long curled and perfumed locks, was crowned with a myrtle wreath; he wore a long loose saffron−colored tunic richly embroidered, but ungirt, and flowing nearly to his

ankles; and from the dress, and the torch−bearers, who preceded him, as well as from his wild eye and reeling gait, it was evident that he was returning from some riotous banquet.

Fulvius instantly recognised him. It was a kinsman of his own, Aulus, the son of Aulus Fulvius, the noblest of the survivors of his house, a senator of the old school, a man of stern and rigid virtue, the owner of that grand simple mansion, beside the door of which he stood.

But, though he recognised his cousin, he was at a loss for a while to discover the cause of the tumult; 'till, suddenly, a word, a female name, angrily murmured through the crowd, gave a clue to its meaning.

"Icilia! Icilia!"

Still, though the crowd swayed to and fro, and jostled, and shouted, becoming evidently more angry every moment, it made way for the young noble, who advanced fearlessly, with a sort of calm and scornful insolence, contemning the rage which his own vile deed had awakened.

At length one of the mob, bolder than the rest, thrust himself in between the torch bearers and their lord, and meeting the latter face to face, cried out, so that all the crowd might hear,

"Lo! Aulus Fulvius! the violator of Icilia! the friend of the people!"

A loud roar of savage laughter followed; and then, encouraged by the applause of his fellows, the man added,

"Vote for Aulus Fulvius, the friend of the people! vote for good Aulus, and his virtuous friend Catiline!"

The hot blood flashed to the brow of the young noble, at the undisguised scorn of the plebeian's speech. Insolence he could have borne, but contempt!—and contempt from a plebeian!

He raised his hand; and slight and unmuscular as he appeared, indignation lent such vigor to that effeminate arm, that the blow which he dealt him on the face, cast the burly mechanic headlong, with the blood spouting from his mouth and nostrils.

A fearful roar of the mob, and a furious rush against the oppressor, followed.

The torch−bearers fought for their master gallantly, with their tough oaken staves; and the young man showed his patrician blood by his patrician courage in the fray. Flaccus, too, wished and endeavored to interpose, not so much that he cared to shield his unworthy kinsman, as that he sought to preserve the energies of the people for a more noble trial. The multitude, moreover, impeded one another by their own violent impetuosity; and to this it was owing, more than to the defence of his followers, or the intercession of the popular Flaccus, that the young libertine was not torn to pieces, on the threshold of his own father's house.

The matter, however, was growing very serious— stones, staves, and torches flew fast through the air—the crash of windows in the neighboring houses was answered by the roar of the increasing mob, and every thing seemed to portend a very dangerous tumult; when, at the same moment, the door of the Fulvian House was thrown open, and the high−crested helmets of a cohort were seen approaching, in a serried line, above the bare heads of the multitude.

Order was restored very rapidly; for a pacific party had been rallying around Fulvius Flaccus, and their efforts, added to the advance of the levelled pila of the cohort, were almost instantly successful.

Nor did the sight, which was presented by the opening door of the Fulvian mansion, lack its peculiar influence on the people.

An old man issued forth, alone, from the unfolded portals.

He was indeed extremely old; with hair as white as snow, and a long venerable beard falling in waves of silver far down upon his chest. Yet his eyebrows were black as night, and these, with the proud arch of his Roman nose, and the glance of his eagle eyes, untamed by time or hardship, almost denied the inference drawn from the white head and reverend chin.

His frame, which must once have been unusually powerful and athletic, was now lean and emaciated; yet he held himself erect as a centennial pine on Mount Algidus, and stood as firmly on his threshold, looking down on the tumultuous concourse, which waved and flunctuated, like the smaller trees of the mountain side, beneath him.

His dress was of the plain and narrow cut, peculiar to the good olden time; yet it had the distinctive marks of the senatorial rank.

It was the virtuous, severe, old senator—the noblest, alas! soon to be the last, of his noble race.

"What means this tumult?" he said in a deep firm sonorous voice, "Wherefore is it, that ye shout thus, and hurl stones about a friendly door! For shame! for shame! What is it that ye lack? Bread? Ye have had it ever at my hands, without seeking it thus rudely."

"It is not bread, most noble Aulus, that we would have," cried the old man, who had made himself somewhat conspicuous before, "but vengeance!"

"Venegeance, on whom, and for what?" exclaimed the noble Roman.

But ere his question could be answered, the crowd opened before him, and his son stood revealed, sobered indeed by the danger he had run, but pale, haggard, bleeding, covered with mud and filth, and supported by one of his wounded slaves.

"Ah!" cried the old man, starting back aghast, "What is this? What fresh crime? What recent infamy? What new pollution of our name?"

"Icilia! Icilia! vengeance for poor Icilia!" cried the mob once again; but they now made no effort to inflict the punishment, for which they clamored; so perfect was their confidence in the old man's justice, even against his own flesh and blood.

At the next moment a voice was heard, loud and clear as a silver trumpet, calling upon the people to disperse.

It was the voice of Paullus, who now strode into the gap, left by the opening concourse, glittering in the full panoply of a decurion of the horse, thirty dismounted troopers arranging themselves in a glittering line behind him.

At the sight of the soldiery, led by one whose face was familiar to him, the audacity of the young man revived; and turning round with a light laugh toward Arvina,

"Here is a precious coil," he said, "my Paullus, about a poor plebeian harlot!"

"I never heard that Icilia was such," replied the young soldier sternly, for the dark tale was but too well known; "nor must you look to me, Aulus Fulvius, for countenance in deeds like these, although it be my duty to protect you from violence! Come my friends," he continued, turning to the multitude, "You must disperse, at once, to your several homes; if any have been wronged by this man, he can have justice at the tribunal of the Prætor! But there must be no violence!"

"Is this thing true, Aulus?" asked the old man, in tones so stern and solemn, that the youth hung his head and was silent.

"Is this thing true?" the Senator repeated.

"Why, hath he not confessed it?" asked the old man, who had spoken so many times before; and who had lingered with Fulvius Flaccus, and a few others of the crowd. "It is true."

"Who art thou?" asked the old Patrician, a terrible suspicion crossing his mind.

"The father of that daughter, whom thy son forcibly dishonored!"

"Enter!" replied the senator, throwing the door, in front of which he stood, wide open, "thou shalt have justice!"

Then, casting a glance full of sad but resolute determination upon the culprit, all whose audacity had passed away, he said in a graver tone,

"Enter thou likewise; thou shalt have punishment!"

"Punishment!" answered the proud youth, his eye flashing, "Punishment! and from whom?"

"Punishment from thy father! wilt thou question it? Punishment, even unto death, if thou shalt be found worthy to die!—the law is not dead, if it have slept awhile! Enter!"

He dared not to reply—he dared not to refuse. Slow, sullen, and crest−fallen, he crossed his father's threshhold; but, as he did so, he glared terribly on Paullus, and shook his hand at him, and cried in tones of deadly hatred,

"This is thy doing! curses—curses upon thee! thou shalt rue it!"

Arvina smiled in calm contempt of his impotent resentment.

The culprit, the accuser, and the judge passed inward; the door closed heavily behind them; the crowd dispersed; the soldiery marched onward; and the street, in front of the Fulvian House, was left dark and silent.

An hour perhaps had passed, when the door was again opened, and the aged plebeian, Icilia's father, issued into the dark street.

"Scourged!" he cried, with a wild triumphant laugh, "Scourged, like a slave, at his own father's bidding! Rejoice, exult, Julia! thy shame is half avenged!"

CHAPTER II. THE CONSULAR COMITIA.

Your voices!
Coriolanus.

The morning had at length arrived, big with the fate of Rome. The morning of the Consular elections.

The sun shone broad and bright over the gorgeous city, and the wide green expanse of the field of Mars, whereon, from an hour before the first peep of dawn, the mighty multitude of Roman citizens had stood assembled.

All the formalities had been performed successfully. The Consul Cicero, who had gone forth beyond the walls to take the auspices, accompanied by an augur, had declared the auguries favorable.

The separate enclosures, with the bridges, as they were termed, across which the centuries must pass to give their votes, had been erected; the distributors of the ballots, and the guardians of the ballot−boxes, had been appointed.

And now, as the sun rushed up with his crown of living glory into the cloudless arch of heaven, the brazen trumpets of the centuries pealed long and loud, calling the civic army to its ranks, in order to commence their voting.

That was the awful moment; and scarce a breast was there, but beat high with hope or fear, or dark and vague anticipation.

The Consul and the friends of order were, perhaps, calmer and more confident, than any others of that mighty concourse; for they were satisfied with their preparations; they were firm in the support of the patrician houses, and in the unanimity of the Roman knights conciliated by Cicero.

Scarcely less confident were the conspirators; for with so much secrecy had the arrangements of the Consul been made, that although Catiline knew himself suspected, knew that his motives were perspicuous, and his measures in some sort anticipated, he yet believed that the time was propitious.

He hoped, and believed as fully as he hoped, that Cicero and his party, content with the triumph they had obtained in the Senate, and with the adjudication by that body of dictatorial power to the consuls, were now deceived into the idea that the danger was already over.

Still, his fierce heart throbbed violently; and there was a feeling of hot agonizing doubt blent with the truculent hope, the savage ambition, the strong thirst of blood, which goaded him almost to madness.

From an early hour he had stood surrounded by his friends, the leaders of that awful faction, hard by the portico of the *diribitorium*, or pay−office, marking with a keen eye every group that entered the field of Mars, and addressing those, whom he knew friendly to his measures, with many a fiery word of greeting and encouragement.

Cassius and Lentulus, a little way behind him, leaned against the columns of the gateway, with more than a thousand of the clients of their houses lounging about in groups, seemingly inattentive, but really alive to every word or glance of their leaders.

These men were all armed secretly with breast plates, and the puissant Roman sword, beneath their peaceful togas.

These men, well−trained in the wars of Sylla, hardy and brave, and acting in a body, were destined to commence the work of slaughter, by slaying the Great Consul, so soon as he should open the comitia.

Cethegus had departed, already, to join his gladiators, who, to the number of fifteen hundred, were gathered beyond the Janiculum, ready to act upon the guard, and to beat down the standard which waved there, the signal of election.

Statilius, Gabinius, and Cæparius, were ready with their armed households and insurgent slaves, prepared at a moment's notice to throw open the prison doors, and fire the city in twelve places.

Fearless, unanimous, armed, and athirst for blood, the foes of the republic stood, and marked with greedy eyes and visages inflamed and fiery, their victims sweep through the gates, arrayed in their peaceful robes, unarmed, as it would seem, and unsuspecting.

Not a guard was to be seen anywhere; not a symptom of suspicion; much less of preparation. The wonted

cohort only was gathered about the standard on the bridge gate of the Janiculum; but even these bore neither shields, nor javelins; and sat or lounged about, unconcerned, and evidently off their guard.

But the keen eye of Catiline, could mark the band of grey−tunicked Gladiators, mustered, and ready to assume the offensive at a moment's notice, though now they were sauntering about, or sitting down or lying in the shade, or chatting with the country girls and rustic slaves, who covered the sloping hill−sides of the Janiculum, commanding a full view of the Campus Martius.

"The Fools!" muttered Catiline. "The miserable, God−deserted idiots! Does the man of Arpinum deem me then so weak, to be disarmed by an edict, quelled by a paltry proclamation?"

Then, as the stout smith, Caius Crispus, passed by him, with a gang of workmen, and a rabble of the lowest citizens,

"Ha!" he exclaimed, "hail, Crispus—hail, brave hearts!— all things look well for us to−day—well for the people! Your voices, friends; I must have your voices!"

"You shall—Catiline!" replied the smith—"and our hands also!" he added, with a significant smile and a dark glance.

"Catiline! Catiline—all friends of the good people, all foes of the proud patricians, give noble Catiline your voices!"

"Catiline! Catiline for the persecuted people!" and, with a wild and stirring shout, the mob passed inward through the gate, leaving the smith behind, however; who stopped as if to speak with one of the Cornelian clients, but in reality to wait further orders.

"When shall we march"—he asked, after a moment or two, stealthily approaching the chief conspirator. "Before they have called the prerogative century to vote, or when the knights are in the bridges?"

"When the standard goes down, fool!" replied Catiline, harshly. "Do not you know your work?"

At this moment, a party of young and dissipated nobles came swaggering along the road, with their ungirded tunics flowing down to their heels, their long sleeves fringed with purple falling as far as to their wrists, and their curled ringlets floating on their shoulders. Among them, with a bloodshot eye, a pale and haggard face, and a strange terrible expression, half−sullen, half−ashamed, on all his features, as if he fancied that his last night's disgrace was known to all men, strode Aulus Fulvius, the son of that stern senator.

"Your voices! noblemen, your voices!" cried Catiline, laughing with feigned gayety—"Do but your work to−day, and to−night"—

"Wine and fair women!" shouted one; but Aulus smiled savagely, and darkly, and answered in one word "Revenge!"

Next behind them, came Bassus, the veteran father of the dead eagle−bearer; he who had told so sad a tale of patrician cruelty to Fulvius Flaccus, in the forge.

"Why, Bassus, my brave veteran, give me your hand," cried the conspirator, making a forward step to meet him. "For whom vote you to−day, for Muroena and Silanus? Ha?"

"For Catiline and justice!" answered the old man, "justice on him who wronged the Eagle−bearer's child! who sits in the senate even yet, defiled with her pure blood!— the infamous Cornelius!"

Another man had paused to listen to these words, and he now interposed, speaking to Bassus,

"Verily Catiline is like to do thee justice, my poor Bassus, on a member of the Cornelian house! Is't Lentulus, I prithee, or Cethegus, on whom thou would'st have justice?"

But the old man replied angrily, "The people's friend shall give the people justice! who ever knew a noble pity or right a poor man?"

"Ask Aulus Fulvius"—replied the other, with a sarcastic tone, and a strange smile lighting up his features. "Besides, is not Catiline a noble?"

At the word Aulus Fulvius leaped on him like a tiger, with his face crimsoning, and his heart almost bursting with fury.

He could not speak for rage, but he seized the man who had uttered those mysterious words by the throat, and brandished a long poniard, extricated in a second's space from the loose sleeve of his tunic, furiously in the air.

As the bright blade flashed in the sunlight, there was a forward rush among the conspirators, who, anxious to avert any casual affray, that might have created a disturbance, would have checked the blow.

But their aid would have come too late, had not the man thus suddenly assaulted, by an extraordinary exertion

of strength, vigor, and agility, wrenched the dagger from Aulus' hand, and, tripping him at the same moment with his foot, hurled him upon his back in the dust, which surged up in a great cloud, covering his perfumed hair and snow−white toga, with its filthy and fætid particles.

"Ha! ha!" he cried with a loud ringing laugh, as he tossed the weapon high into the sunny air, that all around might see it—"Here is one of your *noble* people's friends!— Do they wear daggers *all* , for the people's throats? Do they wave torches *all*, against the people's workshops?"

The matter seemed to be growing serious, and while two or three of the conspirators seized Aulus, and compelled him with gentle violence to desist from farther tumult, Cæ parius whispered into the ear of Catiline, "This knave knows far too much. Were it not best three or four of our friend Crispus' men should knock him on the head?"

"No! no!" cried Catiline—"By Hades! no! It is too late, I tell you. The whole thing will be settled within half an hour. There goes the second trumpet."

And as he spoke, the shrill blast of the brazen instruments rose piercingly and almost painfully upon the ear; and the people might be seen collecting themselves rapidly into the centuries of their tribes, in order to give their votes in their places, as ascertained by lot.

"And the third"—exclaimed Cassius, joyfully—"Will give the signal for *election!*" Catiline interrupted him, as if fearful that he would say something that should commit the party. "But see," he added, pointing with his hand across the wide plain toward a little knoll, on which there stood a group of noble−looking men, surrounded by a multitude of knights and patricians, "See yonder, how thickly the laticlavian tunics muster, and the crimson−edged togas of the nobles—all the knights are there too, methinks. And look! look the consuls of the year! and my competitors! Come, my friends, come; we must toward the consul. He is about to open the comitia."

"Catiline! Catiline! the people's friend!" again shouted Caius Crispus; and Bassus took the word, and repeated it in the shrill quavering accents of old age—"All those who love the people vote for the people's friend—vote for the noble Catiline!"

And at once thousands of voices took the cry, "Catiline! Catiline! Hail, Catiline, that shall be Consul!"

And, in the midst of these triumphant cries, hardened and proud of heart, and confident of the success of his blood−thirsty schemes, he hurried forward, accompanied by Lentulus and his armed satellites, panting already with anticipated joy, and athirst for slaughter.

But, as he swept along, followed by the faction, a great body of citizens of the lower orders, decent substantial men, came crowding toward the Campus, and paused to inquire the cause of the tumult, which had left its visible effects in the flushed visages and knotted brows of many present.

Two or three voices began to relate what had passed; but the smith Crispus, who had lingered with one or two of his ruffians, intent to murder the man who had crossed his chief, so soon as the signal should be given, rudely broke in, and interrupted them with the old cry, "The people's friend! All ye who love the people, vote for the people's friend, vote for the noble Catiline!"

"Had mighty Marius been alive, Marius of Arpinum, or the great Gracchi, they had cried, `Vote rather for the man of the people!—vote for Cicero of Arpinum!' "

"Tush, what knows he of Marius?" replied the smith.

"What knows he of the great Gracchi?" echoed one of his followers.

"Whether should best know Marius, they who fought by his side, or they who slew his friends? Who should best know the great Gracchi if not Fulvius, the grandson of that Fulvius Flaccus, who died with them, in the forum, by the hands of Saturninus?"

"Vote for Catiline! vote for Catiline! friends of the people!" shouted the smith again, reëchoed by all his savage and vociferous gang, seeking to drown the voice of the true man of the people.

"Aye" exclaimed Fulvius, ironically, springing upon a stone horse−block, thence to address the people, who shouted "Flaccus! Flaccus!" on all sides. "Live Fulvius Flaccus! Speak to us, noble Fulvius!"

"Aye!" he exclaimed, "friends of the people, followers of Marius, vote, if ye be wise men, for the murderer of his kinsman—for Catiline, who slew Marius Gratidianus!"

"No! no! we will none of them! no Catiline! no follower of Sylla? To your tribes, men of Rome—to your tribes!"

The mingled cries waxed wild and terrible; and it was clear that the popular party was broken, by the bold

words of the speaker, into two bodies, if ever it had been united. But little cared the conspirators for that, since they had counted, not upon winning by a majority of tribes, but by a civic massacre.

And now—even as that roar was the loudest, while Flaccus in vain strove to gain a hearing, for the third time the brazen trumpets of the centuries awoke their stirring symphonies, announcing that the hour had arrived for the tribes to commence their voting.

Those who were in the secret looked eagerly over the field. The hour had come—the leader was at their head— they waited but the signal!

That signal, named by Catiline, in the house of Læca,— the blood of Cicero!

They saw a mass of men, pressing on like a mighty wedge through the dense multitude; parting the waves of the living ocean as a stout galley parts the billows; struggling on steadily toward the knoll, whereon, amid the magnates of the land, consulars, senators, and knights, covering it with the pomp of white and crimson gowns, gemmed only by the flashing axe−heads of the lictors, stood the great Consul.

They saw the gladiators forming themselves into a separate band, on the slopes of the Janiculum, with a senator's robe distinct among the dark gray tunics.

Catiline and his clients were not a hundred paces distant from Cicero, and the assembled nobles. They had halted! Their hands were busy in the bosom of their gowns, griping the hilts of their assassin's tools!

Cethegus and his gladiators were not a hundred paces distant from the bridge−gate of the Janiculum, and the cohort's bannered eagle.

They, too, had halted! they, too, were forming in battle order—they too were mustering their breath for the dread onset—they too were handling their war weapons!

Almost had Caius Crispus, in his mad triumph, shouted victory.

One moment, and Rome had been the prize for the winner in the gladiators' battle.

And the notes of the brazen trumpets had not yet died away, among the echoing hills.

They had not died away, before they were taken up and repeated, east, west, and north and south, by shriller, more pervading clangors.

It burst over the heads of the astonished people like heaven's thunder, the wild prolonged war−flourish of the legions. From the Tarpeian rock, and the guarded Capitol; from the rampired Janiculum; from the fortress, beyond the Island bridge; from the towered steeps of the Quirinal, broke simultaneously the well known Roman war note!

Upsprang, along the turreted wall of the Janiculum, with crested casques, and burnished brazen corslets, and the tremendous javelins of the cohorts, a long line of Metellus' legionaries.

Upsprang on the heights of the Capitol, and on each point of vantage, an answering band of warriors, full armed.

And, last not least, as that warlike din smote the sky, Cicero, on whom every eye was riveted of that vast concourse, flung back his toga, and stood forth conspicuous, armed with a mighty breastplate, and girded with the sword that won him, at an after day, among the mountains of Cilicia, the high style of Imperator.

A mighty shout burst from the faithful ranks of the knights; and, starting from their scabbards, five thousand sword−blades flashed in a trusty ring around the savior of his country.

"Catiline would have murdered Him!" shouted the voice of Fulvius Flaccus—"Catiline would have burned your workshops! Catiline would have made himself Dictator, King! Vote, men of Rome, vote, friends of the people! vote now, I say, for Catiline!"

Anticipated, frustrated, outwitted, — the conspirators glared on each other hopeless.

Against forces so combined, what chance of success?

Still, although ruined in his hopes, Catiline bore up bravely, and with an insolence of hardihood that in a good cause had been heroism.

Affecting to laugh at the precautions, and sneer at the pusillanimous mind that had suggested them, he defied proof, defied suspicion.

There was no overt act—no proof! and Cicero, satisfied with his triumph—for alarmed beyond measure, and astonished, all ranks and classes vied with each other in voting for Silanus and Muræna—took no step to arrest or convict the ringleaders.

It was a moral, not a physical victory, at which he had aimed so nobly.

And nobly had he won it.

The views of the conspiracy frustrated; the hearts of its leaders chilled and thunder−stricken; the loyalty and virtue of all classes aroused; the eyes of the Roman people opened to knowledge of their friends; two wise and noble consuls chosen, by who were on the point of casting their votes for a murderer and traitor; the city saved from conflagration; the commonwealth preserved, in all its majesty; these were the trophies of the Consular Comitia.

CHAPTER III. THE PERIL.

Things, bad begun, make strong themselves by ill.
Macbeth.

Sixteen days had elapsed, since the conspirators were again frustrated at the Consular Comitia.

Yet not for that had the arch−traitor withdrawn his foot one hair's breadth from his purpose, or paused one moment in his career of crime and ruin.

There is, beyond doubt, a necessity—not as the ancients deemed, supernatural, and the work of fate, but a natural moral necessity—arising from the very quality of crime itself, which spurs the criminal on to new guilt, fresh atrocity.

In the dark path of wickedness there is no halting place; the wretched climber must turn his face for ever upward, for ever onward; if he look backward his fall is inevitable, his doom fixed.

So was it proved with Catiline. To gain impunity for his first deed of cruelty and blood, another and another were forced on him, until at last, harassed and maddened by the consciousness of untold guilt, his frantic spirit could find no respite, save in the fierce intoxication of excitement, the strange delight of new atrocity.

Add to this, that, knowing himself anticipated and discovered, he knew also that if spared for a time by his opponent, it was no lack of will, but lack of opportunity alone to crush him, that held the hands of Cicero inactive.

Thus, although for a time the energies of his weaker comrades sank paralysed by the frustration of their schemes, and by the certainty that they were noted and observed even in their most secret hours, his stronger and more vehement spirit found only in the greater danger the greater stimulus to action.

Sixteen days had elapsed, and gradually, as the conspirators found that no steps were taken by the government for their apprehension or punishment, they too waxed bolder, and began to fancy, in their insolent presumption, that the republic was too weak or too timid to enforce its own laws upon undoubted traitors.

All the causes, moreover, which had urged them at first to councils so desperate, existed undiminished, nay, exaggerated by delay.

Their debts, their inability to raise those funds which their boundless profusion rendered necessary, still maddened them; and to these the consciousness of detected guilt, and that "necessity which," in the words of their chief, "makes even the timid brave," were superadded.

The people and the Senate, who had all, for a time, been vehemently agitated by a thousand various emotions of anger, fear, anxiety, revenge, forgetting, as all popular bodies are wont to do, the past danger in the present security, were beginning to doubt whether they had not been alarmed at a shadow; and were half inclined to question the existence of any conspiracy, save in the fears of their Consul.

It was well for Rome at that hour, that there was still in the commonwealth, a counterpoise to the Democratic Spirit; which, vehement and energetical beyond all others in sudden and great emergencies, is ever restless and impatient of protracted watchfulness and preparation, and lacks that persistency and resolute endurance which seems peculiar to aristocratic constitutions.

And now especially were demonstrated these opposite characteristics; for while the lower orders, and the popular portion of the Senate, who had been in the first instance most strenuous in their alarm, and most urgent for strong measures, were now hesitating, doubting, and almost compassionating the culprits, who had fallen under such a load of obloquy, the firmer and more moderate minds, were guarding the safety of the commonwealth in secret, and watching, through their unknown emissaries, every movement of the traitors.

It was about twelve o'clock at night, on the eighth day before the Ides, corresponding to our seventh of November, when the Consul was seated alone in the small but sumptuous library, which has been described above, meditating with an anxious and care−worn expression, over some papers which lay before him on the table.

No sound had been heard in the house for several hours; all its inhabitants except the Consul only, with the slave who had charge of the outer door, and one faithful freedman, having long since retired to rest.

But from without, the wailing of the stormy night−wind rose and fell in melancholy alternations of wild sobbing sound, and breathless silence; and the pattering of heavy rain was distinctly audible on the flat roofs, and

in the flooded tank, or *impluvium*, which occupied the centre of the hall.

It was in one of the lulls of the autumnal storm, that a heavy knock was heard on the pannel of the exterior door, reverberating in long echoes, through the silent vestibule, and the vast colonnades of the Atrium and peristyle.

At that dead hour of night, such a summons would have seemed strange in any season: it was now almost alarming.

Nor, though he was endowed pre−eminently with that moral strength of mind which is the highest quality of courage, and was by no means deficient in mere physical bravery, did Cicero raise his head from the perusal of his papers, and listen to that unwonted sound, without some symptoms of anxiety and perturbation.

So thoroughly acquainted as he was, with the desperate wickedness, the infernal energy, and absolute fearlessness of Catiline, it could not but occur to him instantly, when he heard that unusual summons, at a time when all the innocent world was buried in calm sleep, how easy and obvious a mode of liberation from all danger and restraint, his murder would afford to men so daring and unscrupulous, as those against whom he was playing, for no less a stake than life or death.

There was, he well knew, but a single slave, and he old and unarmed, in the vestibule, nor was the aged and effeminate Greek freedman, one on whom reliance could be placed in a deadly struggle.

All these things flashed suddenly upon the mind of Cicero, as the heavy knocking fell upon his ear, followed by a murmur of many voices, and the tread of many feet without.

He arose quietly from the bronze arm−chair, on which he had been sitting, walked across the room, to a recess beside the book−shelves, and reached down from a hook, on which it hung, among a collection of armor and weapons, a stout, straight, Roman broad−sword, with a highly adorned hilt and scabbard.

Scarcely, however, had he taken the weapon in his hand, before the door was thrown open, and his freedman ushered in three men, attired in the full costume of Roman Senators.

"All hail, at this untimely hour, most noble Cicero," exclaimed the first who entered.

"By all the Gods!" cried the second, "rejoiced I am, O Consul, to see that you are on your guard; for there is need of watchfulness, in truth, for who love the republic."

"Which need it is, in short," added the third, "that has brought us hither."

"Most welcome at all times," answered Cicero, laying aside the broad−sword with a smile, "though of a truth, I thought it might be less gracious visitors. Noble Marcellus, have you good tidings of the commonwealth? and you, Metellus Scipio, and you Marcus Crassus? Friends to the state, I know you; and would trust that no ill news hath held you watchful."

"Be not too confident of that, my Consul," replied Scipio. "Peril there is, at hand to the commonwealth, in your person."

"We have strange tidings here, confirming all that you made known to the Senate, on the twelfth day before the Calends, in letters left by an unknown man with Crassus' doorkeeper this evening," said Marcellus. "We were at supper with him, when they came, and straightway determined to accompany him hither."

"In my person!" exclaimed Cicero—"Then is the peril threatened from Lucius Sergius Catiline! were it for myself alone, this were a matter of small moment; but, seeing that I hold alone the clues of this dark plot, it were disastrous to the state, should ought befall me, who have set my life on this cast to save my country."

"Indeed disastrous!" exclaimed the wealthy Crassus; "for these most horrible and cursed traitors are sworn, as it would seem, to consume this most glorious city of the earth, and all its stately wealth, with the sword and fire."

"To destroy all the noble houses," cried Scipio, "and place the vile and loathsome rabble at the helm of state."

"All this, I well knew, of old," said Cicero calmly. "But I pray you, my friends, be seated; and let me see these papers."

And taking the anonymous letters from the hands of Crassus, he read them aloud, pausing from time to time, to meditate on the intention of the writer.

"Marcus Licinius Crassus," thus ran the first, "is spoken of by those, who love not Rome, as their lover and trusty comrade! Doth Marcus Licinius Crassus deem that the flames, which shall roar over universal Rome, will spare his houses only? Doth Marcus Crassus hope, that when the fetters shall be stricken from the limbs of every slave in Rome, his serfs alone will hold their necks beneath a voluntary yoke?—Doth he imagine that, when all the gold of the rich shall be distributed among the needy, his seven thousand talents shall escape the red hands of

Catiline and his associates? Be wise! Take heed! The noble, who forsakes his order, earns scorn alone from his new partisans! When Cicero shall fall, all noble Romans shall perish lamentably, with him—when the great Capitol itself shall melt in the conflagration, all private dwellings shall go down in the common ruin. Take counsel of a friend, true, though unknown and humble! Hold fast to the republic! rally the nobles and the rich, around the Consul! Ere the third day hence, he shall be triumphant, or be nothing!— Fare thee well!"

"This is mysterious, dark, incomprehensible," said Cicero, as he finished reading it. "Had it been sent to me. I should have read it's secret thus, as intended to awake suspicion, in my mind, of a brave and noble Roman! a true friend of his country!" he added, taking the hand of Crassus in his own. "Yet, even so, it would have failed. For as soon would I doubt the truth of heaven itself, as question the patriotic faith of the conqueror of Spartacus! But left at thy house, my Crassus, it seems almost senseless and unmeaning. What have we more?

"The snake is scotched, not slain! The spark is concealed, not quenched! The knife is sharp yet, though it lie in the scabbard! When was conspiracy beat down by clemency, or treason conquered by timidity? Let those who would survive the ides of November, keep their loins girded, and their eyes wakeful. What I am, you may not learn, but this much only—I was a noble, before I was a beggar! a Roman, before I was a—traitor!"

"Ha!" continued the consul, examining the paper closely, "This is somewhat more pregnant—the Ides of November!—the Ides—is it so?—They shall be met withal!— It is a different hand−writing also; and here is a third— Ha!"

"A third, plainer than the first," said Metellus Scipio— "pray mark it."

"Three men have sworn—who never swear in vain—a knight, a senator, and yet a senator again! Two of the three, Cornelii! Their knives are keen, their hands sure, their hearts resolute, against the new man from Arpinum! Let those who love Cicero, look to the seventh day, before November's Ides."

"The seventh day—ha? so soon? Be it so," said the undaunted magistrate. "I am prepared for any fortune."

"Consul," exclaimed the Freedman, again entering, "I watched with Geta, in the vestibule, since these good fathers entered; and now there have come two ladies clad in the sacred garb of vestals. Two lictors wait on them. They ask to speak with the consul."

"Admit them, madman!" exclaimed Cicero; "admit them with all honor. You have not surely kept them in the vestibule?"

"Not so, my Consul. They are seated on the ivory chairs in the Tablinum."

"Pardon me, noble friends. I go to greet the holy virgins. This is a strange and most unusual honour. Lead the way, man."

And with the words, he left the room in evident anxiety and haste; while his three visitors stood gazing each on the other, in apprehension mingled with wonder.

In a few moments, however, he returned alone, very pale, and wearing on his fine features a singular expression of awe and dignified self−complacency, which seemed to be almost at variance with each other.

"The Gods," he said, as he entered, in a deep and solemn tone, "the Gods themselves attest Rome's peril by grand and awful portents. The College of the Vestals sends tidings, that `The State totters to its fall'!"

"May the Great Gods avert!" cried his three auditors, simultaneously, growing as pale as death, and faltering out their words from ashy lips in weak or uncertain accents.

"It is so!" said Cicero; who, though a pure Deist, in truth, and no believer in Rome's monstrous polytheism, was not sufficiently emancipated from the superstition of the age to dispute the truth of prodigies and portents. "It is so. The priestess, who watched the sacred flame on the eternal hearth, beheld it leap thrice upward in a clear spire of vivid and unearthly light, and lick the vaulted roof−stones— thrice vanish into utter gloom! Once, she believed the fire extinct, and veiled her head in more than mortal terror. But, after momentary gloom, it again revived, while three strange sighs, mightier than any human voice, came breathing from the inmost shrine, and waved the flame fitfully to and fro, with a dread pallid lustre. The College bids the Consul to watch for himself and the republic, these three days, or ill shall come of it."

Even as he spoke, a bustle was again heard in the vestibule, as of a fresh arrival, and again the freedman entered.

"My Consul, a veiled patrician woman craves to confer with you, in private."

"Ha! all Rome is afoot, methinks, to−night. Do you know her, my Glaucias?"

"I saw her once before, my Consul. On the night of the fearful storm, when the falchion of flame shook over

Rome, and the Senate was convened suddenly."

"Ha! She! it is well—it is very well! we shall know all anon." And his face lighted up joyously, as he spoke. "Excuse me, Friends and Fathers. This is one privy to the plot, with tidings of weight doubtless. Thanks for your news, and good night; for I must pray you leave me. Your warning hath come in good season, and I will not be taken unaware. The Gods have Rome in their keeping, and, to save her, they will not let *me* perish. Fare ye well, nobles. I must be private with this woman."

After the ceremonial of the time, his visitors departed; but as they passed through the atrium, they met the lady, conducted by the old Greek freedman.

Little expecting to meet any one at that untimely hour, she had allowed her veil to fall down upon her shoulders; and, although she made a movement to recover it, as she saw the Senators approaching her by the faint light of the single lamp which burned before the household gods on the small altar by the *impluvium*, Marcus Marcellus caught a passing view of a pair of large languishing blue eyes, and a face of rare beauty.

"By the great Gods!" he whispered in Crassus' ear, "that was the lovely Fulvia."

"Ha! Curius' paramour!" replied the other. "Can it be possible that the stern Consul amuses his light hours, with such high−born harlotry?"

"Not he! not he!" said Scipio. "I doubt not Curius is one of them! He is needy, and bold, and bloody."

"But such a braggart!" answered Marcellus.

"I have known braggarts fight," said Crassus. "There was a fellow, who served in the fifth legion; he fought before the standard of the hastati; and I deemed him a coward ever, but in the last strife with Spartacus he slew six men with his own hand. I saw it."

"I have heard of such things," said Scipio. "But it grows late. Let us move homeward." And then he added, as he was leaving the Consul's door, "If he can trust his household, Cicero should arm it. My life on it! They will attempt to murder him."

"He has given orders even now to arm his slaves," said the Freedman, in reply; "and so soon as they have got their blades and bucklers, I go to invite hither the surest of his clients."

"Thou shalt do well to do so—But see thou do it silently."

And with the words, they hurried homeward through the dark streets, leaving the wise and virtuous magistrate in conference with his abandoned, yet trustworthy informant, Fulvia.

CHAPTER IV. THE CRISIS.

He is about it. The doors are open.

Macbeth.

The morning had scarcely dawned, after that dismal and tempestuous night, when three men were observed by some of the earlier citizens, passing up the Sacred Way, toward the Cerolian Place.

It was not so much that the earliness of the hour attracted the notice of these spectators—for the Romans were a matutinal people, even in their most effeminate and luxurious ages, and the sun found few loiterers in their chambers, when he came forth from his oriental gates—as that the manner and expression of these men themselves were singular, and such as might well excite suspicion.

They all walked abreast, two clad in the full garb of Senators, and one in the distinctive dress of Roman knighthood. No one had heard them speak aloud, nor seen them whisper, one to the other. They moved straight onward, steadily indeed and rather slowly, but with something of consciousness in their manner, glancing furtively around them from beneath their bent brows, and sometimes even casting their eyes over their shoulders, as if to see whether they were followed.

At about a hundred paces after these three, not however accompanying them, or attached to their party, so far at least as appearances are considered, two large−framed fellows, clothed in the dark gray frocks worn by slaves and gladiators, came strolling in the same direction.

These men had the auburn hair, blue eyes, and massive, if not stolid cast of features peculiar to northern races, at that time the conquered slaves, though destined soon to be the victors, of Rome's gigantic power.

When the first three reached the corner of the next block of buildings, to the corner of that magnificent street called the Carinoe, they paused for a few moments; and, after looking carefully about them, to mark whether they were observed or not, held a short whispered conversation, which their stern faces, and impassioned gestures seemed to denote momentous.

While they were thus engaged, the other two came sauntering along, and passed them by, apparently unheeded, and without speaking, or saluting them.

Those three men were the knight Caius Cornelius, a friend and distant kinsman of Cethegus, who was the second of the number, and Lucius Vargunteius, a Senator, whose name has descended only to posterity, through the black infamy of the deed, which he was even at that moment meditating.

Spurred into action by the menaces and violence of Catiline, who had now resolved to go forth and commence open warfare from the entrenched camp prepared in the Appenines, by Caius Manlius, these men had volunteered, on the previous night, at a second meeting held in the house of Læca, to murder Cicero, with their own hands, during his morning levee.

To this end, they had now come forth thus early, hoping so to anticipate the visit of his numerous clients, and take him at advantage, unprepared and defenceless.

Three stout men were they, as ever went forth armed and determined for premeditated crime; stout in frame, stout of heart, invulnerable by any physical apprehension, unassailable by any touch of conscience, pitiless, fearless, utterly depraved.

Yet there was something in their present enterprise, that half daunted them. Something in the character of the man, whom they were preparing to assassinate—something of undefined feeling, suggesting to them the certainty of the whole world's reproach and scorn through everlasting ages, however present success "might trammel up the consequence."

Though they would not have confessed it to their own hearts, they were reluctant toward their task; and this unadmitted reluctance it was, which led them to pause and parley, under the show of arranging their schemes, which had in truth been fully organized on the preceding night.

They were too far committed, however, to recede; and it is probable that no one of them, although their hearts were full almost to suffocation, as they neared the good Consul's door, had gone so far as to think of withdrawing his hand from the deed of blood.

The outer door of the vestibule was open; and but one slave was stationed in the porch; an old man quite

unarmed, not having so much even as a porter's staff, who was sitting on a stone bench, in the morning sunshine.

As the conspirators ascended the marble steps, which gave access to the vestibule, and entered the beautiful Tuscan colonnade, the two Germans, who had stopped and looked back for a moment, seeing them pass in, set off as hard as they could run, through an adjoining street toward the house of Catiline, which was not very far distant.

It was not long ere they reached it, and entered without question or hindrance, as men familiar and permitted.

In a small room, adjoining the inner peristyle, the master of the house was striding to and fro across the tesselated floor, in a state of perturbation, extreme even for him; whose historian has described him with bloodless face, and evil eyes, irregular and restless motions, and the impress of frantic guilt, ever plain to be seen in his agitated features.

Aurelia Orestilla sat near him, on a low cushioned stool, with her superb Italian face livid and sicklied by unusual dread. Her hands lay tightly clasped upon her knee—her lips were as white as ashes. Her large lustrous eyes, burning and preternaturally distended, were fixed on the haggard face of her husband, and followed him, as he strode up and down the room in impotent anxiety and expectation.

Yet she, privy as she was to all his blackest councils, the instigator and rewarder of his most hideous crime, knowing the hell of impotent agony that was consuming his heart, she dared not address him with any words of hope or consolation.

At such a crisis all ordinary phrases of comfort or cheering love, seem but a mockery to the spirit, which can find no rest, until the doubts that harass it are ended; and this she felt to be the case, and, had her own torturing expectation allowed her to frame any speech to soothe him, she would not have ventured on its utterance, certain that it would call forth a torrent of imprecation on her head, perhaps a burst of violence against her person.

The very affections of the wicked, are strangely mixed at times, with more discordant elements; and it would have been a hard question to solve, whether that horrible pair most loved or hated one another.

The woman's passions, strange to relate, had been kindled at times, by the very cruelty and fury, which at other moments made her almost detest him. There was a species of sublimity in the very atrocity of Catiline's wickedness, which fascinated her morbid and polluted fancy; and she almost admired the ferocity which tortured her, and from which, alone of mortal ills, she shrank appalled and unresisting.

And Catiline loved her, as well as he could love anything, loved her the more because she too, in some sort, had elicited his admiration; for she had crossed him many times, and once braved him, and, alone of human beings, he had not crushed her.

They were liker to mated tigers, which even in their raptures of affection, rend with the fang, and clutch with the unsheathed talon, until the blood and anguish testify the fury of their passion, than to beings of human mould and nature.

Suddenly the traitor stopped short in his wild and agitated walk, and seemed to listen intently, although no sound came to the ears of the woman, who was no less on the alert than he, for any stir or rumor.

"It is"—he said at length, clasping his hands above his head—"it is the step of Arminius, the trusty gladiator—do you not hear it, Orestilla?"

"No," she replied, shaking her head doubtfully. "There is no sound at all. My ear is quicker of hearing, too, than yours, Catiline, and if there were any step, I should be first to mark it."

"Tush! woman!" he made answer, glaring upon her fiercely. "It is my *hear* that hears it."

"You have a heart, then!" she replied bitterly, unable even at that time to refain from taunting him.

"And a hand also, and a dagger! and, by Hell and all its furies! I know not why I do not flesh it in you. I will one day."

"No, you will not," she answered very quietly.

"And wherefore not? I have done many a worse deed in my day. The Gods would scarce punish me for that slaughter; and men might well call it justice.—Wherefore not, I say? Do you think I so doat on your beauty, that I cannot right gladly spare you?"

"Because," answered the woman, meeting his fixed glare, with a glance as meaning and as fiery, "because, when I find that you meditate it, I will act quickest. I know a drug or two, and an unguent of very sovereign virtue."

"Ha! ha!" The reckless profligate burst into a wild ringing laugh of triumphant approbation. "Ha! ha! thou mightst have given me a better reason. Where else should I find such a tigress? By all the Gods! it is your clutch

and claws that I prize, more than your softest and most rapturous caress! But hist! hist! now—do you not hear that step?"

"I do—I do," she replied, clasping her hands again, which she had unclinched in her anger—"and it *is* Arminius' step! I was wrong to cross thee, Catiline; and thou so anxious! we shall hear now—we shall hear all."

Almost as she spoke, the German gladiator rushed into the room, heated and panting from his swift race; and, without any sign of reverence or any salutation, exclaimed abruptly,

"Catiline, it is over, ere this time! I saw them enter his house!"

The woman uttered a low choking shriek, her face flushed crimson, and then again turned paler than before, and she fell back on her cushioned seat, swooning with joy at the welcome tidings.

But Catiline flung both his arms abroad toward heaven, and cried aloud—"Ye Gods, for once I thank ye! if there be Gods indeed!" he added, with a sneer—"thou sawest them enter, ha?—thou art not lying?—By all the furies! If you deceive me, I will take care that you see nothing more in this world."

"Catiline, these eyes saw them!"

"At length! at length!" he exclaimed, his eye flashing, and his whole countenance glowing with fiendish animation, "and yet curses upon it!—that I could not slay him— that I should owe to any other hand my vengeance on my victim. Thou hast done well—ha! here is gold, Arminius! the last gold I own—but what of that, to−morrow— to−morrow, I will have millions! Away! away! bold heart, arouse your friends and followers—to arms, to arms, cry havoc through the streets, and liberty and vengeance!"

While he was speaking yet, the door was again opened, and Cethegus entered with the others, dull, gloomy, and crest−fallen; but Catiline was in a state of excitement so tremendous, that he saw nothing but the men.

At one bound he reached Cethegus, and catching him by both hands—"How!" he exclaimed—"How was it?—quick, tell me, quick! Did he die hard? Did he die, conscious, in despair, in anguish?—Tell me, tell me, you tortured him in the slaying—tell me, he died a coward, howling and cursing fate, and knowing that I, *I* slew him, and— speak Cethegus?—speak, man! By the Gods! you are pale! silent!—these are not faces fit for triumph! speak, man, I say, how died he?—show me his blood, Cethegus! you have not wiped it from your dagger, give me the blade, that I may kiss away the precious death−drops."

So rapidly and impetuously had he spoken, heaping query on query, that Cethegus could not have answered, if he would. But, to say the truth, he was in little haste to do so. When Catiline ceased, however, which he did at length, from actual want of breath to enquire farther, he answered in a low smothered voice.

"He is not dead at all—he refused"—

"Not dead!" shrieked Catiline, for it was a shriek, though articulate, and one so piercing that it roused Aurelia from her swoon of joy—"Not dead! Yon villain swore that he saw you enter—not dead!" he repeated, half incredulously— "By heaven and hell! I believe you are jesting with me! Tell me that you have lied, and I—I— I will worship you, Cethegus."

"His porter refused us entrance, and, as the door was opened, we saw in the Atrium the slaves of his household, and half a hundred of his clients, all armed from head to foot, with casque and corslet, pilum, broad−sword, and buckler. And, to complete the tale, as we returned into the street baffled and desperate, a window was thrown open in the banquet−hall above, and we might see the Consul, with Cato, and Marcellus, and Scipio, and a score of Consulars beside, gazing upon us in all the triumph of security, in all the confidence of success. We are betrayed, that is plain—our plans are all known as soon as they are taken, all frustrated ere acted! All is lost, Catiline, for what remains to do?"

"To dare!" answered the villain, all undaunted even by this reverse—"and, if need be, to die—but to despair, never!"

"But who can be the traitor?—where shall we look to find him?"

"Look there," exclaimed Catiline, pointing to the German gladiator, who stood all confounded and chap−fallen. "Look there, and you shall see one; and see him punished too! What ho! without there, ho! a dozen of you, if you would shun the lash!"

And, at the summons, ten or twelve slaves and freedmen rushed into the room in trepidation, almost in terror, so savage was the temper of the lord whom they served, and so merciless his wrath, at the most trivial fault or error.

"Drag that brute, hence!" he said, waving his hand toward the unhappy gladiator, "put out his eyes, fetter him

foot and hand, and cast him to the congers in the fishpond."

Without a moment's pause or hesitation, they cast themselves upon their miserable comrade; and, though he struggled furiously, and struck down two or three of the foremost, and shouted himself hoarse, in fruitless efforts to explain, he was secured, and bound and gagged, within a shorter time than is required to describe it.

This done, one of the freedmen looked toward his dreaded master, and asked, with pale lips, and a faltering voice,

"Alive, Catiline?"

"Alive—and hark you, Sirrah, fasten his head above the water, that he die not too speedily. Those biggest congers will lug him manfully, Cethegus; we will go see the sport, anon. It will serve to amuse us, after this disappointment. There! away with him, begone!"

The miserable creature struggled desperately in his bonds, but in vain; and strove so terribly to speak, in despite his gag, that his face turned almost black, from the blood which rushed to every pore; but no sound could he utter, as he was dragged away, save a deep−mouthed groan, which was drowned by the laughter of the remorseless wretches, who gazed on his anguish with fiendish merriment; among which, hideous to relate, the thrilling sounds of Aurelia's silvery and contagious mirth were distinctly audible.

"He will take care to see more truly in Hades!" said Catiline, with his sardonic smile, as he was dragged out of the room, by his appalled and trembling fellows. "But now to business. Tell me, did you display any weapon? or do aught, that can be proved, to show your intent on the Consul?"

"Nothing, my Catiline," replied Cethegus, firmly.

"Nothing, indeed, Cethegus? By all our hopes! deceive me not!"

"By your head! nothing, Catiline."

"Then I care nothing for the failure!" answered the other. "Keep good hearts, and wear smiling faces! I will kill him myself to−morrow, if, like the scorpion, I must die in the deed."

"Try it not, Catiline. You will but fail—and"—

"Fail! who ever knew me fail, in vengeance?"

"No one!" said Orestilla—"and no one can hinder you of it. No! not the Gods!"

"There are no Gods!" exclaimed the Traitor, "and if there be, it were all one—I defy them!"

"Cicero says there is ONE, they tell me," said Cethegus, half mocking, half in earnest—"and he is very wise."

"Very!" replied the other, with his accustomed sneer— "Therefore that ONE may save him—if he can!"

"The thing is settled," cried Aurelia Orestilla, "I told him yesterday he ought to do it, himself—I should not be content, unless Catiline's hand dealt him the death blow, Catiline's eye gloated upon him in the death−struggle, Catiline's tongue jeered him in the death−pang!"

"You love him dearly, Orestilla," said Cethegus.

"And dearly he has earned it," she replied.

"By Venus! I would give half my hopes, to see him kiss you."

"And I, if my lips had the hydra's venom. But come, she added, with a wreathed smile and a beaming eye, "Let us go see the fishes eat yon varlet; else shall we be too late for the sport."

"Rare sport!" said Cethegus, "I have not seen a man eaten, by a tiger even, these six months past; and by a fish, I think, never!"

"The fish do it better," replied Catiline—"Better, and cleaner—they leave the prettiest skeleton you can imagine— they are longer about it, you will say—True; but I do not grudge the time."

"No! no! the longer, the merrier!" said Aurelia, laughing melodiously—"The last fellow I saw given to the tigers, had his head crushed like a nut−shell, by a single blow. He had not time to shriek even once. There was no fun in that, you know."

"None indeed," said Cethegus—"but I warrant you this German will howl gloriously, when the fish are at him."

"Yes! yes!" exclaimed the lovely woman, clapping her hands joyously. "We must have the gag removed, to give free vent to his music. Come, come, I am dying to see him."

"Some one must die, since Cicero did not."

"Happy fellow this, if he only knew it, to give his friends so much pleasure!"

"One of them such a fair lady too!"

"Will there be more pleasure, think you, in seeing the congers eat the gladiator, or in eating the congers afterward?"

"Oh! no comparison! one can eat fat congers always."

"We have the advantage of them truly, for they cannot always eat fat gladiators."

And they walked away with as much glee and expectation, to the scene of agony and fiendish torture, vitiated by the frightful exhibitions of the circus and the arena, as men in modern days would feel, in going to enjoy the fictitious sorrows of some grand tragedian.

Can it be that the contemplation of human wo, in some form or other, is in all ages grateful to poor corrupt humanity?

CHAPTER V. THE ORATION.

Quousque tandem abutere—
Cicero.

The Senate was assembled in the great temple on the Palatine, built on the spot where Jupiter, thence hailed as Stator, had stayed the tide of flight, and sent the rallied Romans back to a glorious triumph.

A cohort was stationed on the brow of the hill, its spear−heads glancing in the early sunshine.

The Roman knights, wearing their swords openly, and clad in their girded tunics only, mustered around the steps which led to the colonnade and doors of the temple, a voluntary guard to the good consul.

A mighty concourse had flowed together from all quarters of the city, and stood in dense masses in all the neighboring streets, and in the area of the temple, in hushed and anxious expectation.

The tribunes of the people, awed for once by the imminence of the peril, forgot to be factious.

Within the mighty building, there was dead silence— silence more eloquent than words.

For, to the wonder of all men, undismayed by detection, unrebuked by the horror and hate which frowned on him from every brow, Catiline had assumed his place on the benches of his order.

Not one, even of his most intimate associates, had dared to salute him; not one, even of the conspirators, had dared to recognize the manifest traitor.

As he assumed his place, the senators next to him had arisen and withdrawn from the infamous vicinity, some of them even shaking their gowns, as if to dissipate the contamination of his contact.

Alone he sat, therefore, with a wide vacant space around him—alone, in that crowded house—alone, yet proud, unrebuked, undaunted.

The eyes of every man in the vast assembly were riveted in fear, or hatred, or astonishment, on the set features and sullen scowling brow, of the arch conspirator.

Thus sat they, thus they gazed for ten minutes' space, and so deep was the all−absorbing interest, that none observed the Consul, who had arisen to his feet before the curule chair, until the great volume of his clear sonorous voice rolled over them, like the burst of sudden thunder amid the hush of nature which precedes it.

It was to no set form of words, to no premeditated speech, that he gave utterance; nor did he in the usual form address the Conscript Fathers.

With his form drawn to its fullest height, his arm out−stretched as if it was about to launch the thunderbolt, he hurled his impassioned indignation against the fearless culprit.

"Until how long, O Catiline, wilt thou abuse our patience? Until how long, too, will thy frantic fury baffle us? Unto what extremity will thy unbridled insolence display itself? Do the nocturnal guards upon the Palatine nothing dismay you, nothing the watches through the city, nothing the terrors of the people, nothing the concourse hitherward of all good citizens, nothing this most secure place for the senate's convocation, nothing the eyes and faces of all these?" And at the words, he waved both arms slowly around, pointing the features and expression of every senator, filled with awe and aversion.

"Dost thou not feel that all thy plots are manifest? Not see that thy conspiracy was grasped irresistibly, so soon as it was known thoroughly to all these? Which of us dost thou imagine ignorant of what thou didst, where thou wert, whom thou didst convoke, what resolution thou didst take last night, and the night yet preceding? Oh! ye changed Times! Oh, ye degenerate customs! The Senate comprehends these things, the Consul sees them! Yet this man lives! Lives, did I say? Yea, indeed, comes into the Senate, bears a part in the public councils, marks out with his eyes and selects every one of us for slaughter. But we, strenuous brave men, imagine that we do our duty to the state, so long as we escape the frenzy, the daggers of that villain. Long since it had been right, Catiline, that thou shouldst have been led to death by the Consul's mandate— Long since should that doom have been turned upon thyself, which thou hast been so long devising for all of us here present. Do I err, saying this? or did that most illustrious man, Publius Scipio, pontifex maximus, when in no magisterial office, take off Tiberius Gracchus, for merely disturbing the established order of the state? And shall we, Consuls, endure Catiline aiming to devastate the world with massacre and conflagration? For I omit to state, as too ancient precedents, how Caius Servilius Ahala slew with his own hand Spurius Melius, when plotting revolution! There was, there was, of old,

that energy of virtue in this commonwealth, that brave men hedged the traitorous citizen about with heavier penalties than the most deadly foe! We hold a powerful and weighty decree of the Senate against thee, O Catiline. Neither the counsel nor the sanction of this order have been wanting to the republic. We, we, I say it openly, we Consuls are wanting in our duty.

"The Senate decreed once, that Lucius Opimius, then Consul, should see THAT THE REPUBLIC TOOK NO HARM; not one night intervened. Caius Gracchus was slain on mere suspicions of sedition, the son of a most noble father, most noble grandfather, most noble ancestry. Marcus Fulvius, a consular, was slain with both his children. By a like decree of the Senate, the charge of the republic was committed to Caius Marius and Lucius Valerius, the Consuls— did the republic's vengeance delay the death of Lucius Saterninus, a tribune of the people, of Caius Servilius, a prætor, even a single day? And yet, we Consuls, suffer the edge of this authority to be blunted, until the twentieth day. For we have such a decree of the Senate, but hidden in the scroll which contains it, as a sword undrawn in its scabbard. By which decree it were right, O Catiline, that thou shouldst have been slaughtered on the instant. Thou livest; and livest not to lay aside, but to confirm and strengthen thine audacity. I desire, O Conscript fathers, to *be* merciful; I desire, too, in such jeopardy of the republic, not to *seem* culpably neglectful. Yet I condemn myself of inability, of utter weakness. There is a camp in Italy! hostile to the republic, in the defiles that open on Etruria! Daily the numbers of the foe are increasing! And yet the general of that camp, the leader of that foe, we see within the walls, aye, even in the Senate, day by day, plotting some intestine blow against the state. Were I to order thee to be arrested, to be slain now, O Catiline, I should have cause, I think, to dread the reproaches of *all* good citizens, for having stricken thee too late, rather than that of *one*, for having stricken thee too severely. And yet, that which should have been done long ago, I am not yet for a certain reason persuaded to do now. Then—then at length—will I slay thee, when there is not a man so base, so desperately wicked, so like to thee in character, but he shall own thy slaying just. So long as there shall be one man, who dares to defend thee, thou shalt live. And thou shalt live, as now thou livest, beset on every side by numerous, and steady guards, so that thou canst not even stir against the commonwealth. The eyes moreover, and the ears of many, even as heretofore, shall spy thee out at unawares, and mount guard on thee in private.

"For what is there, Catiline, which thou now canst expect more, if neither night with all its darkness, could conceal thy unholy meetings, nor even the most private house contain within its walls the voice of thy conspiracy? If all thy deeds shine forth, burst into public view? Change now that hideous purpose, take me along as thy adviser, forget thy schemes of massacre, of conflagration. Thou art hemmed in on every side. Thy every council is more clear to me than day; and these thou canst now review with me. Dost thou remember, how I stated in the Senate, on the twelfth day before the Calends of November, (1) that Caius Manlius, the satellite and co−minister of thy audacity, would be in arms on a given day, which day would be the sixth (2) before the Calends of November!— Did I err, Catiline, not in the fact, so great as it was, so atrocious, so incredible, but, what is much more wondrous, in the very day? Again I told thee in the Senate, that thou hadst conspired to slay the first men of the state, on the fifth (1) day before the Calends of November, when many leading men of Rome quitted the city, not so much to preserve their lives, as to mar thy councils. Canst thou deny that thou wert hemmed in on that day by my guards, and hindered by my vigilance from stirring thy hand against the state, when, frustrate by the departure of the rest, thou saidst that our blood, ours who had remained behind, would satisfy thee? What? When thou wert so confident of seizing Præneste, by nocturnal escalade, upon the very (2) Calends of November, didst thou not feel that it was by my order that colony was garrisoned, guarded, watched, impregnable?—Thou doest nothing, plottest nothing, thinkest nothing which I shall not—I say not—hear—but shall not see, shall not conspicuously comprehend.

"Review with me now, the transactions of the night before the last, so shalt thou understand that I watch far more vigilantly for the safety, than thou for the destruction of the state. I say that on that former night, (3) thou didst go to the street of the Scythemakers, I will speak plainly, to the house of Marcus Læca; that thou didst meet there many of thy associates in crime and madness. Wilt thou dare to deny it? Why so silent? If thou deniest, I will prove it. For I see some of those here, here in the Senate, who were with thee. Oh! ye immortal Gods! in what region of the earth do we dwell? in what city do we live? of what republic are we citizens? Here! they are here, in the midst of us, Conscript Fathers, here in this council, the most sacred, the most solemn of the universal world, who are planning the slaughter of myself, the slaughter of you all, planning the ruin of this city, and therein the ruin of the world. I the consul, see these men, and ask their opinions on state matters. Nay, those whom it were

but justice to slaughter with the sword, I refrain as yet from wounding with a word. Thou wert therefore in the house of Læca, on that night, O Catiline. Thou didst allot the districts of Italy; thou didst determine whither each one of thy followers should set forth; thou didst choose whom thou wouldst lead along with thee, whom leave behind; thou didst assign the wards of the city for conflagration; thou didst assert that ere long thou wouldst go forth in person; thou saidst there was but one cause why thou shouldst yet delay a little, namely, that I was alive. Two Roman knights were found, who offered themselves to liberate thee from that care, and promised that they would butcher me, that very night, a little before daylight, in my own bed. Of all these things I was aware, when your assembly was scarce yet broken up. I strengthened my house, and guarded it with an unwonted garrison. I refused admittance to those whom thou hadst sent to salute me, when they arrived; even as I had predicted to many eminent men that they would arrive, and at that very time.

"Since then these things stand thus, O Catiline, proceed as thou hast begun; depart when thou wilt from the city; the gates are open; begone; too long already have those camps of Manlius lacked their general. Lead forth, with the morrow, all thy men—if not all, as many at least as thou art able; purify the city of thy presence. Thou wilt discharge me from great terror, so soon as a wall shall be interposed between thee and me. Dwell among us thou canst, now no longer. I will not endure, I will not suffer, I will not permit it! Great thanks must be rendered to the immortal Gods, and to this Stator Jove, especially, the ancient guardian of this city, that we have escaped so many times already this plague, so foul, so horrible, so fraught with ruin to the republic. Not often is the highest weal of a state jeoparded in the person of a single individual. So long as you plotted against me, merely as Consul elect, O Catiline, I protected myself, not by public guards, but by private diligence. When at the late Comitia, thou wouldst have murdered me, presiding as Consul in the Field of Mars, with thy competitors, I checked thy nefarious plans, by the protection and force of my friends, without exciting any public tumult.—In a word, as often as thou hast thrust at me, myself have I parried the blow, although I perceived clearly, that my fall was conjoined with dread calamity to the republic. Now, now, thou dost strike openly at the whole commonwealth, the dwellings of the city; dost summon the temples of the Immortal Gods, the lives of all citizens, in a word, Italy herself, to havoc and perdition. Wherefore−−seeing that as yet, I dare not do what should be my first duty, what is the ancient and peculiar usage of this state, and in accordance with the discipline of our fathers—I will, at least, do that which in respect to security is more lenient, in respect to the common good, more useful. For should I command thee to be slain, the surviving band of thy conspirators would settle down in the republic; but if—as I have been long exhorting thee, thou wilt go forth, the vast and pestilent contamination of thy comrades will be drained out of the city. What is this, Catiline? Dost hesitate to do that, for my bidding, which of thine own accord thou wert about doing? The Consul commands the enemy to go forth from the state. Dost thou enquire of me, whether into exile? I do not order, but, if thou wilt have my counsel, I advise it.

"For what is there, O Catiline, that can delight thee any longer in this city, in which there is not one man, without thy band of desperadoes, who does not fear, not one who does not hate thee?−−What brand of domestic turpitude is not burnt in upon thy life? What shame of private bearing clings not to thee, for endless infamy? What scenes of impure lust, what deeds of daring crime, what horrible pollution attaches not to thy whole career?—To what young man, once entangled in the meshes of thy corruption, hast thou not tendered the torch of licentiousness, or the steel of murder? Must I say more? Even of late, when thou hadst rendered thy house vacant for new nuptials, by the death of thy late wife, didst thou not overtop that hideous crime, by a crime more incredible? which I pass over, and permit willingly to rest in silence, lest it be known, that in this state, guilt so enormous has existed, and has not been punished. I pass over the ruin of thy fortunes, which all men know to be impending on the next (1) Ides, I proceed to those things which pertain not to the private infamy of thy career, not to thy domestic difficulties and baseness, but to the supreme safety of the state, and to the life and welfare of us all. Can the light of this life, the breath of this heaven, be grateful to thee, Catiline, when thou art conscious that not one of these but knows how thou didst stand armed in the comitium, on the day previous (2) to the calends of January, when Lepidus and Tullus were the Consuls? That thou hadst mustered a band of assassins to slay the Consuls, and the noblest of the citizens? That no relenting of thy heart, no faltering from fear, opposed thy guilt and frenzy, but the wonted good fortune of the commonwealth? And now I pass from these things, for neither are these crimes not known to all, nor have there not been many more recently committed. How many times hast not thou thrust at me while elect, how many times when Consul? How many thrusts of thine so nearly aimed, that they appeared inevitable; have I not shunned by a slight diversion, and, as they say of gladiators, by the

movements of my body? Thou doest nothing, attemptest nothing, plannest nothing, which can escape my knowledge, at the moment, when I would know it. Yet thou wilt neither cease from endeavoring nor from plotting. How many times already hath that dagger been wrested from thy hand? how many times hath it fallen by chance, and escaped thy grasp? Still thou canst not be deprived of it, more than an instant's space!—And yet, I know not with what unhallowed rites it has been consecrated and devoted by thee, that thou shouldst deem it necessary to flesh it in the body of a Consul.

"Now then, what life is this of thine? For I will now address thee, not so that I may seem moved by that detestation which I feel toward thee, but by compassion, no portion of which is thy due. But a moment since, thou didst come into the Senate, and which one man, from so vast a concourse, from thine own chosen and familiar friends, saluted thee? If this has befallen no one, within the memory of man, wilt thou await loud contumely, condemned already by the most severe sentence of this silence? What wouldst thou have, when all those seats around thee were left vacant on thy coming? When all those Consulars, whom thou so frequently hadst designated unto slaughter, as soon as thou didst take thy seat, left all that portion of the benches bare and vacant? With what spirit, in one word, can thou deem this endurable? By Hercules! did my slaves so dread me, as all thy fellow citizens dread thee, I should conceive it time for leaving my own house—dost thou not hold it time to leave this city?—And if I felt self without just cause suspected, and odious to my countrymen, I should choose rather to be beyond the reach of their vision, than to be gazed upon by hostile eyes of all men. Dost thou hesitate, when conscious of thine own crimes thou must acknowledge that the hate of all is just, and due long ago—dost thou, I say, hesitate to avoid the presence and the sight of those whose eyes and senses thine aspect every day is wounding? If thine own parents feared and hated thee, and could by no means be reconciled, thou wouldst, I presume, withdraw thyself somewhither beyond the reach of their eyes—now thy country, which is the common parent of us all, dreads and detests thee, and has passed judgment on thee long ago, as meditaing nothing but her parricide. Wilt thou now neither revere her authority, nor obey her judgment, nor yet dread her violence? Since thus she now deals with thee, Catiline, thus speaks to thee in silence.

" `No deed of infamy hath been done in these many years, unless through thee—no deed of atrocity without thee—to thee alone, the murder of many citizens, to thee alone the spoliation and oppression of our allies, hath been free and unpunished. Thou hast been powerful not only to escape laws and prosecutions, but openly to break through and overturn them. To these things, though indeed intolerable, I have submitted as best I might—but it can now no longer be endured that I should be in one eternal dread of thee only—that Catiline, on what alarm soever, alone should be the source of terror—that no treason against me can be imagined, such as should be revolting to thy desperate criminality. Wherefore begone, and liberate me from this terror, so that, if true, I may not be ruined; if false I may at least shake with fear no longer. '

"If thy country should thus, as I have said, parley with thee, should she not obtain what she demands, even if she lack force to compel it? What more shall I say, when thou didst offer thyself to go into some private custody? What, when to shun suspicion, thou didst profess thy willingness to take up thy residence under the roof of Manius Lepidus? Refused by whom, thou hadst audacity to come to me, and request that I would admit thee to my house. And when thou didst receive from me this answer, that I could not exist within the same house with that man, whose presence even inside the same city walls, I esteemed vast peril to my life, thou didst then go to the prætor Quintus Metellus; and, then, repulsed by him, to Marcus Marcellus, thine own comrade, a virtuous man truly, one whom past doubt thou didst deem likely to be most vigilant in guarding, most crafty in suspecting, most strenuous in bringing thee to justice. And how far shall that man be believed distant from deserving chains and a dungeon, who judges himself to be worthy of safekeeping?—Since, then, these things are so, dost hesitate, O Catiline, since here thou canst not tarry with an equal mind, to depart for some other land, and give that life, rescued from many just and deserved penalties, to solitude and exile? `Lay the matter,' thou sayest, `before the Senate,' for that it is which thou requirest, `and if this order shall command thee into banishment, thou wilt obey their bidding.' I will not lay it before them—for to do so is repugnant to my character, yet I will so act, that thou shalt clearly see what these think of thee. Depart from the city, Catiline! Deliver the state from terror! begone into banishment, if that be the word for which thou tarriest!"

Then the great Orator paused once again, not to breathe, though the vehement and uninterrupted torrent of his eloquence, might well have required an interval of rest, but to give the confounded listener occasion to note the feelings of the assembled Senate, perfectly in accordance with his words.

It was but a moment, however, that he paused, and, that ended, again burst out the thunderous weight of his magnificent invective.

"What means this, Catiline? Dost thou note these, dost thou observe their silence? They permit my words, they are mute. Why dost thou wait that confirmation of their words, which thou seest given already by their silence? But had I spoken these same words to that admirable youth Publius Sextius, or to that very valiant man, Marcus Marcellus, I tell thee that this very Senate would have, already, in this very temple, laid violent hands on me, the Consul, and that too most justly! But with regard to thee, when quiescent they approve, when passive they decree, when mute they cry aloud! Nor these alone, whose authority it seems is very dear, whose life most cheap, in your eyes, but all those Roman knights do likewise, most honorable and most worthy men, and all those other valiant citizens, who stand about the Senate house, whose dense ranks thou couldst see, whose zeal thou couldst discover, whose patriotic cries thou couldst hear, but a little while ago; whose hands and weapons I have scarcely, for a long time, restrained from thee, whom I will yet induce to escort thee to the gates of Rome, if thou wilt leave this city, which thou hast sought so long to devastate and ruin.

"And yet what say I? Can it be hoped that anything should ever bend thee? that thou shouldst ever be reformed? that thou shouldst dream of any flight? that thou shouldst contemplate any exile? Would, would indeed that the immortal Gods might give thee such a purpose! And yet I perceive, if astounded by my voice thou shouldst bend thy spirit to go into voluntary exile, how vast a storm of odium would hang over me, if not at this present time, when the memory of thy villanies is recent, at least from the passions of posterity. But to me it is worth this sacrifice, so that the storm burst on my individual head, and be connected with no perils to the state. But that thou shouldst be moved by thine own vices, that thou shouldst dread the penalties of the law, that thou shouldst yield to the exigences of the republic, this indeed is not to be expected; for thou art not such an one, O Catiline, that any sense of shame should ever recall thee from infamy, any sense of fear from peril, any glimmering of reason from insanity. Wherefore, as I have said many times already, go forth from among us; and if thou wouldst stir up against me, as constantly thou sayest, against me thine enemy a storm of enmity and odium, then begone straightway into exile. Scarcely shall I have power to endure the clamors of the world, scarcely shall I have power to susvain the burthen of that odium, if thou wilt but go into voluntary banishment, now, at the consul's bidding. If, on the contrary, thou wouldst advance my glory and my reputation, then go forth with thy lawless band of ruffians! Betake thyself to Manlius! stir up the desperate citizens to arms! withdraw thyself from all good men! levy war on thy country! exult in unhallowed schemes of robbery and murder, so that thou shalt not pass for one driven forth by my tyranny into the arms of strangers, but for one joining by invitation his own friends and comrades. Yet why should I invite thee, when I well know that thy confederates are sent forth already, who nigh Forum Aurelium shall wait in arms for your arrival? When I well know that thou hast already a day promised and appointed whereon to join the camp of Manlius? When I well know that the silver eagle hath been prepared already—the silver eagle which will, I trust, prove ruinous and fatal to thee and all thine host, to which a shrine has been established in thine own house, thy villanies its fitting incense? For how shalt thou endure its absence any longer, thou who wert wont to adore it, setting forth to sacrilege and slaughter, thou who so often hast upraised that impious right hand of thine from its accursed altars to murder citizens of Rome?

"At length, then, at length, thou must go forth, whither long since thy frantic and unbridled passions have impelled thee. Nor shall this war against thy country vex or afflict thee. Nay, rather shall it bring to thee a strange and unimaginable pleasure, for to this frantic career did nature give thee birth, to this hath thine own inclination trained, to this, fortune preserved thee—for never hast thou wished—I say not peaceful leisure—but war itself, unless that war were sacrilegious. Thou hast drawn together from the most infamous of wretches, wretches abandoned not only by all fortune, but all hope, a bodyguard of desperadoes! Among these what pleasure wilt thou not experience, in what bliss not exult, in what raptures not madly revel, when thou shalt neither see nor hear one virtuous man in such a concourse of thy comrades? To this, this mode of life tended all those strenuous toils of thine, which are so widely talked of—to lie on the bare ground, not lying in wait merely for some occasion of adultery, but for some opportunity of daring crime! To watch through the night, not plotting merely against the sleep of betrayed husbands, but against the property of murdered victims! Now, then, thou hast a notable occasion for displaying those illustrious qualities of thine, that wonderful endurance of hunger, of cold, of destitution, by which ere long thou shalt feel thyself undone, and ruined. This much, however, I did accomplish, when I defeated thee *in* the comitia, that thou shouldst strike at the republic as an exile, rather than ravage it as a consul; and that

the warfare, so villanously evoked by thee, should be called rather the struggle of a base banditti, than the fair strife of warriors.

"Now, Conscript Fathers, that I may solemnly abjure and deprecate the just reproaches of my country, listen, I pray you, earnestly to what I say, and commit it deeply to your memories and minds. For if my country, who is much dearer to me than my life, if all Italy, if the whole commonwealth should thus expostulate with me, `What dost thou, Marcus Tullius? Him, whom thou hast proved to be my enemy, whom thou seest the future leader in the war against me, whom thou knowest even now the expected general in the camp of my foes—him, the author of every crime, the head of this conspiracy, the summoner of insurgent slaves, and ruined citizens—him wilt thou suffer to go forth, and in such guise, that he shall not be as one banished from the walls, but rather as one let loose to war against the city? Wilt thou not, then, command that he shall be led away to prison, that he shall be hurried off to death, that he shall be visited with the last torments of the law? What is it, that dissuades thee? Is it the custom of thine ancestors? Not so—for many times in this republic have men, even in private stations, inflicted death on traitors!—Is it the laws, enacted, concerning the punishment of Roman citizens? Not so—for never, in this city, have rebels against the commonwealth been suffered to retain the rights of Citizens or Romans! Dost thou shrink from the odium of posterity? If it be so, in truth, thou dost repay great gratitude unto the Roman people, who hath elevated thee, a man known by thine own actions only, commended by no ancestral glory, so rapidly, through all the grades of honor, to this most high authority of consul; if in the fear of any future odium, if in the dread of any present peril, thou dost neglect the safety of the citizens! Again, if thou dost shrink from enmity, whether dost deem most terrible, that, purchased by a severe and brave discharge of duty, or that, by inability and shameful weakness? Or, once more, when all Italy shall be waste with civil war, when her towns shall be demolished, her houses blazing to the sky, dost fancy that thy good report shall not be then consumed in the fierce glare of enmity and odium?'

"To these most solemn appeals of my country, and to the minds of those men who think in likewise, I will now make brief answer. Could I have judged it for the best, O Conscript Fathers, that Catiline should have been done to death, then would I not have granted one hour's tenure of existence to that gladiator. For if the first of men, noblest of citizens, were graced, not polluted, by the blood of Saturninus, and the Gracchi, and Flaccus, and many more in olden time, there surely is no cause why I should apprehend a burst of future odium for taking off this parricide of the republic. Yet if such odium did inevitably impend above me, I have ever been of this mind, that I regard that hatred which is earned by honorable duty not as reproach, but glory! Yet there are some in this assembly, who either do not see the perils which are imminent above us, or seeing deny their eyesight. Some who have nursed the hopes of Catiline by moderate decrees; and strengthened this conspiracy from its birth until now, by disbelieving its existence—and many more there are, not of the wicked only, but of the inexperienced, who, if I should do justice upon this man, would raise a cry that I had dealt with him cruelly, and as a regal tyrant.

"Now I am well assured that, if he once arrive, whither he means to go, at the camp of Manlius, there will be none so blind as not to see the reality of this conspiracy, none so wicked as to deny it. But on the other hand, were this man slain, alone, I perceive that this ruin of the state might indeed be repressed for a season, but could not be suppressed for ever—while, if he cast himself forth, and lead his comrades with him, and gather to his host all his disbanded desperate outlaws, not only will this full−grown pestilence of Rome be utterly extinguished and abolished, but the very seed and germ of all evil will be extirpated for ever.

"For it is a long time, O Conscript Fathers, that we have been dwelling amid the perils and stratagems of this conspiracy. And I know not how it is that the ripeness of all crime, the maturity of ancient guilt and frenzy, hath burst to light at once during my consulship. But, this I know, that if from so vast a horde of assassins and banditti this man alone be taken off, we may perchance be relieved for some brief space, from apprehension and dismay, but the peril itself will strike inward, and settle down into the veins and vitals of the commonwealth. As oftentimes, men laboring under some dread disease, if, while tossing in feverish heat, they drink cold water, will seem indeed to be relieved for some brief space, but are thereafter much more seriously and perilously afflicted, so will this ulcer, which exists in the republic, if relieved by the cutting off this man, grow but the more inveterate, the others left alive. Wherefore, O Conscript Fathers, let the wicked withdraw themselves, let them retire from among the good, let them herd together in one place, let them, in one word, as often I have said before, be divided from us by the city wall. Let them cease to plot against the consul in his own house, to stand about the tribunal of the city prætor deterring him from justice, to beset even the senate house with swords, to prepare

blazing brands and fiery arrows for the conflagration of the city. Let it, in one word, be borne as an inscription upon the brow of every citizen, what are his sentiments toward the republic. This I can promise you, O Conscript Fathers, that there shall be such diligence in us consuls, such valor in the Roman knights, such unanimity in all good citizens, that you shall see, Catiline once departed, all that is secret exposed, all that is dark brought to light, all that is dangerous put down, all that is guilty punished. Under these omens, Catiline, to the eternal welfare of the state, to thine own ruin and destruction, to the perdition of all those who have linked themselves with thee in this league of infamy and parricide, go forth to thine atrocious and sacrilegious warfare! And do thou Jove, who wert consecrated by Romulus under the same auspices with this city, whom we truly hail as the Stator, and supporter of this city, of this empire, chase forth this man, and this man's associates, from thine own altars, and from the shrines of other Gods, from the roofs and hearths of the city, from the lives and fortunes of the citizens, and consummate the solemn ruin of all enemies of the good, all foes of their country, all assassins of Italy, linked in one league of guilt and bond of infamy, living or dead, by thine eternal torments."

The dread voice ceased—the terrible oration ended. And instantly with flushed cheek, and glaring eye, and the foam on his gnashed teeth, fierce, energetical, undaunted, Catiline sprang to his feet to reply.

But a deep solemn murmur rose on all sides, deepening, swelling into a vast overwhelming conclamation—"Down with the Traitor—away with the Parricide!"

But unchecked by this awful demonstration of the popular mind, he still raised his voice to its highest pitch, defying all, both gods and men, till again it was drowned by that appalling torrent of scorn and imprecation.

Then, with a furious gesture, and a yelling voice that rose clear above all the din and clamor,

"Since," he exclaimed, "my enemies will drive me headlong to destruction, I will extinguish the conflagration which consumes me in their universal ruin!"

And pursued by the yells, and groans, and curses of that great concourse, and hunted by wilder furies within his own dark soul, the baffled Traitor rushed precipitately homeward.

CHAPTER VI. THE FLIGHT.

Abiit, excessit, evasit, erupit.

Cicero.

His heart was a living hell, as he rushed homeward. Cut off on every side, detected, contemned, hated, what was left to the Traitor?

To retrace his steps was impossible,—nor, if possible, would his indomitable pride have consented to surrender his ambitious schemes, his hopes of vengeance.

He rushed homeward; struck down a slave, who asked him some officious question; spurned Orestilla out of his way with a bitter earnest curse; barred himself up in his inmost chamber, and remained there alone one hour.

One hour; but in that hour what years, what ages of time, what an eternity of agony, was concentrated!

For once in many years he sat still, motionless, silent, while thought succeeded thought, and passion passion, with indescribable rapidity and vividness.

In that one hour all the deeds of his life passed before him, from his wild and reckless boyhood to his atrocious and dishonored manhood.

The victims of his fiendish passions seemed to fleet, one by one, before his eyes, with deathlike visages and ghastly menace.

The noble virgin, whom he had first dishonored, scarcely as yet a boy, pointed with bloody fingers to the deep self−inflicted wound, which yawned in her snowy bosom.

The vestal, who had broken through all bounds of virtue, piety, and honor, sacrificed soul and body to his unpitying lust, gazed at him with that unearthly terror in her eyes, which glared from them as they looked their last at earth and heaven, when she descended, young and lovely, into a living grave.

The son, whom he had poisoned, to render his house vacant for unhallowed nuptials, with his whole frame convulsed in agony, and the sardonic grin of death on his writhing lips, frowned on him.

His brother, who had drawn life from the same soft bosom, but whose kindred blood had pleaded vainly against the fratricidal dagger, frowned on him.

His sister's husband, that mild and blameless knight, whose last breath was spent in words of peace and pardon to his slayer, now frowned on him.

The stern impassive face of Marius Gratidianus, unmoved alike by agony or insult, frowned on him, in the serene dignity of sustaining virtue.

Men of all ranks and ages, done to death by his hand or his head, by poison, by the knife, by drowning, by starvation— women deceived or violated, and then murdered, while their kisses were yet warm on his lips—infants tortured to death in the very wantonness of cruelty, and crime that must have been nigh akin to madness, gibbered, and glared upon him.

These things would seem impossible, they are in truth incredible, but they are true beyond the possibility of cavil.

He was indeed one of those unaccountable and extraordinary monsters, who, thanks to nature! appear but once in many ages, to whom sin is dear for its own naked self, to whom butchery is a pastime, and blood and agonies and tears a pleasurable excitement to their mad morbid appetites.

And in this hour of downfall, one by one, did his fancy conjure up before him the victims of his merciless love, his merciless hatred—both alike, sure and deadly.

It was a strange combination of mind, for there must have been in the spirit that evoked these phantoms of the conscience, something of remorse, if not of repentance. Pale, ghastly, grim, reproachful, they all seemed to him to be appealing to the just heavens for justice and revenge. Yet there was even more of triumph and proud self−gratulation in his mood, than of remorse for the past, or of apprehension for the future.

As he thought of each, as he thought of all, he in some sort gloated over the memory of his success, in some sort derived confidence from the very number of his unpunished crimes.

"They crossed me," he muttered to himself, "and where are they?—My fate cried out for their lives, and their lives were forfeit. Who ever stood in my path, that has not perished from before my face? Not one! Who ever

strove with me, that has not fallen? who ever frowned upon me, that has not expiated the bended brow by the death−grin?— Not one! not one! Scores, hundreds, have died for thwarting me! but who of men has lived to boast of it!— Not one!"

He rose from his seat, stalked slowly across the room, drew his hand across his brow twice, with a thoughtful gesture, and then said,

"Cicero! Cicero! Better thou never hadst been born! Better—but it must be—my Fate, my fate demands it, and neither eloquence nor wisdom, virtue nor valor, shall avail to save thee. These were brave, beautiful, wise, pious, eloquent; and what availed it to them? My Fate, my fate shall prevail! To recede is to perish, is to be scorned— to advance is to win—to win universal empire," and he stretched out his hand, as if he clutched an imaginary globe—"to win fame, honor, the applause of ages—for with the people—the *dear* people—failure alone and poverty are guilt—success, by craft or crime, success is piety and virtue!— On! Catifine! thy path is onward still, upward, and onward! But not here!"

Then he unbarred the door, "What ho, Chærea!" and prompt, at the word, the freedman entered. "Send out my trustiest slaves, summon me hither instantly Lentulus and the rest of those, who supped here on the Calends. Ha! the Calends." He repeated the word, as if some new idea had struck him, on the mention of that day, and he paused thoughtfully. "Aye! Paullus Arvina I had well nigh forgotten—I have it; Aulus is the man; he hath some private grudge at him! and beside those," he added, again addressing the freedman, "go thyself and bring Aulus Fulvius hither, the son of the Senator—him thou wilt find with Cethegus, the others at the house of Decius Brutus, near the forum. They dine with Sempronia. Get thee gone, and beshrew thy life! tarry not, or thou diest!"

The man quitted the room in haste; and Catiline continued muttering to himself—"Aye! but for that cursed boy, we should have had Præneste on the Calends! He shall repent it, ere he die, and he shall die too; but not yet— not till he is aweary of his very life, and then, by tortures that shall make the most weary life a boon. I have it all, the method, and the men! Weak fool, thou better hadst been mine."

Then turning to the table he sat down, and wrote many letters, addressed to men of Consular dignity, persons of worth and honor, declaring that, borne down on all sides by false accusations, and helpless to oppose the faction of his enemies, he yielded to the spite of fortune, and was departing for Marseilles a voluntary exile, not conscious of any crime, but careful of the tranquillity of the republic, and anxious that no strife should arise from his private griefs.

To one, who afterward, almost deceived by his profound and wonderful dissimulation, read it aloud in the Senate, in proof that no civil war was impending, he wrote:

"Lucius Catiline to Quintus Catulus, sends health. Your most distinguished faith, known by experience, gives me in mighty perils a grateful confidence, thus to address you. Since I have resolved to prepare no defence in the new steps which I have taken, I am resolved to set forth my apology, conscious to myself of no crime, which—So may the God of Honor guard me!—you may rely upon as true. Goaded by injury and insult, robbed of the guerdon of my toils and industry, that state of dignity at which I aimed, I pubicly have undertaken, according to my wont, the cause of the unhappy and oppressed; not because I am unable to pay all debts contracted on my own account, from my own property—from those incurred in behalf of others, the generosity of Orestilla and her daughter, by their treasures, would have released me—but because I saw men honored who deserve no honor, and felt myself disgraced, on false suspicion. On this plea, I now take measures, honorable in my circumstances, for preserving that dignity which yet remains to me. I would have written more, but I learn that violence is about to be offered me. Now I commend to you Orestilla, and trust her to your faith. As you love your own children, shield her from injury. Farewell."

This strange letter, intended, as after events evidently proved, to bear a double sense, he had scarce sealed, when Aulus Fulvius was announced.

For a few moments after he entered, Catiline continued writing; then handing Chærea, who at a sign had remained in waiting, a list of many names, "Let them," he said, "be here, prepared for a journey, and in arms at the fifth hour. Prepare a banquet of the richest, ample for all these, in the Atrium; in the garden Triclinium, a feast for ten—the rarest meats, the choicest wines, the delicatest perfumes, the fairest slave−girls in most voluptuous attire. At the third hour! See to it! Get thee hence!"

The freedman bowed low, and departed on his mission; then turning to the young patrician,

"I have sent for you," he said, "the first, noble Aulus, because I hold you the first in honor, bravery, and action;

because I believe that you will serve me truly, and to the utmost. Am I deceived?"

"Catiline, you have judged aright."

"And that you cannot serve me, more gratefully to yourself, than in avenging me on that young pedant, Paullus Arvina."

The eyes of the youthful profligate flashed dark fire, and his whole face beamed with intense satisfaction.

"By all the Powers of Tartarus!" he cried, "Show me but how, and I will hunt him to the gates of Hades!"

Catiline nodded to him, with an approving smile, and after looking around him warily for a minute, as if fearful even of the walls' overhearing him, he stepped close up to him, and whispered in his ear, for several moments.

"Do you conceive me, ha?" he said aloud, when he had ended.

"Excellent well!" cried the other in rapturous triumph, "but how gain an opportunity?"

"Look you, here is his signature, some trivial note or other, I kept it, judging that one day it might serve a purpose. You can write, I know, very cleverly—I have not forgotten Old Alimentus' will—write to her in his name, requesting her to visit him, with Hortensia, otherwise she will doubt the letter. Then you can meet her, and do as I have told you. Will not that pass, my Fulvius?"

"It *shall* pass," answered the young man confidently. "My life on it! Rely on me!"

"I hold it done already," returned Catiline. "But you comprehend all—unstained, in all honor, until she reach me; else were the vengeance incomplete."

"It shall be so. But when?"

"When best you can accomplish it. This night, I leave the city."

"You leave the city!"

"This night! at the sixth hour!"

"But to return, Catiline?"

"To return with a victorious, an avenging army! To return as destroyer! with a sword sharper than that of mighty Sylla, a torch hotter than that of the mad Ephesian! To return, Aulus, in such guise, that ashes and blood only show where Rome—*was!*"

"But, ere that, I must join you?"

"Aye! In the Appenines, at the camp of Caius Manlius."

"Fear me not. The deed is accomplished—hatred and vengeance, joined to resolve, never fail."

"Never! but lo, here come the rest. Not a word to one of these. The burly sword−smith is your man, and his fellows! Strike suddenly, and soon; and, till you strike, be silent. Ha! Lentulus, Cethegus, good friends all—welcome, welcome!" he cried, as they entered, eight in number, the ringleaders of the atrocious plot, grasping each by the hand. "I have called you to a council, a banquet, and, thence to action!"

"Good things all," answered Lentulus, "so that the first be brief and bold, the second long and loud, the last daring and decisive!"

"They shall be so, all three! Listen. This very night, I set forth to join Caius Manlius in his camp. Things work not here as I would have them; my presence keeps alive suspicion, terror, watchfulness. I absent, security will grow apace, and from that boldness, and from boldness, rashness! So will you find that opportunity, which dread of me, while present, delays fatally. Watch your time; choose your men; augment, by any means, the powers of our faction; gain over friends; get rid of enemies, secretly if you can; if not, audaciously. Destroy the Consul—you will soon find occasion, or, if not find, make it. Be ready with the blade and brand, to burn and to slaughter, so soon as my trumpets shall sound havoc from the hills of Fiesolè. metellus and his men, will be sent after me with speed; Marcius Rex will be ordered from the city, with his cohorts, to Capua, or Apulia, or the Picene district; for in all these, the slaves will rise, so soon as my Eagle soars above the Appenine. The heart of the city will then lie open to your daggers."

"And they shall pierce it to the core," cried Cethegus.

"Wisely you have resolved, my Catiline, as ever," said Longinus Cassius. "Go, and success sit upon your banners!"

"Be not thou over slow, my Cassius, nor thou, Cethegus, over daring. Temper each one, the metal of the other. Let your counsels be, as the gathering of the storm−clouds, certain and slow; your deeds, as the thunderbolt, rash, rapid, irresistible!"

"How will you go forth, Catiline? Alone? in secret?" asked Autronius.

"No! by the Father of Quirinus! with my casque on my head, and my broad−sword on my thigh, and with three hundred of my clients at my back! They sup in my Atrium, at the fifth hour of the night, and at the sixth, we mount our horses. I *think* Cicero will not bar our passage."

"By Mars! he would beat the gates down rather, to let you forth the more easily."

"If he be wise he would."

"He *is* wise," said Catiline. "Would God that he were less so."

"To be overwise, is worse, sometimes, than to be foolish," answered Cethegus.

"And to be over bold, worse than to be a coward!" said Catiline. "Therefore, Cethegus, be thou neither. Now, my friends, I do not say leave me, but excuse me, until the third hour, when we will banquet. Nay! go not forth from the house, I pray you; it may arouse suspicion, which I would have you shun. There are books in the library, for who would read; foils in the garden, balls in the fives−court, for who would breathe themselves before supper; and lastly, there are some fair slaves in the women's chamber, for who would listen to the lute, or kiss soft lips, and not unwilling. I have still many things to do, ere I depart."

"And those done, a farewell caress to Orestilla," said Cethegus, laughing.

"Aye! would I could take her with me."

"Do you doubt her, then, that you fear to leave her?"

"If I doubted, I would *not* leave her—or I would leave her *so*, as not to doubt her. Alexion himself, cannot in general cure the people, whom I doubt."

"I hope you never will doubt me," said Curius, who was present, the Judas of the faction, endeavoring to jest; yet more than half feeling what he said.

"I hope not"—replied Catiline, with a strange fixed glance, and a singular smile; for he did in truth, at that very moment, half doubt the speaker. "If I do, Curius, it will not be for long! But I must go," he added, "and make ready. Amuse yourselves as best you can, till I return to you. Come, Aulus Fulvius, I must speak with you farther."

And, with the words, he left them, not indeed to apply themselves to any sport or pleasure, but to converse anxiously, eagerly, almost fearfully, on the events which were passing in succession, so rapid, and so unforeseen. Their souls were too much absorbed by one dominant idea, one devouring passion, to find any interest in any small or casual excitement.

To spirits so absorbed, hours fly like minutes, and none of those guilty men were aware of the lapse of time, until Catiline returned, dressed in a suit of splendid armor, of blue Iberian steel, embossed with studs and chasings of pure silver, with a rich scarlet sagum over it, fringed with deep lace. His knees were bare, but his legs were defended by greaves of the same fabric and material with his corslet; and a slave bore behind him his bright helmet, triply crested with crimson horsehair, his oblong shield charged with a silver thunderbolt, and his short broad−sword of Bilboa steel, which was already in those days, as famous as in the middle ages. He looked, indeed, every inch a captain; and if undaunted valor, unbounded energy, commanding intellect, an eye of lightning, unequalled self−possession, endless resource, incomparable endurance of cold, heat, hunger, toil, watchfulness, and extremity of pain, be qualities which constitute one, then was he a great Captain.

A captain well formed to lead a host of demons.

The banquet followed, with all that could gratify the eye, the ear, the nostril, or the palate. The board blazed with lights, redoubled by the glare of gold and crystal. Flowers, perfumes, incense, streamed over all, till the whole atmosphere was charged with voluptuous sweetness. The softest music breathed from the instruments of concealed performers. The rarest wines flowed like water. And flashing eyes, and wreathed smiles, and bare arms, and bare bosoms, and most voluptuous forms, decked to inflame the senses of the coldest, were prodigal of charms and soft abandonment.

No modest pen may describe the orgies that ensued,— the drunkenness, the lust, the frantic mirth, the unnatural mad revelry. There was but one at that banquet, who, although he drank more deeply, rioted more sensually, laughed more loudly, sang more wildly, than any of the guests, was yet as cool amid that terrible scene of excitement, as in the council chamber, as on the battle field.

His sallow face flushed not; his hard clear eye swam not languidly, nor danced with intoxication; his voice quivered not; his pulse was as slow, as even as its wont. That man's frame, like his soul, was of trebly tempered

steel.

Had Catiline not been the worst, he had been the greatest of Romans.

But his race in Rome was now nearly ended. The water−clocks announced the fifth hour; and leaving the more private triclinium, in which the ringleaders alone had feasted, followed by his guests,—who were flushed, reeling, and half frenzied,—with a steady step, a cold eye, and a presence like that of Mars himself, the Arch Traitor entered the great open hall, wherein three hundred of his clients, armed sumptuously in the style of legionary horsemen, had banqueted magnificently, though they had stopped short of the verge of excess.

All rose to their feet, as Catiline entered, hushed in dread expectation.

He stood for one moment, gazing on his adherents, tried veterans every man of them, case−hardened in the furnace of Sylla's fiery discipline, with proud confidence and triumph in his eye; and then addressed them in clear high tones, piercing as those of an adamantine trumpet.

"Since," he said, "it is permitted to us neither to live in Rome securely, nor to die in Rome honorably, I go forth—will you follow me?"

And, with an unanimous cry, as it had been the voice of one man, they answered,

"To the death, Catiline!"

"I go forth, harming no one, hating no one, fearing no one! Guiltless of all, but of loving the people! Goaded to ruin by the proud patricians, injured, insulted, well nigh maddened, I go forth to seek, not power nor revenge, but innocence and safety. If they will leave me peace, the lamb shall be less gentle; if they will drive me into war, the famished lion shall be tamer. Soldiers of Sylla, will you have Sylla's friend in peace for your guardian, in war for your captain?"

And again, in one tumultuous shout, they replied, "In peace, or in war, through life, and unto death, Catiline!"

"Behold, then, your Eagle!"—and, with the word, he snatched from a marble slab on which it lay, covered by tapestry, the silver bird of Mars, hovering with expanded wings over a bannered staff, and brandished it on high, in triumph. "Behold your standard, your omen, and your God! Swear, that it shall shine yet again above Rome's Capitol!"

Every sword flashed from its scabbard, every knee was bent; and kneeling, with the bright blades all pointed like concentric sunbeams toward that bloody idol, in deep emotion, and deep awe, they swore to be true to the Eagle, traitors to Rome, parricides to their country.

"One cup of wine, and then to horse, and to glory!"

The goblets were brimmed with the liquid madness; they were quaffed to the very dregs; they clanged empty upon the marble floor.

Ten minutes more, and the hall was deserted; and mounted on proud horses, brought suddenly together, by a perfect combination of time and place, with the broad steel heads of their javelins sparkling in the moonbeams, and the renowned eagle poised with bright wings above them, the escort of the Roman Traitor rode through the city streets, at midnight, audacious, in full military pomp, in ordered files, with a cavalry clarion timing their steady march—rode unresisted through the city gates, under the eyes of a Roman cohort, to try the fortunes of civil war in the provinces, frustrate of massacre and conflagration in the capitol.

Cicero knew it, and rejoiced; and when he cried aloud on the following day, "Abiit, EXCESSIT, EVASIT, ERUPIT— He hath departed, he hath stolen out, he hath gone from among us, he hath burst forth into war"—his great heart thrilled, and his voice quivered, with prophetic joy and conscious triumph. He felt even then that he had "Saved his Country."

CHAPTER VII THE AMBASSADORS.

Give first admittance to th' ambassadors.

Hamlet.

It wanted a short time of noon, on a fine bracing day in the latter end of November.

Something more than a fortnight had elapsed since the flight of Catiline; and, as no further discoveries had been made, nor any tumults or disturbances arisen in the city, men had returned to their former avocations, and had for the most part forgotten already the circumstances, which had a little while before convulsed the public mind with fear or favor.

No certain tidings had been received, or, if received, divulged to the people, of Catiline's proceedings; it being only known that he had tarried for a few days at the country−house of Caius Flaminius Flamma, near to Arretium, where he was believed to be amusing himself with boar−hunting.

On the other hand, the letters of justification, and complaint against Cicero, had been shewn to their friends by all those who had received them, all men of character and weight; and their contents had thus gained great publicity.

The consequence of this was, naturally enough, that the friends and favorers of the conspiracy, acting with singular wisdom and foresight, studiously affected the utmost moderation and humility of bearing, while complaining every where of the injustice done to Catiline, and of the false suspicions maliciously cast on many estimable individuals, by the low−born and ambitious person who was temporarily at the head of the state.

The friends of Cicero and the republic, on the contrary, lay on their oars, in breathless expectation of some new occurrence, which should confirm the public mind, and approve their own conduct; well aware that much time could not elapse before Catiline would be heard of at the head of an army.

In the meantime, the city wore its wonted aspect; men bought and sold, and toiled or sported; and women smiled and sighed, flaunted and wantoned in the streets, as if, a few short days before, they had not been wringing their hands in terror, dissolved in tears, and speechless from dismay.

It was a market day, and the forum was crowded almost to overflowing. The country people had flocked in, as usual, to sell the produce of their farms; and their wagons stood here and there laden with seasonable fruits, cheeses, and jars of wine, pigeons in wicker cages, fresh herbs, and such like articles of traffic. Many had brought their wives, sun−burned, black−haired and black−eyed, from their villas in the Latin or Sabine country, to purchase city luxuries. Many had come to have their lawsuits decided; many to crave justice against their superiors from the Tribunes of the people; many to get their wills registered, to pay or borrow money, and to transact that sort of business, for which the day was set aside.

Nor were the townsmen absent from the gay scene; for to them the *nundinæ*, or market days, were holydays, in which the courts of law were shut, and the offices closed to them, at least, although open to the rural citizens, for the despatch of business.

The members of the city tribes crowded therefore to the forum many of these too accompanied by their women, to buy provisions, to ask for news from the country, and to stare at the uncouth and sturdy forms of the farmers, or admire the black eyes and merry faces of the country lasses.

It was a lively and gay scene; the bankers' shops, distinguished by the golden shields of the Samnites, suspended from the lintels of their doors, were thronged with money−changers, and alive with the hum of traffic.

Ever and anon some curule magistrate, in his fringed toga, with his lictors, in number proportioned to his rank, would come sweeping through the dense crowd; or some plebeian officer, with his ushers and beadles; or, before whom the ranks of the multitude would open of their own accord and bow reverentially, some white−stoled vestal virgin, with her fair features closely veiled from profane eyes, the sacred fillets on her head, and her lictor following her dainty step with his shouldered fasces. Street musicians there were also, and shows of various kinds, about which the lower orders of the people collected eagerly; and, here and there, among the white stoles and gayly colored shawls of the matrons and maidens, might be seen the flowered togas and showy head−dresses of those unfortunate girls, many of them rare specimens of female beauty, whose character precluded them from wearing the attire of their own sex.

"Ha! Fabius Sanga, whither thou in such haste through the crowd?" cried a fine manly voice, to a patrician of middle age who was forcing his way hurriedly among the jostling mob, near to the steps of the Comitium, or building appropriated to the reception of ambassadors.

The person thus addressed turned his head quickly, though without slackening his speed.

"Ah! is it thou, Arvina? Come with me, thou art young and strong; give me thy arm, and help me through this concourse."

"Willingly," replied the young man. "But why are you in such haste?" he continued, as he joined him; "you can have no business here to−day."

"Aye! but I have, my Paullus. I am the patron to these Gallic ambassadors, who have come hither to crave relief from the Senate for their people. They must receive their answer in the Comitium to−day; and I fear me much, I am late."

"Ah! by the Gods! I saw them on that day they entered the city. Right stout and martial barbarians! What is their plea? will they succeed?"

"I fear not," answered Sanga. "They are too poor. Senatorial relief must be bought nowadays. The longest purse is the most righteous cause! Their case is a hard one, too. Their nation is oppressed with debt, both private and public; they have been faithful allies to the state, and served it well in war, and now seek remission of some grievous tributes. But what shall we say? They are poor—barbarians—their aid not needed now by the republic—and, as you know, my Paullus, justice is sol now in Rome, like silk, for its weight in gold!"

"The more shame!" answered Paullus. "It was no by such practices, that our fathers built up this granded fice of the republic."

"Riches have done it, Paullus! Riches and Commerce! While we had many tillers of the ground, and few merchants, we were brave in the field, and just at home!"

"Think you, then, that the spirit of commerce is averse to justice, and bravery, and freedom?"

"No, I do not think it, Arvina, I know it!" answered Fabius Sanga, who, with the truth and candor of a patrician of Rome's olden school, possessed, and that justly, much repute for wisdom and foresight. "All mercantile communities are base communities. Look at Tyre, in old times! Look at Carthage, in our grandfathers' days! at Corinth in our own! Merchants are never patriots! and rich men seldom; unless they be landholders! But see, see, there are my clients, descending the steps of the Comitium! By all the Gods! I am too late! their audience is ended! Now, by Themis, the goddess of justice! will they deem me also venal!"

As he spoke, they had come to the foot of the grand flight of marble steps, leading up to the doors of the Græ costasis, or comitium; or rather had come as near to the foot, as the immense concourse, which had gathered about that spot to stare at the wild figures and foreign gait of the ambassadors, would allow them to approach.

"It is in vain to press forward yet, my Sanga. A moment or two, and these clowns will be satisfied with gazing; yet, by Hercules! I cannot blame them. For these Highlanders are wondrous muscular and stout warriors to look upon, and their garb, although somewhat savage, is very martial and striking."

And, in truth, their Celtic bonnets, with their long single eagle feathers, set somewhat obliquely on their abundant auburn hair; their saffron−colored shirts, tight−fitting trews of tartan plaid, and variegated mantles floating over their brawny shoulders, their chains and bracelets of gold and silver, their long daggers in their girdles, and their tremendous broad−swords swinging at their thighs, did present a strange contrast to the simple tunics of white woollen, and plain togas of the same material, which constituted the attire of nine−tenths of the spectators.

"I must must get nearer!" replied Sanga, anxiously; "I must speak with them! I can see by the moody brows, and sullen looks of the elder nobles, and by the compressed lips and fiery glances of the young warriors, that matters have gone amiss with them. I shall be blamed, I know, for it—but I have failed in my duty as their patron, and must bear it. There will be mischief; I pray you let us pass, my friends," he continued, addressing the people, "I am the patron of their nation; let us pass."

But it was in vain that they besought and strove; the pressure of the mob was, if anything, augmented; and Paullus was compelled to remain motionless with his companion, hoping that the Allobroges would move in their direction.

But, while they were thus waiting, a thin keen−looking man pressed up to the ambassadors, from the farther side, while they were yet upon the steps, and saluting them cordially, pressed their hands, as if he were an old and

familiar friend.

Nor did the Highlanders appear less glad to see him, for they shook his hand warmly, and spoke to him with vehement words, and sparkling eyes.

"Who is that man, who greets our Allobroges so warmly?" asked Arvina of his companion. "Know you the man?"

"I know him!" answered Sanga, watching the gestures which accompanied their conversation with an eager eye, although too far off to hear anything that was passing. "It is one of these traders, of whom we spoke but now; and as pestilent a knave and rogue as ever sold goods by short measure, and paid his purchases in light coin! Publius Umbrenus is the man. A Gallic trader. He hath become rich by the business he hath carried on with this same tribe, bartering Roman wares, goldsmith's work, trinkets, cutlery, wines, and the like, against their furs and hides, and above all against their amber. He gains three hundred fold by every barter, and yet, by the God of Faith! he brings them in his debt after all; and yet the simple−minded, credulous Barbarians, believe him their best friend. I would buy it at no small price, to know what he saith to them. See! he points to the Comitium. By your head, Paullus! he is poisoning their minds against the Senate!"

"See!" said Arvina. "They descend the steps in the other direction. He is leading them away with him somewhither."

"To no good end!" said Sanga emphatically; and then smiting his breast with his hand, he continued, evidently much afflicted, "My poor clients! my poor simple High−landers! He will mislead them to their ruin?"

"They are going toward Vesta's temple," said Arvina. "If we should turn back through the arch of Fabius, and so enter into the western branch of the Sacred Way, we might overtake them near the Ruminal Fig−tree."

"*You* might, for you are young and active. But I am growing old, Paullus, and the gout afflicts my feet, and makes me slower than my years. Will you do so, and mark whither he leads them; and come back, and tell me? You shall find me in Natta's, the bookseller's shop, at the corner of the street Argiletum."

"Willingly, Sanga," answered the young man. "The rather, if it may profit these poor Gauls anything."

"Thou art a good youth, Paullus. The Gods reward it to thee. Remember Natta's book−shop."

"Doubt me not," said Arvina; and he set off at a pace so rapid, as brought him up with those, whom he was pursuing, within ten minutes.

The ambassadors, six or eight in number, among whom the old white−headed chief he had observed—when he went with Hortensia and his betrothed, to see their ingress into Rome—together with the young warrior whose haughty bearing he had noticed on that occasion, were most eminent, had been joined by another Roman beside Umbrenus.

Him, Paullus recognised at once, for Titus Volturcius, a native and nobleman of Crotona, a Greek city, on the Gult of Tarentum, although a citizen of Rome.

He was a man of evil repute, as a wild debauchee, a gambler, and seducer; and Arvina had observed him more than once in company with Cornelius Lentulus.

This led him to suspect, that Sanga was perhaps more accurate in his suspicions, than he himself imagined; and that something might be in progress here, against the republic.

He watched them warily, therefore; and soon found an ample confirmation of the worst he imagined, in seeing them enter the house of Decius Brutus, the husband of the beautiful, but infamous Sempronia.

It must not be supposed, that the privity of these various individuals to the conspiracy, was accurately known to young Arvina; but he was well aware, that Lentulus and Catiline were sworn friends; and that Sempronia was the very queen of those abandoned and licentious ladies, who were the instigators and rewarders of the young nobles, in their profligacy and their crimes; it did not require, therefore, any wondrous degree of foresight, to see that something dangerous was probably brewing, in this amalgamation of ingredients so incongruous, as Roman nobles and patrician harlots, with wild barbarians from the Gallic highlands.

Without tarrying, therefore, longer than to ascertain that he was not mistaken in the house, he hurried back to meet Sanga, at the appointed place, promising himself that not Sanga only, but Cicero himself, should be made acquainted with that which he had discovered so opportunely.

The Argiletum was a street leading down from the vegetable mart, which lay just beyond the *Porta Fluminiana*, or river gate, to the banks of the Tiber, at the quays called *pulchrum littus*, or the beautiful shore; it was therefore a convenient place of meeting for persons who had parted company in the forum, particularly when

going in that direction, which had been taken by Umbrenus and the Ambassadors.

Hastening onward to the street appointed—which was for the most part inhabited by booksellers, copyists, and embellishers of illuminated manuscripts, beside a few tailors— he was hailed, just as he reached the river gate, by a well−known voice, from a cross street; and turning round he felt his hand warmly grasped, by an old friend, Aristius Fuscus, one of the noble youths, with whom he had striven, in the Campus Martius, on that eventful day, when he first visited the house of Catiline.

"Hail! Paullus," exclaimed the new comer, "I have not seen you in many days. Where have you been, since you beat us all in the quinquernum?"

"Absent from town, on business of the state, part of the time, my Fuscus." answered Arvina, shaking his friend's hand gayly. "I was sent to Præneste, with my troop of horse, before the calends of November; and returned not until the Ides."

"And since that, I fancy"—replied the other laughing, "You have been sunning yourself in the bright smiles of the fair Julia. I thought you were to have led her home, as your bride, ere this time."

"You are wrong for once, good friend," said Paullus, with a well−pleased smile. "Julia is absent from the city also. She and Hortensia are on a visit to their farm, at the foot of Mount Algidus. I have not seen them, since my return from Præneste."

"Your slaves, I trow, know every mile−stone by this time, on the via Labicana! Do you write to her daily?"

"Not so, indeed, Aristius;" he replied. "We are too long betrothed, and too confident, each in the good faith of the other, to think it needful to kill my poor slaves in bearing amatory billets."

"You are wise, Paullus, as you are true, and will, I hope, be happy lovers!"

"The Gods grant it!" replied Paullus.

"Do they return shortly? It is long since I have visited Hortensia. She would do justly to refuse me admittance when next I go to salute her."

"Not until after the next market day. But here I must leave you; I am going to Natta's shop, in the Argiletum."

"To purchase books? Ha! or to the tailor's? the last, I presume, gay bridegroom—there are, you know, two Nattas."

"Natta, the bookseller, is my man. But I go thither, not as a buyer, but to meet a friend, Fabius Sanga."

"A very wise and virtuous Roman," replied the other, stopping at the corner of the street Argiletum, "but tarry a moment; when shall we meet again? I am going down to the hippodrome, can you not join me there, when you have finished your business with Sanga?"

"I can; gladly." answered Arvina.

As they stopped, previous to separating, a young man, who had been walking for some distance close at their heets, passed them, nodding as he did so, to Arvina, who returned his salutation, very distantly.

"Aulus Fulvius!" said Aristius, as Paullus bowed to him, "as bad a specimen of a young patrician, as one might see for many days, even if he searched for rascals, as the philosopher did for an honest man, by lanthorn's light at noon. He has been following our steps, by my head!—to pick up our stray words, and weave them into calumnies, and villainy."

"I care not," answered Arvina, lightly. "He may make all he can of what he heard, we were talking no treason!"

"No, truly; not even lover's treason," said his friend. "Well, do not tarry long, Arvina."

"I will not; be assured. Not the fourth part of an hour. See! there is Fabius Sanga awaiting me even now. Walk slowly, and I will overtake you, before you reach the Campus."

And with the word, he turned down the Argiletum, and joined the patron of the Allobroges, at the bookseller's door.

In the meantime Aulus Fulvius, who had heard all that he desired, wheeled about, and walked back toward the Carmental gate. But, as he passed the head of the Argiletum, he cast a lurid glance of singular malignity upon Arvina, who was standing in full view, conversing with his friend; and muttered between his teeth,

"The fool! the hypocrite! the pedant! well said, wise Catiline, `that it matters not much whether one listen to his friends, so he listen well to his enemies!' The fool— so he thinks he shall have Julia. But he never shall, by Hades! never!"

A slenderly made boy, dressed in a succinct huntsman's tunic, with *subligacula*, or drawers, reaching to within a hand's breadth of his knee, was loitering near the corner, gazing wistfully on Arvina; and, as Aulus muttered

those words half aloud, he jerked his head sharply around, and looked very keenly at the speaker.

"Never shall have Julia!" he repeated to himself, "he must have spoken that concerning Arvina. I wonder who he is. I never saw him before. I must know—I must know, forthwith! For he *shall* have her, by heaven and Him, who dwells in it! he *shall* have her!"

And, turning a lingering and languid look toward Paullus, the slight boy darted away in pursuit of Aulus.

A moment afterward Arvina, his conference with Sanga ended, and ignorant of all that by−play, took the road leading to the Campus, eager to overtake his friend Aristius.

CHAPTER VIII. THE LATIN VILLA.

I come, O Agamemnon's daughter fair,
To this thy sylvan lair.
Electra.

Through a soft lap in the wooded chain of Mount Algidus, a bright pellucid stream, after wheeling and fretting among the crags and ledges of the upper valleys, winds its way gently, toward the far−famed Tiber.

Shut in, on every side, except the south, by the lower spurs of the mountain ridge, in which it is so snugly nestled, covered with rich groves of chesnut−trees, and sheltered on the northward by the dark pines of the loftier steeps, it were difficult to conceive a fairer site for a villa, than that sweet vale.

Accordingly, on a little knoll in the jaws of the gorge, whence issued that clear streamlet, facing the pleasant south, yet sheltered from its excessive heats by a line of superb plane trees, festooned with luxuriant vines, there stood a long low building of the antique form, built of darkcolored stone.

A villa, in the days of Cicero, was a very different thing from the luxurious pleasure−houses which came into vogue in the days of the later Emperors, of which Pliny has given us descriptions so minute and glowing; yet even his Tusculan retreat was a building of vast pretension, when compared with this, which was in fact neither more noless than an old Roman Farmhouse, of that innocent and unsophisticated day, when the Consulars of the Republic were tillers of the soil, and when heroes returned, from the almost immortal triumph, to the management of the spade and the ploughshare.

This villa had, it is true, been adorned somewhat, and fitted to the temporary abode of individuals more refined and elegant, than the rough steward and rustic slaves, who were its usual tenants. Yet it still retained its original form, and was adapted to its original uses.

The house itself, which was but two stories high, was in form a hollow square, to the courts enclosed in which access was gained by a pair of lofty wooden gates in the rear. It had, in the first instance, presented on all sides merely a blank wall exteriorly, all the windows looking into the court, the centre of which was occupied by a large tank of water, the whole interior serving the purpose of a farm yard. The whole ground floor of the building, had formerly been occupied by stables, root−houses, wine−presses, dairies, cheese−rooms and the like, and by the slaves' kitchen, which was the first apartment toward the right of the entrance. The upper story contained the granaries and the dormitories of the workmen; and three sides still remained unaltered.

The front, however, of the villa had been pierced with a handsome doorway, and several windows; a colonnade of rustic stonework had been carried along the facade, and a beautiful garden had been laid out before it, with grassy terraces, clipped hedges, box trees, transmuted by the gardener's art into similitudes of Peacocks, Centaurs, Tritons, Swans, and many other forms of fowls or fishes, unknown alike and unnamed by Gods or mortals.

The sun was within about half an hour of his setting, and his slant beams, falling through a gap in the western hills, streamed down into the little valley, casting long stripes of alternate light and shadow over the smoothly shaven lawn, sparkling upon the ripples of the streamlet, and gilding the embrowned or yellow foliage of the sere hill−sides, with brighter and more vivid colors.

At this pleasant hour, notwithstanding the lateness of the season, and looking upon this pleasant scene, a group of females were collected, under the rustic colonnade of Italian marble, engaged in some of those light toils, which in feminine hands are so graceful.

The foremost of these, seated apart somewhat from the others, were the stately and still beautiful Hortensia, and her lovely daughter, both of them employed in twirling the soft threads from the merrily revolving spindle, into large osier baskets; and the elder lady, glancing at times toward the knot of slave girls, as if to see that they performed their light tasks; and at times, if their mirth waxed too loud, checking it by a gesture of her elevated finger.

A little while before, Julia had been singing in her sweet low voice, one of those favorite old ballads, which were so much prized by the Romans, and to which Livy is probably so much indebted for the redundant imagery of his "pictured page," commemorative of the deeds and virtues of the Old Houses.

But, as her lay came to its end, her eye had fallen on the broad blood−red disc of the descending day−god, and

had followed him upon his downward path, until he was lost to view, among the tangled coppices that fringed the brow of the western hill.

Her hands dropped listlessly into her lap, releasing the snow−white thread, which they had drawn out so daintily; and keeping her eyes still fixed steadily on the point where he had disappeared, she gave vent to her feelings in a long−drawn `heigho!' in every language, and in all times, expression of sentimental sadness.

"Wherefore so sad a sigh, my Julia?" asked Hortensia, gazing affectionately at the saddened brow of the fair girl— "methinks! there is nothing very melancholy here; nothing that should call forth repining."

"See, see Hortensia, how he sinks like a dying warrior, amid those sanguine clouds," cried the girl, pointing to the great orb of the sun, just as its last limb was disappearing.

"And into a couch of bays and myrtles, like that warrior, when his duty is done, his fame won!" exclaimed Hortensia, throwing her arm abroad enthusiastically; and truly the hill−side, behind which he was lost to view, was feathered thick with the shrubs of which she spoke—"methinks! there is nought for which to sigh in such a setting, either of the sun, or the hero!"

"But see, how dark and gloomy he has left all behind him!—the river which was golden but now, while he smiled upon it, now that he is gone, is leaden."

"But he shall rise again to−morrow, brighter and yet more glorious; and yet more gloriously shall the stream blaze back his rising than his setting lustre."

"Alas! alas! Hortensia!"

"Wherefore, alas, my Julia?"

"For so will not the warrior rise, who sinks forever, although it may be into a bed of glory! And if the setting of the sun leave all here lustreless and dark and gloomy, although *that* must arise again to−morrow, what must the setting do of one who shall arise no more for ever; whose light of life was to one heart, what the sunbeam was to the streamlet, but which, unlike that sunbeam, shall never shine on the heart any more, Hortensia."

"My poor child," cried the noble matron, affected almost to tears, "you are thinking of Paullus."

"When am I not thinking of him, mother?" said the girl. "Remember, we have left the city, seeking these quiet shades, in order to eschew that turmoil, that peril, in the heat of which *he* is now striving for his country! Remember, that he will plunge into all that strife, the more desperately, because he fancies that he was too remiss before! Remember this, Hortensia; and say, if thou canst, that I have no cause for sad forebodings!"

"That can I not, my Julia," she replied—"For who is there on earth, who knoweth what the next sun shall bring forth? The sunshine of to−day, oft breeds the storm of to−morrow—and, again, from the tempest of the eve, how oft is born the brightest and most happy morning. Wisest is he, and happiest, my child, who wraps himself in his own virtue, careless of what the day shall bring to pass, and confident, that all the shafts of fortune must rebound, harmless and blunted, from his sure armor of philosophy."

"Must not the heart have bled, Hortensia, before it can so involve itself in virtue?—must not such philosophy be the tardy offspring of great sorrow?"

"For the most part I fear it is so, Julia," answered the matron, "but some souls there are so innocent and quiet, so undisturbed by the outward world, that they have that, almost by nature, which others only win by suffering and tears."

"Cold and unfeeling souls, I fancy," replied the girl. "For it appears to me that this philosophy which smiles on all spite of fortune, must be akin to selfish and morose indifference. I see not much to love, Hortensia, or to admire in the stoic!"

"Nor much more, I imagine," said Hortensia, not sorry to draw her mind from the subject which occupied it so painfully, "in the Epicurean!"

"Much less!" answered Julia, quickly, "his creed is mere madness and impiety. To believe that the Gods care nothing for the good or evil—ye Gods!" she interrupted herself suddenly, almost with a shriek. "What is this? a slave riding, as if for life, on a foaming horse, from the cityward. Oh! my prophetic soul, Hortensia!"

And she turned pale as death, although she remained quite firm and self−possessed.

"It may be nothing, Julia; or it may be good tidings," answered Hortensia, although she was in truth scarce less alarmed, than her daughter, by the unexpected arrival.

"Good tidings travel not so quickly. Beside, what can there be of good, so unexpected? But we shall know—we shall know quickly," and she arose, as if to descend the steps into the garden, but she sank back again

into her seat, crying, "I am faint, I am sick, *here*, Hortensia," and she laid her hand on her heart as she spoke. "Nay! do not tarry with me, I pray thee, see what he brings. Anything but the torture of suspense!"

"I go, I go, my child," cried the matron, descending the marble steps to the lawn, on which the slave had just drawn up his panting horse. "He has a letter in his hand, be of good courage."

And a moment afterward she cried out joyously, "It is in his hand, Julia, Paullus Arvina's hand. Fear nothing."

And with a quick light step, she returned, and gave the little slip of vellum into the small white hand, which trembled so much, that it scarcely could receive it.

"A snow−white dove to thee, kind Venus!" cried the girl, raising her eyes in gratitude to heaven, before she broke the seal.

But as she did so, and read the first lines, her face was again overcast, and her eyes were dilated with wild terror.

"It is so—it is so—Hortensia! I knew—oh! my soul! I knew it!" and she let fall the letter, and fell back in her seat almost fainting.

"What?—what?" exclaimed Hortensia. "It is Arvina's hand—he must be in life!—what is it, my own Julia?"

"Wounded almost to death!" faltered the girl, in accents half choked with anguish. "Read! read aloud, kind mother."

Alarmed by her daughter's suffering and terror, Hortensia caught the parchment from her half lifeless fingers, and scanning its contents hastily with her eyes, read as follows.

"Paullus Arvina, to Julia and Hortensia, greeting! Your well known constancy and courage give me the confidence to write frankly to you, concealing nothing. Your affection makes me sure, that you will hasten to grant my request. Last night, in a tumult aroused by the desperate followers of Catiline, stricken down and severely wounded, I narrowly missed death. Great thanks are due to the Gods, that the assassin's weapon failed to penetrate to my vitals. Be not too much alarmed, however; Alexion, Cicero's friend and physician, has visited me; and declares, that, unless fever supervene, there is no danger from the wound. Still, I am chained to my couch, wearily, and in pain, with none but slaves about me. At such times, the heart asks for more tender ministering—wherefore I pray you, Julia, let not one day elapse; but come to me! Hortensia, by the Gods! bring her to the city! Catiline hath fled, the peril hath passed over—but lo! I am growing faint— I can write no more, now—there is a swimming of my brain, and a cloud over my eyes. Farewell. Come to me quickly, that it prove not too late—come to me quickly, if you indeed love Arvina."

"We will go, Julia. We will go to him instantly," said Hortensia—"but be of good cheer, poor child. Alexion declares, that there is no danger; and no one is so wise as he! Be of good cheer, we will set forth this night, this hour! Ere daybreak, we will be in Rome. Hark, Lydia," she continued, turning to one of the slave girls, "call me the steward, old Davus. Let the boy Geta, take the horse of the messenger; and bring thou the man hither." Then she added, addressing Julia, "I will question him farther, while they prepare the carpentum! Ho, Davus,"— for the old slave, who was close at hand, entered forthwith— "Have the mules harnessed, instantly, to the carpentum, and let the six Thracians, who accompanied us from Rome, saddle their horses, and take arms. Ill fortune has befallen young Arvina; we must return to town this night—as speedily as may be."

"Within an hour, Hortensia, all shall be in readiness, on my head be it, else."

"It is well—and, hark you! send hither wine and bread— we will not wait until they make supper ready; beside, this youth is worn out with his long ride, and needs refreshment."

As the steward left the room, she gazed attentively at the young slave, who had brought the despatch, and, not recognising his features, a half feeling of suspicion crossed her mind; so that she stooped and whispered to Julia, who looked up hastily and answered,

"No—no—but what matters it? It is *his* handwriting, and his signet."

"I do not know," said Hortensia, doubtfully—"I think he would have sent one of the older men; one whom we knew; I think he would have sent Medon"—Then she said to the boy, "I have never seen thy face before, I believe, good youth. How long hast thou served Arvina?"

"Since the Ides of October, Hortensia. He purchased me of Marcus Crassus."

"Purchased thee, Ha?" said Hortensia, yet more doubtfully than before—"that is strange. His household was large enough already. How came he then to purchase thee?"

"I was hired out by Crassus, as is his wont to do, to Crispus the sword−smith, in the Sacred Way—a cruel

tyrant and oppressor, whom, when he was barbarously scourging me for a small error, noble Arvina saw; and then, finding his intercession fruitless, purchased me, as he said, that thereafter I should be entreated as a man, not as a beast of burthen."

"It is true! by the Gods!" exclaimed the girl, clasping her hands enthusiastically, and a bright blush coming up into her pale face. "Had I been told the action, without the actor's name, I should have known therein Arvina."

"Thou shouldst be grateful, therefore, to this good Arvina"— said Hortensia, gazing at him with a fixed eye, she knew not wherefore, yet with a sort of dubious presentiment of coming evil.

"Grateful!" cried the youth, clasping his hands fervently together—"ye Gods! grateful! Hortensia, by your head! I worship him—I would die for him."

"How came he to send thee on this mission? Why sent he not Medon, or Euphranor, or one of his elder freedmen?"

"Medon, he could not send, nor Euphranor. It went ill with them both, in that affray, wherein my lord was wounded. The older slaves keep watch around this bed; the strongest and most trusty, are under arms in the Atrium."

"And wert thou with him, in that same affray?"

"I was with him, Hortensia."

"When fell it out, and for what cause?"

"Hast thou not heard, Hortensia?—has he not told you? by the Gods! I thought, the world had known it. How before Catiline, may it be ill with him and his, went forth from the city, he and his friends and followers attacked the Consuls, on the Palatine, with armed violence. It was fought through the streets doubtfully, for near three hours; and the fortunes of the Republic were at stake, and well nigh despaired of, if not lost. Cicero was down on the pavement, and Catiline's sword flashing over him, when, with his slaves and freedmen, my master cut his way through the ranks of the conspiracy, and bore off the great magistrate unharmed. But, as he turned, a villain buried his *sica* in his back, and though he saved the state, he well nigh lost his life, to win everlasting fame, and the love of all good citizens!"

"Hast seen him since he was wounded?" exclaimed Julia, who had devoured every word he uttered, with insatiable longing and avidity.

"Surely," replied the boy. "I received that scroll from his own hands—my orders from his own lips—`spare not an instant,' he said, `Jason; tarry not, though you kill your steed. If you would have me live, let Julia see this letter before midnight.' It lacks as yet, four hours of midnight. Doth it not, noble Julia?"

"Five, I think. But how looked, how spoke he? Is he in great pain, Jason? how seemed he, when you left him?"

"He was very pale, Julia—very wan, and his lips ashy white. His voice faltered very much, moreover, and when he had made an end of speaking, he swooned away. I heard that he was better somewhat, ere I set out to come hither; but the physician speaks of fever to be apprehended, on any irritation or excitement. Should you delay long in visiting him, I fear the consequences might be perilous indeed."

"Do you hear? do you hear that, Hortensia? By the Gods! Let us go at once! we need no preparation!"

"We will go, Julia. Old Davus' hour hath nearly passed already. We will be in the city before day−break! Fear not, my sweet one, all shall go well with our beloved Paullus."

"The Gods grant it!"

"Here is wine, Jason," said Hortensia. "Drink, boy, you must needs be weary after so hard a gallop. You have done well, and shall repose here this night. To−morrow, when well rested and refreshed, you shall follow us to Rome."

"Pardon me, lady," said the youth. "I am not weary; love for Arvina hath prevailed over all weariness! Furnish me, I beseech you, with a fresh horse; and let me go with you."

"It shall be as you wish," said Hortensia, "but your frame seems too slender, to endure much labor."

"The Gods have given me a willing heart, Hortensia— and the strong will makes strong the feeble body."

"Well spoken, youth. Your devotion shall lose you nothing, believe me. Come, Julia, let us go and array us for the journey. The nights are cold now, in December, and the passes of the Algidus are bleak and gusty."

The ladies left the room; and, before the hour, which Davus had required, was spent, they were seated together in the rich carpentum, well wrapped in the soft many−colored woollen fabrics, which supplied the place of furs among the Romans—it being considered a relic of barbarism, to wear the skins of beasts, until the love for this

decoration again returned in the last centuries of the Empire.

Old Davus grasped the reins; two Thracian slaves, well mounted, and armed with the small circular targets and lances of their native land, galloped before the carriage, accompanied by the slave who had brought the message, while four more similarly equipped brought up the rear; and thus, before the moon had arisen, travelling at a rapid pace, they cleared the cultivated country, and were involved in the wild passes of Mount Algidus.

Scarcely, however, had they wound out of sight, when galloping at mad and reckless speed, down a wild wood−road on the northern side of the villa, there came a horseman bestriding a white courser, of rare symmetry and action, now almost black with sweat, and envelopped with foam−flakes.

The rider was the same singular−looking dark−complexioned boy, who had overheard the exclamation of Aulus Fulvius, concerning young Arvina, uttered at the head of the street Argiletum.

His body was bent over the rude saddle−bow with weariness, and he reeled to and fro, as if he would have fallen from his horse, when he pulled up at the door of the villa.

"I would speak," he said in a faint and faltering voice, "presently, with Hortensia—matters of life and death depend on it."

"The Gods avert the omen!" cried the woman, to whom he had addressed himself, "Hortensia hath gone but now to Rome, with young Julia, on the arrival of a message from Arvina."

"Too late! too late!"—cried the boy, beating his breast with both hands. "They are betrayed to death or dishonor!"

"How? what is this? what say you?" cried the chief slave of the farm, a person of some trust and importance, who had just come up.

"It was a tall slight fair−haired slave who bore the message— he called himself Jason—he rode a bay horse, did he not?" asked the new comer.

"He was! He did! A bay horse, with one white foot before, and a white star on his forehead. A rare beast from Numidia, or Cyrenaica," replied the steward, who was quite at home in the article of horse−flesh.

"He brought tidings that Arvina is sorely wounded?"

"He brought tidings! Therefore it was that they set forth at so short notice! He left the horse here, and was mounted on a black horse of the farm."

"Arvina is not wounded! That bay horse is Cethegus', the conspirator's! Arvina hath sent *no* message! They are betrayed, I tell you, man. Aulus Fulvius awaits them with a gang of desperadoes in the deep cleft of the hills, where the cross−road comes in by which you reach the Flaminian from the Labican way. Arm yourselves speedily and follow, else will they carry Julia to Catiline's camp in the Appenines, beside Fiesole! What there will befall her, Catiline's character best may inform you! Come—to arms—men! to horse, and follow!"

But ignorant of the person of the messenger, lacking an authorized head, fearful of taking the responsibility, and incurring the reproach, perhaps the punishment, of credulity, they loitered and hesitated; and, though they did at length get to horse and set out in pursuit, it was not till Hortensia's cavalcade had been gone above an hour.

Meanwhile, unconscious of what had occurred behind them, and eager only to arrive at Rome as speedily as possible, the ladies journeyed onward, with full hearts, in silence, and in sorrow.

There is a deep dark gorge in the mountain chain, through which this road lay, nearly a mile in length; with a fierce torrent on one hand, and a sheer face of craggy rocks towering above it on the other. Beyond the torrent, the chesnut woods hung black and gloomy along the precipitous slopes, with their ragged tree−tops distinctly marked against the clear obscure of the nocturnal sky.

Midway this gorge, a narrow broken path comes down a cleft in the rocky wall on the right hand side, as you go toward Rome, by which through a wild and broken country the Flaminian way can be reached, and by it the district of Etruria and the famous Val d'Arno.

They had just reached this point, and were congratulating themselves, on having thus accomplished the most difficult part of their journey, when the messenger, who rode in front, uttered a long clear whistle.

The twang of a dozen bowstrings followed, from some large blocks of stone which embarrassed the pass at the junction of the two roads, and both the Thracians who preceded the carriage, went down, one of them killed outright, the other, with his horse shot dead under him.

"Ho! Traitor!" shouted the latter, extricating himself from the dead charger, and hurling his javelin with fatal accuracy at the false slave, "thou at least shalt not boast of thy villainy! Treachery! treachery! Turn back,

Hortensia! Fly, avus! to me! to me, comrades!"

But with a loud shout, down came young Aulus Fulvius, from the pass, armed, head to foot, as a Roman legionary soldier—down came the gigantic smith Caius Crispus, and fifteen men, at least, with blade and buckler, at his back.

The slaves fought desperately for their mistress' liberty or life; but the odds were too great, both in numbers and equipment; and not five minutes passed, before they were all cut down, and stretched out, dead or dying, on the rocky floor of the dark defile.

The strife ended, Aulus Fulvius strode quickly to the carpentum, which had been overturned in the affray, and which his lawless followers were already ransacking.

One of these wretches, his own namesake Aulus, the sword−smith's foreman, had already caught Julia in his licentious grasp, and was about to press his foul lips to her cheek, when the young patrician snatched her from his arms, and pushed him violently backward.

"Ho! fool and villain!" he exclaimed, "Darest thou to think such dainties are for thee? She is sacred to Catiline and vengeance!"

"This one, at least, then!" shouted the ruffian, making at Hortensia.

"Nor that one either!" cried the smith interposing; but as Aulus, the foreman, still struggled to lay hold of the Patrician lady, he very coolly struck him across the bare brow with the edge of his heavy cutting sword, cleaving him down to the teeth—"Nay! then take that, thou fool."— Then turning to Fulvius, he added; "He was a brawler always, and would have kept no discipline, now or ever."

"Well done, smith!" replied Aulus Fulvius. "The same fate to all who disobey orders! We have no time for dalliance now; it will be day ere long, and we must be miles hence ere it dawns! Bind me Hortensia, firmly, to yon chesnut tree, stout smith; but do not harm her. We too have mothers!" he added with a singular revulsion of feeling at such a moment. "For you, my beauty, we will have you consoled by a warmer lover than that most shallow−pated fool and sophist, Arvina. Come! I say come! no one shall harm you!" and without farther words, despite all her struggles and remonstrances, he bound a handkerchief tightly under her chin to prevent her cries, wrapped her in a thick crimson pallium, and springing upon his charger, with the assistance of the smith, placed her before him on the saddle−cloth, and set off a furious pace, through the steep by−path, leaving the defile tenanted only by the dying and the dead, with the exception of Hortensia, who rent the deaf air in vain with frantic cries of anguish, until at last she fainted, nature being to weak for the endurance of such prolonged agony.

About an hour afterward, she was released and carried to her Roman mansion, alive and unharmed in body, but almost frantic with despair, by the party of slaves who had come up, too late to save her Julia, under the guidance of the young unknown.

He, when he perceived that his efforts had been useless, and when he learned how Julia had been carried off by the conspirators, leaving the party to escort Hortensia, and bear their slaughtered comrades homeward, rode slowly and thoughtfully away, into the recesses of the wild country whither Aulus had borne his captive, exclaiming in a low silent voice with a clinched hand, and eyes turned heavenward, "I will die, ere dishonor reach her! Aid me! aid me, thou Nemesis—aid me to save, and avenge!"

CHAPTER IX. THE MULVIAN BRIDGE.

Under which king, Bezonian? Speak, or die!

Two Gentlemen of Verona.

On that same night, and nearly at the same hour wherein the messenger of Aulus Fulvius arrived at the Latin villa, there was a splendid banquet given in a house near the forum.

It was the house of Decius Brutus, unworthy bearer of a time−honored name, the husband of the infamous Sempronia.

At an earlier hour of the evening, a great crowd had been gathered round the doors, eager to gaze on the ambassadors of the Highland Gauls, who, their mission to Rome ended unsuccessfully, feasted there for the last time previous to their departure.

As it grew dark, however, tired of waiting in the hope of seeing the plaided warriors depart, the throng had dispersed, and with exception of the city watches and the cohorts, which from hour to hour perambulated them, the streets were unusually silent, and almost deserted.

There was no glare of lights from the windows of Brutus' house, as there would be in these days, and in modern mansions, to indicate the scene of festivity; for it was in the inmost chamber, of the most secluded suite of apartments, that the boards had been spread for the *comissatio*, or nocturnal revel.

The *cœna*, or dinner, had been partaken by all the guests previous to their arrival at their entertainer's, and the tables were laid only with light dainties and provocatives to thirst, such as salted meats and fishes, the roe of the sturgeon highly seasoned, with herbs and fruits, and pastry and confections, of all kinds.

Rich urns, with heaters, containing hot spiced wines, prepared with honey, smoked on the boards of costly citrean wood, intermixed with crystal vases filled with the rarest vintages of the Falernian hills, cooled and diluted with snow−water.

And around the circular tables, on the tapestried couches, reclined the banqueters of both sexes, quaffing the rich wines to strange toasts, jesting, and laughing wildly, singing at times themselves as the myrtle branch and the lute went round, at times listening to the licentious chaunts of the unveiled and almost unrobed dancing girls, or the obscene and scurrilous buffoonery of the mimes and clowns, who played so conspicuous a part in the Roman entertainments of a later period.

Among these banqueters there was not a single person not privy to the conspiracy, and few who have not been introduced already to the acquaintance of the reader, but among these few was Sempronia—Sempronia, who could be all things, at all times, and to all persons—who with all the softness and grace and beauty of the most feminine of her sex, possessed all the daring, energy, vigor, wisdom of the bravest and most intriguing man—accomplished to the utmost in all the liberal arts, a poetess and minstrel unrivalled by professional performers, a dancer more finished and voluptuous than beseemed a Roman matron, a scholar in both tongues, the Greek as well as her own, and priding herself on her ability to charm the gravest and most learned sages by the modesty of her bearing and the wealth of her intellect, as easily as the most profligate debauchees by her facetious levity, her loose wit, and her abandonment of all restraint to the wildest license.

On this evening she had strained every nerve to fascinate, to dazzle, to astonish.

She had danced as a bacchanal, with her luxuriant hair dishevelled beneath a crown of vine leaves, with her bright shoulders and superb bust displayed at every motion by the displacement of the panther's skin, which alone covered them, timing her graceful steps to the clang of the silver cymbals which she waved and clashed with her bare arms above her stately head, and showing off the beauties of her form in attitudes more classically graceful, more studiously indelicate, than the most reckless figurante of our days.

She had sung every species of melody and rythm, from the wildest dithyrambic to the severest and most grave alcaic; she had struck the lute, calling forth notes such as might have performed the miracles attributed to Orpheus and Amphion.

She had exerted her unrivalled learning so far as to discourse eloquently in the uncouth and almost unknown tongues of Germany and Gaul.

For she had Gaulish hearers, Gaulish admirers, whom, whether from mere female vanity, whether from the

awakening of some strange unbridled passion, or whether from some deeper cause, she was bent on delighting.

For mixed in brilliant contrast with the violet and flower enwoven tunics, with the myrtle−crowned perfumed love−locks of the Roman feasters, were seen the gay and manychequered plaids, the jewelled weapons, and loose lionlike tresses of the Gallic Highlanders, and the wild blue eyes, sharp and clear as the untamed falcon's, gazing in wonder or glancing in childlike simplicity at the strange scenes and gorgeous luxuries which amazed all their senses.

The tall and powerful young chief, who had on several occasions attracted the notice of Arvina, and whom he had tracked but a few days before into this very house, reclined on the same couch with its accomplished mistress, and it was on him that her sweetest smiles, her most speaking glances were levelled, for him that her charms were displayed so unreservedly and boldly.

And the eyes of the young Gaul flashed at times a strange fire, but it was difficult to tell, if it were indignation or desire that kindled that sharp flame—and his cheek burned with a hectic and unwonted hue, but whether it was the hue of shame or passion, what eye could determine.

One thing alone was evident, that he encouraged her in her wild licence, and affected, if he did not feel, the most decided admiration for her beauty.

His hand had toyed with hers, his fingers had strayed through the mazes of her superb raven ringlets, his lip had pressed hers unrebuked, and his ear had drunk in long murmuring low−breathed sighs, and whispers unheard by any other.

Her Roman lovers, in other words two−thirds of those present, for she was no chary dame, looked at each other, some with a sneering smile, some with a shrewd and knowing glance, and some with ill−dissembled jealousy, but not one of them all, so admirable was her dissimulation—if that may be called admirable, which is most odious—could satisfy himself, whether she was indeed captivated by the robust and manly beauty of the young barbarian, or whether it was merely a piece of consummate acting, the more to attach him to their cause.

It might have been observed had the quick eye of Catiline been there, prompt to read human hearts as if they were written books—that the older envoys looked with suspicious and uneasy glances, at the demeanor of their young associate, that they consulted one another from time to time with grave and searching eyes, and that once or twice, when Sempronia, who alone of those present understood their language, was at a distance, they uttered a few words in Gaelic, not in the most agreeable or happiest accent.

Wilder and wilder waxed the revelry, and now the slaves withdrew, and breaking off into pairs or groups, the guests dispersed themselves among the peristyles, dimly illuminated with many twinkling lamps, and shrubberies of myrtle and laurestinus which adorned the courts and gardens of the proud mansions.

Some to plot deeds of private revenge, private cruelty— some to arrange their schemes of public insurrection— some to dally in secret corners with the fair patricians— some to drain mightier draughts than they had yet partaken, some to gamble for desperate stakes, all to drown care and the anguish of conscious guilt, in the fierce pleasure of excitement.

Apart from the rest, stood two of the elder Gauls, in deep and eager conference—one the white−headed chief, and leader of the embassy, the other a stately and noble−looking man of some forty−five or fifty years.

They were watching their comrade, who had just stolen away, with one arm twined about the fair Sempronia's waist, and her hand clasped in his, through the inner peristyle, into the women's chambers.

"Feargus, I doubt him," said the old man in a low guarded whisper. "I doubt him very sorely. These Roman harlots are made to bewitch any man, much more us Gael, whose souls kindle at a spark!"

"It is true, Phadraig," answered the other, still speaking in their own tongue. "Saw ever any man such infamy?— And these—these dogs, and goats, call us barbarians! Us, by the Spirit of Thunder! who would die fifty deaths every hour, ere we would see our matrons, nay! but our matrons' basest slaves, demean themselves as these patricians! Base, carnal, bloody−minded beasts are they—and yet forsooth they boast themselves the masters of the world."

"Alas! that it should be so, Feargus," answered the other. "But so it is, that they *are* masters, and shall be masters yet awhile, but not long. I have heard, I have seen among the mist of our water−falls, the avalanches of our hills, the voices and the signs of Rome's coming ruin, but not yet. Therefore it is that I counselled peace."

"I know that thou art Taishatr, the great seer of our people," replied the other with an expression of deep awe on his features—"Shall Rome indeed so perish!"

"She shall, Feargus. Her sons shall forget the use of the blade, her daughters of the distaff—for heroes and warriors she shall bring forth pipers and fiddlers, pandars and posturers; for heroines and matrons, songstresses, dancing girls, and harlots. The beginning thou seest now, the end cometh not in ages."

"And our people, Phadraig, our northern races"—

"Shall govern and despise them! our arms shall carry devastation into regions of which their Consuls never heard, and under Gaelic eagles; our *men* shall wield thunder louder and deadlier, than the bolts of Roman Gods. I have said, Feargus. It shall be, but not yet; nor shall our eyes behold it; but it shall soothe us yet, in these days of our country's desolation, to know how great she shall be hereafter, and these how less than little—the very name of Roman synonimous with slavery and degradation!"

There was a long pause, during which neither of the chieftains spoke, the one musing over the strange visions, which are phenomena by no means unusual to mountaineers, in all ages; the other dreaming of future glory to his race, and aroused by the predictions of the seer, to an ecstacy, as it were, of expectant triumph.

"Enough of this"—said the old man, at length. "As I said but now, I doubt Eachin sorely."

"If he prove false, I will stab him to the heart, with my own hand, though he be my father's brother's grandson, and the best warrior of our tribe; but no, no, Phadraig, the boy is young, and his blood is hot and fiery; and the charms of that witch might well move a colder spirit—but he is true as steel, and wise and wary for one so young. He may sun himself in her smiles, or revel on her lips, but trust me, Eachin of the iron hand, will never betray council."

"Keep your eye on him, nevertheless, Feargus," said the other, "and, as you said but now, kill him at once, if you perceive him false."

"Ha! what! noble Patricius?" cried Lentulus, coming up to them suddenly, and addressing the old chief by his latinized name—"what is this that thou arguest so sagely, in thy sonorous and male tongue."

"The might and majesty of Rome," answered the old man quietly, "and our people's misery and degradation."

"Nay! nay! chief, be not downhearted. Look upward now, after dark night comes brilliant morning," said the Roman. "Your people shall rise ere long, to power and glory and dominion."

"So I told Feargus."

"Ha! the brave Ferragus! and doth he not credit your wisdom's prophecy."

"I put all faith in Rome's gratitude, in Catiline's valor and justice."

"Aye! when we once have put down this faction, we will do justice to our friends."

"And we are of the number!"

"Surely, the twenty thousand horse, which you have promised us, are twenty thousand pledges of your friendship, as many claims on our favor."

"See, here comes Eachin," said the old man; "and time wears onward, it is nigh midnight. We must away to our lodgings. Our train awaits us, and we but tarry for your envoy and the letters."

"Titus Volturcius! I will go fetch him hither. He hath our letters sealed and ready. He is but draining a last cup, with our brave Cethegus. I will go fetch him." And, with the words, he turned away, gathering his toga in superb draperies about his stately person, and traversing the corridor with proud and measured strides, and as he went, muttered through his teeth—"The fool barbarians! As if we would give them anything but chains and scourges! The poor benighted idiots!"

"Ho, Eachin, where left you our fair hostess?" asked Feargus in Latin—"methinks you are smitten somewhat with her beauty!"

"She is very beautiful!" said the old chieftain gravely.

"Beautiful! Feargus! Phadraig! beautiful, did ye say?" and the youth gazed at them in wonder, "That vile sensual, soulless harlot! she beautiful! Then virtue must be base indeed, and honor shameful!" he cried, with noble indignation, in his own Gaëlic tongue, his eyes flashing, and his cheek burning crimson.

"Why, if you held her then so cheaply, have you so much affected her society?"

"Oh! you suspect me, Feargus. But it needs not. The barbarian hath some shrewdness, and some honesty. Sempronia too, suspected us, and would have won my secret from me, had I indeed a secret, by sweet words and sweeter kisses."

"And thou"—

"Gave kiss for kiss, with interest; and soft word for soft word. I have sighed as if I were any Roman—but no

secret, Feargus; Phadraig, no secret. Do you doubt me?"

"Not I, boy," answered the warrior. "Your father was my cousin, and I think you are not a bastard."

"I think not either. But see, here come these *noble* Romans!"

"It is their envoy with the letters for their leader. We shall be dismissed now, from this haunt of thieves and harlots!"

"And laughed at, when dismissed, for fools and barbarians!"

"One never knows who is the fool, till the game is lost."

"Nor who is laughed at 'till it is won!"

"Here is our Titus, my good friends," said Lentulus, coming forward, leading along with him a slightly−made but well−formed and active−looking man, with a downcast yet roving eye, and a sneering lip, as if he were one who believing nothing, deserved not to be believed in anything himself. "He hath the letters, and credentials secured on his person. On his introduction, our Catiline shall know you as true friends, and as such receive and reward you!"

"Titus Volturcius, is welcome. We tarried but for him, we will now take our leaves, with thanks for your gracious courtesies."

"A trifle, a mere trifle," said Sempronia, who had that moment returned—"We only desired to teach you how we Romans live in our homes daily."

"A very pleasant lesson, ha! my young friend"—said Lentulus to Eachin; and then he said out to Cethegus, in Greek, "I am compelled to call the Highland bull my friend, for his accursed name would break the jaws of any Roman—there is no twisting it into Latin!"

"Hush! he will hear you, Lentulus," said the other. "I believe the brutes hear with their eyes, and understand through their finger−ends," and he too used the same language; yet, strange to say, it would have seemed as if the young man did in some sort comprehend his words, for his cheek turned fiery red, and he bit his lip, and played nervously with the hilt of the claymore.

"Thou will not forget the lesson!" whispered Sempronia.

"Never!" replied the Highlander. "Never while one red drop runs in these veins. And the last drop in them will I shed gladly, to teach these noble Romans how grateful a barbarian can be, poor though he be and half savage, for being thus instructed in Roman hospitality and Roman virtue! Farewell, ye noble Senators, farewell most beautiful and noble matron!"

And with deep salutations, half dignified, half awkward, the Gauls strode away, into the quiet and moon−lighted streets, strange contrast to the glare and riot of those patrician halls and polluted chambers.

"A singular speech that!" said Cethegus musing. "It sounded much as if it might bear a double meaning! could it be irony and cover treason?"

"Irony in a stupid Gaul! thou art mad, Cethegus, to think of it!" said Autronius with a sneer.

"I should as soon look for wit in an elephant," said Longinus Cassius.

"Or I for love in a cold lizard!" cried Sempronia, laughing.

"You found some love in the barbarian, I think, my Sempronia?" exclaimed Cethegus.

"More warmth than wit, I assure you," she replied still laughing. "I acted my part with him rarely. If he were inclined once to play us false, he is bound to us now by chains"—

"Of roses, fair one?"

"Never mind. If he break them, call me"—

"Chaste? Sempronia"—enquired Cæparius, interrupting her.

"Audacious!" she answered with an affected frown, amid the laugh which followed the retort.

"What do you think of it, my Lentulus?" asked Cethegus, who although he had jested with the others, did not by any means appear satisfied in his mind, or convinced of the good faith of the Highlanders.

"That it is two hours now past midnight," answered Lentulus yawning, "and that I am amazing sleepy. I was not in bed till the third watch last night, writing those letters, ill luck to them. That is what I think, Cethegus. And that I am going to bed now, to trouble myself about the matter no more, until the Saturnalia."

And so that company broke up, never to meet again, on this side Hades.

Not long thereafter the Gauls, having reached their lodgings at the house of their patron Fabius Sanga, where everything had been prepared already for their departure, mounted their horses, and set forth on their way

homeward, accompanied by a long train of armed followers; Titus Volturcius riding in the first rank, between the principal chiefs of the party.

The moon had risen; and the night was almost as clear as day, for a slight touch of frost had banished all the vapors from the sky, and the stars sparkled with unusual brilliancy.

Although it was clear and keen, however, the night was by no means cold, as it would have been under the like circumstances in our more northern climes; and the gardens in the suburbs of the city with their numerous clumps of stone−pine, and thickets of arbutus and laurestinus, looked rich and gay with their polished green foliage, long after the deciduous trees had dropped their sere leaves on the steamy earth.

No sounds came to the ears of the travellers, as they rode at that dead hour of night through the deserted streets; the whole of the vast city appeared to be hushed in deep slumber, soon, Caius Volturcuis boasted as they rode along, to burst like a volcano into the din and glare of mighty conflagration.

They met not a single individual, as they threaded the broad suburra with their long train of slaves and led−horses; not one as they passed through the gorge between the Viminal and Quirinal hills, nor as they scaled the summit of the latter eminence, and reached the city walls, where they overlooked Sallust's gardens in the valley, and on the opposite slope, the perfumed hill of flowers.

A sleepy sentinel unbarred the gate for the ambassadors, while four or five of his comrades sat dozing in their armor around a stove, in the centre of the little guard−house, or replenishing their horn cups, at short intervals, from an urn of hot wine, which hissed and simmered on the hearth.

"Excellent guard they keep!" said Volturcius sneeringly, "right trusty discipline! of much avail would such watchers be, were Catiline without the walls, with ten thousand men, of Sylla's veterans."

"And is your Catiline so great a captain?" asked the Highlander.

"The best in Rome, since Sylla is no more! He learned the art of war under that grand, that consummate soldier! He was scarce second to him in his life time!"

"Why, then, hath Rome found no service for him?" asked the Gaul. "If he, as you say, is so valiant and so skillful, why hath he not commanded in the east, in place of Pompey, or Lucullus?"

"Jealousy is the bane of Rome! jealousy and corruption! Catiline will not pander to the pride of the insolent patricians, nor buy of them employments or honors with his gold."

"And is *he* free from this corruption?"

"No man on earth of more tried integrity! While all of Rome beside is venal, his hand alone is conscious of no bribe, his heart alone incorruptible!"

"Thou must be a true friend of his; all men speak not so highly of this Catiline."

"Some men lie! touching *him* specially, they lie!"

"By the Gods! I believe so!" answered the old Gaul, with calm irony.

"By Mars! and Apollo! they lie foully!"

"I think I have heard one, at least, do so."

"Thou shalt hear hundreds, if thou listen to them."

"So many?"

"Aye! by the Gods!—most of the—by your head! Patricius, that was a man, I think; armed too; who looked forth from behind yon buttress of the bridge."

"No! no! Volturcius, 'twas but the shadow of yon pine tree, waving athwart the moonlight. I marked it long since," answered the wily Gaul. "Proceed, I pray you— most of the what, wert thou about to say?"

But, by this time, the speakers had advanced to the centre of the long Mulvian bridge, a magnificent stone structure crossing the broad and sluggish Tiber, two miles below the city; and giving access to the far−famed Flaminian way.

Their train, following closely after them, had all entered into the defile, the last of them having already passed the abutment nearest to Rome, when a loud shout arose from either side the bridge; and from the thickets and gardens at each extremity forth rushed a band of stout youths armed with casques and cuirasses of bronze, with the oblong shields and Spanish stabbing swords of the legionaries.

Each band was led by a Prætor, Lucius Valerius Flaccus commanding at the end next Rome, and Caius Pomptinus, on the Emilian way, and each fell into accurate and beautiful array, barring the outlets of the bridge with a triple file of bright blades and sturdy bucklers.

Nor was this all; for a little party was pushed forward on each flank, with bows and javelins, ready to enfilade the narrow pass with cross shot of their missiles, in case any attempt should be made to force a passage. And at the end, moreover, of the bridge toward Etruria and the camp of Catiline, at which such an attempt was most likely to occur, the glittering helmets and crimson horsehair crests of a troop of cavalry were seen glancing in the moonbeams, as they wheeled into line behind the footmen, ready to charge at once should the infantry be broken.

"Stand! stand!" cried the soldiery at each end. "Stand and surrender!"

But the younger men of the Gauls, unsheathing their claymores, set up their terrible slogan, or Celtic battle cry; and, plunging their spurs into the sides of their fiery horses came thundering across the bridge with a charge that would probably have trodden the Prætor's infantry under foot, had not the old chief, whom the Romans called Patricius, and Ferragus reined their steeds suddenly across the way, calling upon their men to halt and be steady.

But Volturcius, knowing too well the consequence of being taken, dashed forward with his sword drawn; and made a desperate attempt to cut his way through the infantry, striking down two or three, slashing and stabbing to the right and left, displaying singular skill in the use of his weapon, and extreme personal intrepidity.

"Treason! treason, my friends!" he shouted. "Ho, Ferragus, Patricius, ho! Charge, charge, men, gallantly. They are but a handful!" and still he plied his blade, which was now crimson to the hilt, with fearful energy.

"No! no! not so!" cried the ambassadors—"lay down your arms! it is the prætor's train. Lay down your arms! all shall be well, if you resist not."

And at the same time, "Yield thee! yield thee! Volturcius," cried Pomptinus. "We are friends all; and would not hurt thee—but have thee we must, and thy letters.— Dost thou not know me, Titus?"

"Very well, Caius," cried the other, still fighting desperately against a host; for the men were commanded not to kill, but to take him alive at all hazards. "I know thee very well; but I will not yield to thee! So take that, Prætor!" and, with the word, he dealt him a blow on his crest that brought him to his knee in a moment.

"He is a mad man!" cried a veteran legionary. "We must kill him!"

"Not for your lives," shouted Pomptinus, and springing to his feet he plunged his sword home into his horse's chest, up to the very hilt; and then leaping on one side nimbly, as the animal fell headlong, being slain outright, he seized Volturcius by the shoulder, and pulled him down from the saddle.

But even at this disadvantage, the conspirator renewed the single combat with the prætor; until at length, assured by his repeated promises that his life should be spared, he yielded his sword to that officer, and adjuring him in the name of all the Gods! to protect him, gave himself up a prisoner, as if to avowed enemies.

Those of the Gauls, who had been ignorant, at first, what was in progress, perceiving now that the whole matter had been arranged with the concurrence of their chiefs, submitted quietly; and two or three of the prætor's people who had been wounded being accommodated with temporary litters made of bucklers and javelins with watch cloaks thrown over them, the whole party turned their horses' heads, and directed their march toward Rome.

And silence, amid which the gentle murmur of the river, and the sigh of the breeze were distinctly audible, succeeded to the clang of arms, and the shouts of the combatants, unheard for many a year, so near to the walls of the world's metropolis.

CHAPTER X. THE ARREST.

Rebellious subjects; Enemies of peace.

Romeo and Juliet.

It was already daylight, when the loud clang and clatter of a squadron passing along the streets, at a sharp trot, aroused the citizens of Rome from their beds, for though the morning had broke, it was still very early.

Many a lattice was opened, and many a head thrust out, as the troopers swept along with all their accoutrements jingling and clashing through the early silence, a spectacle which in ordinary times, would have excited much astonishment, perhaps aroused a tumult, since it was in direct opposition to the laws, that armed soldiers should enter the city walls in time of peace.

But so much had the public mind been disturbed of late, that the sight, which a month before would have filled the streets with anxious or angry multitudes, now hardly seemed to merit a second glance, and the spectators hurried back to their couches, invoking the aid of the good Consul, who watched so well over the liberties and lives of Rome, or muttering curses on his head, according as they were well or ill−afflicted toward the state.

One man there was, however, who was awakened by the clatter from the deep sleep of drunkenness, with a flushed face and an aching head, in a house on the Clivus Scauri, a steep street running down the southern slope of the Palatine, into the Cerolian Place, and overlooking the mansion of Cicero.

Starting up from his low couch, he called out sharply and with a querulous accent to a freedman, who was watching his feverish slumbers, desiring him to look out and see what made that clatter.

The man passed quickly into an adjoining room which commanded a view of the street, and returned instantly, saying,

"It is a squadron of horse, Cæparius. Young Arvina's, I think; and they appear to be conducting a prisoner, for there is one man among them, in his tunic and abolla only, while the troopers around him have their swords drawn."

Sobered at once, the conspirator leaped from his couch, and almost overthrew the attendant, in his eagerness to reach the window in time to observe the troopers.

They were just halting in the Cerolian place, when he saw them, and dismounting, chargers and men in a confused and dusty group before the door of Cicero.

He gazed, as if his eyes would burst from their sockets, if possibly he might distinguish the wearer of the rich blue riding cloak, of which he could catch glimpses among the glittering corslets and scarlet cassocks of the legionary horse. But for a while he gazed in vain.

At length two figures mounted the marble steps, leading to the Tuscan colonnade, and were thus brought clearly into view, above the crested casques of the soldiery.

One, a tall well−made figure, splendidly accoutred in the cavalry armor of the day, he recognized at once for Arvina, and in the stouter person, clad in the blue abolla, the color of which he had already connected with one whom he knew—his worst fears all realized—he discovered the messenger of treason, Titus Volturcius of Crotona.

"By the Gods! all is lost," he muttered, striking his hand violently on his thigh. "Escape alone, is left to us. Ha!" he continued, addressing his freedman, "I will arise, and go forth speedily. Give me my tunic. So—never mind the feminalia; there, clasp my sandals! Death and furies! how slow thou art, now my dagger, and my toga. Hark, now. I go to the house of Lentulus. See thou, and have my chariot harnessed for a journey, with the four Thracian steeds; put into it my armor, a sword, casque and buckler for thyself; and all the gold which is locked in the great chest in the Atrium. Here is the key. Tarry not for thy life, and bring the car thyself to the arch of Fabius Allobrox; wait there until I come to thee. I will be there within the hour."

"It shall be done, Cæparius."

"See that it *be* done, if thou wouldst scape the scourge!" and with the word he rushed out of the chamber, as if the avenger of blood were at his heels.

But the freedman looked after him, with a bitter and scornful smile, and muttered—

"The scourge!—the scourge! and I a freedman! This is another friend of the people. His villanies, I fancy, are

near upon detection, and he would fly to join Catiline, but I will thwart him."

In the meantime, quitting his own house in great trepidation, the conspirator walked very rapidly through the streets, until he reached the house of Lentulus, which was not far distant from the forum.

He was admitted instantly, and without question, for all the slaves knew him, as the intimate friend of their master; but at the bed room door, he was stopped by the favorite freedman of Lentulus, who urged that his lord had not retired till morning, and had desired that he should not be disturbed earlier than noon.

Cæparius, on the other hand insisted, raising his voice so loudly that the sleeper was awakened, and recognizing the accent of his friend, cried out peevishly—

"Oh! let him in, Agathon; let him in quickly, or he will talk thee deaf, and me frantic! What in the name of Proserpine and Pluto! is it now?"

"The plot is discovered! all is lost!" exclaimed the other, forgetting all prudence in the haste and terror of the moment.

"To the abyss of Tartarus with the plot, and thee also!" replied the other savagely. "I hope it *is* discovered, for I shall get some sleep then. I have had none these six months."

And turning on his other side, he drew the embroidered coverlid over his head, and appeared to court the interrupted slumber.

"By all Gods! I tell thee, Lentulus, Volturcius is arrested. These eyes beheld him dragged into the house of Cicero. My chariot waits me now, at the arch of Fabius. I go to join Catiline."

"I prithee, then, go quickly—thou torturest me, man, I say. Get thee gone! get thee gone! Better to die, than to live thus sleepless."

"Whom the Gods wish to ruin, they first dementate!" exclaimed Cæparius—"thou wilt be seized, within the hour"

"I care not So that till then I can sleep; once more, I say—Begone!"

Cæparius shrugged his shoulders, and shook his head as he left the room; and then made the best of his way to the arch of Fabius; but he found not his chariot there, not though he waited well nigh two hours, did it arrive at all.

Hopeless at length, and desperate, he set forth alone and on foot, in the vain hope of escaping the pursuit of Cicero's unerring justice.

Meanwhile, disturbed more than he would admit by Cæ parius' tidings, Lentulus did, in some sort, arouse himself to consideration.

"It may be so," he said to himself. "Cæparius declared he saw him. If it be so, 'twere better perhaps, indeed, to leave the city. And yet," he continued pondering deeply, "to fly is to admit guilt, and it is too late, moreover. Tush! tush! I daresay, it is but Cæparius' terror—he was a fool always, and I believe a coward also. Beside, if it be true, there is no proof; and what dare Cicero against me—against me, a Consular of Rome?—At the worst, he will implore me to deliver the city of my presence, as he did Catiline. Ha! Ha! I will to sleep again. Yet stay, I am athirst, after Sempronia's revel! Fool, that I was, not to drink more last night, and quench this fiery craving. Ho! Agathon, my boy, fetch me the great goblet, the double sextarius, of spiced mulse with a snow−water."

This order was obeyed instantly, and after draining the huge beaker to the bottom, the indolent and reckless traitor, rolled himself over, and was asleep again as soundly in five minutes, as if he were not in truth slumbering upon the brink of a volcano.

Not long however did he sleep in peace, for Cæparius had scarcely been gone an hour, when he was again startled from his doze, by a knocking so violent, at the outer door, that the whole house reechoed with the din.

He heard the doors opened, and a short angry parle, broken short by the raised voice of the new comers, and the clanging of armed footsteps, along the marble corridor which led toward his chamber.

A moment afterward, pale as death, with his hair starting and a wild eye, Agathon entered the room.

"How now?" exclaimed Lentulus, who fully aroused by this time, was sitting on the edge of the low bedstead, with a purple gown cast carelessly around him, "what is this new disturbance."

"The Atrium is full of armed soldiers, Lentulus," replied the man with a faltering accent.

"Well! hast thou never seen a soldier before, that thou starest so wildly?" asked his master with a sneer, which even the extremity of danger could not restrain.

"Their leader insists on present speech with thee. I told him that thou wert asleep; but he replied that, waking or asleep, he must have speech with thee."

"Truly a valiant leader," answered the Prætor. "Hath he a name, this bold centurion?"

"Paullus Cæcilius Arvina," replied the young man, who having followed the freedman to the door had overheard all that was passing, "is my name—no centurion, as thou mayest see, Lentulus. Loth am I to disturb thy slumbers."

"Then wherefore do it, youth?" asked Lentulus, quickly. "Most broken things may be repaired, but I know not how you shall mend a broken nap, or recompense the loss of it, if irreparable."

"Not of my own will, but by the Consul's order."

"The Consul's? What? Antonius? He scarce need have sent a troop of horse, to ask an old friend to breakfast!"

"Cicero sent me, Prætor, to crave your instant presence at his house, touching affairs of state."

"Ha! Cicero!" said he, affecting to be much surprised "Cicero scarcely is on such terms with me, as to take such a liberty, waking me thus at the dead of night."

"It is well nigh the fourth hour, Lentulus."

"What if it be, an I choose to call it midnight? and what, if I refuse to obey such unceremonious bidding?"

"In that case, Lentulus, my orders are to compel your attendance. I have two decuries of men in your Atrium. But I trust that you will drive me to no such necessity."

"Two decuries!" replied Lentulus scornfully. "I have but to lift my little finger, and my freedmen and slaves would kick your decuries, and yourself after them into the velabrum."

The blood mounted to the brow of the young soldier. "I have endured," he said, "something too much of this Will you go with us peacefully, Lentulus, or will you force us to take you through the street like a felon?"

"Oh! peacefully, Arvina, peacefully. I did but jest with you, my hero. But I knew not that the cavalry of the seventh legion—the legion of Mars I think they call it— had become so degraded, as to do the work of thieftakers."

"Nor I, Lentulus," answered Paul. "But you should know best in this matter. If it be theft for which thou art summoned before Cicero, then are we indeed thieftakers. But if so, not only I believe should we be the first legionaries of Rome so employed, but thou the first Roman Consular so guilty."

"So proud! ha!" exclaimed the haughty conspirator, gazing at him with a curled lip and flashing eye. "Well, I could quell that pride in one moment, with *one* word."

"Even so proud, because honest!" answered the young man, as haughtily as the other. "For the rest, will you clothe yourself at once?—I can wait babbling here no longer."

"I *will* quell it. Look you, boy, you love Julia, the bright daughter of Hortensia—she is worth loving, by the way, and Catiline hath noted it. You fancy that she is safe now, at the Latin villa of her mother. She is not safe—nor at the Latin villa! I have touched you, have I not?"

Arvina started, as if a serpent had bitten him; but in a moment he recovered himself, saying calmly, "Tush! it is a poor deceit! you cannot alarm me."

"In truth it was a deceit, but not so very poor after all, since it succeeded. You were sorely wounded a few days since, Arvina, and wrote, I think, to Julia, requesting her to set forth at once to Rome, with Hortensia."

"Folly!" replied Arvina, "Drivelling folly! Come, hasten your dressing, Lentulus! You need not perfume your hair, and curl your beard, as if you were going to a banquet."

"I never hasten anything, my Paullus. Things done hastily, are rarely things done well. What? thou didst not write such a letter?—I thought thou hadst—of this at least I am sure, that she received such an one; and set out for Rome, within an hour after."

"By the Gods!" exclaimed Paullus, a little eagerly, for Lentulus had changed the slight bantering tone in which he had been speaking, for a quick short decided accent seeming to denote that he was in earnest. "Where is she now. Speak, Lentulus, I adjure thee. Tell me, if thou wouldst have me serve thee!"

"I thought I could abate that pride somewhat," said Lentulus sneeringly. "I thought so indeed. But, by all the Gods! Arvina, I know not where your Julia may be *now*. I know whither they are conveying her—where she soon will be—but I fancy that the knowing it, would give you but little pleasure; unless, indeed, you could prevent it, my poor youth!"

"To know, is something at least toward preventing it If, therefore, thou art not, as I believe indeed thou art, merely mocking me, I pray thee tell me, whither are they conveying her? Where will she soon be?"

"To the camp of Manlius, nigh Fiesolè! In the arms of one Lucius Sergius Catiline—a great admirer of your

auburn−haired, blue−eyed beauties, my Arvina."

The young man, with his eyes gleaming and his face crimsoning with furious rage, made two steps forward, and seizing the burly traitor by the throat, compressed his gul let, as if in an iron vice, and shook him to and fro as easily as if he had been a stripling.

"Shame on thee, filth and carrion that thou art, so to speak of a betrothed bride to her promised husband! It it were true, wretched villain! I would save the hangman his task, and break your traitor's throat with this hand—but thou liest! thou liest!" he shouted, pushing him to the other end of the narrow sleeping chamber. "In poor revenge thou liest! But if you wish to live, beware how you so lie any more!"

"I do not lie indeed, my dear Arvina," replied the other in a bland fawning voice full of mock humility. "But, I prithee, boy, keep thy hands from my throat in future, unless thou wouldst desire to know how a crook−bladed sica some sixteen inches long feels in the region of thy heart. Such an one as this, Arvina," he added, showing a long keen weapon not unlike a Turkish yatagan in shape, which he drew from beneath his pillow. Then casting it aside, with a contemptuous gesture, he continued—"But this is mere child's play. Now mark me. I did not lie, nor do! Aulus Fulvius wrote the letter—Aulus Fulvius' slave carried it, yester−even—Aulus Fulvius beset the road by which they must come—Aulus Fulvius is ere this time on his road many a league conveying her to Catiline—and this," he said, putting a small slip of parchment into the hands of the astonished Paullus, "is Aulus Fulvius' handwriting. Yes! certainly, that is his S in the word Salutem. He affects ever the Greek sigma in his writing. He is a very pretty penman, Aulus Fulvius!"

The strip of parchment bore these words:

"Whom I am you will know by the matter. The camp in Etruria will receive the dove from the Latin villa. All hath succeeded—health!"

"I found it on my desk, when I returned from supper this morning. Aulus's slave brought it hither. He is within, if thou wouldst speak him.

Arvina staggered back like a man who has received a mortal stab, as he read those fatal words; and stared about him with a wild and wandering eye.

It was a moment or two before he could find any speech, and when he did speak at length, it was in tones so altered and broken that his nearest friend would not have recognized his voice.

"Wherefore"—he gasped—"Wherefore have you done this to me."

"For vengeance!" thundered the proud conspirator, casting his crimson−bordered toga over his laticlavian tunic. "For vengeance, boy. Lead on—lead on to your con sul."

"In what have I wronged you?" cried Arvina, in a paroxysm of almost unspeakable despair. "In what, that you should take such infernal vengeance?"

"For Julia's love thou didst betray Catiline! betray *us!* In Julia's infamy thou shalt be punished!"

"Anything! anything! anything but this—strike here, strike here with that sica, thou didst unsheath but now. Slay me, by inches if thou wilt—but spare her, oh! by your mother's memory! oh! by your sister's honor! spare her, and I will—"

"Lead on! To your consul!" exclaimed Lentulus waving his hand proudly to the door. "I can but die— the Gods be thanked for it! Thy life is bitterer than many deaths already! I say, coward and fool, lead on! Where is thy boasted pride? In the dust! at my feet! I trample, I spit on it! once again to your consul!"

"And thou couldst save her!"

"By a word! At a hint from me Fulvius will set her free."

"But that word? but that hint?—"

"My lips shall never utter—my hand indite; unless—"

"Unless? unless what?—speak! speak, Lentulus. By the Gods! By your head! By your life! speak."

"Place me beyond the walls of Rome, with twenty of my freedmen, armed and mounted—it can be done on the instant; they are here; they are ready!—and Julia shall be in thy bosom ere to−morrow's sun shall sink behind the hills of Latium!"

"A Traitor to my country! Lentulus, never!"

"Tush! boy! think upon beautiful, soft, weeping, *innocent* Julia rescued by thee from Catiline—from pollution— think on her gratitude, her love, her kiss! Think on a life, a whole long life, of rapture!—and then balance against it one small foolish word—"

"Dishonor!" Arvina interrupted him fiercely.

"Aye! to which thou consignest Julia, whom thou *lovest!* Kind Venus guard me from such lovers!"

"Dishonor never can come nigh her," replied Arvina, who had recovered his senses completely, and who, though unutterably wretched, was now as firm and as cold as marble. "Death it may be, but not dishonor!"

"Be it so," answered Lentulus. "We will leave her the option of the two, but believe me, when dishonor is pleasant, women rarely choose death in preference to it. You have had your option too, my Arvina. But I, it seems, can have none, but must wait upon your consul."

"You have the same which you give Julia!" answered Paullus, sternly. "There is your dagger, and your heart here!" he added, laying his hand on the broad breast of the infamous Patrician.

"True! count its pulses—cooler, I think, and more regular than thine, Paullus. Tush! man! I know a hundred wiser things and pleasanter than dying. But once more, lead on! I will speak no word again till I speak to the consul!"

And without farther words he strode to the door, followed closely by the young soldier, resolute and determined to perform his duty, let what might come of it! He passed through his marble peristyles, looked with a cool eye on his flowery parterres and sparkling fountains, nodded a careless adieu to his slaves and freedmen, and entered the Atrium where Arvina's troopers awaited him, wondering and impatient at the long delay.

With a proud gesture he waved his hand toward the door, and six of the number marched forward, three and three, while the rest falling into regular array behind him, escorted him with all respect, but with stern watchfulness, along the Via Sacra to the Carinæ.

Quickly arriving at the Atrium of Cicero's house, which was filled with his friends and clients all in arms, and with many knights and patricians, whom he knew, but no one of whom saluted or seemed to recognize him, he was admitted into the Tablinum, or saloon, at the doors of which six lictors were on guard with their fasces.

On entering this small but sumptuous chamber he found assembled there already, Cethegus, Statilius, and Gabinius, silent, with white lips, in an agony of terror worse than death.

"Ha! my friends!" he exclaimed, with an unaltered mien and voice, "We are met once again. But we seem not, by all the Gods! to be well pleased with the meeting. Why so downcast, Cethegus?"

"Because on earth it is our last meeting," he replied. And it was clear to see that the boldest and fiercest, and most furious of the band, while danger was afar, was the most utterly appalled now, when fate appeared imminent and certain.

"Why, then!" answered Lentulus, "we shall meet in Hell, Cethegus."

"By the Gods! jest not so foully—"

"Wherefore not, I prithee? If that this be our last meeting, good faith! let it be a merry one! I know not, for my part, what ails ye all."

"Are you mad? or know you not that Volturcius is a prisoner, and our letters in the hands of the consul? They will kill us ere noon."

"Then they must make haste, Caius. It is noon already. But, cheer thee up, be not so much afraid, my brave Cethegus— they dare not slay us."

"Dare not?"

"For their own lives, they dare not!" But as he spoke, raising his voice to its highest pitch, the curtains which closed the other end of the Tablinum were suddenly drawn back, and Cicero appeared, clad in his consular robes, and with his ivory staff in his hand. Antonius his colleague stood in the intercolumniation, with all the lictors at his back, and many knights in their appropriate tunics, but with military cloaks above them in place of the peaceful toga, and with their swords girded by their sides.

"Prætor," said Cicero in a dignified but serene voice, with no show of taunting or of triumph over his fallen enemy. "The Senate is assembled in the temple of Concord. The Fathers wait but for your coming. Give me your hand that I may conduct you thither."

"My hand, consul? Not as a friend's, I trust," said the undaunted Traitor.

"As a magistrate's, Cornelius Lentulus," replied Cicero severely, "whose hand, even if guilty, may not be polluted by an inferior's grasp."

"As a magistrate's you have it, consul. We go?"

"To the shrine of Concord! Antonius, my noble colleague, let us begone. Senators, follow us; escape you

cannot, if you would; and I would spare you the disgrace of chains."

"We follow, Cicero," answered Cethegus in a hollow voice, and casting his eyes with a wild and haggard expression on Gabinius, he added in a whisper, "to our death!"

"Be it so!" replied the other. "One can but die once; and if his time be come, as well now as hereafter. I fear not death now, when I see it face to face. I think, I have heard thee say the same."

"He spoke," answered Statilius, with a bitter and sarcastic laugh, "of the death of others then. Would God, he *then* had met his own! So should we *now* have been innocent and fearless!"

"I at least, if not innocent, *am* fearless."

And watched on every side by the knights, and followed by the lictors, two behind each, the ringleaders of the plot, all save Cæparius who had fled, and Catiline—who was in open arms, an outlaw and proclaimed enemy of his country— the ringleaders were led away to trial.

The fate of Rome hung on the firmness of their judges.

CHAPTER XI. THE YOUNG PATRICIAN.

Not always robes of state are worn,
Most nobly by the nobly born.
H. W. H.

The light of that eventful morning, which broke, pregnant with ruin to the conspiracy, found Aulus Fulvius and his band, still struggling among the rugged defiles which it was necessary to traverse, in order to gain the Via Cassia or western branch of the Great North Road.

It had been necessary to make a wide circuit, in order to effect this, inasmuch as the Latin road, of which the Labican way was a branch, left the city to the South−eastward, nearly opposite to the Flaminian, or north road, so that the two if prolonged would have met in the forum, and made almost a right line.

Nor had this been their only difficulty, for they had been compelled to avoid all the villages and scattered farm houses, which lay on their route, in the fear that Julia's outcries and resistance—for she frequently succeeded in removing the bandage from her mouth—would awaken suspicion and cause their arrest, while in the immediate vicinity of Rome.

At one time, the party had been within a very few miles of the city, passing over the Tiber, scarce five miles above the Mulvian bridge, about an hour before the arrest of the ambassadors; and it was from this point, that Aulus sent off his messenger to Lentulus, announcing his success, thereby directly disobeying the commands of Catiline, who had enjoined it on him almost with his last words, to communicate this enterprise to none of his colleagues in guilt.

Crossing the Flaminian, or great northern road, they had found a relay of fresh horses, stationed in a little grove, of which by this time they stood greatly in need, and striking across the country, at length reached the Cassian road, near the little river Galera, just as the sun rose above the eastern hills.

At this moment they had not actually effected above ten miles of their journey, as reckoned from the gates of Rome to the camp of Catiline, which was nearly two hundred miles distant, though they had traversed nearly forty during the night, in their wearisome but unavoidable circuit.

They were, however, admirably mounted on fresh horses, and had procured a *cisium*, or light carriage for two persons, not much unlike in form to a light gig, in which they had placed the unhappy Julia, with a slight boy, the son of Caius Crispus, as the driver.

By threats of the most atrocious nature, they had at length succeeded in compelling her to temporary silence. Death she had not only despised, but implored, even when the point of their daggers were razing the skin of her soft neck; and so terribly were they embarrassed and exasperated by her persistence, that it is probable they would have taken her life, had it not been for fear of Catiline, whose orders were express to bring her to his camp alive and in honor.

At length Aulus Fulvius had threatened in the plainest language outrages so enormous, that the poor girl's spirit sank, and that she took an oath, in order to avoid immediate indignities, and those the most atrocious, to remain silent during the next six hours.

Had she been able to possess herself of any weapon, she would undoubtedly have destroyed herself, as the only means she could imagine of escaping what to her was worse than loss of life, the loss of honor; and it was chiefly in the hope of effecting this ere nightfall, that she took the oath prescribed to her, in terms of such tremendous sanctity, that no Roman would dream of breaking it, on any pretext of compulsion.

Liberated by their success in this atrocious scheme, from that apprehension, they now pushed forward rapidly, and reached the station at Baccanæ, in a wooded gorge between a range of low hills, and a clear lake, at about nine in the morning, of our time, or the third hour by Roman computation.

Here they obtained a fresh horse for the vehicle which carried Julia, and tarrying so long only as to swallow a draught of wine, they pressed onward through a steep defile along which the road wound among wooded crags toward Sutrium.

At this place, which was a city of some note, they were joined by forty or fifty partisans, well armed and mounted on good horses, all veteran soldiers who had been settled on the confiscated estates of his enemies by the

great usurper Sylla, and thenceforth feeling themselves strong enough to overawe any opposition they might meet on the way, they journeyed at a slower rate in perfect confidence of success, numbering now not less than sixty well−equipped Cavaliers.

Before noon, they were thirty miles distant from Rome, and had reached the bottom of a long and almost precipitous ascent where the road, scorning any divergence to the right or left, scaled the abrupt heights of a craggy hill, known at the present day as the Monte Soriano, the ancient name of which has not descended to these times.

Scarcely however had they reached the first pitch of the hill, in loose and straggling order, when the rearmost rider, came spurring furiously to the head of the column, and announced to Aulus Fulvius, that they were pursued by a body of men, nearly equal to themselves in number, who were coming up at a rate so rapid, as made it certain that they would be overtaken, encumbered as they were with the wheeled carriage conveying the hapless Julia.

A brief council was held, in which, firmly resisting the proposal of the new−comers to murder their captive, and disperse in small bodies among the hills, Aulus Fulvius and Caius Crispus determined on dividing their men into two parties. The first of these, commanded by the smith, and consisting of two−thirds of their whole force, was destined to press forward as rapidly as possible; while Fulvius, with the second, should make a charge down hill upon the pursuers, by which it was hoped that they might be so effectually checked and alarmed as to give up the pursuit.

No time was lost in the execution, a second horse was attached to the *cisium*, for they had many sumpter animals along with them, and several spare chargers; and so much speed did they make, that Crispus had reached the summit of the ridge and commenced the descent before the pursuers had come up with Fulvius and the rear.

There is a little hollow midway the ascent, which is thickly set with evergreen oaks, and hollies, and in the centre of this hollow, the road makes a turn almost at right angles.

Behind the corner of the wood, which entirely concealed them from any persons coming up the hill, Aulus drew up his men in double lines, and as the band, whom he suspected to be in pursuit of him, came into the open space, in loose array, and with their horses blown and weary, he charged upon them with a fierce shout, and threw them into disorder in a moment.

Nothing could indicate more clearly, the utter recklessness of the Catilinarian party, and the cheap estimate at which they held human life, than the perfect unconcern with which they set upon a party of men, whose identity with those whom they feared was so entirely unproved.

Nothing, at the same time, could indicate more clearly, the fury and uncalculating valor which had grown up among them, nurtured by the strange policy of Catiline, during a peace of eighteen years' duration.

Eighteen men, for, Aulus Fulvius included, they numbered no more, set fiercely upon a force of nearly three times their number, with no advantage of arms or accoutrement, or even of discipline, for although all old soldiers, these men had not, for years, been accustomed to act together, nor were any of them personally acquainted with the young leader, who for the first time commanded them.

The one link which held them together, was welded out of crime and desperation. Each man knew that his neighbor, as well as himself, must win or die—there was no compromise, no half−way measure that could by any possibility preserve them.

And therefore as one man they charged, as one man they struck, and death followed every blow.

At their first onset, with horses comparatively fresh, against the blown chargers and disordered mass of their pursuers, they were entirely successful. Above a dozen of their opponents went down horse and man, and the remainder were driven scattering along the slope, nearly to the foot of the declivity.

Uncertain as he had been at the first who were the men, whom he thus recklessly attacked, Aulus Fulvius had not well turned the angle of the wood, before he recognized the faces of almost all the leading men of the opposite party.

They were the oldest and most trusty of the clients of his house; and half a dozen, at the least, of his own name and kindred led them.

It needed not a moment therefore, to satisfy him that they were in quest of himself, and of himself alone—that they were no organized troop and invested with no state authority, but merely a band suddenly collected from his father's household, to bring him back in person from the fatal road on which he had entered so fatally.

Well did he know the rigor of the old Roman law, as regarded the paternal power, and well did he know, the

severity with which his father would execute it.

The terrors inspired by the thought of an avenging country, would have been nothing—the bare idea of being surrendered a fettered captive to his dread father's indignation, maddened him.

Fiercely therefore, as he rushed out leading his ambushed followers, the fury of his first charge was mere boy's play when compared to the virulent and concentrated rage with which he fought, after he had discovered fairly against whom he was pitted.

Had his men shared his feeling, the pursuers must have been utterly defeated and cut to pieces, without the possibility of escape.

But while he recognized his personal enemies in the persons he attacked, the men who followed him as quickly perceived that those, whom they were cutting down, were not regular soldiers, nor led by any Roman magistrate.

They almost doubted, therefore, as they charged, whether they were not in error; and when the horsemen of the other faction were discomfitted and driven down the hill on the instant, they felt no inclination to pursue or harass them farther.

Not so, however, Aulus. He had observed in the first onset, the features of a cousin, whom he hated; and now, added to other motives, the fierce thirst for his kinsman's blood, stirred his blood almost into frenzy. Knowing, moreover, that he was himself the object of their pursuit, he knew likewise that the pursuit would not be given up for any casual check, but that to conquer, he must crush them.

Precipitately, madly therefore he drove down the hill, oversetting horseman after horseman, the greater part of them unwounded—for the short Roman sword, however efficient at close quarters and on foot, was a most ineffective weapon for a cavalier—until he reached the bottom of the hill.

There he reined up his charger for a moment, and looked back, waving his hand and shouting loudly to bring on his comrades to a second charge.

To his astonishment, however, he saw them collected in a body at nearly a mile's distance, on the brow of the first hill, beckoning him to come back, and evidently possessed by no thought, less than that of risking their lives or liberty by any fresh act of hostility.

In the mean time, the fugitives, who had now reached the level ground and found themselves unpressed, began to halt; and before Aulus Fulvius had well made up his mind what to do, they had been rallied and reformed, and were advancing slowly, with a firm and unbroken front, well calculated to deter his handful, which had already been diminished in strength, by one man killed, and four or five more or less severely wounded, from rashly making any fresh attack.

Alone and unsupported, nothing remained for him but to retreat if possible, and make his way back to his people, who, he felt well assured would again charge, if again menaced with pursuit. To do this, however, had now ceased to be an easy, perhaps to be a feasible matter.

Between himself and his own men, there were at least ten of his father's clients; several of them indeed were wounded, and all had been overthrown in the shock either by himself or his troopers; but they had all regained their horses, and—apparently in consequence of some agreement or tacit understanding with his comrades, were coming down the hill at a gentle trot to rejoin their own party.

Now it was that Aulus began to regret having sent forward the smith, and those of the conspirators to whom he was individually known, with Julia in the van. Since of the fellows who had followed him thus far, merely because inferior will always follow superior daring, and who now appeared mightily inclined to desert him, not three were so much as acquainted with his name, and not one had any intimacy with him, or indeed any community of feeling unless it were the community of crime.

These things flashed upon Aulus in an instant; the rather that he saw the hated cousin, whom he had passed unnoticed in his headlong charge, quietly bringing the clients into line between himself and his wavering associates.

He was in fact hemmed in on every side; he was alone, and his horse, which he had taxed to the uttermost, was wounded and failing fast.

His case was indeed desperate, for he could now see that his own faction were drawing off already with the evident intention of rejoining the bulk of the party, careless of his fate, and glad to escape at so small a sacrifice.

Still, even in this extremity he had no thought of surrender— indeed to him death and surrender were but two names for one thing.

He looked to the right and to the left, if there were any possibility of scaling the wooded slopes and so rejoining the sturdy swordsmith without coming to blows again with his father's household; but one glance told him that such hopes were vain indeed. On either hand the crags rose inaccessible even to the foot of man, unless he were a practised mountaineer.

Then rose the untamed spirit of his race, the firm Roman hardihood, deeming naught done while anything remains to do, and holding all things feasible to the bold heart and ready hand—the spirit which saved Rome when Hannibal was thundering at her gates, which made her from a petty town the queen and mistress of the universe.

He gathered his reins firmly in his hand, and turning his horse's head down the declivity put the beast to a slow trot, as if he had resolved to force his way toward Rome; but in a moment, when his manoeuvre had, as he expected caused the men in his rear to put their horses to their speed, and thus to break their line, he again wheeled, and giving his charger the spur with pitiless severity drove up the steep declivity like a thunderbolt, and meeting his enemies straggling along in succession, actually succeeded in cutting down two, before he was envelopped, unhorsed and disarmed, which, as his cousin's men came charging up and down the road at once, it was inevitable that he must be from the beginning.

"Curses upon thee! it is thou!" he said, grinding his teeth and shaking his weaponless hand at his kinsman in impotent malignity—"it is thou! Caius. Curses upon thee! from my birth thou hast crossed me."

"It were better thou hadst died, Aulus," replied the other solemnly, but in sorrow more than anger, "better that thou hadst died, than been so led back to Rome."

"Why didst *thou* not kill me then?" asked Aulus with a sneer of sarcastic spite—"Why dost thou not kill me now."

"Thou art *sacro sanctus!*" answered the other, with an expression of horror in his eyes—"doomed, set apart, sanctified unto destruction—words, alas! henceforth avail nothing. Bind him"—he continued, turning toward his men—"Bind him, I say, hard, with his hands behind his back, and his legs under his horse's belly! Go your way," he added, "Go to your bloody camp, and accursed leader"— waving his hand as he spoke, to the veterans above, who seemed half inclined to make an effort to rescue the prisoner. "Go your way. We have no quarrel with you now; we came for him, and having got him we return."

"What?" cried the dark−eyed boy who had come up too late to the Latin villa on the preceding night, and who, strange to state, was riding with the clients of the Fulvian house, unwearied—"What, will you not save *her?* will you not do that for which alone I led ye hither? will you be falsifiers of your word and dishonored?"

"Alas!" answered Caius Fulvius, "it is impossible.— We are outnumbered, my poor boy, and may not aid you, as we would; but be of good cheer, this villain taken, they will not dare to harm her."

The youth shook his nead mournfully; but made no reply.

Aulus, however, who had heard all that was said, glared savagely upon the boy, and after examining his features minutely for a moment exclaimed—"I know thy face! who art thou! quick thy name?"

"I have no name!" replied the other gloomily.

"That voice! I know thee!" he shouted, an expression of infernal joy animating his features. "Thou miserable fool, and driveller! and is it for this—for this, that thou hast brought the bloodhounds on my track, to restore *her* to *him?* Mark me, then, mark me, and see if I am not avenged—her dishonor, her agony, her infamy are no less certain than my death. Catiline, Catiline shall avenge me upon her—upon him—upon thee—thou weaker, more variable thing than—woman! Catiline! think'st thou he will fail?"

"He hath failed ere now!" replied the boy proudly.

"Failed! when?" exclaimed Aulus, forgetting his own situation in the excitement of the wordy contest.

"When he crossed me"—then turning once more to the leader of the Fulvian clients, the dark−eyed boy said in a calm determined voice, "You will not, therefore, aid me?"

"We cannot."

"Enough! Look to him, then, that he escape you not."

"Fear us not. But whither goest thou?"

"To rescue Julia. Tell thou to Arvina how these things have fallen out, and whither they have led her; and, above all, that one is on her traces who will die or save her."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Aulus savagely in the glee of his vengeful triumph. "Thou wilt die, but not save her. I am

avenged, already—avenged in Julia's ruin!"

"Wretch!" exclaimed his kinsman, indignant and disgusted— "almost it shames me that my name is Fulvius! Fearful, however, is the punishment that overhangs thee! think on that, Aulus! and if shame fetter not thy tongue, at least let terror freeze it."

"Terror? of whom? perhaps of thee, accursed?"

"Aulus. Thou hast—a father!"

At that word father, his eyes dropped instantly, their haughty insolence abashed; his face turned deadly pale; his tongue *was* frozen; he spoke no word again until at an early hour of morning, they reached the house he had so fatally dishonored.

Meanwhile, as the party, who had captured him, returned slowly with their prisoner down the mountain side, the last of the rebels having gallopped off long before to join the swordsmith and his gang, the boy, who took so deep an interest in Julia, dismounted from the white horse, which had borne him for so many hours with unabated fire and spirit, and leaving the high road, turned into a glade among the holm oaks, watered by a small streamlet, leading his courser by the rein.

Having reached a secluded spot, quite removed from sight of the highway, he drew from a small wallet, which was attached to the croupe, some pieces of coarse bread and a skin of generous wine, of which he partook sparingly himself, giving by far the larger portion to his four−footed friend, who greedily devoured the cake saturated with the rich grape−juice.

This done he fastened the beast to a tree so that he could both graze and drink from the stream; and then throwing himself down at length on the grass, he soon fell into a heavy and quiet sleep.

It was already sunset, when he awoke, and the gray hues of night were gathering fast over the landscape; but he seemed to care nothing for the approaching darkness as he arose reinvigorated and full of spirit, and walked up to his horse which whinnied his joyful recognition, and tossed his long thin mane with a spirited and fiery air, as he felt the well−known hand clapping his high arched crest.

"Courage! brave horse," he cried—"Courage, White Ister. We will yet save her, for—Arvina!"

And, with the words he mounted, and cantered away through the gloom of the woodland night, on the road toward Bolsena, well assured of the route taken by Caius Crispus and his infernal crew.

CHAPTER XII THE ROMAN FATHER.

Daughter, He fled.
That Flight was parricide.
Mason's Caractacus.

The streets of Rome were in fierce and terrible confusion all that day long, on which the conspirators were arrested, and all the night that followed it.

Late on the evening of that day, when it was already dark, the Consul had addressed the people by torch−light in the forum, delivering that superb speech, known as the third oration against Catiline.

In it, he had informed them clearly of all the events which had occurred in the last twenty−four days, since the delivery of his second speech, more especially treating of those which had taken place in the preceding day and night.

The conspiracy made manifest by overwhelming evidence— the arrest of the ambassadors, the seizure of the letters, the acknowledgment of those letters for their own by the terrified and bewildered traitors, and lastly the committal of the ringleaders of the plot to close custody, previous to the discussion of their fate—such were the wondrous and exciting facts, which he had announced to the assembled multitudes, inviting them to join him in a solemn thanksgiving to the Gods, and public celebration, decreed by the Senate to his honor; congratulating them on their escape from a danger so imminent and so general; and calling on them, in conclusion, to watch over the safety of the city by nocturnal guards and patroles, as they had done so diligently during all that emergency.

The thundering acclamations, which greeted the close of that luculent and powerful exposition, the zeal with which the concourse hailed him unanimously Savior of Rome and Father of his country, the eagerness of affection with which all ranks and ages thronged around him, expressing their gratitude and their devotion, by all means imaginable, proved satisfactorily that, whatever might have been the result had massacre, plunder, and conflagration fallen upon them unawares, the vast mass of the people were now loyal, and true to their country.

The seven hills never had resounded with louder din of civic triumph, than they did on that glorious night; not when the noble Scipio triumphed for Carthage overthrown; not when the mighty Marius, begirt with a host of captives and all the pomp of war, dismounted, happiest of men, from his Teutonic Car.

The streets were as light as day with the glare of lamps, and torches, and bonfires blazing on all the circumjacent heights, as with tremendous shouts, and unpremeditated triumph, the mighty multitude escorted the great Consul home, not to his own house, where the rites of the Good Goddess were in celebration, and whither no male could be admitted, but to his next−door neighbor's mansion, in which he and his friends were entertained with more than regal splendor.

What could have been more glorious, what more unmixed with any touch of bitterness, or self reproach, than Cicero's position on that evening?

His country saved from miseries unparalleled—saved by himself alone—no aid of rival generals, no force of marshalled hosts to detract from the greatness of his own achievement— all the strife borne, all the success won, all the glory conquered by the force of his own genius, of his own
Quid illo cive tulisset
Natura in terris quid Roma beatius unquam,
Si circumducto captivoum agmine, et omni
Bellorum pompa, animam exhalasset opimam,
Quum de Teutonico vellet descendere Curru. moral resolution. No blood of friends had been spilt to buy that conquest, and wring its tribute of anguished sorrow from eyes bright with the mixed excitement of regret and triumph—no widow's tears, no orphan's sighs, had mounted heavenward amid those joyous conclamations.

With no sword drawn, with no army arrayed, alone in his peaceful toga, he had conquered the world's peace; and, for that night at least, be enjoyed, as his great merit's meed, a world's gratitude.

All night long had the streets been crowded with loud and ardent throngs of all ages, sexes, ranks, conditions, questioning, cheering, carolling, carousing—all, in appearance at least, unanimous in joy; for none dared in such an ebullition of patriotic feeling to display any disaffection.

And the morrow dawned upon Rome, still noisy, still alive with tumultuous joy, still filled, through the whole area within its walls, by thousands, and tens of thousands, hoarse with shouting, weary almost of revelling, haggard and pale from the excess of excitement.

Such was the scene, which the metropolis of the world presented, when at the second hour of the morning, on the day following the arrest of Lentulus, a small party consisting of about fifty horsemen, conducting a prisoner, with his arms bound behind his back, gagged, and with the lappet of his cloak so disposed as to conceal his face, entered the Quirinal gate, from the direction of the Flaminian way.

They were the clients of the Fulvian House, leading the miserable Aulus homeward, under the command of his cousin. The horses were jaded, and bleeding from many a spur gall; the men were covered with dust and sweat; and several of their number were wounded; but, what at once struck the minds of all who beheld them, was that their faces, although stern and resolute, were grave, dejected and sad, while still it would seem that they were returning in triumph from some successful expedition.

At any other time, the entrance of such a party would have awakened much astonishment and surprise, perhaps might have created a tumult among the excitable and easily agitated Romans; but now so strangely had the popular mind been stimulated during the last days, that they either paid no attention to the train at all, or observed, pointing to the prisoner, that there went another of the parricides.

Just. however, as the new−comers entered the gate, another armed band met them, moving outward; the latter being a full troop, thirty in number, of cavalry of the seventh legion, with a banner, and clarion, and Paullus Arvina at their head, in complete armor, above which he wore a rich scarlet cloak, or *paludamentum*, floating over his left shoulder.

The face of the young man was as pale as that of a corpse, his eyes were sunken, and surrounded by dark circles, his cheeks were hollow, and among the short black curls, which were visible beneath the brazen peak of his sculptured casque, there was one as white as snow.

Since the dread news had reached him of Julia's abduction, he had not closed his eyes for a moment; and, although scarcely eight and forty hours had elapsed, since he received the fatal intelligence, he had grown older by many years.

No one, who looked upon him, would have judged him to be younger than thirty−five or forty years, when he was in truth little more than half way on life's journey toward the second period.

There was a cold firm determination too written on all his features, such as is rarely seen in young men; and the wild vacillating light which used to flicker so changefully over his fine face, was lost in an expression of mournful and despairing resolution.

Still his attitude on his charger's back was fine and spirited; his head was proudly erect: and his voice, as from time to time, he uttered some command to his troopers, was clear, steady, and sonorous.

So much indeed was he altered, that Caius Fulvius, who knew him well, gazed at him doubtfully for half a minute ere he addressed him, as the two troops came almost into contact, the mounted clients of the Fulvian House, withdrawing to the wayside to allow the legionaries to pass.

Assured at last that it was indeed Arvina, he called out as he passed—

"Tell me, I pray thee, Paullus, what means this concourse in the streets? hath aught of ill befallen?"

"Ha! is it thou, Caius Fulvius?" replied Arvina. "I will speak with thee anon. Lead the men forward," he added, turning round in his saddle to the second Decurion of his troop, "my good Drusus. I will overtake you, ere you shall reach the Mulvian bridge." Here wheeling his horse to the side of the young nobleman, "Where hast thou been, Caius, that thou hast not heard? All the conspirators have been arrested. Lentulus, and Cethegus, Gabinius, Statilius, and Cæparius! They have confessed their letters—the Gaulish ambassadors, and Titus Volturcius have given evidence against them. The senate is debating even now on their doom."

"Indeed! indeed! when did all this fall out?" enquired the other evidently in great astonishment.

"Yesterday morning they were taken. The previous night, in the third watch, the ambassadors were stopped on the Mulvian bridge, and the treasonable papers found on Volturcius."

"Ha! this is indeed news!" cried Caius. "What will befall Lentulus and the rest? Do men know anything!"

"Death!" answered Arvina gravely.

"Death! art thou certain? A Prætor, a consular of Rome! and all the others Senators! Death! Paullus?"

"Death!" replied the other still more solemnly, than before. "Yet methinks! that rather should be a boon, than

the fit penalty of such guilt! But where have you been, that you are ignorant of all this, and whom have you there?"

Caius Fulvius shook his head sorrowfully, and a deep groan burst from the lips of the muffled man, a groan of rage mingled with hate and terror.

"I will tell *thee*, Arvina," said the young man, after a moment's pause, during which Paullus had been gazing with a singular, and even to himself incomprehensible, emotion at the captive horseman. "We have been sent to fetch *him* back," and he pointed to his wretched cousin, "as he fled to join Catiline. We overtook him nigh to Volsinii."

"Who—who—" exclaimed Arvina in a terrible hoarse voice—"By all the Gods! who is he?—"

"Aulus—"

"Ha! villain! villain! He shall die by my hand! burst from Arvina's lips with a stifled cry, and drawing his sword as he spoke, he made toward him.

But Caius Fulvius, and several others of the clients threw themselves into the way, and the former said quietly but very firmly, "No—no, my Paullus, that must not be. His life is devoted to a baser doom; nor must his blood be shed by a hand so noble! But wherefore—Ha!" he exclaimed, interrupting himself in mid speech. "Ha! Julia, I remember—I remember—would to the Gods I could have rescued her."

For one second's space Paullus Arvina glared upon the speaker, as if he would have stabbed him where he sat on his horse motionless and unresisting; then, shaking his head with an abrupt impatient motion as if to rid himself of some fixed image or impression, he said,

"You are right, Caius. But tell me! by the Gods! was she with him? saw you aught of her, as you took him?"

"She was in his power, my poor Paullus, as we were told at Sutrium; but when we overtook him, he had sent forward all his band but a small party, who fought so hard and handled us so roughly, that, he once taken, we dared not set on them again. But, be of good cheer, my Paullus. There is a gallant youth on the track of them; the same youth who went to save her at the Latin villa but arrived too late; the same who brought us the tidings of yon villain's flight, who led us in pursuit of them. He follows still, and swears that he will save her! The Gods grant it?"

"A youth, ha! who is he?"

"I know not. He refused to tell us, still saying that he was nameless. A slight slender black−eyed youth. Exceeding dark−complexioned, but handsome withal. You would have said, to look on him, he would lack strength to ride an hour; yet, by the God of Faith! he was in the saddle incessantly for nearly forty hours, and shewed less weariness than our sturdiest men. Never saw I such fiery will, and resolute endurance, in one so young and feeble."

"Strange!" muttered Paullus—"strange! why came he not to me?"

"He did go to your mansion, but found you not. You were absent on state business—then came he to the father of this demon, who sent us in pursuit, and we have, as I tell you, succeeded. May you do so likewise! He charged me to say to you `there was one on her track who would die to save her.'"

"'Tis passing strange! I may not even guess who it should be," he added musing, "the Gods give him strength. But tell me, Caius, can I, by any speed, overtake them?"

"I fear me not, Paullus, ere they have reached the camp. They were nigh to Volsinii at noon yesterday; of course they will not loiter on the way."

"Alas!" replied the unhappy youth. "Curses! curses! ten thousand curses on his head!" and he glanced savagely upon Aulus as he spoke—"to what doom do ye lead him?"

"To an indignant father's pitiless revenge!"

"May he perish ill!—may his unburied spirit wander and wail forever upon the banks of Acheron, unpardoned and despairing!"

And turning suddenly away, as if afraid to trust himself longer in sight of his mortal enemy, he plunged his spurs deep into his charger's flank, and gallopped away in order to overtake his troop, with which he was proceeding to join the army which Antonius the consul and Petreius his lieutenant were collecting on the sea−coast of Errulla in order to act against Catiline.

Meanwhil the others rode forward on their gloomy errand toward the Fulvian House.

They reached its doors, and at the trampling of their horses' feet, before any summons had been given, with a

brow dark as night and a cold determined eye, the aged Senator came forth to meet his faithful clients.

At the first glance he cast upon the party, the old man saw that they had succeeded; and a strange expression of satisfaction mixed with agony crossed his stern face.

"It is well!" he said gravely. "Ye have preserved the honor of my house. I give ye thanks, my friends. Well have ye done your duty! It remains only that I do my own. Bring in your prisoner, Caius, and ye, my friends, leave us, I pray you, to our destiny."

The young man to whom he addressed himself, leaped down from his horse with one or two of the clients, and, unbuckling the thong which fastened his cousin's legs under the belly of the beast he rode, lifted him to the ground; for in a sort of sullen spite, although unable to resist, he moved neither hand nor foot, more than a marble statue would have done; and when he stood on the pavement, he made no step toward the door, and it was necessary to carry him bodily up the steps of the colonnade, and through the vestibule into the atrium.

In that vast hall a fearful group was assembled. On a large arm chair at the upper end sat an aged matron, perfectly blind, with hair as white as snow, and a face furrowed with wrinkles, the work of above a century. She was the mother of the Senator, the grandmother of the young culprit. At her right hand stood another large chair vacant, the seat of the master of the house; and at her left sat another lady, already far advanced in years, yet stately, firm, and unflinching—the wretched, but proud mother. Behiend her stood three girls of various ages, the youngest not counting above sixteen years, all beautiful, and finely made, but pale as death, with their superb dark eyes dilated and their white lips mute with strange horror.

Lower down the hall toward the door, and not far re moved from the altar of the household gods, near the impluvium, stood a black wooden block, with a huge broad axe lying on it, and a grim−visaged slave leaning against the wall with folded arms in a sort of stoical indifference— the butcher of the family. By his trade, he little cared whether he practised it on beasts or men; and perhaps he looked forward with some pleasurable feelings to the dealing of a blow against one of the proud lords of Empire.

No one could look upon that mute and sad assemblage without perceiving that some dread domestic tragedy was in process; but how dreadful no one could conceive, who was not thoroughly acquainted with the strange and tremendous rigor of the old Roman Law.

The face of the mother was terribly convulsed, as she heard the clanging hoof tramps at the door; and in an agony of unendurable suspense she laid her hand upon her heart, as if to still its wild throbbing.

Roman although she was, and trained from her childhood upward in the strictest school of Stoicism, he, on whom they were gathered there to sit in judgment, was still her first−born, her only son; and she could not but remember in this hour of wo the unutterable pleasure with which she had listened to the first small cry of him, then so innocent and weak and gentle, who now so strong in manhood and so fierce in sin, stood living on the verge of death.

But now as the clanging of the horse hoofs ceased, different sounds succeeded; and in a moment the anxious ears of the wife and mother could discern the footsteps of the proud husband, and the fallen child.

They entered the hall, old Aulus Fulvius striding with martial steps and a resolute yet solemn brow toward the chair of judgment, like to some warlike Flamen about to execute the wrath of the Gods upon his fated victim; the son shuffling along, with downcast eyes and an irregular pace, supported on one hand by his detested cousin, and on the other by an aged freedman of the house.

The head of the younger Aulus was yet veiled with the lappet of his gown; so that he had seen none of those who were then assembled, none of the fatal apparatus of his fore−ordered doom.

But now, as the old man took his seat, he made a movement with his hand, and Caius, obedient to the gesture, lifted the woollen covering from the son's brow, and released his hold of his arm. At a second wafture, the nephew and the freedman both departed, glad to be spared the witnessing a scene so awful as that which was about to ensue.

The sound of their departing footsteps fell with an icy chill on the stout heart of the young conspirator; and although he hated the man, who had just left the room, more than any living being, he would yet willingly have detained him at that crisis.

He felt that even hatred was less to be apprehended than the cold hard decision of the impassive unrelenting father, in whose heart every sentiment was dead but those of justice and of rigorous honor.

"Aulus, lift up your eyes!"

And, for the first time since he had entered the hall, the culprit looked up, and gazed with a wild and haggard eye on the familiar objects which met his glance on every side; and yet, familiar as they were, all seemed to be strange, altered, and unusual.

The statues of his dead ancestors, as they stood, grim and uncouth in their antique sculpture, between the pillars of the wall, seemed to dilate in size, and become gigantic, to frown stern contempt on their degenerate descendant. The grotesque forms of the Etruscan household Gods appeared to gibber at him; the very flames upon the altar, before them, cast lurid gleams and ominous to his distempered fancy.

It was singular, that the last thing which he observed was that, which would have been the first to attract the notice of a stranger—the block, the axe, and the sullen headsman.

A quick shudder ran through every limb and artery of his body, and he turned white and livid. His spirit was utterly appalled and broken; his aspect was that of a sneaking culprit, a mean craven.

"Aulus, lift up your eyes!"

And he did lift them, with a strong effort, to meet the fixed and searching gaze of his father; but so cold, so penetrating was that gaze, that his glance fell abashed, and he trembled from head to foot, and came well nigh to falling on the earth in his great terror.

"Aulus, art thou afraid to die?—thou, who hast sworn so deeply to dye thine hands in *my* gore, in the gore of all who loved their country? Art thou afraid to die, stabber, adulterer, poisoner, ravisher, parricide, Catilinarian? Art thou afraid to die? I should have thought, when thou didst put on such resolves, thou wouldst have cast aside all that is human! Once more, I say, art thou afraid to die?"

"To die!" he exclaimed in husky tones, which seemed to stick in his parched throat—"to die! to be nothing!"

And again the convulsive shudder ran through his whole frame.

But ere the Senator could open his lips to reply, the blind old grandam asked, in a voice so clear and shrill that its accents seemed to pierce the very souls of all who heard it—

"Is he a coward, Aulus Fulvius? Is he a coward, too, as well as a villain? The first of our race, is he a coward?"

"I fear it," answered the old man gloomily. "But, cowardly or brave, he must disgrace our house no farther. His time is come! his fate cries out for him! Aulus must die! happy to die without the taint of public and detected infamy—happy to die unseen in his father's house, not in the base and sordid Tullianum."

"Mother! mother!" exclaimed the wretched youth in a paroxysm of agony. "Sisters, speak for me—plead for me! I am young, oh, too young to die!"

"The mother, whom thou hast sworn to murder—the sisters, whose virgin youth thou hast agreed to yield to the licentious arms of thy foul confederates!" answered the old man sternly; while the women, with blanched visages, convulsed with agony, were silent, even to that appeal.

"Speak, speak! will you not speak for me, for your first−born son, my mother?"

"Farewell!"—the cold word came forth from her pallid lips, with a mighty effort—"Farewell, unhappy!" And, unable to endure the dreadful scene any longer, she arose from her seat, and laid her hand on the blind woman's arm. "Come," she said, "mother of my lord! our task is ended! his doom spoken! Let us go hence!"

But the youngest sister, overcoming her fear of the stern father, her modesty of youth, and her sense of high−strained honor, cast herself at the old man's feet, and clung about his knees, crying with a shrill painful cry—

"Oh, father! by your right hand! by your gray head! by all the Gods! I implore you, pardon, spare him!"

"Up! up! base girl!" cried the old man; "wouldst have the infamy of our house made public? and thou, most miserable ooy, spare ner, thou, this disgrace, and me this anguish—veil thy head! bow thee o the block! bid the slave do his office! At least, Aulus, if thou hast not lived, at least die, a Roman!"

The second of the girls, while her sister had made that fruitless appeal to the father's mercy, walked steadily to her brother, kissed his brow with a tearless eye, and in a low voice bade him "Farewell for ever!" then turned away, impassive as her father, and followed her mother and the blind grandam from the fatal hall.

But the third daughter stepped up to the faltering youth with a hectic flush on her cheek, and a fitful fire in her eye, and whispered in his ear,

"Aulus, my brother! unhappy one, it is vain! Thou *must* die, for our house's honor! Die, then, my brother, as it becomes a Fulvius, bravely, and by a free hand! Which of our house perished ever by a base weapon, or a slavish blow? Thou wert brave ever,—be brave now, oh! my brother!"

And at her words, his courage, his pride, rallied to his aid; and he met her eye with a flashing glance, and answered in a firm tone, "I *will*, sister. I will die as becomes a Roman, as becomes a Fulvius! But how shall I die by a free hand, bound as I am, and weaponless?"

"Thus, brother," she replied, drawing a short keen knife from the bosom of her linen stola; and severing the bonds which confined his elbows, she placed it in his hands. "It is keen! it will not fail you! it is the last gift of the last who loves you, Aulus!"

"The best gift! Farewell, sister!"

"Farewell, Aulus, for ever!" And she too kissed him on the brow; and as she kissed him, a hot tear fell upon his cheek. Then, turning toward her sister who was still clinging to the old man's knees, embarrassing him with useless prayers, so that he had observed none of that by−play, she said to her firmly,

"Come, little girl, come! It is fruitless! Bid him farewell! he is prepared to die! he cannot survive his honor!"

And she drew her away, screaming and struggling, with eyes deluged in tears, from the apartment wherein the Senator now stood face to face with his first born, the slave alone present as a witness of the last struggle.

But Aulus had by this time recovered all the courage of his race, all his own natural audacity; and waving his hand with a proud gesture toward the slave, he exclaimed in tones of severe authority:

"Dismiss that wretched slave, Aulus Fulvius. Ready I am to die—nay! I wish not to live! But it becomes not *thee* to doom me to such a death, nor *me* so to die! Noble I am, and free; and by a free hand will I die, and a noble weapon!"

There was so much command, so much high pride, and spirit, in his tone, his expression, and his gesture, that an answering chord was struck in the mind of the old man; so that without reply, and without evincing any surprise at seeing the youth's arms unbound, he waved a signal to the slave to depart from the atrium

Then the youth knelt down on one knee before the altar, and cried aloud in a solemn voice—

"Pardon me, ye Gods of our house, for this dishonor which I have brought upon you; absolve me, ye grand ancestors; mine eyes are open now, and I perceive the sin, the shame, the sorrow of my deeds! Absolve me, ye great Gods, and ye glorious men; and thou, my father, think sometimes of the son, whom it repented of his guilt, but whom it pained not"—he raised his arm aloft, and the bright knife−blade glittered in the rays of the altar−fire, when the old Senator sprang forward, with all his features working strangely, and cried "Hold!"

It might be that he had relented; but if it were so, it was too late; for, finishing his interrupted sentence with these words—

—"to die for his house's honor!"—

the young man struck himself one quick blow on the breast, with a hand so sure and steady, that the knife pierced through his ribs as if they had been paper, and clove his heart asunder, standing fixed hilt−deep in his chest; while, without word, or groan, or sigh or struggle, he dropped flat on his back beside the *impluvium*, and was dead in less time than it has taken to describe the deed.

The father looked on for a moment calmly; and then said in a cool hard voice, "It is well! it is well! The Gods be thanked! he died as a Roman should!"

Then he composed his limbs, and threw a white cloth which lay nigh the block, over the face and body of the wretched youth.

But, as he turned to leave the atrium, nature was too strong for his philosophy, for his pride; and crying out, "My son! my son! He was yet mine own son! mine own Aulus!" and burying his face in his toga, he burst into a paroxysm of loud grief, and threw himself at length on the dead body: father and son victims alike to the inexorable Roman honor!

CHAPTER XIII. THE DOOM.

Without debatement further, more or less,
He should the bearers put to sudden death,
Not striving time allowed.
Hamlet.

The nones of November were perilous indeed to Rome.

The conspirators, arrested two days previously, and fully convicted on the evidence of the Gaulish ambassadors, of Titus Volturcius of Crotona, and of Lucius Tarquinius,— convicted on the evidence of their own letters—and lastly convicted by their own admissions, were yet uncondemned and in free custody, as it was termed; under the charge of certain senators and magistrates, whose zeal for the republic was undoubted.

There was still in the city a considerable mass of men, turbulent, disaffected, ripe for tumult—there was still in the Senate a large party, not indeed favorable to the plot, but far from being unfavorable to the plotters,—Catiline was at the head of a power which had increased already to nearly the force of two legions, and was in full march upon Rome.

Should the least check of the armies sent against him occur under such circumstances, there was but little doubt that an eruption of the Gladiators, and a servile insurrection, would liberate the traitors, and perhaps even crown their frantic rashness with success.

Such was the state of things, on the morning of the nones; and the brow of the great Consul was dark, and his heart heavy, as he entered the Senate, convened on this occasion in the temple of Jupiter Stator, in order to take the voice of that body on the fate of Lentulus and the rest.

But scarcely had he taken his seat, before a messenger was introduced, breathless and pale, the herald of present insurrection.

The freedmen and clients of Lentulus were in arms; the gladiators and the slaves of Cethegus were up already, and hurrying through the streets toward the house of Quintus Cornificius, wherein their master was confined.

Many slaves of other houses, and no small number of disaffected citizens had joined them; and the watches were well nigh overpowered.

Ere long the roar of the mob might be heard even within those hallowed precincts, booming up from the narrow streets about the Forum, like the distant sound of a heavy surf.

Another, and another messenger followed the first in quick succession—one manipule of soldiers had been over−powered, and driven into some houses where they defended themselves, though hard set, with their missiles—the multitude was thundering at the gates of the City Prisons; and, if not quelled immediately, would shortly swell their numbers by the accession of all the desperate criminals, convicted slaves, and reckless debtors, who were crowded together in those abodes of guilt and wretchedness.

Then was it seen, when the howls of the rabble were echoing through the arches of the sanctuary wherein they sate; when massacre and conflagration were imminent, and close at hand; then was it seen, how much of real majesty and power resided still in the Roman Senate.

Firm, as when Hannibal was thundering at their gates, solemn as when the Gaul was ravaging their city, they sat, and debated, grave, fearless, and unmoved.

Orders were issued to concentrate forces upon the spot where the tumult was raging; the knights, who were collected under arms, in the whole force of their order, without the gates of the Temple as a guard to the Senate, were informed that the Fathers were sufficiently defended by their own sanctity; and were requested to march down upon the forum, and disperse the rioters.

The heavy tramp of their solid march instantly succeeded the transmission of the order; and, in a short time after, the deep swell of their charging shout rose high above the discordant clamors of the mob, from the hollow of the Velabrum.

Still, not a Senator left his seat, or changed countenance; although it might be seen, by the fiery glances and clinched hands of some among the younger nobles, that they would have gladly joined the knights, in charging their hereditary enemies, the Democratic rabble.

The question which was then debating was of more weight, however, than any triumph over the mob; for by the decision of that question it was to be determined whether the traitors and the treason should be crushed simultaneously and forever, or whether Rome itself should be abandoned to the pleasure of the rebels.

That question was the life or death of Lentulus, Cethe gus, Gabinius, Statilius, and Cæparius; all of whom were in separate custody, the last having been brought in on the previous evening, arrested on his way to the camp of Catiline and Manlius.

Should the Senate decree their death, the commonwealth might be deemed safe—should it absolve them, by that weakness, the republic must be lost.

And on the turn of a die did that question seem to hang.

Decius Junius Silanus, whose opinion was first asked, spoke briefly, but strenuously and to the point, and as became the Consul elect, soon to be the first magistrate of that great empire. He declared for the capital punishment of all those named above, and of four others, Lucius Cassius, Publius Furius, Publius Umbrenus, and Quintus Annius, if they should be thereafter apprehended.

Several others of the high Patrician family followed on the same side; and no one had as yet ventured openly to urge the impunity of the parricides, although Tiberius Nero had recommended a delay in taking the question, and the casting of the prisoners meanwhile into actual incarceration under the safeguard of a military force.

But it had now come to the turn of Caius Julius Cæsar, the great leader then of the Democratic faction, the great captain that was to be in after days, and the first Emperor of subjugated Rome.

An orator second, if second, to Cicero alone, ardent, impassioned, yet bland, clement, easy; liberal both of hand and council; averse to Cicero from personal pique, as well as from party opposition; an eager candidate for popular applause and favor, it was most natural that he should take side with the conspirators.

Still, his name having been coupled obscurely with their infamous designs, although Cicero had positively refused to suffer his accusation or impeachment, it required so much boldness, so much audacity indeed, to enable him to stand forward as their open champion, that many men disbelieved that he would venture on a step so hazardous.

The greatest possible anxiety was manifested, therefore, in the house, when that distinguished Senator arose, and began in low, deep, harmonious tones, and words which rolled forth like a gentle river in an easy and silvery flow.

"It were well," he said, "Conscript Fathers, that all men who debate on dubious matters, should be unbiassed in opinion by hate or friendship, clemency or anger. When passions intervene, the mind can rarely perceive truth; nor hath at one time any man obeyed his interests and his pleasures. The intellect there prevails, where most it is exerted. If passion governs it, passion hath the sole sway; reason is powerless. It were an easy task for me, Conscript Fathers, to quote instances in which kings and nations, impelled by enmity or pity, have taken unadvised and evil counsels; but I prefer to cite those, wherein our ancestors, defying the influence of passion, have acted well and wisely. During the Macedonian war which we waged against King Perseus, the state of Rhodes, splendid then and stately, which had been built up by the aid and opulence of Rome, proved faithless to us, and a foe. Yet, when, the war being ended, debate was had concerning her, our fathers suffered her citizens to go unpunished, in order that no men might infer that Rome had gone to war for greed, and not for just resentment. Again, in all the Punic wars, although the Carthaginians repeatedly committed outrages against them, in violation both of truce and treaties, never once did they follow that example, considering rather what should seem worthy of themselves, than what might be inflicted justly on their foes.

"This same consideration you should now take, Conscript Fathers; having care that the crimes of Publius Lentulus and his fellows weigh not upon your minds with greater potency, than your own dignity and honor; and that ye obey not rather the dictates of resentment, than the teachings of your old renown. For if a punishment worthy their crimes can be discovered, I approve of it, of how new precedent soever; but if the enormity of their guilt overtop the invention of all men, then, I shall vote that we abide by the customs, prescribed by our laws and institutions.

"Many of those who have already spoken, have dilated in glowing and set phrases on the perils which have menaced the republic. They have descanted on the horrors of warfare, on the woes which befall the vanquished. The rape of virgins; the tearing of children from parental arms; the ransacking of human homes and divine temples; the subjecting of matrons to the brutal will of the conquerors; havoc and conflagration, and all places

filled with arms and corpses, with massacre and misery—But, in the name of the immortal Gods! to what do such orations tend? Do they aim at inflaming your wrath against this conspiracy? Vain, vain were such intent; for is it probable that words will inflame the mind of any one, if such and so atrocious facts have failed to inflame it? That is indeed impossible! Nor hath any man, at any period, esteemed his own injuries too lightly. Most persons, on the contrary, hold them more heavy than they are. But consequences fall not equally on all men, Conscript Fathers. They who in lowly places pass their lives in obscurity, escape the censure of the world, if they err on occasion under the influences of passion. Their fortunes and their fame are equal. They who, endowed with high commands, live in exalted stations, perform every action of their lives in the full gaze of all men. Thus to the greatest fortunes, the smallest licence is conceded. The great man must in no case consult his affections, or his anger. Least of all, must he yield to passion. That which is styled wrath in the lowly−born, becomes tyranny and cruel pride in the high and noble.

"I indeed think, with those who have preceded me, that every torture is too small for their atrocity and crime. But it is human nature's trick to remember always that which occurs the last in order. Forgetful of the criminal's guilt, the world dwells ever on the horror of his punishment, if it lean never so little to the side of severity. Well sure am I, that the speech of Decius Silanus, a brave and energetic man, was dictated by his love for the republic—that in a cause so weighty he is moved neither by favor nor resentment. Yet his vote to my eyes appears, I say not cruel— for what could be cruel, inflicted on such men?—but foreign to the sense of our institutions. Now it is clear, Silanus, that either fear of future peril, or indignation at past wrong, impelled you to vote for an unprecedented penalty! Of fear it is needless to speak farther; when through the active energy of that most eminent man, our consul, such forces are assembled under arms! concerning the punishment of these men we must speak, however, as the circumstances of the case require. We must admit that in agony and wo death is no penalty, but rather the repose from sorrow. Death alone is the refuge from every mortal suffering—in death alone there is no place for joy or grief. But if this be not so, wherefore, in the name of the Gods! have ye not added also to your sentence, that they be scourged before their execution? Is it, that the Porcian law forbids? That cannot be—since other laws as strenuously prohibit the infliction of capital punishment on condemned citizens, enjoining that they be suffered to go into exile. Is it, then, that to be scourged is more severe and cruel than to be slain? Not so—for what can be too severe or too cruel for men convicted of such crime. If on the other hand it be less severe, how is it fitting to obey that law in the lesser, which you set at naught in the greater article? But, you will ask me perchance, who will find fault with any punishment inflicted upon the parricides of the republic? Time—future days—fortune, whose caprice governs nations! True, these men merit all that can befall them; but do ye, Conscript Fathers, pause on the precedent which you establish against others? Never did bad example arise but from a good precedent— only when the reins of empire have fallen from wise hands into ignorant or wicked guidance, that good example is perverted from grand and worthy to base and unworthy ends. The men of Lacedemon, when they had conquered Athens, set thirty tyrants at the helm who should control the commonwealth. They at the first began to take off the guiltiest individuals, wretches hated by all, without form of trial. Thereat the people were rejoiced, and cried out that their deaths were just and merited. Ere long, when license had gained ground, they slew alike the virtuous and the guilty, and governed all by terror. Thus did that state, oppressed by slavery, rue bitterly its insane mirth. Within our memory, when victorious Sylla commanded Damasippus and his crew, who had grown up a blight to the republic, to be put to the sword's edge, who did not praise the deed? Who did not exclaim earnestly that men, factious and infamous, who had torn the republic by their tumults, were slain justly? And yet that deed was the commencement of great havoc. For, when one envied the city mansion or the country farm, nay, but the plate or garment of another, he strove with all his energy to have him on the lists of the proscription. Therefore, they who exulted at the death of Damasippus were themselves, ere long, dragged to execution; nor was there an end put to the massacre, until Sylla had satiated all his men with plunder. These things, indeed, I fear not under Marcus Tullius, nor at this day; but in a mighty state there are many and diverse dispositions. It may be at another time, under another consul, who shall perhaps hold an army at his back, that the wrong shall be taken for the right. If it be so when—on this precedent, by this decree, of this Senate—that consul shall have drawn the sword, who will compel him to put it back into the scabbard, who moderate his execution? Our ancestors, O Conscript Fathers, never lacked either wisdom in design, or energy in action; nor did their pride restrain them from copying those institutions of their neighbors, which they deemed good and wise. Their arms offensive and defensive they imitated from the Samnites—most of the ensigns of their

magistracies they borrowed of the Tuscans. In a word, whatsoever they observed good and fitting, among their allies or their foes, they followed up with the greatest zeal at home. They chose to imitate, rather than envy, what was good. But in those days, after the fashion of the Greeks, they punished citizens with stripes; they took the lives of condemned criminals. As the republic grew in size, and party strife arose among its multitudinous citizens, innocent persons were taken off under the pretext of the law, and many wrongful deeds were committed with impunity. Then was the Porcian Law enacted, with others of like tenor, permitting convicts to depart into exile. This I esteem, O Conscript Fathers, the first great cause wherefore this novel penalty be not established as a precedent. The wisdom and the valor of our ancestors who from a small beginning created this vast empire, were greater far than we, who scarcely can retain what they won so nobly. Would I have, therefore, you will ask, these men suffered to go at large, and so to augment the hosts of Catiline? Far from it. But I shall vote thus, that their property be confiscated, and they themselves detained in perpetual fetters, in those municipalities of Italy which are the wealthiest and the strongest. That the Senate never again consider their case, or bring their cause before the people—and that whosoever shall speak for them, be pronounced, of the Senate, an enemy to his country, and to the common good of all men."

This specious and artful oration, in which, while affecting to condemn what he dared not defend openly, he had more than insinuated a doubt of the legality of sentencing the traitors, was listened to by all present, with deep attention; and by the secret partizans of the conspiracy with joy and exultation. So sure did they esteem it that, in the teeth of this insidious argument, the Senate would not venture to inflict capital punishment on their friends, that they evinced their approbation by loud cheers; while many of the patrician party were shaken in their previous convictions; and many of those who perceived the fallacy of his sophistical reasoning, and detected his latent determination to screen the parricides of the state, felt the hazard and difficulty of proceeding as the exigencies of the case required.

Cicero's brow grew dark; as Silanus avowed openly that he had altered his opinion, and should vote for the motion of Tiberius Nero, to defer judgment.

Then Cicero himself arose, and in the noblest perhaps of all his orations, exerted himself strenuously to controvert the arguments and abolish the evil influence of the noble demagogue.

He did not, indeed, openly urge the death of the traitors; but he dwelt with tremendous force on the atrocious nature of the crimes, and on the consequence of their success. He showed the fallacy of Cæsar's insinuation, that death was a less severe enactment than perpetual imprisonment. He pointed out the impossibility and injustice of compelling the municipalities to take charge of the prisoners— the insecurity of those towns, as places of detention— the almost entire certainty, that the men would ere long be released, either by some popular tumult, or some party measure; and he concluded with a forcible and earnest peroration, appealing to the Senators, by their love of life, of their families, of their country, to take counsel worthily of themselves, and of their common mother; entreating them to decree firmly, and promising that he would execute their sentence, be it what it might, fearlessly.

As he sat down, the order was agitated like a sea in the tumultuous calm, which succeeds to the wrath and riot created by a succession of gales blowing from different quarters. Murmurs of approbation and encouragement were mixed with groans and loud evidences of displeasure.

The passions of the great concourse were aroused thoroughly, and the debate waxed wild and stormy.

Senator arose after Senator, advocating some the death, some the banishment, and some, emboldened by Cæsar's remarks, even proposing the enlargement of the conspirators.

At length, when all arguments appeared to be exhausted, and no hope left of anything like an unanimous decision being adopted, Marcus Portius Cato arose from his seat, stern, grave, composed, and awful from the severe integrity of his grand character.

The turbulent assembly was calm in a moment. All eyes were fixed on the harsh features of the stoic; all ears hung rivetted in expectation, on his deep guttural intonations, and short vigorous sentences. It was evident, almost ere he began to speak, that his opinion would sway the votes of the order.

"My mind is greatly different," he said, "Conscript Fathers, when I consider the perils of our case, and recall to my memory the speeches of some whom I have heard today. Those Senators, it seems to me, have descanted on the punishment of the men who have levied war against their country and their parents, against their hearths and their altars. But the facts of the case require not punishment of their crimes, but defence from their assaults.—

Other crimes you may punish after their commission—unless you prevent this from being done, when it is done, vainly shall ye ask for judgment. The city stormed, nothing remains to the vanquished. Now, in the name of the immortal Gods! I call upon you, *you* who have always set more store on your mansions, your farms, your statues and your pictures, than on the interests of the state, if you desire to retain these things, be they what they may, to which you cling so lovingly, if you desire to give yourselves leisure for your luxuries, arouse yourselves, now or never, and take up the commonwealth! It is no question now of taxes! No question of plundering our allies! The lives, the liberties of every one of us, are hanging on your doubt ful decision. Oftentimes, Conscript Fathers, have I spoken at length in this assembly. Oftentimes have I inveighed against the luxury and avarice of our citizens, and, therefore, have I many men my enemies. I, who have never pardoned my own soul even for any trivial error, could not readily excuse in others the lusts which result in open criminality. But, although you neglected those crimes as matters of small moment, still the republic, by its stability and opulence, sustained the weight cast on it by your negli−gence. Now, however, we ask not whether we shall live, corrupt or virtuous; we ask not how we shall render Rome most great, and most magnificent; we ask this—whether we ourselves, and with ourselves all that we possess whatsoever, shall be yielded up to the enemy? Who here will speak to me of clemency and pity? Long, long ago have we cast away the true names of things; for now to be lavish of the goods of others is termed liberality; audacity in guilt is denominated valor. Into such extremity has the republic fallen. Let Senators, therefore, since such are their habitudes and morals, be liberal of the fortunes of our allies, be merciful to the pilferers of the treasury; but let them not be lavish in bestowing our blood upon them! Let them not, in pity for a few scoundrels, send all good citizens to perdition. Caius Cæsar spoke a while since, eloquently and in set terms, in this house, concerning life and death; esteeming those things false, I presume, which are believed by most men of a future state that the wicked, I mean, journey on a different road from the righteous, and inhabit places aloof from them, dark horrid, waste, and fearful.

"He hath declared his intent, therefore, to vote for the confiscation of their property; and the detention of themselves in the borough towns in close custody. Fearing, forsooth, that if they be kept in Rome, they may be rescued forcibly, either by the confederates in their plot, or by a hireling rabble. Just as if there were only rogues and villains in this city, and none throughout all Italy.— Just as if audacity cannot effect the greatest things there, where the means of defence are the smallest. Wherefore his plan is absurd, if he fear peril from these men. And if he alone, in the midst of consternation so general, do not fear, the more need is there that you and I do fear them. Wherefore, when you vote on the fate of Publius Lentulus and the rest, hold this assured, that you are voting also on the fate of Catiline's army, on the fate of the whole conspiracy. With the more energy you act, the more will their courage fail them. If they shall see you falter but a little, all at once they will fall on fiercely. Be far from believing that our ancestors raised this republic from a small state to a great empire, by dint of arms alone. Had it been so, much greater should we have rendered it, who have much greater force than they, of citizens and of allies, of arms and of horses. But there were other things which made them great, which we lack altogether. At home, industry, abroad justice! A mind free to take counsel, unbiassed by crime or passion. Instead of these things we possess luxury and avarice. Public need, private opulence. We praise wealth, and practice indolence. Between righteous and guilty we make no distinction. Ambition gains all the rewards of virtue. Nor is this strange, when separately every one of you takes counsel for himself alone. When at home, you are slaves to pleasure; here in the Senate house, to bribery or favor. Thence it arises that a general charge is made from all quarters against the helpless commonwealth.

"But this I will pass over.

"The noblest of our citizens have conspired to put the torch to the republic. They have called to their aid, in open war, the Gallic nation most hostile to the name of Roman. The chief of your enemy is thundering above your very heads; and are you hesitating even now what you shall do with enemies taken within your very walls?— Oh! you had better pity them, I think—the poor young men have only erred a little, misled by ambition—you had better send them away in arms! I swear that, should they once take those arms, that clemency and mercifulness of yours will be changed into wo and wailing. Forsooth, it is a desperate crisis; and yet you fear it not. Yea, by the Gods! but you do fear it vehemently. Yet, in your indolence and feebleness of mind, waiting the one upon the other, you hesitate, relying, I presume, on the protection of the Immortals, who have so many times preserved this republic in its greatest dangers. The aid of the Gods is not gained by prayers or womanish supplication. To those who watch, who act, who take counsel, wisely, all things turn out successful. Yield yourselves up to idleness and

sloth, and in vain you shall implore the Gods—they are irate and hostile.

"In the time of our forefathers, Titus Manlius Torquatus during the Gallic war commanded his own son to be slain, because he had fought against orders; and that illustrious youth suffered the penalty of his immoderate valor.— Do ye know this, and delay what ye shall decide against the cruellest parricides? Is it forsooth that the lives of these men are in their character repugnant to this guilt.— Oh! spare the dignity of Lentulus, if he have ever spared his own modesty, his own good report; if he have ever spared any man or any God! Oh! pardon the youth of Cethegus, if this be not the second time that he has waged war on his country. For wherefore should I speak of Gabinius, Statilius or Cæparius?—who if they ever felt any care for the republic, would never have taken these councils. To conclude, Conscript Fathers, if there were any space for a mistake, I would leave you right willingly, by Hercules, to be corrected by facts, since you will not be warned by words! But we are hemmed in on all sides. Catiline with his army is at our very throats—others of our foes are within our walls in the bosom of the state. Nothing can be prepared, nor any counsel taken, so privately but they must know it.— Wherefore I shall vote thus, seeing that the republic is plunged into most fearful peril by the guilty plot of atrocious citizens, seeing that these men are convicted on the evidence of Titus Volturcius, and of the ambassadors of the Allobroges, and seeing that they have confessed the intent of murder, conflagration, and other foul and barbarous crimes, against their fellow citizens and native country—I shall vote, I say, that execution, according to the custom of our ancestors, be done upon them having thus confessed, as upon men manifestly convicted of capital treason."

The stern voice ceased. The bitter irony, which had stung so many souls to the quick, the cutting sarcasm, which had demolished Cæsar's sophistry, the clear reasoning, which had so manifestly found the heart of the mystery, were silent. And, folding his narrow toga closely about him, the severe patriot resumed his seat, he alone unexcited and impassive.

But his words had done their work. The guilty were smitten into silence; even the daring eloquence and high heart of the ambitious Cæsar, were subdued and mute.— The friends of their country were encouraged to shake off their apathy.

With one voice, unanimous, the consulars of Rome cried out for the question, applauding loudly the energy and fearlessness of Cato, and accusing one another of timidity and weakness.

A great majority of the Senate, likewise, exclaimed aloud that they required no more words, but were prepared to vote.

And convinced that the time had arrived for striking, Cicero put it to the vote, according to the regular form, requiring those who thought with Marcus Porcius Cato, to pass over to the right of the curule chair.

The question was not in doubt a moment; for above three−fourths of the whole body arose, as a single man, and passed over to the right of the chair, and gathered about the seat of Cato; while very few joined themselves openly to Julius Cæsar, who sat, somewhat crest−fallen and scarcely able to conceal his disappointment, immediately on the left of the consul.

Rallying, however, before the vote of the Senate had been taken, the factious noble sprang to his feet and loudly called upon the tribunes in general, and upon Lucius Bestia, in particular, a private friend of Catiline, and understood by all to be one of the conspirators, to interpose their Veto.

That was too much, however, even for tribunician daring. No answer was made from the benches of the popular magistrates, for once awed into patriotic silence.

But a low sneering laugh ran through the crowded ranks of the Patricians, and the vote was taken, now nearly unanimous; for many men disgusted by that last step, who had believed the measure to be unconstitutional, passed across openly from Cæsar's side to that of Cato.

A decree of the Senate was framed forthwith, and committed to writing by the persons appointed, in presence of Marcus Porcius Cato and Decius Julius Silanus, as authorities or witnesses of the act, empowering the consul to see execution done upon the guilty, where and when it should to him seem fitting.

Thus was it that Cicero and Cato for a while saved the commonwealth, and checked the future Dictator in his first efforts to subvert the liberties of Rome, happy for him and for his country if it had been his last.

CHAPTER XIV. THE TULLIANUM.

To be, or not be, that is the question.

Hamlet.

Night was at hand.

The Roman Senate might not sit after the sun had set.

Although the Tribunes had failed, in the consternation of the moment, to respond to the call of Cæsar, there was no doubt, that, if one night should intervene, those miscalled magistrates would check the course of justice.

Confined, apart one from the other, in free custody, the traitors had not failed to learn all that was passing, almost ere it passed.

Their hopes had been high, when the rabble were alert and thundering at the prison gates—nor when the charge of the knights had beaten back the multitude, did they despair; for simultaneously with those evil tidings, they learned the effect of Cæsar's speech; and shortly afterward the news reached them that Cicero's reply had found few willing auditors.

Confined, apart one from the other, they had eaten and drunken, and their hearts were "jocund and sublime"; the eloquence of Cæsar, the turbulence of the tribunes, were their predominant ideas. Confined, apart one from the other, one thought was common to them all,—immediate liberation, speedy vengeance.

And, in truth, immediate was the liberation; speedy the vengeance.

Night was at hand.

The Triumvirs, whose duty it was to superintend all capital punishments—a thing almost unknown in Rome—had been instructed to prepare whatever should be needful.

Lentulus sat alone in an inner chamber of the house of Publius Lentulus Spintherus, an ædile at that time. There was, it is true, a guard at the door, and clients under arms in the atrium; but in his own apartment the proud conspirator was still master of himself indeed, soon to be master of Rome, in his own frantic fantasy.

Bright lights were burning in bronze candelabra; rich wines were before him; his own favorite freedman leaned on the back of his ivory arm chair, and jested lighly on the discomfiture of *noble* Cicero, on the sure triumph of *democratic* Cæsar.

"Fill up the glass again, my Phormio," cried the exhilarated parricide; "this namesake of my own hath good wine, at the least—we may not taste it again shortly—fill up, I say; and do not spare to brim your own. What if our boys were beaten in the streets to−day. Brave Cæsar was not beaten in the Senate."

"By Hercules! no!" cried the wily Greek, base inheritor of a superb name—"and if he had been checked, there are the tribunes."

"But he was *not* checked, Phormio?" asked the conspirator in evident anxiety.

"By your head, no! You shall yet be the THIRD Cornelius!"—

"Who shall rule Rome!"—

The door of the small room was suddenly thrown open, and the tall form of Cicero stood in the shadow of the entrance. The gleam of the lamps fell full on his white robes, and glittered on his ivory sceptre; but behind him it showed the grim dark features of the Capital Triumvirs, and flickered on the axe−heads of the lictors.

The glass fell from the hand of Lentulus, the wine untasted; and so deep was the silence of that awful moment, that the gurgling of the liquor as it trickled from the shattered fragments of the crystal goblet, was distinctly audible.

There was a silent pause—no word, no motion followed the entrance of the Consul. Face to face, he stood with the deadliest of his foes, Catiline absent. Face to face, he stood with his overthrown and subdued enemy. And yet on his broad tranquil brow there was no frown of hatred; on his calm lip there there was no curl of gratified resentment, of high triumph.

Raising his hand, with a slow but very solemn gesture, he uttered in his deep harmonious accents, accents which at that moment spoke in almost an unnatural cadence, this one word—

"Come."

And calm, and proud, as the Consul, the degraded Senator, the fallen Consul replied, with a question,

"To death, Consul?"

"Come!"

"Give me my toga, Phormio."

And robing himself, with an air as quiet and an expression as unconcerned as if he had been setting forth to a banquet, the proud Epicurean gazed with a calmer eye upon the Consul, than that good man could fix upon his victim.

"This signet to Sempronia—that sword to—no! no!— this purse to thyself, Phormio! Consul, precede. I follow."

And the step of the convicted Traitor, as he descended from the portico of that mansion, for the last time, was firmer, statelier, prouder, than that of his conductor.

The streets were thronged—the windows crowded—the housetops heaped—with glaring mute spectators.

Some twenty knights, no more, unarmed, with the exception of their swords, composed the Consul's escort. Lentulus knew them, man by man, had drunk with them, played with them, lent money to them, borrowed of them.

He looked upon them.

They were the handful leading him to death! What made them break the ties which bound them to their brother noble? What made them forget mutual pleasures enjoyed, mutual perils incurred, mutual benefits accepted?

They were the nobles, true to their order.

He looked upon the thronged streets—upon the crowded windows—upon the heaped housetops, he saw myriads, myriads who had fed on his bounty, encouraged his infamy, hoped from his atrocity, urged him to his crime, myriads who now frowned upon him—cursed him—howled at him—or—more cowardly—were silent. Myriads, who might have saved him, and did not.

Wherefore?

They were the people, false to their leader.

He looked from the handful to the myriad—and shook himself, as a lion in his wrath; and stamped the dust from his sandals.

Cicero saw the movement, and read its meaning. He met the glance, not humiliated, but prouder for the mob's reprobation; and said, what he would not have said had the glance been conscious—

"Thou seest!—Hearest!"

"The voice of the People!" answered the traitor with a bitter sneer.

"The voice of God!" replied the Consul, looking upward.

"That voice of God shall shout for joy at thy head on the rostrum! Such is the fate of all who would serve the people!"

The eloquent tongue, stabbed with the harlot's bodkin, the head and the hand, nailed on the beaked column in after days, showed which best knew the people, their savior, or their parricide.

There is a place in Rome—there *is* a place—reader, thou mayest have seen it—on the right hand as thou goest up the steps of the Asylum ascending from the forum to the capitol.

"There *is* a place," wrote Sallust, some nineteen hundred years ago—"There *is* a place, within the prison, which is called Tullianum, after you have ascended a little way to the left, about twelve feet underground. It is built strongly with walls on every side, and arched above with a stone vaulting. But its aspect is foul and terrible from neglect, darkness, and stench."

It is there *now*—thou mayest have seen it, reader. Men call it the Mamertine Prison. It was then called Tullianum, because it was so antique at that time, that vague tradition only told of its origin long centuries before, built by the fabulous King Tullius.

The Tullianum—The Mamertine Prison.

The *bath*, which Jugurtha found very cold, when the earrings had been torn from his bleeding ears, and, stript of his last vestment, he was let down to die by the hangman's noose.

The prison, in which, scarce one century later, Saint Paul was held in durance, what time "Agrippa said unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, had he not appealed unto *Cæsar*."

Unto *Cæsar?*

Cæsar the third Emperor, the third tyrant of the Roman people.

Lentulus *had* appealed unto Cæsar, and was cast likewise into the Tullianum.

The voice of the people, is the voice of God.

Whether of the twain slew Lentulus? whether of the twain set free Paul, from the Tullianum?

In those days, there was a tall and massive structure above that sordid and tremendous vault, on the right hand as you go up towards the capitol.

The steps of the asylum were lined on either side by legionaries in full armor; and as the Consul walked up with his victim, side by side, each soldier faced about, and, by a simple movement, doubling their files, occupied the whole space of the steep ascent with a solid column; while all the heights above, and the great capitol itself, bristled with spears, and flashed with tawny light from the dense ranks of brazen corslets.

The Capital Triumvirs received the Consul at the door; and with his prisoner he passed inward.

It was in perfect keeping with the Roman character, that a man, hopeless of success, should die without an effort; and to the fullest, Lentulus acted out that character.

Impassive and unmoved, he went to his death. He disgraced his evil life by no cowardice in death; by no fruitless call upon the people for assistance, by no vain cry to the nobles for mercy.

But it was the impassibility of the Epicurean, not of the Stoic, that sustained him.

He went to die, like his brother democrats of France, with the madness of Atheism in his heart, the mirth of Perdition on his tongue.

They two, the Convict and the Consul, ascended a little, two or three steps, to the left, and entered a large apartment, paved, walled, and roofed with stone; but in the centre of the floor there was a small round aperture.

There were a dozen persons in that guard−room, four of whom were his fellow−traitors—Gabinius, Statilius, Cæ parius, and Cethegus—two prætors, four legionaries, and two Moorish slaves composed the group, until with the Triumvirs, and his twelve lictors, Cicero entered.

"Ha! my Cæparius!" exclaimed Lentulus, who had not seen him since the morning of his arrest. "We have met again. But I slept my sleep out. Thou might'st as well have slept too; for we are both met here"—

"To die! to die! Great Gods! to die!" cried Cæparius utterly overcome, and almost fainting with despair.

"Great Gods indeed!" replied Lentulus with his accustomed half−sardonic, half−indolent sneer. "They must be great, indeed, to let such a puppet as that," and he pointed to Cicero, as he spoke, "do as he will with us. To die! to die! Tush—what is that but to sleep? to sleep without the trouble of awaking, or the annoyance of to−morrow? What sayest thou, my Cethegus?"

"That thou art a sluggard, a fool, and a coward; curses! curses! curses upon thee!" And he made an effort to rush against his comrade, as if to strike him; and, when the guards seized him and dragged him back, he shook his fist at Cicero, and gnashed his teeth, and howling out, "Thou too! thou too shalt die proscribed, and thy country's foe!" by a sudden effort cast off the men who held him, and crying, "Slaves and dastards, see how a Roman noble dies," rushed, with his head down, at the solid wall, as a buffalo rushes blindly against an elephant.

He fell as if he were dead, the blood gushing from eyes, nose, and mouth, and lay senseless.

Lentulus thought he was killed, gazed on him for a moment tranquilly, and then said with a quiet laugh—

"He was a fool always—a rash fool!" Then turning to Cicero, he added—"By Hercules! this is slow work. I am exceeding hungry, and somewhat dry; and, as I fancy I shall eat nothing more to−day, nor drink, I would fain go to sleep."

"Would'st thou drink, Lentulus?" asked one of the Triumvirs.

"Would I not, had I wine?"

"Bring wine," said the magistrate to one of the Moorish slaves; who went out and returned in an instant with a large brazen platter supporting several goblets.

Lentulus seized one quickly, and swallowed it at a mouthful—there is a hot thirst in that last excitement—but as the flavor reached his palate, when the roughness of the harsh draught had passed away, he flung the cup down scornfully and said,

"Finish it! Take this filthy taste from my lips! Let me rest!"

And with the words, he advanced to the Moors who stood beside the well−like aperture, and without a word suffered them to place the rope under his arms, and lower him into the pit.

Just as his head, however, was disappearing, he cast his eyes upward, and met the earnest gaze of the Consul.

"The voice of the people! the man of the people!" he cried sarcastically. "Fool! fool! *they* shall avenge me!

Think upon me near Formiæ!"

Was that spite, or a prophecy?

The eyes of the dying sometimes look far into futurity.

The haughty traitor was beyond the sight, before his words had ceased to ring in the ears of the spectators.

There was a small low sound heard from below—not a groan, not a struggle—but a rustle, a sob, a flutter—silence.

`So did that Patrician, of the most noble house of the Cornelii, who once held consular dominion in Rome, meet his end, merited by his course of life, and his overt actions. '

Cethegus perished senseless, half dead by his own deed.

Cæparius died sullen; Gabinius weak and almost fainting; Statilius struggling and howling. All by a hard and slavish death, strangled by the base noose of a foreign hangman.

An hour afterward, their corpses were hurled down the Gemonian Stairs, among the shouts and acclamations of the drunken slavish rabble.

An hour afterward, Cicero stood on the rostrum, near the Libonian well—that rostrum whereon, at a later day Lentulus' prophecy was fulfilled—and called out, in a voice as solemn and almost as deep as thunder,

"They were!"

And the voice of the people yelled out its joy, because they *were* no longer; and hailed their slayer the Savior and Father of his country.

A few years afterward, how did they not hail Anthony?

CHAPTER XV. THE CAMP IN THE APPENNINES.

With that he gave his able horse the head.
Henry IV.

There is a wild gorge in the very summit of the Appennines, not quite midway between Florence and Pistoia, the waters of which, shed in different directions, flow on the one hand tributaries to the Po, and on the other to the Arno, swelling the Adriatic, and the Mediterranean seas.

The mountains rise abruptly in bare crags, covered here and there by a low growth of myrtle and wild olives, on either hand this gorge, quite inaccessible to any large array of armed men, though capable of being traversed by solitary foresters or shepherds. Below, the hills fall downward in a succession of vast broken ridges, in places rocky and almost perpendicular, in places swelling into rounded knolls, feathered with dark rich forests of holm oak and chesnut.

In the highest part of this gorge, where it spreads out into a little plain, perched like the eyry of some ravenous bird of prey, the camp of Catiline was pitched, on the second evening after the execution of his comrades.

Selected with rare judgment, commanding all the lower country, and the descent on one hand into the Val d'Arno and thence to Rome, on the other into the plain of the Po and thence into Cisalpine Gaul, the whole of which was ripe for insurrection, that camp secured to him an advance upon the city, should his friends prove successful, or a retreat into regions where he could raise new levies in case of their failure.

A Roman camp was little less than a regular fortification, being formed mostly in an oblong square, with a broad ditch and earthen ramparts garnished by a stockade, with wooden towers at the gates, one of which pierced each side of the intrenchment.

And to such a degree of perfection and celerity had long experience and the most rigid discipline brought the legions, that it required an incredibly short time to prepare such a camp for any number of men; a thing which never was omitted to be done nightly even during the most arduous marches and in the face of an enemy.

Catiline was too able and too old a soldier to neglect such precaution under any circumstances; and assuredly he would not have done so now, when the consul Antonius lay with two veteran legions within twenty miles distance in the low country east of Florence, while Quintus Metellus Celer, at the head of a yet larger force, was in the Picene district on his rear, and not so far off but he might have attempted to strike a blow at him.

His camp, capable of containing two full legions, the number of which he had completed, all free−born men and Roman citizens, for he had refused the slaves who flocked at first to his standard in great force, was perfectly defended, and provided with all the usual tents and divisions; so that every cohort, manipule, and century, nay every man, knew his own station.

The sun had just sunk beneath the horizon and the night watches had been set by sound of trumpets, the horsemen had been appointed for the rounds, and an outpost of light−armed soldiers pushed forward in front of all the gates.

There was a rosy tinge still lingering in the sky, and a few slant rays were shot through the gaps in the mountain ridge, gilding the evergreen foliage of the holm−oaks with bright lustre, and warming the cold grey stones which cumbered the sides and summits of the giant hills; but all the level country at their feet was covered with deep purple shadow.

Catiline sat alone in his *prætorium*, as the general's pavilion was entitled, situated on a little knoll nearly in the centre of the camp between the tents of the tribunes, and the quarters of the extraordinary horse.

He was completely armed, all but his head, and wore a rich scarlet cloak above his panoply, his helmet and buckler lying upon the ground beside him in easy reach of his hand. A pen was in his fingers, and a sheet of parchment was stretched on the board before him; but he was not writing, although there were several lines scrawled on it in a bold coarse hand.

His face was paler and more livid than usual, and his frame thinner, almost indeed emaciated, yet every sinew and muscle was hard as tempered steel.

But now there was a strange expression in his features; it was not doubt nor hesitation, much less fear; and consisted perhaps rather in the absence of his wonted characteristics, the unquiet and quick changes, the

passionate restlessness, the fell deadly sneer, and the blighting flash of the dark eye, than in any token of peculiar meaning.— There was a cold and almost vacant expression in his gaze; and an impassive calmness in all his lineaments, that were in singular contrast with the character of the man; and he sat, a thing most unusual for him, perfectly motionless, buried in deep thought.

The night was very cold, and, without, a heavy hoar frost was falling; so that a fire of charcoal had keen kindled in a bronze brazier, and as the light of the sky died away strange lurid gleams and fantastic shadows rose and fell, upon the walls of the large tent, rendered more fickle and grotesque by the wavering of the canvass in the gusty night air. There was wine with several goblets upon the board, at which he sat, with his eyes fixed straight before him; and at his elbow there stood a tall brazen tripod supporting a large lamp with several burners; but none of these were lighted, and, but for the fitful glare of the char−coal, the tent would have been completely dark.

Still he called not to any slave, nor appeared to observe the growing obscurity, but sat gloomily pondering—on what?

Once or twice he drew his hand across his eyes, and then glared still more fixedly upon the dark and waving shadows as if he saw something more than common in their uncertain outlines.

Suddenly he spoke, in a hoarse altered voice—"This is strange," he said, "very strange! Now, were I one of these weak fools who believe in omens, I should shake. But tush! tush! how should there be omens? for who should send them? there must be Gods, to have omens! and that is too absurd for credence! Gods! Gods!" he repeated half dubiously—"Yet, if there should—ha! ha! art thou turned dotard, Catiline? There are *no* Gods, or why sleep their thunders? Aye! there it is again," he added, gazing on vacancy. "By my right hand! it is very strange! three times last night, the first time when the watch was set, and twice afterward I saw him! And three times again to−night, since the trumpet was blown. Lentulus, with his lips distorted, his face black and full of blood, his eyes starting from their sockets, like a man strangled! and he beckoned me with his pale hand! I saw him, yet so shadowy and so transparent, that I might mark the waving of the canvass through his figure!—But tush! tush! it is but a trick of the fancy. I am worn out with this daily marching; and the body's fatigue hath made the mind weak and weary. And it is dull here too, no dice, no women, and no revelling. I will take some wine," he added, starting up and quaffing two or three goblets' full in quick succession, "my blood is thin and cold, and wants warming. Ha! that is better—It is right old Setinian too; I marvel whence Manlius had it." Then he rose from his seat, and began to stride about the room impatiently. After a moment or two he dashed his hand fiercely against his brow, and cried in a voice full of anguish and perturbation, "Tidings! tidings! I would give half the world for tidings! Curses! curses upon it! that I began this game at all, or had not brave colleagues! It is time! can it be that their hearts have failed them? that they have feared or delayed to strike, or have been overthrown, detected?—Tidings, tidings! By Hades! I must have tidings! What ho!" he exclaimed, raising his voice to a higher pitch, "Ho, I say, ho! Chærea!"

And from an outer compartment of the tent the Greek freedman entered, bearing a lighted lamp in his hand.

"Chærea, summon Manlius hither, and leave the lamp, have been long in the darkness!"

"Wert sleeping, Catiline?"

"Sleeping!" exclaimed the traitor, with a savage cry, hoarse as the roar of a wounded lion—"sleeping, thou idiot! Do men sleep on volcanoes? Do men sleep in the crisis of their fortunes? I have not slept these six nights. Get thee gone! summon Manlius!" and then, as the freedman left the room, he added; "perchance I shall sleep no more until—I sleep for ever! I would I could sleep, and not see those faces; they never troubled me till now. I would I knew if *that* sleep is dreamless. If it were so— perhaps, perhaps! but no! no! By all the Furies! no! until my foot hath trodden on the neck of Cicero."

As he spoke, Manlius entered the room, a tall dark sinister−looking scar−seamed veteran, equipped in splendid armor, of which the helmet alone was visible, so closely was he wrapped against the cold in a huge shaggy watch−cloak.

As his subordinate appeared, every trace of the conflict which had been in progress within him vanished, and his brow became as impassive, his eye as hard and keen as its wont.

"Welcome, my Caius," he exclaimed. "Look you, we have present need of council. The blow must be stricken before this in Rome, or must have failed altogether. If it have been stricken, we should be nearer Rome to profit by it—if it have failed, we must destroy Antonius' army, before Metellus join him. I doubt not he is marching

hitherward even now. Besides, we must, we *must* have tidings— we *must* know all, and all truly!"

Then, seeing that Manlius doubted, "Look you," he continued. "Let us march at daybreak to−morrow upon Fæsulæ, leaving Antonius in the plain on our right. Marching along the crest of the hills, he cannot assail our flank. We can outstrip him too, and reach Arretium ere the second sunset. He, thinking we have surely tidings from our friends in the city, will follow in disordered haste; and should we have bad news, doubling upon him on a sudden we may overpower him at one blow. It is a sure scheme either way—think'st thou not so, good friend? nay more, it is the only one."

"I think so, Sergius," he replied. "In very deed I think so. Forage too is becoming scarce in the camp, and the baggage horses are dying. The men are murmuring also for want of the pleasures, the carouses, and the women of the cities. They will regain their spirits in an hour, when they shall hear of the march upon Rome."

"I prithee, let them hear it, then, my Caius; and that presently. Give orders to the tribunes and centurions to have the tents struck, and the baggage loaded in the first hour of the last night−watch. We will advance at—ha!" he exclaimed, interrupting himself suddenly, and listening with eager attention. "There is a horse tramp crossing from the gates. By the Gods! news from Rome! Tarry with me, until we hear it."

Within five minutes, Chærea re−entered the tent, introducing a man dressed and armed as a light−horseman, covered with mudstains, travelworn, bending with fatigue, and shivering with cold, the hoar−frost hanging white upon his eyebrows and beard.

"From Rome, good fellow?" Catiline inquired quickly. "From Rome, Catiline!" replied the other, "bearing a letter from the noble Lentulus."

"Give—give it quick!" and with the word he snatched the scroll from the man's hand, tore it violently open, and read aloud as follows.

"Who I may be, you will learn from the bearer. All things go bravely. The ambassadors have lost their suit, but we have won ours. They return home to−morrow, by the Flaminian way, one Titus of Crotona guiding them, who shall explain to you our thoughts and hopes—but, of this doubt not, thoughts shall be deeds, and hopes success, before this hour to−morrow."

"By all the Gods!" cried Catiline with a shout of joy. "Ere this time all is won! Cicero, Cicero, I have triumphed, and thou, mine enemy, art nothing;" then turning to the messenger, he asked, "When didst leave Rome, with these joyous tidings? when sawest the noble Lentulus?"

"On the fourth day before the nones, at sunset."

"And we are now in the sixth before the Ides. Thou hast loitered on the way, Sirrah."

"I was compelled to quit my road, Catiline, and to lie hid four days among the hills to avoid a troop of horse which pursued me, seeing that I was armed; an advanced guard, I think, of Antonius' army."

"Thou didst well. Get thee gone, and bid them supply thy wants. Eat, drink, and sleep—we march upon Rome at day−break to−morrow."

The man left the apartment, and looking to Manlius with a flushed cheek and exulting aspect, Catiline exclaimed.

"Murmuring for pleasure, and for women, are they? Tell them, good friend, they shall have all the gold of Rome for their pleasure, and all its patrician dames for their women. Stir up their souls, my Manlius, kindle their blood with it matters not what fire! See to it, my good comrade, I am aweary, and will lay me down, I can sleep after these good tidings."

But it was not destined that he should sleep so soon.

He had thrown himself again into a chair, and filled himself a brimming goblet of the rich wine, when he repeated to himself in a half musing tone—

"Murmuring for their women? ha!—By Venus! I cannot blame the knaves. It is dull work enough without the darlings. By Hercules! I would Aurelia were here; or that jade Lucia! Pestilent handsome was she, and then so furious and so fiery! By the Gods! were she here, I would bestow one caress on her at the least, before she died, as die she shall, in torture by my hand! Curses on her, she has thwarted, defied, foiled me! By every fiend and Fury! ill shall she perish, were she ten times my daughter!"

Again there was a bustle without the entrance of the pavilion, and again Chærea introduced a messenger.

It was Niger, one of the swordsmith's men. Catiline recognized him in an instant.

"Ha! Niger, my good lad, from Caius Crispus, ha?"—

"From Caius Crispus, praying succor, and that swift, lest it be too late."

"Succor against whom? succor where, and wherefore?"

"Against a century of Antonius' foot. They came upon us unawares, killed forty of our men, and drove the stout smith for shelter into a ruined watch−tower, on the hill above the cataract, near to Usella, which happily afforded him a shelter. They have besieged us there these two days; but cannot storm us until our arrows fail, or they bring up engines. But our food is finished, and our wine wakes low, and Julia"—

"Who? Julia?" shouted Catiline, scarce able to believe his ears, and springing from his chair in rapturous agitation— "By your life! speak! what Julia?"—

"Hortensia's daughter, whom"—

"Enough! enough! Chærea"—he scrawled a few words on a strip of parchment—"this to Terentius the captain of my guard. Three hundred select horsemen to be in arms and mounted within half an hour. Let them take torches, and a guide for Usella. Saddle the black horse Erebus. Get me some food and a watch−cloak. Get thee away. Now tell me all, good fellow."

The man stated rapidly, but circumstantially, all that he knew of the occurrences of Julia's seizure, of the capture of Aulus, and of their journey; and then, his eyes gleaming with the fierce blaze of excited passion and triumphant hatred, Catiline cross−questioned him concerning the unhappy girl. Had she been brought thus far safely and with unblemished honor? Had she suffered from hunger or fatigue? Had her beauty been impaired by privation?

And, having received satisfactory replies to all his queries, he gave himself up to transports of exultation, such as his own most confidential freedman never before had witnessed.

Dismissing the messenger, he strode to and fro the hut, tossing his arms aloft and bursting into paroxysms of fierce laughter.

"Ha! ha! too much!—it is too much for one night! Ha! ha! ha! ha! Love, hatred, passion, triumph, rage, revenge, ambition, all, all gratified! Ha! ha! Soft, gentle Julia—proud, virtuous one that did despise me, thou shalt writhe for it—from thy soul shalt thou bleed for it! Ha! ha! Arvina—liar! fool! perjurer! but this will wring thee worse than Ixion's wheel, or whips of scorpions!— Ha! ha! Cicero! Cicero!—No! no! Chærea. There are no Gods! no Gods who guard the innocent! no Gods who smile on virtue! no gods! I say, no Gods! no Gods, Chærea!"—

But, as he spoke, there burst close over head an appaling crash of thunder, accompanied by a flash of lightning so vivid and pervading that the whole tent seemed to be on fire. The terrified Greek fell to the earth, stunned and dazzled; but the audacious and insane blasphemer, tossing his arms and lifting his front proudly, exclaimed with his cynical sneer, "If ye be Gods! strike! strike! I defy your vain noise! your harmless thunder!"

For ten minutes or more, blaze succeeded blaze, and crash followed crash, with such tremendous rapidity, that the whole heavens, nay, the whole atmosphere, appeared incandescent with white, sulphureous, omnipresent fire; and that the roar of the volleyed thunder was continuous and incessant.

Still the fierce traitor blenched not. Crime and success had maddened him. His heart was hardened, his head frenzied, to his own destruction.

But the winter storm in the mountains was as brief as it was sudden, and tremendous; and it ceased as abruptly as it broke out unexpectedly. A tempest of hail came pelting down, the grape−shot as it were of that heavenly artillery, scourging the earth with furious force during ten minutes more; and then the night was as serene and tranquil as it had been before that elemental uproar.

As the last flash of lightning flickered faintly away, and the last thunder roll died out in the sky, Catiline stirred the freedman with his foot.

"Get up, thou coward fool. Did I not tell thee that there are no Gods? lo! you now! for what should they have roused this trumpery pother, if not to strike me? Tush, man, I say, get up!"

"Is it thou, Sergius Catiline?" asked the Greek, scarce daring to raise his head from the ground. "Did not the bolt annihilate thee? art thou not indeed dead?"—

"Judge if I be dead, fool, by this, and this, and this!"—

And, with each word, he kicked and trampled on the grovelling wretch with such savage violence and fury, that he bellowed and howled for mercy, and was scarce able to creep out of the apartment, when he ceased stamping upon him, and ordered him to begone speedily and bring his charger.

Ere many minutes had elapsed, the traitor was on horse−back.

And issuing from the gates of his camp into the calm and starry night, he drove, with his escort at his heels, with the impetuosity and din of a whirlwind, waking the mountain echoes by the clang of the thundering hoofs, and the clash of the brazen armor and steel scabbards, down the steep defile toward Usella.

CHAPTER XVI. THE WATCHTOWER OF USELLA.

Our castle's strength
Will laugh a siege to scorn.
Macbeth.

The watchtower in which Caius Crispus and his gang had taken refuge from the legionaries, was one of those small isolated structures, many of which had been perched in the olden time on the summits of the jutting crags, or in the passes of the Appennines, but most of which had fallen long before into utter ruin.

Some had been destroyed in the border wars of the innumerable petty tribes, which, ere the Romans became masters of the peninsula, divided among themselves that portion of Italy, and held it in continual turmoil with their incessant wars and forays.

Some had mouldered away, by the slow hand of ruthless time; and yet more had been pulled down for the sake of their materials, which now filled a more useful if less glorious station, in the enclosures of tilled fields, and the walls of rustic dwellings.

From such a fate the watchtower of Usella had been saved by several accidents. Its natural and artificial strength had prevented its sack or storm during the earlier period of its existence—the difficulty of approaching it had saved its solid masonry from the cupidity of the rural proprietors— and, yet more, its formidable situation, commanding one of the great hill passes into Cisalpine Gaul, had induced the Roman government to retain it in use, as a fortified post, so long as their Gallic neighbors were half subdued only, and capable of giving them trouble by their tumultuous incursions.

Although it had consisted, therefore, in the first instance, of little more than a rude circular tower of that architecture called Cyclopean, additions had been made to it by the Romans of a strong brick wall with a parapet, enclosing a space of about a hundred feet in diameter, accessible only by a single gateway, with a steep and narrow path leading to it, and thoroughly commanded by the tower itself.

In front, this wall was founded on a rough craggy bank of some thirty feet in height, rising from the main road traversing the defile, by which alone it could be approached; for, on the right and left, the rocks had been scarped artificially; and, in the rear, there was a natural gorge through which a narrow but impetuous torrent raved, between precipices a hundred feet in depth, although an arch of twenty foot span would have crossed the ravine with ease.

Against the wall at this point, on the inner side, the Romans had constructed a small barrack with three apartments, each of which had a narrow window overlooking the bed of the torrent, no danger being apprehended from that quarter.

Such was the place into which Crispus had retreated, under the guidance of one of the Etruscan conspirators, after the attack of the Roman infantry; and, having succeeded in reaching it by aid of their horses half an hour before their pursuers came up, they had contrived to barricade the gateway solidly with some felled pine trees; and had even managed to bring in with them a yoke of oxen and a mule laden with wine, which they had seized from the peasants in the street of the little village of Usella, as they gallopped through it, goading their blown and weary animals to the top of their speed.

It was singularly characteristic of the brutal pertinacity, and perhaps of the sagacity also, of Caius Crispus, that nothing could induce him to release the miserable Julia, who was but an incumbrance to their flight, and a hindrance to their defence.

To all her entreaties, and promises of safety from his captors, and reward from her friends, if he would release her, he had replied only with a sneer; saying that he would ensure his own safety at an obolus' fee, and that, for his reward, he would trust noble Catiline.

"For the rest," he added, "imagine not that you shall escape, to rejoice the heart of that slave Arvina. No! minion, no! We will fight 'till our flesh be hacked from our bones, ere they shall make their way in hither; and if they do so, they shall find thee—dead and dishonored! Pray, therefore, if thou be wise, for our success."

Such might in part indeed have been his reasoning; for he was cruel and licentious, as well as reckless and audacious; but it is probable that, knowing himself to be in the vicinity of Catiline's army, he calculated on finding

some method of conveying to him information of the prize that lay within his grasp, and so of securing both rescue and reward.

If he had not, however, in the first instance thought of this, it was not long ere it occurred to him; when he at once proceeded to put it into execution.

Within half an hour of the entrance of the little party into this semi−ruinous strong−hold, the legionary foot came up, about a hundred and fifty men in number, but without scaling ladders, artillery, or engines.

Elated by their success, however, they immediately formed what was called the *tortoise*, by raising their shields and overlapping the edges of them above their heads, in such a manner as to make a complete penthouse, which might defend them from the missiles of the besieged; and, under cover of this, they rushed forward dauntlessly, to cut down the palisade with their hooks and axes.

In this they would have probably succeeded, for the arrows and ordinary missiles of the defenders rebounded and rolled down innocuous from the tough brass−bound bull−hides; and the rebels were already well nigh in despair, when Caius Crispus, who had been playing his part gallantly at the barricade, and had stabbed two or three of the legionaries with his pilum, in hand to hand encounter, through the apertures of the grating, rushed up to the battlements, covered with blood and dust, and shouting—

"Ho! by Hercules! this will never do, friends. Give me yon crow−bar—So! take levers, all of you, and axes! We must roll down the coping on their heads,"—applied his own skill and vast personal strength to the task. In an instant the levers were fixed, and grasping his crow−bar with gigantic energy, he set up his favorite chaunt, as cheerily as he had done of old in his smithy on the Sacred Way—

"Ply, ply, my boys, now ply the lever!
Heave at it, heave at it, all! Together!
Great Mars, the war God, watches ye laboring
Joyously. Joyous watches"— But his words were cut short by a thundering crash; for, animated by his untamed spirit, his fellows had heaved with such a will at the long line of freestone coping, that, after tottering for a few seconds, and reeling to and fro, it all rushed down with the speed and havoc of an avalanche, drowning all human sounds with the exception of one piercing yell of anguish, which rose clear above the confused roar and clatter.

"Ho! by the Thunderer! we have smashed them beneath their tortoise, like an egg in its shell! Now ply your bows, brave boys! now hurl your javelins! Well shot! well shot indeed, my Niger! You hit that high−crested centurion full in the mouth, as he called on them to rally, and nailed his tongue to his jaws. Give me another pilum, Rufus! This," he continued, as he poised and launched it hurtling through the air, "This to the ensignbearer!" And, scarce was the word said, ere the ponderous missile alighted on his extended shield, pierced its tough fourfold bull−hide, as if it had been a sheet of parchment; drove through his bronze cuirass, and hurled him to the ground, slain outright in an instant. "Ha! they have got enough of it! Shout, boys! Victoria! Victoria!"

And the wild cheering of the rebels pealed high above the roar of the torrent, striking dismay into the soul of the wretched Julia.

But, although the rebels had thus far succeeded, and the legionaries had fallen back, bearing their dead and wounded with them, the success was by no means absolute or final; and this no man knew better than the sword−smith.

He watched the soldiers eagerly, as they drew off in orderly array into the hollow way, and after a short consultation, posting themselves directly in front of the gate with sentinels thrown out in all directions, lighted a large watch fire in the road, with the intention, evidently, of converting the storm into a blockade.

A few moments afterward, he saw a soldier mount the horse of the slain centurion, and gallop down the hill in the direction of Antonius' army, which was well known to be lying to the south−eastward. Still a few minutes later a small party was sent down into the village, and returned bringing provisions, which the men almost immediately began to cook, after having posted a chain of videttes from one bank to the other of the precipitous ravine, so as to assure themselves that no possibility of escape was left to the besieged in any direction, by which they conceived escape to be practicable.

"Ha!" exclaimed Crispus, as he watched their movements, "they will give us no more trouble to−night, but we will make sure of them by posting one sentinel above the gate, and another on the head of the watch−tower. Then we will light us a good fire in the yard below, and feast there on the beef and wine of those brute peasants. The legionaries fancy that they can starve us out; but they know not how well we are provided. Hark you, my Niger.

Go down and butcher those two beeves, and when they are flayed and decapitated, blow me a good loud trumpet blast and roll down the heads over the battlements. Long ere we have consumed our provender, Catiline will be down on them in force! I go to look around the place, and make all certain."

And, with the words, he ascended to the summit of the old watch−tower and stood there for many minutes, surveying the whole conformation of the country, and all the defences of the place, with a calm and skilful eye.

The man was by no means destitute of certain natural talents, and an aptitude for war, which, had it been cultivated or improved, might possibly have made him a captain. He speedily perceived, therefore, that the defences were tenable so long only as no ladders or engines should be brought against them; which he was well assured would be done, within twenty−four hours at the latest. He knew also that want of provisions must compel him to surrender at discretion before many days; and he felt it to be very doubtful whether, without some strong effort on their part Catiline would hear at all of their situation, until it should be entirely too late.

He began, therefore, at once, to look about him for means of despatching an envoy, nothing doubting that succor would be sent to him instantly, could the arch traitor be informed, that the lovely Julia was a prisoner awaiting his licentious pleasure.

Descending from the battlements, he proceeded at once to the barrack rooms in the rear, hoping to find some possibility of lowering a messenger into the bed of the stream, or transporting him across the ravine, unseen by the sentinels of the enemy.

Then, casting open a door of fast decaying wood−work, he entered the first of the low mouldering unfurnished rooms; and, stepping across the paved floor with a noiseless foot, thrust his head out of the window and gazed anxiously up and down the course of the ravine.

He became satisfied at once that his idea was feasible; for the old wall was built, at this place, in salient angles, following the natural line of the cliffs; and the window of the central room was situated in the bottom of the recess, between two jutting curtains, in each of which was another embrasure. It was evident, therefore, that a person lowered by the middle window, into the gorge beneath, would be screened from the view of any watchers, by the projection of the walls; and Crispus nothing doubted but that, once in the bottom of the ravine, a path might be found more or less difficult by which to reach the upper country.

Beyond the ravine rose many broken knolls covered with a thick undergrowth of young chesnut hollies, wild laurels, and the like; and through these, a winding road might be discovered, penetrating the passes of the hills, and crossing the glen at a half mile's distance below on a single−arched brick bridge, by which it joined the causeway occupied by the legionaries.

Having observed so much, Caius Crispus was on the point of withdrawing his head, forgetting all about his prisoner, who, on their entrance into this dismantled hold, had been thrust in hither, as into the place where she would be most out of harm's way, and least likely to escape.

But just as he was satisfied with gazing, the lovely face of Julia, pale as an image of statuary marble, with all her splendid auburn hair unbound, was advanced out of the middle window; evidently looking out like himself for means of escape. But to her the prospect was not, as to him, satisfactory; and uttering a deep sigh she shook her head sadly, and wrung her hands with an expression of utter despair.

"Ha! ha! my pretty one, it is too deep, I trow!" cried Crispus, whom she had not yet observed, with a cruel laugh, "Nothing, I swear, without wings can descend that abyss; unless like Sappho, whom the poets tell us of, it would put an end to both love and life together. No! no! you cannot escape thus, my pretty one; and, on the outside, I will make sure of you. For the rest I will send you some watch cloaks for a bed, some supper, and some wine. We will not starve you, my fair Julia, and no one shall harm you here, for I will sleep across your door, myself, this night, and ere to−morrow's sunset we shall be in the camp with Catiline."

He was as good as his word, for he returned almost immediately, bringing a pile of watch−cloaks, which he arranged into a rude semblance of a bed, with a pack saddle for the pillow, in the innermost recess of the inner room, with some bread, and beef broiled hastily on the embers, and some wine mixed with water, which last she drank eagerly; for fear and anxiety had parched her, and she was faint with thirst.

Before he went out, again he looked earnestly from the unlatticed window, in order to assure himself that she had no means of escape. Scarce was he gone, before she heard the shrill blast of the Roman trumpets blown clearly and scientifically, for the watch−setting; and, soon afterward, all the din and bustle, which had been rife through the livelong day, sank into silence, and she could hear the brawling of the brook below chafing and raving

against the rocks which barred its bed, and the wind murmuring against the leafless treetops.

Shortly after this, it became quite dark; and after sitting musing awhile with a sad and despairing heart, and putting up a wild prayer to the Gods for mercy and protection, she went once more and leaned out of the window, gazing wistfully on the black stones and foamy water.

"Nothing," she said to herself sadly, repeating Caius Crispus' words, "could descend hence, without wings, and live. It is too true! alas! too true!—" she paused for a moment, and then, while a flash of singular enthusiastic joy irradiated all her pallid lineaments, she exclaimed, "but the Great Gods be praised? one can leap down, and die! Let life go! what is life? since I can thus preserve my honor!" She paused again and considered; then clasped her hands together, and seemed to be on the point of casting herself into that awful gulf; but she resisted the temptation, and said, "Not yet! not yet! There is hope yet, on earth! and I will live awhile, for hope and for Paullus. I can do this at any time—of this refuge, at least, they cannot rob me. I will live yet awhile!" And with the words she turned away quietly, went to the pile of watch−cloaks, and lying down forgot ere long her sorrows and her dread, in calm and innocent slumber.

She had not been very long asleep, however, when a sound from without the door aroused her; and, as she started to her feet, Caius Crispus looked into the cell with a flambeau of pine−wood blazing in his right hand, to ascertain if she was still within, and safe under his keeping.

"You have been sleeping, ha!" he exclaimed. "That is well, you must be weary. Will you have more wine?"

"Some water, if you will, but no wine. I am athirst and feverish."

"You shall have water."

And thrusting the flambeau into the earth, between the crevices in the pavement, he left the room abruptly.

Scarce was he gone, leaving the whole apartment blazing with a bright light which rendered every object within clearly visible to any spectator from the farther side of the ravine, before a shrill voice with something of a feminine tone, was heard on the other brink, exclaiming in suppressed tones—

"Hist! hist! Julia?"

"Great Gods! who calls on Julia?"

"Julia Serena, is it thou?"

"Most miserable I!" she made answer. "But who calls me?"

"A friend—be wary, and silent, and you shall not lack aid."

But Julia heard the heavy step of the swordsmith approaching, and laying her finger on her lips, she sprang back hastily from the window, and when her gaoler entered, was busy, apparently, in arranging her miserable bed.

It was not long that he tarried; for after casting one keen glance around him, to see that all was right; he freed her of his hated presence, taking the torch along with him, and leaving her in utter darkness.

As soon as his footstep had died away into silence, she hurried back to the embrasure, and gazed forth earnestly; but the moon had not yet risen, and all the gulf of the ravine and the banks on both sides were black as night, and she could discern nothing.

She coughed gently, hoping to attract the attention of her unknown friend, and to learn more of her chances of escape; but no farther sound or signal was made to her; and, after watching long in hope deferred, and anxiety unspeakable, she returned to her sad pallet and bathed her pillow with hot tears, until she wept herself at length into unconsciousness of suffering, the last refuge of the wretched, when they have not the christian's hope to sustain them.

She was almost worn out with anxiety and toil, and she slept soundly, until the blowing of the Roman trumpets in the pass again aroused her; and before she had well collected her thoughts so as to satisfy herself where she was and wherefore, the shouts and groans of a sudden conflict, the rattling of stones and javelins on the tiled roof, the clang of arms, and all the dread accompaniments of a mortal conflict, awoke her to a full sense of her situation.

The day lagged tediously and slow. No one came near her, and, although she watched the farther side of the gorge, with all the frantic hope which is so near akin to despair, she saw nothing, heard nothing, but a few wood−pigeous among the leafless tree−tops, but the sob of the torrent and the sigh of the wintry wind.

At times indeed the long stern swell of the legionary trumpets would again sound for the assault, and the din of warfare would follow it; but the skirmishes were of shorter and shorter duration, and the tumultuous cheering of the rebels at the close of every onslaught, proved that their defence had been maintained at least, and that the besiegers had gained no advantage.

It was, perhaps, four o'clock in the afternoon; and the sun was beginning to verge to the westward, when, just after the cessation of one of the brief attacks—by which it would appear that the besiegers intended rather to harass the garrison and keep them constantly on the alert, than to effect anything decided—the sound of armed footsteps again reached the ears of Julia.

A moment afterward, Caius Crispus entered the room hastily, accompanied by Niger and Rufus, the latter bearing in his hand a coil of twisted rope, manufactured from the raw hide of the slaughtered cattle, cut into narrow stripes, and ingeniously interwoven.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, starting for a moment, as he saw Julia. "I had forgotten you. We have been hardly pressed all day, and I have had no time to think of you; but we shall have more leisure now. Are you hungry, Julia?"

For her only reply she pointed to the food yet untouched, which he had brought to her on the previous evening, and shook her head sadly; but uttered not a word.

"Well! well!" he exclaimed, "we have no time to talk about such matters now; but eat you shall, or I will have you crammed, as they stuff fat−livered geese! Come, Niger, we must lose no minute. If they attack again, and miss me from the battlements, they will be suspecting something, and will perhaps come prying to the rear.—Have you seen any soldiers, girl, on this side? I trow you have been gazing from the window all day long in the hope of escaping, but I suppose you will not tell me truly."

"If I tell you not truly, I shall hold my peace. But I will tell you, that I have seen no human being, no living thing, indeed; unless it be a thrush, and three wood pigeons, fluttering in the treetops yonder."

"That is a lie, I dare be sworn!" cried Niger. "If it had been the truth she would not have breathed a word of it to us. Beside which, it is too cool altogether!"

"By Mulciber my patron! if I believed so, it should go hardly with her; but it matters not. Come, we must lose no time."

And passing into the central room of the three, they made one end of the rope fast about the waist of Niger, and the other to an upright mullion in the embrasure, which, although broken half way up, afforded ample purchase whereby to lower him into the chasm.

This done, the man clambered out of the window very cooly, going backward, as if he were about to descend a ladder; but, when his face was on the point of disappearing below the sill, as he hung by his hands alone, having no foothold whatever, he said quietly, "If I shout, Caius Crispus, haul me up instantly. I shall not do so, if there be any path below. But if I whistle, be sure that all is right. Lower away. Farewell."

"Hold on! hold on, man!" replied Crispus quickly, "turn yourself round so as to bring your back to the crag's face, else shall the angles of the rock maim, and the dust blind you. That's it; most bravely done! you are a right good cragsman."

"I was born among the crags, at all events," answered the other, "and I think now that I am going to die among them. But what of that? One must die some day! Fewer words! lower away, I say, I am tired of hanging here between Heaven and Tartarus!"

No words were spoken farther, by any of the party; but the smith with the aid of Rufus paid out the line rapidly although steadily, hand under hand, until the whole length was run out with the exception of some three or four feet.

Just at this moment, when Crispus was beginning to despair of success, and was half afraid that he had miscalculated the length of the rope, the strain on it was slackened for a moment, and then ceased altogether.

The next instant a low and guarded whistle rose from the gorge, above the gurgling of the waters, but not so loud as to reach any ears save those for which it was intended.

A grim smile curled the swordsmith's lip, and his fierce eye glittered with cruel triumph. "We are safe now.—Catiline will be here long before daybreak. Your prayers have availed us, Julia; for I doubt not," he added, with malicious irony, "that you have prayed for us."

Before she had time to reply to his cruel sarcasm, a fresh swell of the besiegers' trumpets, and a loud burst of shouts and warcries from the battlement announced a fresh attack. The smith rushed from the room instantly with Rufus at his heels, and Julia had already made one step toward the window, intending to attempt the perilous descent, alone and unaided, when Crispus turned back suddenly, crying,

"The Rope! the Rope! By the Gods! do not leave the rope! She hath enough of the Amazon's blood in her to atttempt it—"

"Of the *Roman's* blood, say rather!" she exclaimed, springing toward the casement, half maddened in perceiving her last hope frustrated.

Had she reached it, she surely would have perished; for no female head and hands, how strong and resolute so ever, could have descended that frail rope, and even if they could, the ruffian, rather than see her so escape, would have cut it asunder, and so precipitated her to the bottom of the rocky chasm.

But she did not attain her object; for Caius Crispus caught her with both arms around the waist and threw her so violently to the after end of the room, that, her head striking the angle of the wall, she was stunned for the moment, and lay almost senseless on the floor, while the savage, with a rude brutal laugh at her disappointment, rushed out of the room, bearing the rope along with him.

Scarce had he gone, however, when, audible distinctly amid the dissonant danger of the fray, the same feminine voice, which she had heard on the previous night, again aroused her, crying "Hist! hist! hist! Julia."

She sprang to her feet, and gained the window in a moment, and there, on the other verge of the chasm, near twenty feet distant from the window at which she stood, she discovered the figure of a slender dark−eyed and dark−complexioned boy, clad in a hunter's tunic, and bearing a bow in his hand, and a quiver full of arrows on his shoulder.

She had never seen that boy before; yet was there something in his features and expression that seemed familiar to her; that sort of vague resemblance to something well known and accustomed, which leads men to suppose that they must have dreamed of things which mysteriously enough they seem to remember on their first occurrence.

The boy raised his hand joyously, and cried aloud, without any fear of being heard, well knowing that all eyes and ears of the defenders of the place were turned to the side when the fight was raging, "Be of good cheer; you are saved, Julia. Paullus is nigh at hand, but ere he come, *I* will save you! Be of good courage, watch well these windows, but seem to be observing nothing."

And with the words, he turned away, and was lost to her sight in an instant, among the thickly−set underwood. Ere long, however, she caught a glimpse of him again, mounted upon a beautiful white horse, and galloping like the wind down the sandy road, which wound through the wooded knolls toward the bridge below.

Again she lost him; and again he glanced upon her sight, for a single second, as he spurred his fleet horse across the single arch of brick, and dashed into the woods on the hither side of the torrent.

Two weary hours passed; and the sun was nigh to his setting, and she had seen, heard nothing more. Her heart, sickening with hope deferred, and all her frame trembling with terrible excitement, she had almost begun to doubt, whether the whole appearance of the boy might not have been a mere illusion of her feverish senses, a vain creation of her distempered fancy.

Still, fiercer than before, the battle raged without, and now there was no intermission of the uproar; to which was added the crashing of the roofs beneath heavy stones, betokening that engines of some kind had been brought up from the host, or constructed on the spot.

At length, however, her close watch was rewarded. A slight stir among the evergreen bushes on the brink of the opposite cliff caught her quick eye, and in another moment the head of a man, not of the boy whom she had seen before, nor yet, as her hope suggested, of her own Paullus, but of an aquiline−nosed clean−shorn Roman soldier, with an intelligent expression and quick eye, was thrust forward.

Perceiving Julia at the window, he drew back for a second; and the boy appeared in his place, and then both showed themselves together, the soldier holding in his hand the bow and arrows of the hunter youth.

"He is a friend," said the boy, "do all that he commands you."

But so fiercely was the battle raging now, that it was his signs, rather than his words, which she comprehended.

The next moment, a gesture of his hand warned her to withdraw from the embrasure; and scarcely had she done so before an arrow whistled from the bow and dropped into the room, having a piece of very slender twine attached to the end of it.

Perceiving the intention at a glance, the quick witted girl detached the string from the shaft without delay, and, throwing the latter out of the window lest it should betray the plan, drew in the twine, until she had some forty yards within the room, when it was checked from the other side, neither the soldier nor the youth showing themselves at all during the operation.

This done, however, the boy again stood forth, and pitched a leaden bullet, such as was used by the slingers of the day, into the window.

Perceiving that the ball was perforated, she secured it in an instant to the end of the clue, which she held in her hand, and, judging that the object of her friends was to establish a communication from their side, cast it back to them with a great effort, having first passed the twine around the mullion, by aid of which Crispus had lowered down his messenger.

The soldier caught the bullet, and nodded his approbation with a smile, but again receded into the bushes, suffering the slack of the twine to fall down in an easy curve into the ravine; so that the double communication would scarce have been perceived, even by one looking for it, in the gathering twilight.

The boy's voice once more reached her ears, though his form was concealed among the shrubbery. "Fear nothing, you are safe," he said. "But we can do no more until after midnight, when the moon shall give us light to rescue you. Be tranquil, and farewell."—

Be tranquil!—tranquil, when life or death—honor or infamy—bliss or despair, hung on that feeble twine, scarce thicker than the spider's web! hung on the chance of every flying second, each one of which was bringing nigher and more nigh, the hoofs of Catiline's atrocious band.

When voice of man can bid the waves be tranquil, while the north−wester is tossing their ruffian tops, and when the billows slumber at his bidding, then may the comforter assay, with some chance of success, to still the throbbings of the human heart, convulsed by such hopes, such terrors, as then were all but maddening the innocent and tranquil heart of Julia.

Tranquil she could not be; but she was calm and self−possessed, and patient.

Hour after hour lagged away; and the night fell black as the pit of Acheron, and still by the glare of pale fires and torches, the lurid light of which she could perceive from her windows, reflected on the heavens, the savage combatants fought on, unwearied, and unsparing.

Once only she went again to that window, wherefrom hung all her hopes; so fearful was she, that Crispus might find her there, and suspect what was in process.

With trembling fingers she felt for the twine, fatal as the thread of destiny should any fell chance sever it; and in its place she found a stout cord, which had been quietly drawn around the mullion, still hanging in a deep double bight, invisible amid the gloom, from side to side of the chasm.

And now, for the first time, she comprehended clearly the means by which her unknown friends proposed to reach her. By hauling on one end of the rope, any light plank or ladder might be drawn over to the hither from the farther bank, and the gorge might so be securely bridged, and safely traversed.

Perceiving this, and fancying that she could distinguish the faint clink of a hammer among the trees beyond the forest knoll, she did indeed become almost tranquil.

She even lay down on her couch, and closed her eyes, and exerted all the power of her mind to be composed and self−possessed, when the moment of her destiny should arrive.

But oh! how day−long did the minutes seem; how more than year−long the hours.

She opened her curtained lids, and lo! what was that faint pale lustre, glimmering through the tree−tops on the far mountain's brow?—all glory to Diana, chaste guardian of the chaste and pure! it was the signal of her safety! it was! it was the ever−blessed moon!—

Breathless with joy, she darted to the opening, and slowly, warily creeping athwart the gloomy void, she saw the cords drawn taught, and running stiffly, it is true, and reluctantly, but surely, around the mouldering stone mullion; while from the other side, ghost−like and pale, the skeleton of a light ladder, was advancing to meet her hand as if by magic.

Ten minutes more and she would be free! oh! the strange bliss, the inconceivable rapture of that thought! free from pollution, infamy! free to live happy and unblemished! free to be the beloved, the honored bride of her own Arvina.

Why did she shudder suddenly? why grew she rigid with dilated eyes, and lips apart, like a carved effigy of agonized surprise?—

Hark to that rising sound, more rapid than the rush of the stream, and louder than the wailing of the wind! thick pattering down the rocky gorge! nearer and nearer, 'till it thunders high above all the tumult of the battle! the furious gallop of approaching horse, the sharp and angry clang of harness!—

Lo! the hot glare, outfacing the pale moonbeam, the fierce crimson blaze of torches gleaming far down the mountain side, a torrent of rushing fire!

Hark! the wild cheer, "Catiline! Catiline!" to the skies! mixed with the wailing blast of the Roman trumpets, unwillingly retreating from the half−won watchtower!—

"Pull for your lives!" she cried, in accents full of horror and appalling anguish—"Pull! pull! if ye would not see me perish!"—

But it was all too late. Amid a storm of tumultuous acclamation, Catiline drew his panting charger up before the barricaded gateway, which had so long resisted the dread onset of the legionaries, and which now instantly flew open to admit him. Waving his hand to his men to pursue the retreating infantry, he sprang down from his horse, uttering but one word in the deep voice of smothered passion—"Julia!"—

His armed foot clanged on the pavement, ere the bridge was entirely withdrawn; for they, who manned the ropes, now dragged it back, as vehemently as they had urged forward a moment since.

"Back from the window, Julia!"—cried the voice—"If he perceive the ropes, all is lost! Trust me, we never will forsake you! Meet him! be bold! be daring! but defy him not!"—

Scarce had she time to catch the friendly admonition and act on it, as she did instantly, before the door of the outer room was thrown violently open; and, with his sallow face inflamed and fiery, and his black eye blazing with hellish light, Catiline exclaimed, as he strode in hot haste across the threshold,

"At last! at last, I have thee, Julia!"

CHAPTER XVII. TIDINGS FROM ROME.

Time and the tide wear through the longest day.
Shakspeare.

"At last, I have thee, Julia!"

Mighty indeed was the effort of the mind, which enabled that fair slight girl to bear up with an undaunted lip and serene eye against the presence of that atrocious villain; and hope, never−dying hope, was the spirit which nerved her to that effort.

It was strange, knowing as she did the character of that atrocious and bloodthirsty tyrant, that she should not have given way entirely to feminine despair and terror, or sought by tears and prayers to disarm his purpose.

But her high blood cried out from every vein and artery of her body; and she stood calm and sustained by conscious virtue, even in that extremity of peril; neither tempting assault by any display of coward weakness, nor provoking it by any show of defiance.

There is nothing, perhaps, so difficult to any one who is not a butcher or an executioner by trade, with sensibilities blunted by the force of habit, as to attack or injure any thing, which neither flies, nor resists, neither braves, nor trembles.

And Catiline himself, savage and brutal as he was, full of ungoverned impulse and unbridled passion, felt, though he knew not wherefore, this difficulty at this moment.

Had she fallen at his feet, trembling, and tearful, and implored his mercy, he would have gloated on her terrors, laughed tears and prayers to scorn, yea! torn her from an altar's foot, to pour out upon her the vials of agony and foul pollution.

Had she defied, or braved his violence, his fury would have trampled her to the earth in an instant, and murder would have followed in the footsteps of worse violence.

But as she stood there, firm, cold, erect, and motionless as a statue of rare marble, with scarcely a pulse throbbing in her veins, and her clear azure eyes fixed on him with a cold and steady gaze, as if she would have fascinated him by their serene chaste influence, he likewise stood and gazed upon her with a strange mixture of impressions, wherein something akin to love and admiration were blent with what, in minds of better mould, should have been reverence and awe.

He felt, in short, that he lacked `a spur to prick the sides of his intent,' a provocation to insult and aggression yet stronger than the passion and hot thirst of vengeance, which had been well nigh chilled by her severe and icy fortitude. 'Tis said that a lion will turn and flee, From a maid in the pride of her purity; and here a fiercer and more dangerous savage stood powerless and daunted for the moment, by the same holy influence of virtue, which, it is said, has potency to tame the pinched king of the desert.

It was not, however, in the nature of that man to yield himself up long to any influence, save that of his own passions, and after standing mute for perhaps a minute, during which the flush on his sallow cheek, and the glare of his fiery eye, were blanched and dimmed somewhat, he advanced a step or two toward her, repeating the words,

"I have thee; thou art mine, Julia."

"Thy prisoner, Catiline," she replied quietly—"if you make women prisoners."

"My slave, minion."

"I am free−born, and noble. A patrician of a house as ancient as thine own. My ancestors, I have heard say, fought side by side with Sergius Silo."

"The more cause, that their daughter should sleep side by side with Sergius Catiline!" he replied with bitter irony; but there was less of actual passion in his tones, than of a desire to lash himself into fury.

"The less cause that a free−born lady should be disgraced by the grandson of his comrade in arms, who gave her father being."

Thus far her replies had been conducted in the spirit most likely to control, if any thing could control, the demon that possessed him; but seeing that her words had produced more effect on him than she had deemed possible, she made an effort to improve her advantage, and added, looking him firmly in the eye,

"I have heard tell that thou art proud, Catiline, as they art nobly born. Let, then, thine own pride"—

"Proud! Proud! Ha! minion! What have your *nobles* left me that I should glory in—what of which I may still be proud? A name of the grandest, blasted by their base lies, and infamous! Service converted into shame, valor warped into crime! At home poverty, degradation ruin! Abroad, debt, mockery, disgrace! Proud! proud! By Nemesis! fond girl. I am proud—to be the thing that they have made me, a terror, and a curse to all who call themselves patrician. For daring, remorseless! for brave, cruel! for voluptuous, sensual! for fearless, ruthless! for enterprising, reckless! for ambitious, desperate! for a man, a monster! for a philosopher, an atheist! Ha! ha! ha! ha! I am proud, minion, proud to be that I am— that which thou, Julia, shalt soon find me!"

She perceived, when it was too late, the error which she had made, and fearful of incensing him farther, answered nothing. But he was not so to be set at naught, for he had succeeded now in lashing himself into a fit of fury, and advancing upon her, with a face full of all hideous passions, a face that denoted his fell purpose, as plainly as any words could declare them.

"Dost hear me, girl, I say? Thou art mine, Julia."

"Thy prisoner, Catiline," she again repeated in the same steady tone as at first; but the charm had now failed of its effect, and it was fortunate for the sweet girl, that the fell wretch before whom she stood defenceless, had so much of the cat−like, tiger−like spirit in his nature, so much that prompted him to tantalize and torment before striking, to teaze and harass and break down the mind, before doing violence to the body of his subject enemies, or of those whom he chose to deem such.

Had he suspected at this moment that any chance of succor was at hand, however remote, he lacked neither the will nor the occasion to destroy her. He fancied that she was completely at his mercy; and perceiving that, in despite of her assumed coolness, she writhed beneath the terrors of his tongue, he revelled in the fiendish pleasure of triumphing in words over her spirit, before wreaking his vengeance on her person.

"My slave! Julia. My slave, soul and body! my slave, here and for ever! Slave to my passions, and my pleasures! Wilt yield, or resist, fair girl? Resist, I do beseech thee! Let some fire animate those lovely eyes, even if it be the fire of fury—some light kindle those pallid cheeks, even if it be the light of hatred! I am aweary of tame conquests."

"Then wherefore conquer; or conquering, wherefore not spare?"—she answered.

"I conquer, to slake my thirst of vengeance. I spare not, for the wise man's word to the fallen, is still, V æ Victis. Wilt yield, or resist, Julia? wilt be the sharer, or the victim of my pleasures? speak, I say, speak!" he shouted savagely, perceiving that she sought to evade a direct answer. "Speak and reply, directly, or I will do to thee forth with what most thou dreadest! and then wipe out thy shame by agonies of death, to which the tortures of old Regulus were luxury."

"If I must choose, the victim!" she replied steadily. "But I believe you will not so disgrace your manhood."

"Ha! you believe so, you shall feel soon and know. One question more, wilt thou yield or resist?"—

"Resist," she answered, "to the last, and when dishonored, die, and by death, like Lucretia, win back greater honor! Lucretia's death had witnesses, and her tale found men's ears."

"Thy death shall be silent, thy shame loud. I will proclaim the first my deed, the last thy voluntary —."

"Proclaim it!"—she interrupted him, with her eyes flashing bright indignation, and her lip curling with ineffable disdain; as she forgot all prudence in the scorn called forth by his injurious words—"Proclaim it to the world! who will believe it?"—

"The world. Frailty's name is woman!"—

"And Falsehood's—Catiline!"—

"By Hades!"—and he sprang upon her with a bound like that of a tiger, and twined his arms about her waist, clasping her to his breast with brutal violence, and striving to press his foul lips on her innocent mouth; but she, endowed with momentary strength, infinitely unwonted and unnatural, the strength of despair and frenzy, caught his bare throat with both her hands, and writhing herself back to the full length of her arms, uttered a volume of shrieks, so awfully shrill and piercing, that they struck terror into the souls of the brutal rebels without, and harrowed up the spirits of her friends, who lay concealed within earshot, waiting, now almost in despair, an opportunity to aid her.

So strong was the clutch which her small hands had fixed upon his throat, that ere he could release himself, sufficiently to draw a full breath, he was compelled to let her go; and ere he fully recovered himself, she had made

a spring back toward the window, with the evident purpose of throwing herself out into the yawning gulf below it.

But something caught her eye which apparently deterred her, and turning her back upon it quickly, she faced her persecutor once again.

At this moment, there was a loud and angry bustle in the outer court, immediately followed by a violent knocking at the door; but so terrible was the excitement of both these human beings, her's the excitement of innocence in trial, his of atrocity triumphant, that neither heard it, though it was sudden and strong enough to have startled any sleepers, save those of the grave.

"Ha! but this charms me! I knew not that you had so much of the Tigress to fit you for the Tiger's mate. But what a fool you are to waste your breath in yells and your strength in struggles, like to those, when there are none to hear, or to witness them."

"Witnesses are found to all crimes right early and aven gers!" she exclaimed with the high mien of a prophetess; and still that vehement knocking continued, unheeded as the earthquake which reeled unnoticed beneath the feet of the combatants at Thrasymene.

"To this at least there are no witnesses! there shall be no avengers!"

"The Gods are my witnesses! shall be my avengers!"

"Tush! there are no Gods, Julia!"

And again he rushed on her and caught her in his arms

But as he spoke those impious words, sprang to do that atrocious deed, a witness was found, and it might be an avenger.

Unnoticed by the traitor in the fierce whirlwind of ms passion, that hunter boy stood forth on the further brink; revealed, a boy no longer; for the Phrygian bonnet had fallen off, and the redundant raven tresses of a girl flowed back on the wind. Her attitude and air were those of Diana as she bent her good bow against the ravisher Orion. Her right foot dvanced firmly, her right hand drawn back to the ear, her fine eye glaring upon the arrow which bore with unerring aim full on the breast of her own corrupter, her own father, Catiline.

Who had more wrongs to avenge than Lucia?

Another second, and the shaft would have quivered in the heart of the arch villain, sped by the hand from which he deserved it the most dearly. The room within was brighter than day from the red torch light which filled it, falling full on the gaunt form and grim visage of the monster. Her hand was firm, her eye steady, her heart pitiless. But in the better course of her changed life, heaven spared her the dread crime of parricide.

Just as the chord was at the tightest, just as the feathers quivered, and the barb thrilled, about to leap from the tense string, the tall form of the soldier sprang up into the clear moonlight from the underwood, and crying "Hold! hold!" mastered her bowhand, with the speed of light, and dragged her down into the covert.

Well was it that he did so. For just as Catiline seized Julia the second time in his resistless grasp, and ere his lips had contaminated her sweet mouth, the giant Crispus, who had so long been knocking unheeded, rushed into the room, and seized his leader by the shoulder unseen, until he literally touched him.

"Another time for this;" he said, "Catiline. There are tidings from Rome; which—"

"To Tartarus with thy tidings! Let them tarry!"

"They will not tarry, Catiline," replied the smith, who was as pale as a ghost and almost trembling—"least of all for such painted woman's flesh as this is!"

"Get thee away! It were better, wiser, safer to stand between the Lion and his prey, than between Catiline and Julia."

"Then have it!" shouted the smith. "All is discovered! all undone! Lentulus and Cethegus, Gabinius and Statilius, and Cæparius all dead by the hangman's noose in the Tullianum!"

"The idiots! is that all? thy precious tidings! See! how I will avenge them." And he struggled to shake himself free from the grasp of Crispus.

But the smith held him firmly, and replied, "It is not all, Catiline. Metellus Celer is within ten leagues of the camp, at the foot of the mountains. We have no retreat left into Gaul. Come! come! speak to the soldiers! You can deal with this harlotry hereafter."

Catiline glared upon him, as if he would have stabbed him to the heart; but seeing the absolute necessity of enquiring into the truth of this report, he turned to leave the room.

"The Gods be praised! the Gods have spoken loud! The Gods have saved me!" cried Julia falling on her knees.

"Are there no Gods now, O Catiline?"

"To Hades! with thy Gods!" and, striking the unhappy girl a coward blow, which felled her to the ground senseless, he rushed from the room with his confederate in crime, barring the outer door behind him.

CHAPTER XVIII. THE RESCUE.

Speed, Malise, speed, the dun deer's hide
On fleeter foot was never tied.
Lady of the Lake.

Scarcely had the door closed behind Catiline, who rushed forth torch in hand, as if goaded by the furies of Orestes, when half a dozen stout men, sheathed in the full armor of Roman legionaries, sprang out of the brushwood on the gorge's brink, and seizing the ropes which had hung idle during that critical hour, hauled on them with such energetical and zealous power, that the ladder was drawn across the chasm with almost lightning speed.

The hooks, with which its outer end was garnished, caught in the crevices of the ruined wall, and a slender communication was established, although the slight structure which bridged the abyss was scarcely capable of supporting the weight of a human being.

The soldiers, accustomed, as all Roman soldiers were, to all the expediences and resources of warefere had prepared planks which were to be run forward on the ladder, in order to construct a firm bridge. For the plan of the besiegers, until interrupted by Catiline's arrival, had been to take the stronghold in reverse, while a false attack in front should be in progress, and throwing ten or twelve stout soldiers into the heart of the place, to make themselves masters of it by a coup−de−main.

This well−devised scheme being rendered unfeasible by the sudden charge of Catiline's horse, and the rout of the legionaries, the small subaltern's detachment, which had been sent round under Lucia's guidance—for it was she who had discerned the means of passing the chasm, while lying in wait to assist Julia, and disclosed it to the centurion commanding—had been left alone, and isolated, its line of retreat cut off, and itself without a leader.

The singular scenes, however, which they had witnessed, the interest which almost involuntarily they had been led to take in the fate of the fair girl, her calm and dauntless fortitude, and above all the atrocious villainy of Catiline, had inspired every individual of that little band with an heroic resolution to set their lives upon a cast, in order to rescue one who to all of them was personally unknown.

In addition to this, the discovery of Lucia's sex—for they had believed her to be what she appeared, a boy—which followed immediately on the less of her Phrygian bonnet, and the story of her bitter wrongs, which had taken wind, acted as a powerful incentive to men naturally bold and enterprising.

For it is needless to add, that with the revelation of her sex, that of her character as the arch−traitor's child and victim went, as it were, hand in hand.

They had resolved, therefore, on rescuing the one, and revenging the other of these women, at any risk to themselves whatsoever; and now having waited their opportunity with the accustomed patience of Roman veterans, they acted upon it with their habitual skill and celerity.

But rapid as were their movements, they were outstripped by the almost superhuman agility of Lucia, who, knowing well the character of the human fiend with whom they had to contend, his wondrous promptitude in counsel, his lightning speed in execution, was well assured that there was not one moment to be lost, if they would save Arvina's betrothed bride from a fate worse than many deaths.

As soon therefore as she saw the hooks of the scaling ladder catch firm hold of the broken wall, before a single plank had been laid over its frail and distant rungs, she bounded over it with the light and airy foot of a practised dancer—finding account at that perilous moment in one of those indelicate accomplishments in which she had been instructed for purposes the basest and most horrible.

Accustomed as they were to deeds of energy and rapid daring, the stout soldiers stood aghast; for, measuring the action by their own weight and ponderous armature, they naturally overrated its peril to one so slightly made as Lucia.

And yet the hazard was extreme, for not taking it into account that a single slip or false step must precipitate her into the abyss, the slender woodwork of the ladder actually bent as she alighted on it, from each of her long airy bounds.

It was but a second, however, in which she glanced across it, darted through the small embrasure, and was lost

to the eyes of the men within the darkness of the old barrack.

Astonished though they were at the girl's successful daring, the soldiers were not paralyzed at all, nor did they cease from their work.

In less than a minute after she had entered the window, a board was thrust forward, running upon the framework of the ladder, and upon that a stout plank, two feet in breadth, capable of supporting, if necessary, the weight of several armed men.

Nor had this bridge been established many seconds before the soldier in command ran forward upon it, and met Lucia at the embrasure, bearing with strength far greater than her slight form and unmuscular limbs appeared to promise, the still senseless form of Julia.

Catching her from the arms of Lucia, the robust legionary cast the fainting girl across his shoulder as though she had been a feather; and rushed back with her toward his comrades, crying aloud in haste alarm—

"Quick! quick! follow me quick, Lucia. I hear footsteps, they are coming!"—

The caution was needless, for almost outstripping the heavy soldier, the fleet−footed girl stood with him on the farther bank.

Yet had it come a moment later, it would have come all too late.

For having with his wonted celerity ascertained the truth of these fatal tidings, and ordered the body of horse whom he had brought up with him, and who had returned from pursuing the infantry, on seeing a larger body com ing up from Antonius' army, to return with all speed to the camp of Manlius, retaining only a dozen troopers as a personal escort, Catiline had come back to bear off his lovely captive.

The clang of his haughty step had reached the ears of the legionary just as he drew poor Julia, unconscious of her rescue, though the barrack window; and as they stood on the brink of the ravine, thus far in safety, the red glare of the torches streaming through the embrasures, announced the arrival of their enemies, within almost arm's length of them.

The awful burst of imprecations which thundered from the lips of Catiline, as he perceived that his victim had been snatched from him, struck awe even into the hearts of those brave veterans.

A tiger robbed of its young is but a weak and poor example of the frantic, ungovernable, beast−like rage which appeared to prevail entirely above all senses, all consideration, and all reason.

"May I perish ill! may I die crucified! may the fowls of the air, the beasts of the field devour me, if she so escape!" he shouted; and perceiving the means by which she had been carried off, he called loudly for his men to follow, and was in the very act of leaping out from the embrasure upon the bridge, which they had not time to withdraw, when one of the legionaries spurned away the frail fabric with his foot, and drawing his short falchion severed the cords which secured it, at a single blow.

Swinging off instantly in mid air, it was dashed heavily against the rocky wall of the precipice, and, dislodged by the shock, the planks went thundering down into the torrent, at the bottom of the gorge; while upheld by the hooks to the stone window sill, the ladder hung useless on Catiline's side of the chasm, all communication thus completely interrupted.

At the same moment three of the heavy pila, which were the peculiar missiles of the legion, were hurled by as many stout arms at the furious desperado; but it was not his fate so to perish. One of the pondrous weapons hurtled so close to his temple that the keen head razed the skin, the others, blunted or shivered against the sides or lintel of the window, fell harmless into the abyss.

"Thou fool!" cried the man who had rescued Julia, addressing him who had cut away the bridge, "thou shouldst have let him reach the middle, ere thou didst strike that blow. Then would he have lain there now," and he pointed down ward with his finger into the yawning gulf.

"I do not know," replied the other. "By the Gods! Catiline is near enough to me, when he is twenty paces distant."

"Thou art right, soldier, and didst well and wisely," said Lucia, hastily. "Hadst thou tarried to strike until he reached the middle, thou never wouldst have stricken at all. One foot without that window, he would have cleared that chasm, as easily as I would leap a furrow. But come! come! come! we must not loiter, nor lose one instant. He will not so submit to be thwarted. I have two horses by the roadside yonder. Their speed alone shall save us."

"Right! right!" replied the soldier, "lead to them quickly. It is for life or death! Hark! he is calling his men now to horse. We shall have a close run for it, by Hercules!"—

"And we?"—asked one of the veterans—

"Disperse yourselves among the hills, and make your way singly to the camp. He will not think of you, with us before him!"—

"Farewell! The Gods guide and guard thee!"—

"We shall much need, I fear, their guidance!" answered the legionary, setting off at a swift pace, still bearing Julia, who was now beginning to revive in the fresh air, following hard on Lucia, who ran, literally like the wind, to the spot where she had tied her own beautiful white Ister, and another horse, a powerful and well−bred Thracian charger, to the stems of two chesnut trees, in readiness for any fortunes.

Rapidly as the soldier ran, still the light−footed girl outstripped him, and when he reached the sandy road, she had already loosened the reins from the trees to which they had been attached, and held them in readiness.

"Mount, mount," cried Lucia, "for your life! I will help you to lift her."

"I am better now," exclaimed Julia—"Oh ye Gods! and safe too! I can help myself now! and in an instant she was seated behind the stout man−at−arms, and clinging with both hands to his sword belt.

"If you see me no more, as I think you will not, Julia, tell Paullus, Lucia saved you, and — died, for love of him! Now—ride! ride! ride! for your life ride!"

And giving their good horses head they sprang forth, plying the rein and scourge, at headlong speed.

As they ascended the first little hillock, they saw the troopers of Catiline pouring out of the watch−tower gate, and thundering down the slope toward the bridge, with furious shouts, at a rate scarcely inferior to their own.

They had but one hope of safety. To reach the little bridge and pass it before their pursuers should gain it, and cut off their retreat toward their friends, whom they knew to be nigh at hand; but to do so appeared well nigh impossible.

It was a little in their favor that the steeds of Catiline's troopers had been harassed by a long and unusually rapid night march, while their own were fresh and full of spirit; but this advantage was neutralized at least by the double weight which impeded the progress and bore down the energies of the noble Thracian courser, bearing Julia and the soldier.

Again it was in their favor that the road on their side the chasm was somewhat shorter and much more level than that by which Catiline and his riders were straining every nerve, galloping on a parallel line with the tremulous and excited fugitives; but this advantage also was diminished by the fact that they must turn twice at right angles—once to gain the bridge, and once more into the high road beyond it—while the rebels had a straight course, though down a hill side so steep that it might well be called precipitous.

The day had by this time broken, and either party could see the other clearly, even to the dresses of the men and the colors of the horses, not above the sixth part of a mile being occupied by the valley of the stream dividing the two roads.

For life! fire flashed from the flinty road at every bound of the brave coursers, and blood flew from every whirl of the knotted thong; but gallantly the high−blooded beasts answered it. At every bound they gained a little on their pursuers, whose horses foamed and labored down the abrupt descent, one or two of them falling and rolling over their riders, so steep was the declivity.

For life! Catiline had gained the head of his party, and his black horse had outstripped them by several lengths.

If the course had been longer the safety of the fugitives would have been now certain; but so brief was the space and so little did they gain in that awful race, that the nicest eye hardly could have calculated which first would reach the bridge.

So secure of his prize was Catiline, that his keen blade was already out, and as he bowed over his charger's neck, goring his flanks with his bloody spurs, he shouted in his hoarse demoniacal accents, "Victory and vengeance!"

Still, hopeful and dauntless, the stout legionary gallopped on—"Courage!" he exclaimed, "courage, lady, we shall first cross the bridge!"—

Had Lucia chosen it, with her light weight and splendid horsemanship, she might easily have left Julia and the soldier, easily have crossed the defile in advance of Catiline, easily have escaped his vengeance. But she reined in white Ister, and held him well in hand behind the others, muttering to herself in low determined accents, "She shall be saved, but my time is come!"

Suddenly there was a hasty shout of alarm from the troopers on the other side, "Hold, Catiline! Rein up! Rein

up!" and several of the foremost riders drew in their horses. Within a minute all except Catiline had halted.

"They see our friends! they are close at hand! We are saved! by the Immortal Gods! we are saved!" cried the legionary, with a cry of triumph.

But in reply, across the narrow gorge, came the hoarse roar of Catiline, above the din of his thundering gallop.— "By Hades! Death! or vengeance!"

"Ride! ride!" shrieked Lucia from behind, "Ride, I say, fool! you are *not* saved! He will not halt for a horse when revenge spurs him! For your life! ride!"

It was a fearful crisis.

The Thracian charger reached the bridge. The hollow arch resounded but once under his clanging hoofs—the second stride cleared it. He wheeled down the road, and Julia, pale as death, whose eyes had been closed in the agony of that fearful expectation, unclosed them at the legionary's joyous shout, but closed them again in terror and despair with a faint shriek, as they met the grim countenance of Catiline, distorted with every hellish passion, and splashed with blood gouts from his reeking courser's side, thrust forward parallel nearly to the black courser's foamy jaws—both nearly within arm's length of her, as it appeared to her excited fancy.

"We are lost! we are lost!" she screamed.

"We are saved! we are saved!" shouted the soldier as he saw coming up the road at a gallop to meet them, the bronze casques and floating horse−hair crests, and scarlet cloaks, of a whole squadron of legionary cavalry, arrayed beneath a golden eagle—the head of their column scarcely distant three hundred yards.

But they were not saved yet, not would have been—for Catiline's horse was close upon their croupe and his uplifted blade almost flashed over them—when, with a wild cry. Lucia dashed her white Ister at full speed, as she crossed the bridge, athwart the counter of black Erebus.

The thundering speed at which the black horse came down the hill, and the superior weight of himself and his rider, hurled the white palfrey and the brave girl headlong; but his stride was checked, and, blown as he was, he stumbled, and rolled over, horse and man.

A minute was enough to save them, and before Lucia had regained her feet, the ranks of the new comers had opened to receive the fugitives, and had halted around them, in some slight confusion.

"The Gods be blessed for ever!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands, and raising her eyes to heaven. "I have saved her!"

"And lost thyself, thrice miserable fool!" hissed a hoarse well known voice in her ear, as a heavy hand seized her by the shoulder, and twisted her violently round.

She stood face to face with Catiline, and met his horrid glare of hate with a glance prouder than his own and brighter. She smiled triumphantly, as she said in a clear high voice.

"I have saved her!"

"For which, take thy reward, in this, and this, and this!"

And with the words he dealt her three stabs, the least of which was mortal; but, even in that moment of dread passion, with fiendish ingenuity he endeavored to avoid giving her a wound that should be directly fatal.

There writhe, and howl, 'till slow death relieve you!"

"Meet end to such beginning!" cried the unhappy girl. "Adulterous parent! incestuous seducer! kindred slayer! ha! ha! ha! ha!" and with a wild laugh she fell to the ground and lay with her eyes closed, motionless and for the moment senseless.

But he, with his child's blood smoking on his hand, shook his sword aloft fiercely against the legionaries, and leaping on his black horse which had arisen from the ground unhurt by its fall, gallopped across the bridge; and plunging through the underwood into the deep chesnut forest was lost to the view of the soldiers, who had spurred up in pursuit of him, that they abandoned it ere long as hopeless.

It was not long that Lucia lay oblivious of her sufferings. A sense of fresh coolness on her brow, and the checked flow of the blood, which gushed from those cruel wounds, were the first sensations of which she became aware.

But, as she opened her eyes, they met well known and loving faces; and soft hands were busy about her bleeding gashes; and hot tears were falling on her poor pallid face from eyes that seldom wept.

Julia was kneeling at her side, Paullus Arvina was bending over her in speechless gratitude, and sorrow; and the stern cavaliers of the legion, unused to any soft emotions, stood round holding their chargers' bridles with

frowning brows, and lips quivering with sentiments, which few of them had experienced since the far days of their gentler boyhood.

"Oh! happy," she exclaimed, in a soft low tone, "how happy it is so to die! and in dying to see thee, Paullus."

"Oh! no! no! no!" cried Julia, "you must not, shall not die! my friend, my sister! O, tell her, Paullus, that she will not die, that she will yet be spared to our prayers, our love, our gratitude, our veneration."

But Paullus spoke not; a soldier, and a man used to see death in all shapes in the arena, he knew that there was no hope, and, had his life depended on it, he could not, at that moment have deceived her.

Little, however, cared the dying girl for that; even if she had heard or comprehended the appeal. Her ears, her mind, were full of other thoughts, and a bright beautiful irradiation played over her wan lips and ashy features, as she cried joyously, although her voice was very tremulous and weak,

"Paullus, do you hear that? her friend! her sister! Paullus, Paullus, do you hear that? Julia calls me her friend—me, me her sister! me the disgraced—"

"Peace! peace! Dear Lucia! you must not speak such words!" said Paullus. Be your past errors what they may— and who am I, that I should talk of errors?—this pure high love—this delicate devotion—this death most heroical and glorious no! no! I cannot—" and the strong man bowed his head upon his hands, and burst into an agony of tears and passion.

No revelation from on high had taught those poor Romans, that `joy shall be in heaven, over the sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance.'

Yet groping darkly on their way by the dim lights of nature and philosophy, they had perceived, at least, that it is harder far for one corrupted from her very childhood, corrupted by the very parents who should have guided, with all her highest qualities of mind and body perverted studiously till they had hardened into vices, to raise herself erect at once from the slough of sensuality and sin, and spring aloft, as the butterfly transmuted from the grub, into the purity and loveliness of virtue—than for one, who hath known no trial, suffered no temptation, to hold the path of rectitude unswerving.

And Julia, whose high soul and native delicacy were all incapable of comprehending the nature, much less the seductions, of such degradation, as that poor victim of parental villainy had undergone, saw clearly and understood at a glance, the difficulty, the gloriousness, the wonder of that beautiful regeneration.

"No, no. Dear Lucia, dear sister, if you love that name," she said in soothing tones, holding her cold hands clasped in her own quivering fingers, "indeed, indeed you must not think or speak of yourself thus. Your sins, if you have sinned, are the sins of others, your virtues and your excellence, all, all your own. I have heard many times of women, who have fallen from high virtue, in spite of noble teachings, in spite of high examples, and whom neither love nor shame could rescue from pollution—but never, never, did I hear of one who so raised herself, alone, unaided, in spite of evil teaching, in spite the atrocity of others, in spite of infamous examples, to purity, devotion such as thine! But, fear not, Lucia. Fear not, dearest girl, you shall not die, believe—"

"I do not fear, I desire it," said the dying girl, who was growing weaker and fainter every moment. "To a life, and a love like mine, both guilty, both unhappy, death is a refuge, not a terror; and if there be, as you believe, who are so wise and virtuous, a place beyond the grave, where souls parted here on earth, may meet and dwell in serene and tranquil bliss, perhaps, I say, perhaps, Julia, this death may compensate that life—this blood may wash away the sin, the shame, the pollution."

"Believe it, O believe it!" exclaimed Julia earnestly. "How else should the Gods be all−great and all−wise; since vice triumphs often *here*, and virtue pines in sorrow. Be sure, I say, be sure of it, there is a place hereafter, where all sorrows shall be turned to joy, all sufferings compensated, all inequalities made even. Be sure of that, dear Lucia."

"I am sure of it," she replied, a brighter gleam of pleasure crossing her features, on which the hues of death were fast darkening. "I am sure of it *now*. I think my mind grows clearer, as my body dies away. I see—I see—there *is* God! Julia—there is an hereafter—an eternity—rest for the weary, joy for the woful! yes! yes! I see—I feel it. We shall meet, Julia. We shall meet, Paullus, Paullus!" And she sank back fainting and overpowered upon Julia's bosom.

In a moment or two, however, she opened her eyes again, but it was clear that the spirit was on the point of taking its departure.

"I am going!" she said in a very low voice. "I am going. His sword was more merciful than its master.— Bury

me in a nameless grave. Let no stone tell the tale of unhappy, guilty Lucia. But come sometimes, Julia, Paullus, and look where I lie; and sometimes—will you not sometimes remember Lucia?"

"You shall live in our souls forever!" replied Julia, stooping down to kiss her.

"In your arms, Paullus, in your arms! will you not let me, Julia? 'Twere sweet to die in your arms, Paullus."—

"How can you ask?" cried Julia, who scarce could speak for the tears and sobs, which almost choked her.

"Here, Paullus, take her, gently, gently."

"Oh! sweet—oh! happy!" she murmured, as she leaned her head against his heart, and fixed her glazing eyes upon his features, and clasped his hand with her poor dying fingers. "She told you, Paullus, that for your love I died to save her!"

"She did—she did—dear, dearest Lucia!"—

"Kiss me," she whispered; "I am going very fast. Kiss me on the brow, Paullus, where years ago you kissed me, when I was yet an innocent child." Then, fancying that he hesitated, she cried, "you will let him kiss me, now, will you not, Julia? He is yours"—

"Oh! kiss her, kiss her, Paullus," exclaimed Julia eagerly, "how could you fancy, Lucia, that I should wish otherwise? kiss her lips, not her brow, Paullus Arvina."

"Kiss me first thou, dear Julia. I *may* call you dear."

"Dear Lucia, dearest sister!"

And the pure girl leaned over and pressed a long kiss on the cold lips of the unhappy, guilty, regenerated being, whose death had won for her honor, and life, and happiness.

"Now, Paullus, now," cried Lucia, raising herself from his bosom by a last feeble effort, and stretching out her arms, "now, ere it be too late!"—

He bowed down to her and kissed her lips, and she clasped her arms close about his neck, and returned that last chaste caress, murmuring "Paullus, mine own in death, mine own, own Paullus!"—

There was a sudden rigor, a passing tremulous spasm, which ran through her whole frame for a moment—her arms clasped his neck more tightly than before, and then released their hold, all listless and unconscious—her head fell back, with the eyes glazed and visionless, and the white lips half open.

"She is dead, Julia!" exclaimed Paullus, who was not ashamed to weep at that sad close of so young and sorrowful a life, "dead for our happiness!"

"Hush! hush!" cried Julia, who was still gazing on the face of the dead—"There is a change—see! see! how beautiful, how tranquil!"—

And in truth a sweet placid smile had settled about the pallid mouth, and nothing can be conceived more lovely than the calm, holy, pure expression which breathed from every lineament of the lifeless countenance.

"She is gone, peace to her manes."

"She is at rest, now, Paullus, she is happy!" murmured Julia. "How excellent she was, how true, how brave, how devoted! Oh! yes! I doubt not, she is happy."

"The Gods grant it!" he replied fervently. "But I have yet a duty," and drawing his short straight sword he severed one long dark curl from the lifeless head, and raising it aloft in his left hand, while with the right he pointed heavenward the gleaming steel, "Ye Gods!" he cried, "supernal and infernal! and ye spirits and powers, shades of the mighty dead! Hear earth, and heaven, and thou Tartarus! by this good steel, by this right hand, in presence of this sacred dead, I swear, I devote Catiline and his hated head to vengeance! By this sword may he perish; may this hair be steeped in his lifeblood; may he know himself, when dying, the victim of my vengeance— may dogs eat his body—and his unburied spirit know neither Tartarus nor Elysium!"—

It was strange, but as he ceased from that wild imprecation, a faint flash of lightning veined the remote horizon, and a low clap of thunder rumbled afar off, echoing among the hills—perchance the last of a storm, unheard before and unnoticed by the distracted minds of the spectators of that scene.

But the superstitious Romans accepted it as an omen.

"Thunder!"—cried one.

"The Gods have spoken!"—

"I hail the omen!" exclaimed Paullus, sheathing his sword, and thrusting the tress of hair into his bosom. "By my hand shall he perish!"

And thenceforth, it was believed generally by the soldiers, that in the coming struggle Catiline was destined to

fall, and by the hand of Paul Arvina.

CHAPTER XIX. THE EVE OF BATTLE.

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased.
Macbeth.

Nearly a fortnight had elapsed since the rescue of Julia, and the sad death of Catiline's unhappy daughter, and yet the battle which was daily and hourly expected, had not been fought.

With rare ability and generalship, Catiline had avoided an action with the troops of Antonius, marching and countermarching among the rugged passes of the Appennines, now toward Rome, now toward Gaul, keeping the enemy constantly on the alert, harassing the consul's outposts, threatening the city itself with an assault, and maintaining with studious skill that appearance of mystery, which is so potent an instrument whether to terrify or to fascinate the vulgar mind.

During this period the celerity of his movements had been such that his little host appeared to be almost ubiquitous, and men knew not where to look for his descent, or how to anticipate the blow, which he evidently had it in contemplation to deliver.

In the meantime, he had given such of his adherents as fled from Rome immediately on the execution of the conspirators, an opportunity to join him, and many had in fact done so with their clients, and bands of gladiators.

The disaffected of the open country had all united themselves to him; and having commenced operations with a force not exceeding two thousand men, he was now at the head of six times that number, whom he had formed into two complete legions, and disciplined them with equal assiduity and success.

Now, however, the time had arrived when it was for his advantage no longer to avoid an encounter with the troops of the commonwealth; for having gained all that he proposed to himself by his dilatory movements and Fabian policy, time namely for the concentration of his adherents, and opportunity to discipline his men, he now began to suffer from the inconveniences of the system.

Unsupplied with magazines, or any regular supply of provisions, his army like a flight of locusts had stripped the country bare at every halting place, and that wild hill country had few resources, even when shorn by the licentious band of his desperadoes, upon which to support an army. The consequence, therefore, of his incessant hurrying to and fro, was that the valleys of the mountain chain which he had made the theatre of his campaign, were now utterly exhausted; that his beasts of burthen were broken down and foundered; and that the line of his march might be traced by the carcasses of mules and horses which had given out by the wayside, and by the flights of carrion birds which bovered in clouds about his rear, prescient of the coming carnage.

His first attempt was to elude Metellus Celer, who had marched down from the Picene district on the Adriatic sea, with great rapidity, and taken post at the foot of the mountains, on the head waters of the streams which flow down into the great plain of the Po.

In this attempt he had been frustrated by the ability of the officer who was opposed to him, who had raised no less than three legions fully equipped for war.

By him every movement of the conspirator was anticipated, and met by some corresponding measure, which rendered it abertive. Nor was it, any longer, difficult for him to penetrate the designs of Catiline, since the peasantry and mountaineers, who had throughout that district been favorable to the conspiracy in the first instance, and who were prepared to favor any design which promised to deliver them from inexorable taxation, had been by this time so unmercifully plundered and harassed by that banditti, that they were now as willing to betray Catiline to the Romans, as they had been desirous before of giving the Romans into his hands at disadvantage.

Fully aware of all these facts, and knowing farther that Antonius had now come up so close to his rear, with a large army, that he was in imminent danger of being surrounded and taken between two fires, the desperate traitor suddenly took the boldest and perhaps the wisest measure.

Wheeling directly round he turned his back toward Gaul, whither he had been marching, and set his face toward the city. Then making three great forced marches he came upon the army of Antonius, as it was in column of march, among the heights above Pistoria, and had there been daylight for the attack when the heads of the consul's cohorts were discovered, it is possible that he might have forced him to fight at disadvantage, and even

defeated him.

In that case there would have been no force capable of opposing him on that side Rome, and every probability would have been in favor of his making himself master of the city, a success which would have gone far to insure his triumph.

It was late in the evening, however, when the hostile armies came into presence, each of the other, and on that account, and, perhaps, for another and stronger reason, Catiline determined on foregoing the advantages of a surprise.

Caius Antonius, the consul in command, it must be remembered, had been one of the original confederates in Catiline's first scheme of massacre and conflagration, which had been defeated by the unexpected death of Curius Piso.

Detached from the conspiracy only by Cicero's rare skill, and disinterested cession to him of the rich province of Macedonia. Antonius might therefore justly be supposed unlikely to urge matters to extremities against his quondam comrades; and it was probably in no small degree on this account that Catiline had resolved on trying the chances of battle rather against an old friend, than against an enemy so fixed, and of so resolute patrician principles as Metellus Celer.

He thought, moreover, that it was just within the calculation of chances that Antonius might either purposely mismanoeuvre, so as to allow him to descend upon Rome without a battle, or adopt such tactics as should give him a victory.

He halted his army, therefore, in a little gorge of the hills opening out upon a level plain, flanked on the left by the steep acclivities of the mountain, which towered in that direction, ridge above ridge, inaccessible, and on the right by a rugged and rocky spur, jutting out from the same ridge, by which his line of battle would be rendered entirely unassailable on the flanks and rear.

In this wild spot, amid huge gray rocks, and hanging woods of ancient chesnuts and wild olive, as gray and hoary as the stones among which they grew, he had pitched his camp, and now lay awaiting in grim anticipation what the morrow should bring forth; while, opposite to his front, on a lower plateau of the same eminence, the great army of the consul might be descried, with its regular entrenchments and superb array of tents, its forests of gleaming spears, and its innumerable ensigns, glancing and waving in the cold wintry moonshine.

The mind of the traitor was darker and more gloomy than its wont. He had supped with his officers, Manlius and a nobleman of Fæsulæ, whose name the historian has not recorded, who held the third rank in the rebel army, but their fare had been meagre and insipid, their wines the thin vintage of that hill country; a little attempt at festivity had been made, but it had failed altogether; the spirits of the men, although undaunted and prepared to dare the utmost, lacked all that fiery and enthusiastic ardor, which kindles patriot breasts with a flame so pure and pervading, on the eve of the most desperate encounters.

Enemies of their country, enemies almost of mankind, these desperadoes were prepared to fight desperately, to fight unto the death, because to win was their only salvation, and, if defeated, death their only refuge.

But for them there was no grand heart−elevating spur to action, no fame to be won, no deathless name to be purchased— their names deathless already, as they knew too well, through black infamy!—no grateful country's praises, to be gained cheaply by a soldier's death!—no! there were none of these things.

All their excitements were temporal, sensual, earthy. The hope to conquer, the lust to bask in the sunshine of power, the desire to revel at ease in boundless luxury and riot.

And against these, the rewards of victory, what were the penalties of defeat—death, infamy, the hatred and the scorn of ages.

The wicked have no friends. Never, perhaps, was this fact exemplified more clearly than on that battle eve. Community of guilt, indeed, bound those vicious souls together— community of interests, of fears, of perils, held them in league—yet, feeling as they did feel that their sole chance of safety lay in the maintenance of that confederation, each looked with evil eyes upon his neighbor, each almost hated the others, accusing them internally of having drawn them into their present perilous peril, of having failed at need, or of being swayed by selfish motives only.

So little truth there is in the principle, which Catiline had set forth in his first address to his banded parricides, "that the community of desires and dislikes constitutes, in one word, true friendship!"—

And now so darkly did their destiny lower on those depraved and ruined spirits, that even their recklessness,

that last light which emanates from crime in despair, had burned out, and the furies of conscience,—that conscience which they had so often stifled, so often laughed to scorn, so often drowned with riot and debauch, so often silenced by fierce sophistry—now hunted them, harpies of the soul, worse than the fabulous Eumenides of parricide Orestes.

The gloomy meal was ended; the parties separated, all of them, as it would seem, relieved by the termination of those mock festivities which, while they brought no gayity to the heart, imposed a necessity of seeming mirthful and at ease, when they were in truth disturbed by dark thoughts of the past, and terrible forebodings of the future.

As soon as his guests had departed and the traitor was left alone, he arose from his seat, according to his custom, and began to pace the room with vehement and rapid strides, gesticulating wildly, and muttering sentences, the terrible oaths and blasphemies of which were alone audible.

Just at this time a prolonged flourish of trumpets from without, announced the changing of the watch. I was nine o'clock. "Ha! the third hour!" already, he exclaimed, starting as he heard the wild blast, "and Chærea not yet returned from Antonius. Can it be that the dog freedman has played me false, or can Antonius have seized him as a hostage?—I will go forth," he added, after a short pause, "I will go forth, and observe the night."

And throwing a large cloak over his armor, and putting a broad−brimmed felt hat upon his head, in lieu of the high crested helmet, he sallied out into the camp, carrying in addition to his sword a short massive javelin in his right hand.

The night was extremely dark and murky. The moon had not yet risen, and but for the camp−fires of the two armies, it would have been impossible to walk any distance without the aid of a torch or lantern. A faint lurid light was dispersed from these, however, over the whole sky, and thence was reflected weakly on the rugged and broken ground which lay between the entrenched lines of the two hosts.

For a while, concealed entirely by his disguise, Catiline wandered through the long streets of tents, listening to the conversation of the soldiers about the watch−fires, their strange superstitious legends, and old traditionary songs; and, to say truth, the heart of that desperate man was somewhat lightened by his discovery that the spirits of the men were alert and eager for the battle, their temper keen and courageous, their confidence in the prowess and ability of their chief unbounded.

"He is the best soldier, since the days of Sylla," said one gray−headed veteran, whose face was scarred by the Pontic scymetars of Mithridates.

"He is a better soldier in the field, than ever Sylla was, by Hercules!" replied another.

"Aye! in the field! Sylla, I have heard say, rarely unsheathed his sword, and never led his men to hand and hand encounter," interposed a younger man, than the old colonists to whom he spoke.

"It is the head to plan, not the hand to execute, that makes the great captain. Caius, or Marcus, Titus or Tullus, can any one of them strike home as far, perhaps farther, than your Syllas or your Catilines."

"By Mars! I much doubt it!" cried another. "I would back Catiline with sword and buckler against the stoutest and the deftest gladiator that ever wielded blade. He is as active and as strong as a Libyan tiger."

"Aye! and as merciless."

"May the foe find him so to−morrow!"

"To−morrow, by the Gods! I wish it were to−morrow It is cold work this, whereas, to−morrow night, I promise you, we shall be ransacking Antonius' camp, with store of choice wines, and rare viands."

"But who shall live to share them is another question."

"One which concerns not those who win."

"And by the God of Battles! we will do that to−morrow, let who may fall asleep, and who may keep awake to tell of it."

"A sound sleep to the slumberers, a merry rouse to the quick boys, who shall keep waking!" shouted another and the cups were brimmed, and quaffed amid a storm of loud tumultuous cheering.

Under cover of this tumult, Catiline withdrew from the neighborhood, into which he had intruded with the stealthy pace of the beast to which the soldiers had compared him; and as he retired, he muttered to himself—"They are in the right frame of mind—of the right stuff to win—and yet— and yet—" he paused, and shook his head gloomily, as if he dared not trust his own lips to complete the sentence he had thus begun.

A moment afterward he exclaimed—"But Chærea! but Chærea! how long the villain tarries! By heaven! I will

go forth and meet him."

And suiting the action to the word, he walked rapidly down the Quintana or central way to the Prætorian gate, there giving the word to the night−watch in a whisper, and showing his grim face to the half−astonished sentinel on duty, he passed out of the lines, alone and unguarded.

After advancing a few paces, he was challenged again by the pickets of the velites, who were thrust out in advance of the gates, and again giving the word was suffered to pass on, and now stood beyond the farthest outpost of his army.

Cautiously and silently, but with a swift step and determined air, he now advanced directly toward the front of the Roman entrenchments, which lay at a little more than a mile's distance from his own lines, and ere long reached a knoll or hillock which would by daylight have commanded a complete view of the whole area of the consul's camp, not being much out of a sling's cast from the ramparts.

The camp of the consul lay on the slope of a hill, so that the rear was considerably higher than the front; Catiline's eye, as he stood on that little eminence, could therefore clearly discern all the different streets and divisions of the camp, by the long lines of lamps and torches which blazed along the several avenues, and he gazed anxiously and long, at that strange silent picture.

With the exception of a slight clash and clang heard at times on the walls, where the skirmishers were going on their rounds, and the neigh of some restless charger, there was nothing that should have indicated to the ear that nearly twenty thousand men were sleeping among those tented lines of light—sleeping how many of them their last natural slumber.

No thoughts of that kind, however, intruded on the mind of the desperado.

Careless of human life, reckless of human suffering, he gazed only with his enquiring glance of profound penetration, hoping to espy something, whereby he might learn the fate—not of his messenger, that was to him a matter of supreme indifference—but of his message to Antonius.

Nor was he very long in doubt on this head; for while he was yet gazing, there was a bustle clearly perceptible about the prætorium, lights were seen flitting to and fro, voices were heard calling and answering to one another, and then the din of hammers and sounds of busy preparation.

This might have lasted perchance half an hour, to the great amazement of the traitor, who could not conceive the meaning of that nocturnal hubbub, when the clang of harness succeeded by the heavy regular tramp of men marching followed the turmoil, and, with many torches borne before them, the spears and eagle of a cohort were seen coming rapidly toward the Prætorian Gate.

"By Hecate!" cried Catiline—"what may this mean, I wonder. They are too few for an assault, nay! even for a false alarm. They have halted at the gate! By the Gods! they are filing out! they march hitherward! and lo! Manlius is aware of them. I will risk something to tarry here and watch them."

As he spoke, the cohort marched forward, straight on the hillock where he stood; and so far was it from seeking to conceal its whereabout, that its trumpets were blown frequently and loudly, as if to attract observation.

Meantime the camp of Catiline was on the alert also, the ramparts were lined with torches, by the red glare of which the legionaries might be seen mustering in dense array with shields in serried order, and spear heads twinkling in the torch−light.

As the cohorts approached the hill, Catiline fell back toward his own camp a little, and soon found shelter in a small thicket of holleys and wild myrtle which would effectually conceal him from the enemy, while he could observe their every motion from its safe covert.

On the hillock, the cohort halted—one manipule stood to its arms in front, while the rest formed a hollow square, all facing outward around its summit. The torches were lowered, so that with all his endeavors, Catiline could by no means discover what was in process within that guarded space.

Again the din of hammers rose on his ear, mixed now with groans and agonizing supplications, which waxed at length into a fearful howl, the utterance of one, past doubt, in more than mortal agony.

A strange and terrible suspicion broke upon Catiline, and the sweat started in beadlike drops from his sallow brow. It was not long ere that suspicion became certainty.

The clang of the hammers ceased; the wild howls sank into a continuous weak pitiful wailing. The creak of pullies and cordage, the shouts of men plying levers, and hauling ropes, succeeded, and slowly sullenly uprose, hardly seen in the black night air, a huge black cross. It reached its elevation, and was made fast in almost less

time than it has taken to relate it, and instantly a pile of faggots which had been raised a short distance in front of it, and steeped in oil or some other unctuous matter, was set on fire.

A tall wavering snowwhite glare shot upward, and revealed, writhing in agony, and wailing wofully, the naked form of Chærea, bleeding at every pore from the effects of the merciless Roman scourging, nailed on the fatal cross.

So near was the little thicket in which Catiline lay, that he could mark every sinew of that gory frame working in agony, could read every twitch of those convulsed features.

Again the Roman trumpets were blown shrill and piercing, and a centurion stepping forward a little way in front of the advanced manipule, shouted at the pitch of his voice,

"Thus perish all the messengers of parricides and traitors!"

Excited, almost beyond his powers of endurance, by what he beheld and heard, the fierce traitor writhed in his hiding place, not sixty paces distant from the speaker, and gnashed his teeth in impotent malignity. His fingers griped the tough shaft of his massive pilum, as if they would have left their prints in the close−grained ash.

While that ferocious spirit was yet strong within him, the wretched freedman, half frenzied doubtless by his tortures, lifted his voice in a wild cry on his master—

"Catiline! Catiline!" he shrieked so thrillingly that every man in both camps heard every syllable distinct and clear. "Chærea calls on Catiline. Help! save! Avenge! Catiline! Catiline!"

A loud hoarse laugh burst from the Roman legionaries, and the centurion shouted in derision.

But at that instant the desperate spectator of that horrid scene sprang to his feet reckless, and shouting, as he leaped into the circle of bright radiance,

"Catiline hears Chærea, and delivers,"—hurled his massive javelin with deadly aim at his tortured servant.

It was the first blow Catiline ever dealt in mercy, and mercifully did it perform its errand.

The broad head was buried in the naked breast of the victim, and with one sob, one shudder, the spirit was released from the tortured clay.

Had a thunderbolt fallen among the cohort, the men could not have been more stunned—more astounded. Before they had sufficiently recovered from their shock to cast a missile at him, much less to start forth in pursuit, he was half way toward his own camp in safety; and ere long a prolonged burst, again and again reiterated, of joyous acclamations, told to the consular camp that the traitors knew and appreciated the strange and dauntless daring of that almost ubiquitous leader.

An hour afterward that leader was alone, in his tent, stretched on his couch, sleeping. But oh! that sleep—not gentle slumber, not nature's soft nurse—but nature's horrible convulsion! The eyes wide open, glaring, dilated in their sockets as of a strangled man—the brow beaded with black sweat drops—the teeth grinded together—the white lips muttering words too horrible to be recorded— the talon−like fingers clutching at vacancy.

It was too horrible to last. With a wild cry, "Lucia! Ha! Lucia! Fury! Avenger! Fiend!" he started to his feet, and glared around him with a bewildered eye, as if expecting to behold some ghastly supernatural visitant.

At length, he said, with a shudder—which he could not repress, "It was a dream! A dream—but ye Gods! what a dream! I will sleep no more—'till to−morrow. To−morrow," he repeated in a doubtful and enquiring tone, "to−morrow. If I should fall to−morrow, and such dreams come in that sleep which hath no waking, those dreams should be reality—that reality should be—Hell! I know not—I begin to doubt some things, which of yore I held certain! What if there should be Gods! avenging, everlasting torturers! If there should be a Hell! Ha! ha!" he laughed wildly and almost frantically. "Ha! ha! what matters it? Methinks this is a hell already!" and with the words he struck his hand heavily on his broad breast, and relapsed into gloomy and sullen meditation.

That night he slept no more, but strode backward and forward hour after hour, gnawing his nether lip till the blood streamed from the wounds inflicted by his unconscious teeth.

What awful and mysterious retribution might await him in the land of spirits, it is not for mortals to premise; but in this at least did he speak truth that night—conscience and crime may kindle in the human heart a Hell, which nothing can extinguish, so long as the soul live identical self−knowing, self−tormenting.

CHAPTER XX. THE FIELD OF PISTORIA.

Make all our trumpets speak; give them all breath,
Those clamorous harbingers of blood and death.
Macbeth.

The first faint streaks of day were scarcely visible in the east, when Catiline, glad to escape the horrors which he had endured through the dark solitude of the night watches, issued from his tent, armed at all points, and every inch a captain.

All irresolution, all doubt, all nervousness had passed away. Energy and the strong excitement of the moment had overpowered conscience; and looking on his high, haughty port, his cold hard eye, his resolute impassive face, one would have said that man, at least, never trembled at realities, far less at shadows.

But who shall say in truth, which are the shadows of this world, which the realities? Many a one, it may be, will find to his sorrow, when the great day shall come, that the hard, selfish, narrow fact, the reality after which his whole life was a chase, a struggle, is but the shadow of a shade; the unsubstantial good, the scholar's or the poet's dream, which he scorned as an empty nothing, is an immortal truth, an everlasting and immutable reality.

Catiline shook at shadows, whom not the `substance of ten thousand soldiers armed in proof,' could move, unless it were to emulation and defiance.

Which were in truth more real, more substantial causes of dismay, those shadows which appalled him, or those realities which he despised.

Ere that sun set, upon whose rising he gazed with an eye so calm and steadfast, that question, to him at least, was solved for ever—to us it is, perhaps, still a question.

But, at that moment, he thought nothing of the past, nothing of the future. The present claimed his whole undivided mind, and to the present he surrendered it, abstracted from all speculations, clear and unclouded, and pervading as an eagle's vision.

All his arrangements for the day had been made on the previous night so perfectly, that the troops were already filing out from the Prætorian gate in orderly array, and taking their ground on the little plain at the mouth of the gorge, in the order of battle which had been determined by the chiefs beforehand.

The space which he had selected whereon to receive the attack of Antonius' army, was indeed admirably chosen. It front it was so narrow, that eight cohorts, drawn up in a line ten deep, according to the Roman usage, filled it completely; behind these, the twelve remaining cohorts, which completed the force of his two legions, were arrayed in reserve in denser and more solid order, the interval between the mountains on the left, and the craggy hill on the right, which protected his flanks, being much narrower as it ascended toward the gorge in which the rebel camp was pitched.

In front of the army, there was a small plain, perfectly level, lying in an amphitheatre, as it were, of rocks and mountains, with neither thicket, brake, nor hillock to mar its smooth expanse or hinder the shock of armies, and extending perhaps half a mile toward the consular army. Below this, the ground fell off in a long abrupt and rugged declivity, somewhat exceeding a second half mile in length, with many thickets and clumps of trees on its slope, and the hillock at its foot, whereon still frowned Chærea's cross with the gory and hideous carcase, already blackened by the frosty night wind, hanging from its rough timbers, an awful omen to that army of desperate traitors.

Beyond that hillock, the ground swelled again into a lofty ridge, facing the mouth of the gorge in which Catiline had arrayed his army, with all advantages of position, sun and wind in his favor.

The sun rose splendid and unclouded, and as his long rays streamed through the hollows in the mountain top, nothing can be conceived more wildly romantic than the mountain scene, more gorgeous and exciting than the living picture, which they illuminated.

The hoary pinnacles of the huge mountains with their crowns of thunder−splintered rocks, the eyries of innumerable birds of prey, gleaming all golden in the splendors of the dawn—their long abrupt declivities, broken with crags, feathered with gray and leafless forests, and dotted here and there with masses of rich evergreens, all bathed in soft and misty light—and at the base of them the mouth of the deep gorge, a gulf of massive purple

shadow, through which could be descried indistinctly the lines of the deserted palisades and ramparts, whence had marched out that mass of living valor, which now was arrayed in splendid order, just where the broad rays, sweeping down the hills, dwelt in their morning glory.

Motionless they stood in their solid formation, as living statues, one mass, as it appeared, of gold and scarlet; for all their casques and shields and corslets were of bright burnished bronze, and all the cassocks of the men, and cloaks of the officers of the vivid hue, named from the flower of the pomegranate; so that, to borrow a splendid image of Xenophon describing the array of the ten thousand, the whole army lightened with brass, and bloomed with crimson.

And now, from the camp in the rear a splendid train came sweeping at full speed, with waving crests of crimson horse hair dancing above their gleaming helmets, and a broad banner fluttering in the air, under the well−known silver eagle, the tutelar bird of Marius, the God of the arch−traitor's sacrilegious worship.

Armed in bright steel, these were the body guard of Catiline, three hundred chosen veterans, the clients of his own and the Cornelian houses, men steeped to the lips in infamy and crime, soldiers of fifty victories, Sylla's atrocious colonists.

Mounted on splendid Thracian chargers, with Catiline at their head, enthroned like a conquering king on his superb black Erebus, they came sweeping at full gallop through the intervals of the foot, and, as they reached the front of the array, wheeled up at once into a long single line, facing their infantry, and at a single wafture of their leader's hand, halted all like a single man.

Then riding forward at a foot's pace into the interval between the horse and foot, Catiline passed along the whole line from end to end, surveying every man, and taking in with his rapid and instinctive glance, every minute detail in silence.

At the right wing, which Manlius commanded, he paused a moment or two, and spoke eagerly but shortly to his subordinate; but when he reached the extreme left he merely nodded his approbation to the Florentine, crying aloud in his deep tones the one word, "Remember!"

Then galloping back at the top of his horse's speed to the eagle which stood in front of the centre, he checked black Erebus so suddenly that he reared bolt−upright and stood for a second's space pawing the vacant air, uncertain if he could recover that rude impulse. But the rare horsemanship of Catiline prevailed, and horse and man stood statue−like and immoveable.

Then, pitching his voice so high and clear that every man of that dense host could hear and follow him, he burst abruptly into the spirited and stirring speech which has been preserved complete by the most elegant of Roman writers.

"Soldiers, I hold it an established fact, that words cannot give valor—that a weak army cannot be made strong, nor a coward army brave, by any speech of their commander. How much audacity is given to each man's spirit, by nature, or by habit, so much will be displayed in battle. Whom neither glory nor peril can excite, you shall exhort in vain. Terror deafens the ears of his intellect. I have convoked you, therefore, not to exhort, but to admonish you in brief, and to inform you of the causes of my counsel. Soldiers, you all well know how terrible a disaster the cowardice and sloth of Lentulus brought on himself and us; and how, expecting reinforcements from the city, I was hindered from marching into Gaul. Now I would have you understand, all equally with me, in what condition we are placed. The armies of our enemy, two in number, one from the city, the other from the side of Gaul, are pressing hard upon us. In this place, were it our interest to do so, we can hold out no longer, the scarcity of corn and forage forbid that. Whithersoever we desire to go, our path must be opened by the sword. Wherefore I warn you that you be of a bold and ready spirit; and, when the battle have commenced, that ye remember this, that in your own right hand ye carry wealth, honor, glory, moreover liberty and your country. Victorious, all things are safe to us, supplies in abundance shall be ours, the colonies and free boroughs will open their gates to us. Failing, through cowardice, these self−same things will become hostile to us. Not any place nor any friend shall protect him, whom his own arms have not protected. However, soldiers, the same necessity doth not actuate us and our enemies. We fight for our country, our liberty, our life! To them it is supererogatory to do battle for the power of a few nobles. Wherefore, fall on with the greater boldness, mindful of your own valor. We might all of us, have passed our lives in utter infamy as exiles; a few of you, stripped of your property, might still have dwelt in Rome, coveting that of your neighbors. Because these things appeared too base and foul for men's endurance, you resolved upon this career. If you would quit it, you must perforce be bold. No one, except victorious, hath ever

exchanged war for peace. Since to expect safety from flight, when you have turned away from the foe, that armor which defends the body, is indeed madness. Always in battle to who most fears, there is most peril. Valor stands as a wall to shield its possessor. Soldiers, when I consider you, and recall to mind your deeds, great hopes of victory possess me. Your spirit, age, and valor, give me confidence; moreover that necessity of conquest, which renders even cowards brave. As for the numbers of the enemy, the defiles will not permit them to surround you. And yet, should Fortune prove jealous of your valor, beware that ye lose not your lives unavenged; beware that, being captured, ye be not rather butchered like sheep, than slain fighting like men, and leaving to your foes a victory of blood and lamentation."

He ceased, and what a shout went up, seeming to shake the earth−fast hill, scaring the eagles from their high nests, and rolling in long echoes, like reverberated thunder among the resounding hills. Twice, thrice, that soul fraught acclamation pealed up to heaven, sure token of resolution unto death, in the hardened hearts of that desperate banditti.

Catiline drank delighted inspiration from the sound, and cried in triumphant tones:

"Enough! your shout is prophetic! Soldiers, already we have conquered!"

Then leaping from his charger to the ground, he turned to his body−guard, exclaiming,

"To fight, my friends, we have no need of horses; to fly we desire them not! On foot we must conquer, or on foot die! In all events, our peril as our hope must be equal. Dismount then, all of ye, and leading your chargers to the rear slay them; so shall we all run equal in this race of death or glory!"

And, with the word, leading his superb horse through the intervals between the cohorts of the foot, he drew his heavy sword, and smote him one tremendous blow which clove through spine and muscle, through artery and vein and gullet, severing the beauteous head from the graceful and swanlike neck, and hurling the noble animal to the earth a motionless and quivering mass.

It was most characteristic of the ruthless and brutal temper of that parricidal monster, that he cut down the noble animal which had so long and so gallantly borne him, which had saved his life more than once by its speed and courage, which followed him, fed from his hand, obeyed his voice, like a dog, almost like a child, without the slightest show of pity or compunction.

Many bad, cruel, savage−hearted men, ruthless to their own fellows, have proved themselves not devoid altogether of humanity by their love to some faithful animal, but it would seem that this most atrocious of mankind lacked even the "one touch of nature which makes the whole world kin."

He killed his favorite horse, the only friend, perhaps, that he possessed on earth, not only unreluctant, but with a sort of savage glee, and a sneering jest—

"If things go ill with us to day, I shall be fitly horsed on Erebus, by Hades!"

Then, hurrying to the van, he took post with his three hundred, and all the picked centurions and veterans of the reserve, mustered beneath the famous Cimbric Eagle, in the centre of the first rank, prepared to play out to the last his desperate and deadly game, the ablest chief, and the most daring soldier, that ever buckled blade for parricide and treason.

CHAPTER XXI. THE BATTLE.

At least we'll die with harness on our back.

Macbeth.

It was indeed time that the last arrangements of the traitor were completed; for, long since, from the gates of the Consular camp the great army of the enemy had been filing out, and falling into order, not a mile distant.

One third, at least, superior to the rebel host in numbers, the loyal soldiers were as high in spirit, as firm in resolution; were better armed, better officered, and, above all, strong in a better cause.

Nor if those had the incentive of despair to spur them to great deeds, did these lack a yet stronger stimulus to action. There were bright eyes, and fair forms in their camp, dependent on their victory for life, and, yet dearer, honor. So great was the terror spread through those regions by the name of Catiline, and by the outrages committed already by his barbarous banditti, that all the female nobility of the provinces, wherein the war was waging, had fled to the Roman camp, as to their only place of safety.

For all that district was ripe for insurrection; the borough towns awaited only the first sunshine of success, to join the rebellion; the rural slaves were, to a man, false at heart; and it was evident to all that the slightest check of the Consular forces would be the signal for tumult, massacre, and conflagration in the provincial towns, for all the horrors of a servile rising in the champaign.

Flight to Rome was impossible, since all the villainy and desperate crime of the land was afloat, and every where, beyond the outposts of Antonius' head quarters, the roads were infested with banditti, runaway slaves, and rustic robbers.

To the camp, therefore, had all the patricians of the district flocked, the men as volunteers, with such of their clients as they could trust, and such of their wealth as was portable; the women as suppliants, tearful and terrified, for Rome's powerful protection.

Meanwhile, for leagues around, by day the open country was seen blackened by numberless columns of smoke, by night flashing with numberless pyres of flame, the blaze of country seats and villas; and terror was on all sides, murder and rape, havoc and desolation.

The minds of the Roman soldiery were inflamed, therefore, to the utmost; the sight of the ravaged country, the charms, the tears, the terrors of the suppliant ladies, had kindled all that was patriotic, all that was generous, all that was manly in their nature; and it was with deep−recorded vows of vengeance that they had buckled on their armor, and grinded their thirsty swords for the conflict.

But throughout all that ardent host there was not one so determined, so calm in his resolved ire, so deadly bent on vengeance, as Paullus Arvina.

Julia was in the camp; for no means had occurred of sending her to Rome in safety, and her high counsels, her noble feminine courage, would have given birth alone to contagious valor in her lover's spirit, had he been weak and faltering as of old between his principles and his passions.

But it was not so. The stern trials to which his constancy had been subjected, the fearful strife of the hottest passions which had raged so long in his bosom, had hardened him like steel thrice tempered in the furnace, and he was now no longer the impulsive, enthusiastic, changeful stripling, in whom to−day's imagination swept away yesterday's resolve, but a cool, resolute, thoughtful man.

It is events, not years, which make men old or young. It is adversity and trial, not ease and prosperity, which make men, from dwarfs, giants.

And events had so crowded on the boy in the last few months, that those months had matured his wisdom more than all the years of his previous life. Adversity and trial had so swelled his mental stature, that aged men might have been proud to cope with him in counsel, strong men to rival him in execution.

The sun was already high in heaven, when the cavalry of the seventh legion, which had been selected to act as the general's escort, in addition to the Prætorian cohort of infantry, swept forth from the gates, following Petreius, who, although holding the second rank only in the army, was actually in command; Antonius, on the pretext of a fit of the gout, having declined to lead that day.

The men were already marshalled at the base of the ascent, leading to the narrow plain on which, as in the

amphitheatre, the fight was to be fought out hand to hand, with little room for generalship, or intricate manoeuvring, but every opportunity for the display of mortal strength and desperate gallantry.

Here they had halted, on the verge of the broken ground, awaiting the arrival of their general in chief to reform their array, and complete their preparations, before advancing to the attack.

The lines of the enemy were concealed from them by the abrupt acclivity, and the level space on the top of the plateau, which intervened between the hosts; and it seemed probable that an officer of Catiline's intuitive eye and rapid resource, would not fail to profit by the difficulties of the ground, in order to assail the consular troops while struggling among the rocks and thickets which encumbered the ascent. It behoved, therefore, to hold the men well in hand, to fortify the heads of the advancing columns with the best soldiers, and to be ready with reinforcements at all points; and to this end Petreius had ordered a brief halt, before attacking.

So eager were the spirits of the men, however, and so hot for the encounter, that they were murmuring already almost angrily, and calling on their centurions and tribunes to lead them at once to the shock.

The fierce acclamations of the rebels, consequent on the address of Catiline, had kindled not daunted the brave indignation which possessed them; and stung, as it were, by some personal insult, each soldier of the array burned to be at it.

So stood the case, when, escorted by the magnificent array of the legionary horse, Petreius gallopped through the ranks. A military man, by habit as by nature, who had served for more than thirty years as tribune, præfect of allies, commander of a legion, and lastly prætor, all with exceeding great distinction, he knew nearly all the men in his ranks by sight, was acquainted with their services and honors, had led them oftentimes to glory, and was their especial favorite.

He made no set speech, therefore, to his legions, but as he gallopped through the lines called to this man or that by name, bidding him recollect this skirmish, or think upon that storm, fight as he did in this pitched battle, or win a civic crown as in that sally, and finally shouted to them all in a high voice, entreating them to remember that they were Roman soldiers, fighting against a rabble of unarmed banditti, for their country, their wives, their children, their hearths and their altars.

One full−mouthed shout replied to his brief address.

"Lead on! Petreius, we will conquer!"

He waved his hand toward the trumpeters, and nodded his high crested helmet; and instant there pealed forth that thrilling brazen clangor, "that bids the Romans close."

Nor less sonorously did the war music of the rebels make reply, ringing among the hills their bold defiance.

Then onward rolled that bright array, with a long steady sweep, like that of an unbroken line of billows rushing in grand and majestical upon some sandy cape.

In vain did the sinuosities of the broken ground, in vain did crag and thicket, ravine and torrents' bed impede their passage; closing their files or serrying them, as the nature of the ascent required, now wheeling into solid column, deploying now into extended line, still they rolled onward, unchecked, irresistible—

A long array of helmets bright,
A long array of spears.

The glorious eagles glittered above them in the unclouded sunshine, the proud initials, which had gleamed from their crimson banners over one half the world, shone out conspicuous, SPQR, as the broad folds streamed to their length upon the frosty air.

A solitary trumpet spoke at times, to order their slow terrible advance; there was no hum of voices, no shout, no confusion; only the solemn and continuous tramp of their majestic march, shaking the earth like an incessant roll of thunder—only the clang of their brazen harness, as buckler clashed with buckler.

All the stern discipline, all the composed and orderly manoeuvres, all the cold steadiness of modern war was there, combined with all the gorgeousness and glitter of the chivalric ages.

Contrary to all expectation, no opposition met them as they scaled that abrupt hill side. Fearful of exposing his flanks, Catiline wisely held his men back, collecting all their energies for the dread onset.

In superb order, regular and even, Petreius' infantry advanced upon the plateau, their solid front filling the whole space with a mass of brazen bucklers, ten deep, and thrice ten hundred wide, without an interval, or break, or bend in that vast line.

Behind these came the cavalry, about a thousand strong, and the Prætorian cohort, with the general in person,

forming a powerful reserve, whereby he proposed to decide the day, so soon as the traitors should be shaken by his first onset.

Once more the line was halted; once more Petreius galloped to the van; and passed from left to right across the front, reconnoitering the dispositions of the enemy. Then taking post, at the right, he unsheathed his broadsword, and waved it slowly in the air, pointing to the impassive ranks of Catiline.

Then the shrill trumpets flourished once again, and the dense mass bore onward, steady and slow, the enemy still motionless and silent, until scarce sixty yards intervened between the steadfast ranks, and every man might distinguish the features and expression of his personal antagonist.

There was a pause. No word was given. No halt ordered. But intuitively, as if by instinct, every man stopped, and drew a deep breath, unconscious that he did so, collecting himself for the dread struggle.

The point was reached, from which it was customary to hurl the tremendous volley of ponderous steel−headed pila, which invariably preceded the sword charge of the legions, and for the most part threw the first rank of the enemy into confusion, and left them an easy conquest to the short stabbing sword, and sturdy buckler.

But now not a javelin was raised on either side—the long stern swell of the trumpets, ordering the charge, was drowned by a deep solemn shout, which pealed wilder and higher yet into a terrible soul−stirring cheer; and casting down their heavy missiles, both fronts rushed forward simultaneously, with their stout shields advanced, and their short broadswords levelled to the charge.

From flank to flank, they met simultaneous, with a roar louder than that of the most deafening thunder, a shock that made the earth tremble, the banners flap upon their staves, the streams stand still, as if an earthquake had reeled under them.

Then rose the clang of blades on helm and buckler, clear, keen, incessant; and charging shouts and dying cries, and patriotic acclamations, and mad blasphemies; and ever and anon the piercing clangor of the screaming brass, lending fresh frenzy to the frantic tumult.

From right to left, the plain was one vast arena full of single combats—the whole first ranks on both sides had gone down at the first shock; the second and the third had come successively to hand to hand encounter; and still, as each man fell, stabbed to death by the pitiless sword, another leaped into his place; and still the lines, though bent on each side and waving like a bow, were steadfast and unbroken; and still the clang of brazen bucklers and steel blades rang to the skies, rendering all commands, all words, inaudible.

Officers fought like privates; skirmishers, hand to hand, like legionaries. Blood flowed like water; and so fierce was the hatred of the combatants, so deadly the nature of the tremendous stabbing broadswords of the Romans, that few wounds were inflicted, and few men went down 'till they were slain outright.

The dust stood in a solid mass over the reeling lines; nor could the wind, though it blew freshly, disperse the dense wreaths, so constantly did they surge upward from the trampling feet of those inveterate gladiators. At times, the waving of a banner would be seen, at times a gleamy brazen radiance, as some rank wheeled forward, or was forced back in some desperate charge; but, for the most part, all was dim and dark, and the battle still hung balanced.

Wherever the fight was the fiercest, there rang the warshout "Catiline! Catiline!" to the darkened skies; and there ever would the Roman army waver, so furiously did he set on with his best soldiers, still bringing up reserves to the weakest points of his army, still stabbing down the fiercest of the consular host, fearless, unwearied, and unwounded.

But his reserves were now all engaged, and not one point of the Roman line was broken; Manlius had fallen in the front rank, playing a captain's and a soldier's part. The Florentine had fallen in the front rank, battling with gallantry worthy a better cause. All the most valiant officers, all the best veterans had fallen, in the first rank, all with their faces to the foe, all with their wounds in front, all lying on the spot which they had held living, grim−visaged, and still terrible in death.

"Paullus Arvina!" exclaimed Petreius, at this juncture, after having observed the equal strife long and intently, and having discerned with the eagle eye of a general's instinct what had escaped all those around him, that Catiline's last reserves were engaged. "The time is come; ride to the tribune of the horse, and bid him dismount his men. Horse cannot charge here! command the tribune of the Prætorian cohort to advance! We will strike full at the centre!"

"I go, Petreius!" and bowing his head, till his crimson crest mingled with his charger's mane, he spurred

furiously to the rear, and had delivered his message and returned, while the shouts, with which the reserve had greeted the command to charge, were yet ringing in the air.

When he returned, the general had dismounted, and one of his freedmen was unbuckling the spurs from his steel greaves. His sword was out, and it was evident that he was about to lead the last onset in person.

"A boon, noble Petreius!" cried the youth, leaping from his horse—"By all the Gods! By all your hopes of glory! grant me one boon, Petreius."

"Ha! what?" returned the general quickly—"Speak out, be brief—what boon?"

"Be it mine to head the charge!"

"Art thou so greedy of fame, boy; or so athirst to die!"

"So greedy of Revenge, Petreius. I have a vow in Heaven, and in Hell, to slay that parricide. If he should die by any hand but mine, I am forsworn and infamous!"

"Thou, boy, and to slay Catiline!"

"Even I, Petreius."

"Thou art mad to say it."

"Not mad, not mad, indeed, Petreius —."

"He *will* slay him, Petreius," cried an old veteran of Arvina's troop. "The Gods thundered when he swore it. We all heard it. Grant his prayer, General; we will back him to the death. But be sure, he will slay him."

"Be it so," said Petreius, struck despite himself by the confidence of the youth, and the conviction of the veterans. "Be it so, if ye will. But, remember, when we have broken through the centre, wheel to the right with the dismounted horse—the Prætorians must charge to the left. Ho! we are all in line. Forward! Ho! Victory, and Rome!"—

And with the word, he rushed forward, himself a spear's length in front of his best men, who, with a long triumphant shout, dashed after him.

Passing right through the wearied troops, who had sustained the shock and brunt of the whole day, and who now opened their ranks gladly to admit the reinforcement, these fresh and splendid soldiers fell like a thunderbolt upon the centre of Catiline's army, weakened already by the loss of its best men; and clove their way clean through it, solid and unbroken, trampling the dead and dying under foot, and hurling a small body of the rebels, still combating in desperation, into the trenches of their camp, wherein they perished to a man refusing to surrender, and undaunted.

Then, wheeling to the left and right, they fell on the naked flanks of the reeling and disordered mass, while the troops whom they had relieved, re−forming themselves rapidly, pressed forward with tremendous shouts of victory, eager to share the triumph which their invincible steadiness had done so much to win.

It was a battle no longer; but a route; but a carnage. Yet still not one of the rebels turned to fly; not one laid down his arms, or cried for quarter.

Broken, pierced through, surrounded, overwhelmed by numbers, they fought in single lines, in scattered groups, in twos or threes, back to back, intrepid to the last, and giving mortal wounds in their extreme agony.

More of the consular troops fell, after the field was won, than during all the previous combat. No lances, no long weapons, no missiles were at hand, wherewith to over−whelm the desperadoes; no horse wherewith to tread them under foot; hand to hand, man to man, it was fought out, with those short stabbing blades, against which the stoutest corslet was but as parchment, the hardest shield of brass−bound bull's hide, but as a stripling's wicker target.

Still in the front, abreast still with the bravest veterans shouting himself hoarse with cries of "To me! to me, Catiline, to me, Paul Arvina!" The young man had gone through the whole of that dreadful meleè; striking down a man at every blow, and filling the soldiers' mouths with wonder at the boy's exploits—he had gone through it all, without a scratch, unwounded.

More than once had his mortal enemy been almost within arm's length of him; their eyes had glared mutual hatred on each other, their blades had crossed once, but still the throng and rush of combatants and flyers had forced them asunder; and now the strife was almost ended, the tide of slaughter had receded toward the rebel camp, the ramparts of which the legionaries were already storming.

Weary and out of breath and disappointed, Paullus Arvina halted alone, among piles of the dying and the dead, with groans and imprecations in his ears, and bitterness and vexation at his heart.

His comrades had rushed away on the track of the retreating rebels; and their shouts, as they stormed the palisades, reached him, but failed to awake any respondent note of triumph in his spirit.

He had no share in the vulgar victory, he cared not to strike down and slaughter the commoners of the rebellion. Catiline was the quarry at which he flew, and with no game less noble could he rest contented. Catiline, it would seem, had escaped him for the moment; and he stood leaning on his red sword, doubtful.

Instinctively he felt assured that his enemy had not retreated. Almost he feared that his death had crowned some other hand with glory.

When suddenly, a mighty clatter arose in the rear, toward the Roman camp, and turning swiftly toward the sound, he perceived a desperate knot of rebels still charging frantically onward, although surrounded by thrice their numbers of inveterate and ruthless victors.

"By the Gods! he is there!" and with the speed of the hunted deer, he rushed toward the spot, bounding in desperate haste over the dying and the dead, blaspheming or unconscious.

He reached the meleè. He dashed headlong into the thick of it. The Romans were giving way before the fury of a gory madman, as he seemed, who bore down all that met him at the sword's point.

"Catiline! Catiline!" and at the cry, the boldest of the consular army recoiled. "Ho!—Romans! Ho! who will slay Sergius Catiline? Ho! Romans! Ho! His head is worth the winning! Who will slay Sergius Catiline?"

And, still at every shout, he struck down, and stabbed, and maimed, and trampled, even amid defeat and ruin victorious, unsubdued, a terror to his victors.

"Who will slay Sergius Catiline?"

And, as Arvina rushed upon the scene, the veteran who had so confidently announced his coming triumph, crossed swords with the traitor, and went down in a moment, stabbed a full span deep in his thigh.

"Ho! Romans! Ho! who will slay Sergius Catiline?"—

"Paullus Arvina!"—cried the youth, springing forward, and dealing him with the word a downright blow upon the head, which cleft his massive casque asunder.

"I will! I, even I, Paullus Arvina!"—

But he shouted too soon; and soon rued the imprudence of raising his arm to strike, when at sword's point with such a soldier.

As his own blow fell on the casque of the traitor, *his* shortened blade, aimed with a deadly thrust tore through the sturdy shield, tore through the strong cuirass, and pierced his side with a ghastly wound.

Arvina staggered—he thought he had received his death blow; and had not the blade of Catiline, bent by the violence of his own effort, stuck in the cloven shield, resisting every attempt to withdraw it, the next blow must have found him unprepared, must have destroyed him.

But ere the desperado could recover his weapon, Arvina rallied and closed with him, grasping him by the throat, and shouting "Lucia! Vengeance!"—

Brave as he was and strong, not for a single moment could Arvina have maintained that death−grapple, had his foe been unwounded.

But the arch traitor was bleeding at every pore; gashed in every limb of his body; he had received three mortal wounds already; he was fast failing when Arvina grappled him, and at the name of his injured child, his conscience conquered. His sword at length came away, extricated when too late from the tough bull−hide; but, ere he could nerve his arm to strike again, Arvina's point had torn his thigh, had gored his breast, had pierced his naked throat, with three wounds, the least of them mortal.

But even in that agony he struck home! He could not even curse, but he struck home, and a fierce joyous smile illuminated his wan face, as he saw his slayer stumble forward, and fall beside him on the bloody greensward.

In a moment, however, Paullus rallied, recovered his feet, drew from his bosom the long black ringlet of poor Lucia, and bathed it in the life blood of her slayer.

"Lucia! Ho! Lucia! Rejoice! my vow, my vow is kept! Thou art avenged, avenged! Ah! Lucia!— Julia!"—

And he fell sick and swooning upon the yet living bleeding body of his mortal foeman.

CHAPTER XXII. A NIGHT OF HORROR.

Rider and horse, friend, foe, in one red burial blent.

Childe Harold.

The battle was at an end; the sun had set; the calm and silvery moon was sailing through the azure skies; as peaceful as though her pure light shone upon sights of happiness alone, and quiet. The army of the commonwealth had returned to their camp victorious, but in sadness, not triumph.

Of the magnificent array, which had marched out that morning from the Prætorian gate, scarce two−thirds had returned at sun−set.

And the missing were the best, the bravest, the most noble of the host; for all the most gallant had fallen dead in that desperate struggle, or had sunk down faint, with wounds and bloodshed, beside the bodies of their conquered foemen.

Of the rebels there was not a remnant left; some had escaped from that dread route; and of that mighty power, which at the close of day was utterly exterminated, it is on record that neither in the combat, while it lasted, nor in the slaughter which followed it, was any free born citizen taken— a living captive.

For the numbers engaged on both sides it is probable that never in the annals of the world was there the like carnage; nor is this wonderful, when the nature of the ground, which rendered flight almost impossible to the vanquished, the nature of the weapons, which rendered almost every wound surely mortal, and the nature of the strife, which rendered the men of either party pitiless and desperate, are all taken into consideration.

In long ranks, like grass in the mower's swathes, the rebel warriors lay, with their grim faces, and glazed eyes, set in that terrible expression of ferocity which is always observed on the lineaments of those who have died from wounds inflicted by a stabbing weapon; and under them, or near them, in ghastly piles were heaped, scarce less in number, the corpses of their slaughtered conquerors. So equal was the havoc; so equal the value which the men had set on their own lives, and on those of their enemies.

Never perhaps had there been such, or so signal, a retribution. They who had taken to the sword had perished by the sword, not figuratively but in the literal meaning of the words. Stabbers by trade, they had fallen stabbed, by the hands of those whom they had destined to like massacre.

With the exception of the five chiefs who had already wrestled out their dark spirits, in the Tullianum, slavishly strangled, there was no traitor slain save by the steel blade's edge.

The field of Pistoria was the tribunal, the ruthless sword the judge and executioner, by which to a man the conspirators expiated their atrocious crimes.

No chains, no scaffolds followed that tremendous field. None had survived on whom to wreak the vengeance of the state. Never was victory so complete or final.

But in that victory there was no triumph, no joy, no glory to the victors.

So long, and so desperate had been the battle, so furiously contested the series of single combats into which it was resolved, after the final and decisive charge of the Prætorian cohort, that the shades of the early winter night were already falling over the crimson field, when, weak and shattered, sorrowful and gloomy, the Roman host was recalled by the wailing notes of the brazen trumpets from that tremendous butchery.

The watches were set, as usual, and the watch fires kindled; but no shouts of the exulting soldiers were to be heard hailing their general "Imperator;" no songs of triumph pealed to the skies in honor of the great deeds done, the deathless glory won; no prizes of valor were distributed; no triumph—not an oration even—was to be hoped for by the victorious leader of that victorious host, which had conquered indeed for the liberties of Rome, but had conquered, not on foreign earth, in no legitimate warfare, against no natural foe, but on the very soil of the republic, at the very gates of Rome, in an unnatural quarrel, against Romans, citizens, and brothers.

The groans of the wounded, the lamentations of friends, the shrieks of women, went up the livelong night from that woful camp. To hear that grievous discord, one would have judged it rather the consequences of defeat than of victory, however sad and bloody.

No words can express the anguish of the ladies, with whom the camp was crowded, as rushing forth to meet the returning legions, they missed the known faces altogether, or met them gashed and pallid, borne home,

perhaps to die after long suffering, upon the shields under which they had so boldly striven.

Enquiries were fruitless. None knew the fate of his next neighbor, save in so much as this, that few of those who went down in such a meleè, could be expected ever again to greet the sunrise, or hail the balmy breath of morning.

Averted heads and downcast eyes, were the sole replies that met the wives, the mothers, the betrothed maidens, widowed ere wedded, as with rent garments, and dishevelled hair, and streaming eyes, they rushed into the sorrowful ranks, shrieking, "Where are they," and were answered only by the short echo, "Where."

Such was the fate of Julia. No one could tell her aught of her Arvina; until at a late hour of the night, remembering her solitary situation and high birth, and taking a deep interest in her sorrows, Petreius himself visited her, not to instil false hope, but to console if possible her wounded spirit by praises of her lost lover's conduct.

"He fought beside my right hand, Julia, through the whole of that deadly struggle; and none with more valor, or more glory. He led the last bloody onset, and was the first who cut his way through the rebel centre. Julia, you must not weep for him, you must not envy him such glory. Julia, he was a hero."

"*Was!*" replied the poor girl, with clasped hands and streaming eyes—"then he *is* no longer?"

"I do not know, but fear it," said the stout soldier; "He had vowed himself to slay Catiline with his own hands. Such vows are not easy, Julia, nor safe of performance."

"And Catiline?" asked Julia,—"the parricide—the monster?"

"Has not survived the strife. None of the traitors have survived it," replied Petreius. "But how he fell, or where, as yet we know not."

"Paullus hath slain him! my own, my noble Paullus."

"I think so, Julia," answered the general.

"I know it," she said slowly—"but what availeth that to me—to me who had rather hear one accent of his noble voice, meet one glance of his glorious eye—alas! alas! my Paullus! my Lord! my Life! But I will not survive him!"

"Hold, Julia, hold! I would not nurse you to false hopes, but he may yet be living; many are wounded doubtless, who shall be saved to−morrow—"

"To−morrow?" she exclaimed, a gleam of hope bursting upon her soul like the dayspring. "Why not to−night?— Petreius, I say, why not to−night?"

"It is impossible. The men are all worn out with wounds and weariness, and must have daylight to the task. Dear girl, it is impossible."

"I will go forth myself, alone, unaided, I will save him."

"You must not, Julia."

"Who shall prevent me? Who dare to part a betrothed maiden from her true lover,—true, alas! in death! in death!"

"I will," replied Petreius firmly. "You know not the perils of such a night as this. The gaunt wolves from the Appennines; the foul and carrion vultures; the plundering disbanded soldiers; the horrid unsexed women, who roam the field of blood more cruel than the famished wolf, more sordid than the loathsome vulture. I will prevent you, Julia. But with the earliest dawn to−morrow I will myself go with you. Fare you well, try to sleep, and hope, hope for the best, poor Julia."

And with a deep sigh at the futility of his consolation, the noble Roman left the tent, giving strict orders to the peasant girls who had been pressed into her service, and to Arvina's freedmen who were devoted to her, on no account to suffer her to leave the camp that night, and even, if need were, to use force to prevent her.

Meanwhile the frost wind had risen cold and cutting over the field of blood. Its chilly freshness, checking the flow of blood and fanning the brow of many a maimed and gory wretch, awoke him to so much at least of life, as to be conscious of his tortures; and loud groans, and piercing shrieks, and agonizing cries for water might be heard now on all sides, where, before the wind rose, there had been but feeble wailings and half−unconscious lamentations.

Then came a long wild howl from the mountain side, another, and another, and then the snarling fiendish cry of the fell wolf−pack.

Gods! what a scream of horrid terror rose from each helpless sufferer, unanimous, as that accursed sound fell

on their palsied ears, and tortured them back into life.

But cries were of no avail, nor prayers, nor struggles, nor even the shouts, and trumpet blasts, and torches of the legionaries from the camp, who hoped thus to scare the bloodthirsty brutes from their living prey, of friend and foe, leal comrade and false traitor.

It was all vain, and ere long to the long−drawn howls and fierce snarls of the hungry wolves, battening upon their horrid meal, were added the flapping wings and croaking cries of innumerable night birds flocking to the carnage; and these were blended still with the sharp outcries, and faint murmurs, that told how keener than the mortal sword were the beak and talon, the fang and claw, of the wild beast and the carrion fowl.

Such, conquerors, such a thing is glory!

That frost wind, among others awakened Paullus to new life, and new horrors. Though gashed and weak from loss of blood, none of his wounds were mortal, and yet he felt that, unaided, he must die there, past doubt, even if spared by the rending beak, and lacerating talon.

As he raised himself slowly to a sitting posture, and was feeling about for his sword, which had fallen from his grasp as he fainted, he heard his name called feebly by some one near him.

"Who calls Arvina?" he replied faintly. "I am here."

"I, Caius Pansa," answered the voice; it was that of the old legionary horseman, who had predicted so confidently the fall of Catiline by the hand of Paullus. "I feared thou wert dead."

"We shall both be dead soon, Caius Pansa," replied the young man. "Hark! to those wolves! It makes my very flesh creep on my bones! They are sweeping this way, too."

"No! no! cheer up, brave heart," replied the veteran. "We will not die this bout. By Hercules! only crawl to me, thou. My thigh is broken, and I cannot stir. I have wine here; a warming draught, in a good leather bottle. Trust to old Caius for campaigning! I have life enough in me to beat off these howling furies. Come, Paullus; come, brave youth. We will share the wine! You shall not die this time. I saw you kill that dog—I knew that you would kill him. Courage, I say, crawl hitherward."

Cheered by the friendly voice, the wounded youth crept feebly and with sore anguish to the old trooper's side, and shared his generously proffered cup; and, animated by the draught, and deriving fresh courage from his praises, endured the horrors of that awful night, until the day breaking in the east scared the foul beasts and night birds to their obscene haunts in the mountain peaks and caverns.

Many times the gory wings had flapped nigh to them, and the fierce wolf−howls had come within ten feet of where they sat, half recumbent, propped on a pile of dead, but still their united voices and the defensive show which they assumed drove off the savages, and now daylight and new hopes dawned together, and rescue was at hand and certain.

Already the Roman trumpets were heard sounding, and the shouts of the soldiers, as they discerned some friend living, or some leader of the rebels dead or dying, came swelling to their ears, laden with rapture, on the fresh morning air.

At this moment, some groans broke out, so terribly acute and bitter, from a heap of gory carcasses hard by Arvina and the old trooper, that after calling several times in vain to enquire who was there, the veteran said,

"It were pity, Paullus, that after living out such a mele è as this, and such a night as the last, any poor fellow should die now. Cannot you crawl to him with the flask, and moisten his lips; try, my Paullus."

"I will try, Caius, but I am stiffer than I was, and my hurts shoot terribly, but I will try."

And with the word, holding the leathern bottle in his teeth, he crawled painfully and wearily toward the spot whence the sounds proceeded; but ere he reached it, creeping over the dead, he came suddenly on what seemed a corpse so hideous, and so truculently savage, so horribly distorted in the death pang, that involuntarily he paused to gaze upon it.

It was Catiline, although at first he recognised him not, so frightfully was his face altered, his nether lip literally gnawed half−through, by his own teeth in the death agony, and his other features lacerated by the beak and talons of some half−gorged vulture.

But, while he gazed, the heavy lids rose, and the glazed eyes stared upon him in ghastly recognition; Paullus knew him at the same moment, and started back a little, drawing a deep breath through his set teeth, and murmuring, "Ah! Catiline!"

The dying traitor's lips were convulsed by a fearful sardonic grin, and he strove hard to speak, but the words

rattled in his throat inarticulate, and a sharp ruckling groan was the only sound that he uttered.

But with a mighty effort he writhed himself up from the ground, and drove his sword, which he still clasped in his convulsed fingers, by a last desperate exertion through Paullus' massive corslet, and deep into his bosom.

With a sharp cry the youth fell prone, and after two or three struggles to arise, lay on his face motionless, and senseless.

Catiline dropped back with a fiendish grin, and eyes rolling in a strange mixed expression of agony and triumph; while old Pansa, after crying, twice or thrice, "Paullus, ho! noble Paullus!' exclaimed mournfully, "Alas! He is dead! He is dead! And I it is who have slain him."

Within half an hour, Petreius and his guards with several mounted officers, and a lady upon a white palfrey, came riding slowly toward the fatal spot, pausing from time to time to examine every pile of carcasses, and after causing his men to dismount and turn over the bodies, in the hope of finding him they sought.

Their search had hitherto been fruitless, and unrewarded even by the discovery of any wounded friends or comrades, for this was the place in which the battle had been most desperately contested, and few had fallen here but to die almost on the instant.

But now a weak voice was heard calling to the general.

"Petreius, he is here! here! He is here, noble Petreius!"

"The immortal Gods be praised!" cried Julia, interpreting the casual words at once to signify Arvina, and giving her palfrey the rein, she galloped to the spot, followed by Petreius shaking his head gloomily; for he was not so deceived.

"Who? who is here?" exclaimed the general. "Ha! my stout Pansa, right glad am I to find you living. See to him, quickly, Postumus, and Capito. But whom do you mean? Who is here?"

"Catiline! Paullus Arvina slew him!"—

"By all the Gods!" exclaimed Petreius, leaping down from his horse and gazing at the hideous mutilated carcase, still breathing a little, and retaining in its face that ferocity of soul which had distinguished it while living!

But swifter yet than he, Julia sprang from her saddle, and rushed heedless and unconscious, through pools of blood, ancle deep, treading on human corpses, in her wild haste, and cast herself down on the well known armor, the casque crested and the cloak embroidered by her own delicate hands, which could alone be distinguished of her lover's prostrate form.

"Aye! me! aye me! dead! dead! my own Arvina!"

"Alas! alas!"—cried Petreius, "Raise her up; raise them both, this is most lamentable!"—

"Never heed me!" said the veteran Pansa, eagerly, to the officers who were busy raising him from the ground. "Help the poor girl! Help the brave youth! He may be living yet, though I fear me not. It is my fault, alas! that he is not living now!"

"Thy fault, old Pansa, how can that be, my friend?— who slew him?"

Once more the rigid features of Catiline relaxed into a horrid smile, the glaring eyes again opened, and starting half upright he shook his hand aloft, and with a frightful effort, half laugh, half groan, half words articulate, sneered fiendishly—"I! I. Ha! ha! I did. Ha! ha! ha! ha!"—

But at the same instant there was a joyous cry from the officers who had lifted Paullus, and a rapturous shriek from Julia.

"He is not dead!"

"His hurts are not mortal, lady, it is but loss of blood."

"He lives! he lives!"—

"Curses! cur—cur—ha! ha!—this—this is—Hades!"

The fierce sneer died from the lips, a look of horror glared from the savage eyes, the jaw gibbered and fell, a quick spasm shook the strong frame, and in a paroxysm of frustrated spite, and disappointed fury, the dark spirit, which had never spared or pitied, went to its everlasting home.

It was the dead of winter, when the flame of rebellion was thus quenched in rebel blood; Cicero still was consul. But it was blithesome springtide, and the great orator had long since sworn THAT HE HAD SAVED HIS COUNTRY, among the acclamations of a people for once grateful; had long since retired into the calm serenity of private life and literary leisure, when Paullus was sufficiently recov ered from his wounds to receive the thanks of

his friend and benefactor; to receive in the presence of the good and great Consular his best reward in the hand of his sweet Julia. It was balmy Italian June, and all in Rome was peace and prosperity, most suitable to the delicious season, when on the sacred day of Venus, clad in her snow−white bridal robe, with its purple ribands and fringes, her blushing face concealed by the saffron−colored nuptial veil, the lovely girl was borne, a willing bride, over the threshold of her noble husband's mansion, amid the merry blaze of waxen torches, and the soft swell of hymeneal music, and the congratulations of such a train of consuls, consulars, senators and patricians, as rarely had been seen collected at any private festival. In a clear voice, though soft and gentle, she addressed Paullus with the solemn formula—

"Where thou art Caius, I am Caia."

Thenceforth their trials ceased, their happiness began; and thenceforth, they two were one for ever. And, for years afterward, when Roman maidens called blessings down upon a kindred bride, they had no fairer fate to wish her than to be happy as Arvina's Julia.

And how should any man be blessed, in this transitory life, if not by the love of such a girl as Julia, the friendship of such a man as Cicero, the fame of such a deed, as the death of THE Roman Traitor. THE END.

NOTES TO THE ROMAN TRAITOR.

It is perhaps hardly necessary to state, that the oration of Cicero in the 37th page of the second volume, those of Cæsar and Cato in the 137th and 142d pages, and that of Catiline in the 217th page of the same, are all literal translations from the actual speeches delivered on those occasions, and recorded by Cicero and Sallust.

It was absolutely necessary for the truth and spirit of the romance, that these speeches should be inserted; and the author considered that it would be equally vain and absurd to attempt fictitious orations, when these master−pieces of ancient eloquence were extant.

This brief explanation made, no farther notes will, I believe, be found necessary; as the few Latin words which occur in the body of the work are explained therein; and the costumes and customs are described so much in detail, that they will be readily comprehended even by the unclassical reader.

A table is appended, containing the Roman and English Calendars of the three months during which all the events of the conspiracy occurred, illustrating the complicated and awkward mode of Roman computation; and this, I believe, is all that is needful in the way of simplifying or elucidating the narrative.