

Homo Sum, Complete

Georg Ebers

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HOMO SUM, Complete

By Georg Ebers

Volume 1.

Translated by Clara Bell

PREFACE.

In the course of my labors preparatory to writing a history of the Sinaitic peninsula, the study of the first centuries of Christianity for a long time claimed my attention; and in the mass of martyrology, of ascetic writings, and of histories of saints and monks, which it was necessary to work through and sift for my strictly limited object, I came upon a narrative (in *Cotelerius Ecclesiae Graecae Monumenta*) which seemed to me peculiar and touching notwithstanding its improbability. Sinai and the oasis of Pharan which lies at its foot were the scene of action.

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When, in my journey through Arabia Petraea, I saw the caves of the anchorites of Sinai with my own eyes and trod their soil with my own feet, that story recurred to my mind and did not cease to haunt me while I travelled on farther in the desert.

A soul's problem of the most exceptional type seemed to me to be offered by the simple course of this little history.

An anchorite, falsely accused instead of another, takes his punishment of expulsion on himself without exculpating himself, and his innocence becomes known only through the confession of the real culprit.

There was a peculiar fascination in imagining what the emotions of a soul might be which could lead to such apathy, to such an annihilation of all sensibility; and while the very deeds and thoughts of the strange cave-dweller grew more and more vivid in my mind the figure of Paulus took form, as it were as an example, and soon a crowd of ideas gathered round it, growing at last to a distinct entity, which excited and urged me on till I ventured to give it artistic expression in the form of a narrative. I was prompted to elaborate this subject--which had long been shaping itself to perfect conception in my mind as ripe material for a romance--by my readings in Coptic monkish annals, to which I was led by Abel's Coptic studies; and I afterwards received a further stimulus from the small but weighty essay by H. Weingarten on the origin of monasticism, in which I still study the early centuries of Christianity, especially in Egypt.

This is not the place in which to indicate the points on which I feel myself obliged to differ from Weingarten. My acute fellow-laborer at Breslau clears away much which does not deserve to remain, but in many parts of his book he seems to me to sweep with too hard a broom.

Easy as it would have been to lay the date of my story in the beginning of the fortieth year of the fourth century instead of the thirtieth, I have forborne from doing so because I feel able to prove with certainty that at the time which I have chosen there were not only heathen recluses in the temples of Serapis but also Christian anchorites; I fully agree with him that the beginnings of organized Christian monasticism can in no case be dated earlier than the year 350.

The Paulus of my story must not be confounded with the "first hermit," Paulus of Thebes, whom Weingarten has with good reason struck out of the category of historical personages. He, with all the figures in this narrative is a purely fictitious person, the vehicle for an idea, neither more nor less. I selected no particular model for my hero, and I claim for him no attribute but that of his having been possible at the period; least of all did I think of Saint Anthony, who is now deprived even of his distinguished biographer Athanasius, and who is represented as a man of very sound judgment but of so scant an education that he was master only of Egyptian.

The dogmatic controversies which were already kindled at the time of my story I have, on careful consideration, avoided mentioning. The dwellers on Sinai and in the oasis took an eager part in them at a later date.

That Mount Sinai to which I desire to transport the reader must not be confounded with the mountain which lies at a long day's journey to the south of it. It is this that has borne the name, at any rate since the

time of Justinian; the celebrated convent of the Transfiguration lies at its foot, and it has been commonly accepted as the Sinai of Scripture. In the description of my journey through Arabia Petraea I have endeavored to bring fresh proof of the view, first introduced by Lepsius, that the giant-mountain, now called Serbal, must be regarded as the mount on which the law was given--and was indeed so regarded before the time of Justinian--and not the Sinai of the monks.

As regards the stone house of the Senator Petrus, with its windows opening on the street--contrary to eastern custom--I may remark, in anticipation of well founded doubts, that to this day wonderfully well-preserved fire-proof walls stand in the oasis of Pharan, the remains of a pretty large number of similar buildings.

But these and such external details hold a quite secondary place in this study of a soul. While in my earlier romances the scholar was compelled to make concessions to the poet and the poet to the scholar, in this one I have not attempted to instruct, nor sought to clothe the outcome of my studies in forms of flesh and blood; I have aimed at absolutely nothing but to give artistic expression to the vivid realization of an idea that had deeply stirred my soul. The simple figures whose inmost being I have endeavored to reveal to the reader fill the canvas of a picture where, in the dark background, rolls the flowing ocean of the world's history.

The Latin title was suggested to me by an often used motto which exactly agrees with the fundamental view to which I have been led by my meditations on the mind and being of man; even of those men who deem that they have climbed the very highest steps of that stair which leads into the Heavens.

In the Heautontimorumenos of Terence, Chremes answers his neighbor Menedemus (Act I, SC. I, v. 25) "Homo sum; humani nil a me alienum puto," which Donner translates literally:

"I am human, nothing that is human can I regard as alien to me."

But Cicero and Seneca already used this line as a proverb, and in a sense which far transcends that which it would seem to convey in context with the passage whence it is taken; and as I coincide with them, I have transferred it to the title-page of this book with this meaning:

"I am a man; and I feel that I am above all else a man."

Leipzig, November 11, 1877.

GEORG EBERS.

HOMO SUM.

CHAPTER I.

Rocks-naked, hard, red-brown rocks all round; not a bush, not a blade, not a clinging moss such as elsewhere nature has lightly flung on the

rocky surface of the heights, as if a breath of her creative life had softly touched the barren stone. Nothing but smooth granite, and above it a sky as bare of cloud as the rocks are of shrubs and herbs.

And yet in every cave of the mountain wall there moves a human life; two small grey birds too float softly in the pure, light air of the desert that glows in the noonday sun, and then they vanish behind a range of cliffs, which shuts in the deep gorge as though it were a wall built by man.

There it is pleasant enough, for a spring bedews the stony soil and there, as wherever any moisture touches the desert, aromatic plants thrive, and umbrageous bushes grow. When Osiris embraced the goddess of the desert--so runs the Egyptian myth--he left his green wreath on her couch.

But at the time and in the sphere where our history moves the old legends are no longer known or are ignored. We must carry the reader back to the beginning of the thirtieth year of the fourth century after the birth of the Saviour, and away to the mountains of Sinai on whose sacred ground solitary anchorites have for some few years been dwelling--men weary of the world, and vowed to penitence, but as yet without connection or rule among themselves.

Near the spring in the little ravine of which we have spoken grows a many-branched feathery palm, but it does not shelter it from the piercing rays of the sun of those latitudes; it seems only to protect the roots of the tree itself; still the feathered boughs are strong enough to support a small thread-bare blue cloth, which projects like a penthouse, screening the face of a girl who lies dreaming, stretched at full-length on the glowing stones, while a few yellowish mountain-goats spring from stone to stone in search of pasture as gaily as though they found the midday heat pleasant and exhilarating. From time to time the girl seizes the herdsman's crook that lies beside her, and calls the goats with a hissing cry that is audible at a considerable distance. A young kid comes dancing up to her. Few beasts can give expression to their feelings of delight; but young goats can.

The girl puts out her bare slim foot, and playfully pushes back the little kid who attacks her in fun, pushes it again and again each time it skips forward, and in so doing the shepherdess bends her toes as gracefully as if she wished some looker-on to admire their slender form. Once more the kid springs forward, and this time with its head down. Its brow touches the sole of her foot, but as it rubs its little hooked nose tenderly against the girl's foot, she pushes it back so violently that the little beast starts away, and ceases its game with loud bleating.

It was just as if the girl had been waiting for the right moment to hit the kid sharply; for the kick was a hard one--almost a cruel one. The blue cloth hid the face of the maiden, but her eyes must surely have sparkled brightly when she so roughly stopped the game. For a minute she remained motionless; but the cloth, which had fallen low over her face, waved gently to and fro, moved by her fluttering breath. She was listening with eager attention, with passionate expectation; her convulsively clenched toes betrayed her.

Then a noise became audible; it came from the direction of the rough stair of unhewn blocks, which led from the steep wall of the ravine down to the spring. A shudder of terror passed through the tender, and not yet

fully developed limbs of the shepherdess; still she did not move; the grey birds which were now sitting on a thorn-bush near her flew up, but they had merely heard a noise, and could not distinguish who it was that it announced.

The shepherdess's ear was sharper than theirs. She heard that a man was approaching, and well knew that one only trod with such a step. She put out her hand for a stone that lay near her, and flung it into the spring so that the waters immediately became troubled; then she turned on her side, and lay as if asleep with her head on her arm. The heavy steps became more and more distinctly audible.

A tall youth was descending the rocky stair; by his dress he was seen to be one of the anchorites of Sinai, for he wore nothing but a shirt-shaped garment of coarse linen, which he seemed to have outgrown, and raw leather sandals, which were tied on to his feet with fibrous palm-bast.

No slave could be more poorly clothed by his owner and yet no one would have taken him for a bondman, for he walked erect and self-possessed. He could not be more than twenty years of age; that was evident in the young soft hair on his upper lip, chin, and cheeks; but in his large blue eyes there shone no light of youth, only discontent, and his lips were firmly closed as if in defiance.

He now stood still, and pushed back from his forehead the superabundant and unkempt brown hair that flowed round his head like a lion's mane; then he approached the well, and as he stooped to draw the water in the large dried gourd-shell which he held, he observed first that the spring was muddy, and then perceived the goats, and at last their sleeping mistress.

He impatiently set down the vessel and called the girl loudly, but she did not move till he touched her somewhat roughly with his foot. Then she sprang up as if stung by an asp, and two eyes as black as night flashed at him out of her dark young face; the delicate nostrils of her aquiline nose quivered, and her white teeth gleamed as she cried:

"Am I a dog that you wake me in this fashion?" He colored, pointed sullenly to the well and said sharply: "Your cattle have troubled the water again; I shall have to wait here till it is clear and I can draw some."

"The day is long," answered the shepherdess, and while she rose she pushed, as if by chance, another stone into the water.

Her triumphant, flashing glance as she looked down into the troubled spring did not escape the young man, and he exclaimed angrily:

"He is right! You are a venomous snake--a demon of hell."

She raised herself and made a face at him, as if she wished to show him that she really was some horrible fiend; the unusual sharpness of her mobile and youthful features gave her a particular facility for doing so. And she fully attained her end, for he drew back with a look of horror, stretched out his arms to repel her, and exclaimed as he saw her uncontrollable laughter,

"Back, demon, back! In the name of the Lord! I ask thee, who art thou?"

"I am Miriam--who else should I be?" she answered haughtily.

He had expected a different reply, her vivacity annoyed him, and he said angrily, "Whatever your name is you are a fiend, and I will ask Paulus to forbid you to water your beasts at our well."

"You might run to your nurse, and complain of me to her if you had one," she answered, pouting her lips contemptuously at him.

He colored; she went on boldly, and with eager play of gesture.

"You ought to be a man, for you are strong and big, but you let yourself be kept like a child or a miserable girl; your only business is to hunt for roots and berries, and fetch water in that wretched thing there. I have learned to do that ever since I was as big as that!" and she indicated a contemptibly little measure, with the outstretched pointed fingers of her two hands, which were not less expressively mobile than her features. "Phoh! you are stronger and taller than all the Amalekite lads down there, but you never try to measure yourself with them in shooting with a bow and arrows or in throwing a spear!"

"If I only dared as much as I wish!" he interrupted, and flaming scarlet mounted to his face, "I would be a match for ten of those lean rascals."

"I believe you," replied the girl, and her eager glance measured the youth's broad breast and muscular arms with an expression of pride. "I believe you, but why do you not dare? Are you the slave of that man up there?"

"He is my father and besides--"

"What besides?" she cried, waving her hand as if to wave away a bat. "If no bird ever flew away from the nest there would be a pretty swarm in it. Look at my kids there--as long as they need their mother they run about after her, but as soon as they can find their food alone they seek it wherever they can find it, and I can tell you the yearlings there have quite forgotten whether they sucked the yellow dam or the brown one. And what great things does your father do for you?"

"Silence!" interrupted the youth with excited indignation. "The evil one speaks through thee. Get thee from me, for I dare not hear that which I dare not utter."

"Dare, dare, dare!" she sneered. "What do you dare then? not even to listen!"

"At any rate not to what you have to say, you goblin!" he exclaimed vehemently. "Your voice is hateful to me, and if I meet you again by the well I will drive you away with stones."

While he spoke thus she stared speechless at him, the blood had left her lips, and she clenched her small hands. He was about to pass her to fetch some water, but she stepped into his path, and held him spell-bound with the fixed gaze of her eyes. A cold chill ran through him when she asked him with trembling lips and a smothered voice, "What harm have I done you?"

"Leave me!" said he, and he raised his hand to push her away from the water.

"You shall not touch me," she cried beside herself. "What harm have I done you?"

"You know nothing of God," he answered, "and he who is not of God is of the Devil."

"You do not say that of yourself," answered she, and her voice recovered its tone of light mockery. "What they let you believe pulls the wires of your tongue just as a hand pulls the strings of a puppet. Who told you that I was of the Devil?"

"Why should I conceal it from you?" he answered proudly. "Our pious Paulus, warned me against you and I will thank him for it. 'The evil one,' he says, 'looks out of your eyes,' and he is right, a thousand times right. When you look at me I feel as if I could tread every thing that is holy under foot; only last night again I dreamed I was whirling in a dance with you--"

At these words all gravity and spite vanished from Miriam's eyes; she clapped her hands and cried, "If it had only been the fact and not a dream! Only do not be frightened again, you fool! Do you know then what it is when the pipes sound, and the lutes tinkle, and our feet fly round in circles as if they had wings?"

"The wings of Satan," Hermas interrupted sternly. "You are a demon, a hardened heathen."

"So says our pious Paulus," laughed the girl.

"So say I too," cried the young man. "Who ever saw you in the assemblies of the just? Do you pray? Do you ever praise the Lord and our Saviour?"

"And what should I praise them for?" asked Miriam. "Because I am regarded as a foul fiend by the most pious among you perhaps?"

"But it is because you are a sinner that Heaven denies you its blessing."

"No--no, a thousand times no!" cried Miriam. "No god has ever troubled himself about me. And if I am not good, why should I be when nothing but evil ever has fallen to my share? Do you know who I am and how I became so? I was wicked, perhaps, when both my parents were slain in their pilgrimage hither? Why, I was then no more than six years old, and what is a child of that age? But still I very well remember that there were many camels grazing near our house, and horses too that belonged to us, and that on a hand that often caressed me--it was my mother's hand--a large jewel shone. I had a black slave too that obeyed me; when she and I did not agree I used to hang on to her grey woolly hair and beat her. Who knows what may have become of her? I did not love her, but if I had her now, how kind I would be to her. And now for twelve years I myself have eaten the bread of servitude, and have kept Senator Petrus's goats, and if I ventured to show myself at a festival among the free maidens, they would turn me out and pull the wreath out of my hair. And am I to be thankful? What for, I wonder? And pious? What god has taken any care of me? Call me an evil demon--call me so! But if Petrus and your Paulus there say that He who is up above us and who let me grow up to such a lot is good, they tell a lie. God is cruel, and it is just like Him to put it into your heart to throw stones and scare me away from your well."

With these words she burst out into bitter sobs, and her features worked with various and passionate distortion.

Hermas felt compassion for the weeping Miriam. He had met her a hundred times and she had shown herself now haughty, now discontented, now exacting and now wrathful, but never before soft or sad. To-day, for the first time, she had opened her heart to him; the tears which disfigured her countenance gave her character a value which it had never before had in his eyes, and when he saw her weak and unhappy he felt ashamed of his hardness. He went up to her kindly and said: "You need not cry; come to the well again always, I will not prevent you."

His deep voice sounded soft and kind as he spoke, but she sobbed more passionately than before, almost convulsively, and she tried to speak but she could not. Trembling in every slender limb, shaken with grief, and overwhelmed with sorrow, the slight shepherdess stood before him, and he felt as if he must help her. His passionate pity cut him to the heart and fettered his by no means ready tongue.

As he could find no word of comfort, he took the water-gourd in his left hand and laid his right, in which he had hitherto held it, gently on her shoulder. She started, but she let him do it; he felt her warm breath; he would have drawn back, but he felt as if he could not; he hardly knew whether she was crying or laughing while she let his hand rest on her black waving hair.

She did not move. At last she raised her head, her eyes flashed into his, and at the same instant he felt two slender arms clasped round his neck. He felt as if a sea were roaring in his ears, and fire blazing in his eyes. A nameless anguish seized him; he tore himself violently free, and with a loud cry as if all the spirits of hell were after him he fled up the steps that led from the well, and heeded not that his water-jar was shattered into a thousand pieces against the rocky wall.

She stood looking after him as if spell-bound. Then she struck her slender hand against her forehead, threw herself down by the spring again and stared into space; there she lay motionless, only her mouth continued to twitch.

When the shadow of the palm-tree grew longer she sprang up, called her goats, and looked up, listening, to the rock-steps by which he had vanished; the twilight is short in the neighborhood of the tropics, and she knew that she would be overtaken by the darkness on the stony and fissured road down the valley if she lingered any longer. She feared the terrors of the night, the spirits and demons, and a thousand vague dangers whose nature she could not have explained even to herself; and yet she did not stir from the spot nor cease listening and waiting for his return till the sun had disappeared behind the sacred mountain, and the glow in the west had paled.

All around was as still as death, she could hear herself breathe, and as the evening chill fell she shuddered with cold.

She now heard a loud noise above her head. A flock of wild mountain goats, accustomed to come at this hour to quench their thirst at the spring, came nearer and nearer, but drew back as they detected the presence of a human being. Only the leader of the herd remained standing on the brink of the ravine, and she knew that he was only awaiting her departure to lead the others down to drink. Following a kindly impulse,

she was on the point of leaving to make way for the animals, when she suddenly recollected Hermas's threat to drive her from the well, and she angrily picked up a stone and flung it at the buck, which started and hastily fled. The whole herd followed him. Miriam listened to them as they scampered away, and then, with her head sunk, she led her flock home, feeling her way in the darkness with her bare feet.

CHAPTER II.

High above the ravine where the spring was lay a level plateau of moderate extent, and behind it rose a fissured cliff of bare, red-brown porphyry. A vein of diorite of iron-hardness lay at its foot like a green ribbon, and below this there opened a small round cavern, hollowed and arched by the cunning hand of nature. In former times wild beasts, panthers or wolves, had made it their home; it now served as a dwelling for young Hermas and his father.

Many similar caves were to be found in the holy Fountain, and other anchorites had taken possession of the larger ones among them.

That of Stephanus was exceptionally high and deep, and yet the space was but small which divided the two beds of dried mountain herbs where, on one, slept the father, and on the other, the son.

It was long past midnight, but neither the younger nor the elder cave-dweller seemed to be sleeping. Hermas groaned aloud and threw himself vehemently from one side to the other without any consideration for the old man who, tormented with pain and weakness, sorely needed sleep. Stephanus meanwhile denied himself the relief of turning over or of sighing, when he thought he perceived that his more vigorous son had found rest.

"What could have robbed him of his rest, the boy who usually slept so soundly, and was so hard to waken?"

"Whence comes it," thought Stephanus, "that the young and strong sleep so soundly and so much, and the old, who need rest, and even the sick, sleep so lightly and so little. Is it that wakefulness may prolong the little term of life, of which they dread the end? How is it that man clings so fondly to this miserable existence, and would fain slink away, and hide himself when the angel calls and the golden gates open before him! We are like Saul, the Hebrew, who hid himself when they came to him with the crown! My wound burns painfully; if only I had a drink of water. If the poor child were not so sound asleep I might ask him for the jar."

Stephanus listened to his son and would not wake him, when he heard his heavy and regular breathing. He curled himself up shivering under the sheep-skin which covered only half his body, for the icy night wind now blew through the opening of the cave, which by day was as hot as an oven.

Some long minutes wore away; at last he thought he perceived that Hermas had raised himself. Yes, the sleeper must have wakened, for he began to speak, and to call on the name of God.

The old man turned to his son and began softly, "Do you hear me, my boy?"

"I cannot sleep," answered the youth.

"Then give me something to drink," asked Stephanus, "my wound burns intolerably."

Hermas rose at once, and reached the water-jar to the sufferer.

"Thanks, thanks, my child," said the old man, feeling for the neck of the jar. But he could not find it, and exclaimed with surprise: "How damp and cold it is--this is clay, and our jar was a gourd."

"I have broken it," interrupted Hermas, "and Paulus lent me his."

"Well, well," said Stephanus anxious for drink; he gave the jar back to his son, and waited till he had stretched himself again on his couch. Then he asked anxiously: "You were out a long time this evening, the gourd is broken, and you groaned in your sleep. Whom did you meet?"

"A demon of hell," answered Hermas. "And now the fiend pursues me into our cave, and torments me in a variety of shapes."

"Drive it out then and pray," said the old man gravely. "Unclean spirits flee at the name of God."

"I have called upon Him," sighed Hermas, "but in vain; I see women with ruddy lips and flowing Hair, and white marble figures with rounded limbs and flashing eyes beckon to me again and again."

"Then take the scourge," ordered the father, "and so win peace."

Hermas once more obediently rose, and went out into the air with the scourge; the narrow limits of the cave did not admit of his swinging it with all the strength of his arms.

Very soon Stephanus heard the whistle of the leathern thongs through the stillness of the night, their hard blows on the springy muscles of the man and his son's painful groaning.

At each blow the old man shrank as if it had fallen on himself. At last he cried as loud as he was able "Enough--that is enough."

Hermas came back into the cave, his father called him to his couch, and desired him to join with him in prayer.

After the 'Amen' he stroked the lad's abundant hair and said, "Since you went to Alexandria, you have been quite another being. I would I had withstood bishop Agapitus, and forbidden you the journey. Soon, I know, my Saviour will call me to himself, and no one will keep you here; then the tempter will come to you, and all the splendors of the great city, which after all only shine like rotten wood, like shining snakes and poisonous purple-berries--"

"I do not care for them," interrupted Hermas, "the noisy place bewildered and frightened me. Never, never will I tread the spot again."

"So you have always said," replied Stephanus, "and yet the journey quite altered you. How often before that I used to think when I heard you laugh that the sound must surely please our Father in Heaven. And now? You used to be like a singing bird, and now you go about silent, you look sour and

morose, and evil thoughts trouble your sleep."

"That is my loss," answered Hermas. "Pray let go of my hand; the night will soon be past, and you have the whole live-long day to lecture me in." Stephanus sighed, and Hermas returned to his couch.

Sleep avoided them both, and each knew that the other was awake, and would willingly have spoken to him, but dissatisfaction and defiance closed the son's lips, and the father was silent because he could not find exactly the heart-searching words that he was seeking.

At last it was morning, a twilight glimmer struck through the opening of the cave, and it grew lighter and lighter in the gloomy vault; the boy awoke and rose yawning. When he saw his father lying with his eyes open, he asked indifferently, "Shall I stay here or go to morning worship?"

"Let us pray here together," begged the father. "Who knows how long it may yet be granted to us to do so? I am not far from the day that no evening ever closes. Kneel down here, and let me kiss the image of the Crucified."

Hermas did as his father desired him, and as they were ending their song of praise, a third voice joined in the 'Amen.'

"Paulus!" cried the old man. "The Lord be praised! pray look to my wound then. The arrow head seeks to work some way out, and it burns fearfully."

"The new comer, an anchorite, who for all clothing wore a shirt-shaped coat of brown undressed linen, and a sheep-skin, examined the wound carefully, and laid some herbs on it, murmuring meanwhile some pious texts.

"That is much easier," sighed the old man. "The Lord has mercy on me for your goodness' sake."

"My goodness? I am a vessel of wrath," replied Paulus, with a deep, rich; sonorous voice, and his peculiarly kind blue eyes were raised to heaven as if to attest how greatly men were deceived in him. Then he pushed the bushy grizzled hair, which hung in disorder over his neck and face, out of his eyes, and said cheerfully: "No man is more than man, and many men are less. In the ark there were many beasts, but only one Noah."

"You are the Noah of our little ark," replied Stephanus.

"Then this great lout here is the elephant," laughed Paulus.

"You are no smaller than he," replied Stephanus.

"It is a pity this stone roof is so low, else we might have measured ourselves," said Paulus. "Aye! if Hermas and I were as pious and pure as we are tall and strong, we should both have the key of paradise in our pockets. You were scourging yourself this night, boy; I heard the blows. It is well; if the sinful flesh revolts, thus we may subdue it."

"He groaned heavily and could not sleep," said Stephanus.

"Aye, did he indeed!" cried Paulus to the youth, and held his powerful arms out towards him with clenched fists; but the threatening voice was loud rather than terrible, and wild as the exceptionally big man looked

in his sheepskin, there was such irresistible kindness in his gaze and in his voice, that no one could have believed that his wrath was in earnest.

"Fiends of hell had met him," said Stephanus in excuse for his son, "and I should not have closed an eye even without his groaning; it is the fifth night."

"But in the sixth," said Paulus, "sleep is absolutely necessary. Put on your sheep-skin, Hermas; you must go down to the oasis to the Senator Petrus, and fetch a good sleeping-draught for our sick man from him or from Dame Dorothea, the deaconess. Just look! the youngster has really thought of his father's breakfast--one's own stomach is a good reminder. Only put the bread and the water down here by the couch; while you are gone I will fetch some fresh--now, come with me."

"Wait a minute, wait," cried Stephanus. "Bring a new jar with you from the town, my son. You lent us yours yesterday, Paulus, and I must--"

"I should soon have forgotten it," interrupted the other. "I have to thank the careless fellow, for I have now for the first time discovered the right way to drink, as long as one is well and able. I would not have the jar back for a measure of gold; water has no relish unless you drink it out of the hollow of your hand! The shard is yours. I should be warring against my own welfare, if I required it back. God be praised! the craftiest thief can now rob me of nothing save my sheepskin."

Stephanus would have thanked him, but he took Hermas by the hand, and led him out into the open air. For some time the two men walked in silence over the clefts and boulders up the mountain side. When they had reached a plateau, which lay on the road that led from the sea over the mountain into the oasis, he turned to the youth, and said:

"If we always considered all the results of our actions there would be no sins committed."

Hermas looked at him enquiringly, and Paulus went on, "If it had occurred to you to think how sorely your poor father needed sleep, you would have lain still this night."

"I could not," said the youth sullenly. "And you know very well that I scourged myself hard enough."

"That was quite right, for you deserved a flogging for a misconducted boy."

Hermas looked defiantly at his reproving friend, the flaming color mounted to his cheek: for he remembered the shepherdess's words that he might go and complain to his nurse, and he cried out angrily:

"I will not let any one speak to me so; I am no longer a child."

"Not even your father's?" asked Paulus, and he looked at the boy with such an astonished and enquiring air, that Hermas turned away his eyes in confusion.

"It is not right at any rate to trouble the last remnant of life of that very man who longs to live for your sake only."

"I should have been very willing to be still, for I love my father as well as any one else."

"You do not beat him," replied Paulus, "you carry him bread and water, and do not drink up the wine yourself, which the Bishop sends him home from the Lord's supper; that is something certainly, but not enough by a long way."

"I am no saint!"

"Nor I neither," exclaimed Paulus, "I am full of sin and weakness. But I know what the love is which was taught us by the Saviour, and that you too may know. He suffered on the cross for you, and for me, and for all the poor and vile. Love is at once the easiest and the most difficult of attainments. It requires sacrifice. And you? How long is it now since you last showed your father a cheerful countenance?"

"I cannot be a hypocrite."

"Nor need you, but you must love. Certainly it is not by what his hand does but by what his heart cheerfully offers, and by what he forces himself to give up that a man proves his love."

"And is it no sacrifice that I waste all my youth here?" asked the boy.

Paulus stepped back from him a little way, shook his matted head, and said, "Is that it? You are thinking of Alexandria! Ay! no doubt life runs away much quicker there than on our solitary mountain. You do not fancy the tawny shepherd girl, but perhaps some pretty pink and white Greek maiden down there has looked into your eyes?"

"Let me alone about the women," answered Hermas, with genuine annoyance. "There are other things to look at there."

The youth's eyes sparkled as he spoke, and Paulus asked, not without interest, "Indeed?"

"You know Alexandria better than I," answered Hermas evasively. "You were born there, and they say you had been a rich young man."

"Do they say so?" said Paulus. "Perhaps they are right; but you must know that I am glad that nothing any longer belongs to me of all the vanities that I possessed, and I thank my Saviour that I can now turn my back on the turmoil of men. What was it that seemed to you so particularly tempting in all that whirl?"

Hermas hesitated. He feared to speak, and yet something urged and drove him to say out all that was stirring his soul. If any one of all those grave men who despised the world and among whom he had grown up, could ever understand him, he knew well that it would be Paulus; Paulus whose rough beard he had pulled when he was little, on whose shoulders he had often sat, and who had proved to him a thousand times how truly he loved him. It is true the Alexandrian was the severest of them all, but he was harsh only to himself. Hermas must once for all unburden his heart, and with sudden decision he asked the anchorite:

"Did you often visit the baths?"

"Often? I only wonder that I did not melt away and fall to pieces in the

warm water like a wheaten loaf."

"Why do you laugh at that which makes men beautiful?" cried Hermas hastily. "Why may Christians even visit the baths in Alexandria, while we up here, you and my father and all anchorites, only use water to quench our thirst? You compel me to live like one of you, and I do not like being a dirty beast."

"None can see us but the Most High," answered Paulus, "and for him we cleanse and beautify our souls."

"But the Lord gave us our body too," interrupted Hermas. "It is written that man is the image of God. And we! I appeared to myself as repulsive as a hideous ape when at the great baths by the Gate of the Sun I saw the youths and men with beautifully arranged and scented hair and smooth limbs that shone with cleanliness and purification. And as they went past, and I looked at my mangy sheepfell, and thought of my wild mane and my arms and feet, which are no worse formed or weaker than theirs were, I turned hot and cold, and I felt as if some bitter drink were choking me. I should have liked to howl out with shame and envy and vexation. I will not be like a monster!"

Hermas ground his teeth as he spoke the last words, and Paulus looked uneasily at him as he went on: "My body is God's as much as my soul is, and what is allowed to the Christians in the city--"

"That we nevertheless may not do," Paulus interrupted gravely. "He who has once devoted himself to Heaven must detach himself wholly from the charm of life, and break one tie after another that binds him to the dust. I too once upon a time have anointed this body, and smoothed this rough hair, and rejoiced sincerely over my mirror; but I say to you, Hermas--and, by my dear Saviour, I say it only because I feel it, deep in my heart I feel it--to pray is better than to bathe, and I, a poor wretch, have been favored with hours in which my spirit has struggled free, and has been permitted to share as an honored guest in the festal joys of Heaven!"

While he spoke, his wide open eyes had turned towards Heaven and had acquired a wondrous brightness. For a short time the two stood opposite each other silent and motionless; at last the anchorite pushed the hair from off his brow, which was now for the first time visible. It was well-formed, though somewhat narrow, and its clear fairness formed a sharp contrast to his sunburnt face.

"Boy," he said with a deep breath, "you know not what joys you would sacrifice for the sake of worthless things. Long ere the Lord, calls the pious man to Heaven, the pious has brought Heaven down to earth in himself."

Hermas well understood what the anchorite meant, for his father often for hours at a time gazed up into Heaven in prayer, neither seeing nor hearing what was going on around him, and was wont to relate to his son, when he awoke from his ecstatic vision, that he had seen the Lord or heard the angel-choir.

He himself had never succeeded in bringing himself into such a state, although Stephanus had often compelled him to remain on his knees praying with him for many interminable hours. It often happened that the old man's feeble flame of life had threatened to become altogether extinct

after these deeply soul-stirring exercises, and Hermas would gladly have forbidden him giving himself up to such hurtful emotions, for he loved his father; but they were looked upon as special manifestations of grace, and how should a son dare to express his aversion to such peculiarly sacred acts? But to Paulus and in his present mood he found courage to speak out.

"I have sure hope of Paradise," he said, "but it will be first opened to us after death. The Christian should be patient; why can you not wait for Heaven till the Saviour calls you, instead of desiring to enjoy its pleasures here on earth? This first and that after! Why Should God have bestowed on us the gifts of the flesh if not that we may use them? Beauty and strength are not empty trifles, and none but a fool gives noble gifts to another, only in order to throw them away."

Paulus gazed in astonishment at the youth, who up to this moment had always unresistingly obeyed his father and him, and he shook his head as he answered,

"So think the children of this world who stand far from the Most High. In the image of God are we made no doubt, but what child would kiss the image of his father, when the father offers him his own living lips?"

Paulus had meant to say 'mother' instead of 'father,' but he remembered in time that Hermas had early lost the happiness of caressing a mother, and he had hastily amended the phrase. He was one of those to whom it is so painful to hurt another, that they never touch a wounded soul unless to heal it, divining the seat of even the most hidden pain.

He was accustomed to speak but little, but now he went on eagerly:

"By so much as God is far above our miserable selves, by so much is the contemplation of Him worthier of the Christian than that of his own person. Oh! who is indeed so happy as to have wholly lost that self and to be perfectly absorbed in God! But it pursues us, and when the soul fondly thinks itself already blended in union with the Most High it cries out 'Here am I!' and drags our nobler part down again into the dust. It is bad enough that we must hinder the flight of the soul, and are forced to nourish and strengthen the perishable part of our being with bread and water and slothful sleep to the injury of the immortal part, however much we may fast and watch. And shall we indulge the flesh, to the detriment of the spirit, by granting it any of its demands that can easily be denied? Only he who despises and sacrifices his wretched self can, when he has lost his baser self by the Redeemer's grace, find himself again in God."

Hermas had listened patiently to the anchorite, but he now shook his head, and said: "I cannot understand either you or my father. So long as I walk on this earth, I am I and no other. After death, no doubt, but not till then, will a new and eternal life begin"

"Not so," cried Paulus hastily, interrupting him. "That other and higher life of which you speak, does not begin only after death for him who while still living does not cease from dying, from mortifying the flesh, and from subduing its lusts, from casting from him the world and his baser self, and from seeking the Lord. It has been vouchsafed to many even in the midst of life to be born again to a higher existence. Look at me, the basest of the base. I am not two but one, and yet am I in the

sight of the Lord as certainly another man than I was before grace found me, as this young shoot, which has grown from the roots of an overthrown palmtree is another tree than the rotten trunk. I was a heathen and enjoyed every pleasure of the earth to the utmost; then I became a Christian; the grace of the Lord fell upon me, and I was born again, and became a child again; but this time--the Redeemer be praised!--the child of the Lord. In the midst of life I died, I rose again, I found the joys of Heaven. I had been Menander, and like unto Saul, I became Paulus. All that Menander loved--baths, feasts, theatres, horses and chariots, games in the arena, anointed limbs, roses and garlands, purple-garments, wine and the love of women--lie behind me like some foul bog out of which a traveller has struggled with difficulty. Not a vein of the old man survives in the new, and a new life has begun for me, mid-way to the grave; nor for me only, but for all pious men. For you too the hour will sound, in which you will die to--"

"If only I, like you, had been a Menander," cried Hermas, sharply interrupting the speaker: "How is it possible to cast away that which I never possessed? In order to die one first must live. This wretched life seems to me contemptible, and I am weary of running after you like a calf after a cow. I am free-born, and of noble race, my father himself has told me so, and I am certainly no feebler in body than the citizens' sons in the town with whom I went from the baths to the wrestling-school."

"Did you go to the Palaestra?" asked Paulus in surprise.

"To the wrestling-school of Timagetus," cried Hermas, coloring. "From outside the gate I watched the games of the youths as they wrestled, and threw heavy disks at a mark. My eyes almost sprang out of my head at the sight, and I could have cried out aloud with envy and vexation, at having to stand there in my ragged sheep-skin excluded from all competition. If Pachomius had not just then come up, by the Lord I must have sprung into the arena, and have challenged the strongest of them all to wrestle with me, and I could have thrown the disk much farther than the scented puppy who won the victory and was crowned."

"You may thank, Pachomius," said Paulus laughing, "for having hindered you, for you would have earned nothing in the arena but mockery and disgrace. You are strong enough, certainly, but the art of the discobolus must be learned like any other. Hercules himself would be beaten at that game without practice, and if he did not know the right way to handle the disk."

"It would not have been the first time I had thrown one," cried the boy. "See, what I can do!" With these words he stooped and raised one of the flat stones, which lay piled up to secure the pathway; extending his arm with all his strength, he flung the granite disk over the precipice away into the abyss.

"There, you see," cried Paulus, who had watched the throw carefully and not without some anxious excitement. "However strong your arm may be, any novice could throw farther than you if only he knew the art of holding the discus. It is not so--not so; it must cut through the air like a knife with its sharp edge. Look how you hold your hand, you throw like a woman! The wrist straight, and now your left foot behind, and your knee bent! see, how clumsy you are! Here, give me the stone. You take the discus so, then you bend your body, and press down your knees like the arc of a bow, so that every sinew in your body helps to speed the shot when you let go. Aye--that is better, but it is not quite right yet."

First heave the discus with your arm stretched out, then fix your eye on the mark; now swing it out high behind you--stop! once more! your arm must be more strongly strained before you throw. That might pass, but you ought to be able to hit the palm-tree yonder. Give me your discus, and that stone. There; the unequal corners hinder its flight--now pay attention!" Paulus spoke with growing eagerness, and now he grasped the flat stone, as he might have done many years since when no youth in Alexandria had been his match in throwing the discus.

He bent his knees, stretched out his body, gave play to his wrist, extended his arm to the utmost and hurled the stone into space, while the clenched toes of his right foot deeply dented the soil.

But it fell to the ground before reaching which Paulus had indicated as the mark.

"Wait!" cried Hermas. "Let me try now to hit the tree."

His stone whistled through the air, but it did not even reach the mound, into which the palm-tree had struck root.

Paulus shook his head disapprovingly, and in his turn seized a flat stone; and now an eager contest began. At every throw Hermas' stone flew farther, for he copied his teacher's action and grasp with increasing skill, while the older man's arm began to tire. At last Hermas for the second time hit the palm-tree, while Paulus had failed to reach even the mound with his last fling.

The pleasure of the contest took stronger possession of the anchorite; he flung his raiment from him, and seizing another stone he cried out--as though he were standing once more in the wrestling school among his old companions; all shining with their anointment.

"By the silver-bowed Apollo, and the arrow-speeding Artemis, I will hit the palm-tree."

The missile sang through the air, his body sprang back, and he stretched out his left arm to save his tottering balance; there was a crash, the tree quivered under the blow, and Hermas shouted joyfully: "Wonderful! wonderful! that was indeed a throw. The old Menander is not dead! Farewell--to-morrow we will try again."

With these words Hermas quitted the anchorite, and hastened with wide leaps down the hill in the oasis. Paulus started at the words like a sleep-walker who is suddenly wakened by hearing his name called. He looked about him in bewilderment, as if he had to find his way in some strange world. Drops of sweat stood on his brow, and with sudden shame he snatched up his garments that were lying on the ground, and covered his naked limbs.

For some time he stood gazing after Hermas, then he clasped his brow in deep anguish and large tears ran down upon his beard.

"What have I said?" he muttered to himself; "That every vein of the old man in me was extirpated? Fool! vain madman that I am. They named me Paulus, and I am in truth Saul, aye, and worse than Saul!"

With these words he threw himself on his knees, pressing his forehead against the hard rock, and began to pray. He felt as if he had been flung

from a height on to spears and lances, as if his heart and soul were bleeding, and while he remained there, dissolved in grief and prayer, accusing and condemning himself, he felt not the burning of the sun as it mounted in the sky, heeded not the flight of time, nor heard the approach of a party of pilgrims, who, under the guidance of bishop Agapitus, were visiting the Holy Places. The palmers saw him at prayer, heard his sobs, and, marvelling at his piety, at a sign from their pastor they knelt down behind him.

When Paulus at last arose, he perceived with surprise and alarm the witnesses of his devotions, and approached Agapitus to kiss his robe. But the bishop said: "Not so; he that is most pious is the greatest among us. My friends, let us bow down before this saintly man!"

The pilgrims obeyed his command. Paulus hid his face in his hands and sobbed out: "Wretch, wretch that I am!"

And the pilgrims lauded his humility, and followed their leader who left the spot.

CHAPTER III.

Hermas had hastened onwards without delay. He had already reached the last bend of the path he had followed down the ravine, and he saw at his feet the long narrow valley and the gleaming waters of the stream, which here fertilized the soil of the desert. He looked down on lofty palms and tamarisk shrubs innumerable, among which rose the houses of the inhabitants, surrounded by their little gardens and small carefully-irrigated fields; already he could hear the crowing of a cock and the hospitable barking of a dog, sounds which came to him like a welcome from the midst of that life for which he yearned, accustomed as he was to be surrounded day and night by the deep and lonely stillness of the rocky heights.

He stayed his steps, and his eyes followed the thin columns of smoke, which floated tremulously up in the clear light of the ever mounting sun from the numerous hearths that lay below him.

"They are cooking breakfast now," thought he, "the wives for their husbands, the mothers for their children, and there, where that dark smoke rises, very likely a splendid feast is being prepared for guests; but I am nowhere at home, and no one will invite me in." The contest with Paulus had excited and cheered him, but the sight of the city filled his young heart with renewed bitterness, and his lips trembled as he looked down on his sheepskin and his unwashed limbs. With hasty resolve he turned his back on the oasis and hurried up the mountain. By the side of the brooklet that he knew of he threw off his coarse garment, let the cool water flow over his body, washed himself carefully and with much enjoyment, stroked clown his thick hair with his fingers, and then hurried down again into the valley.

The gorge through which he had descended debouched by a hillock that rose from the valley-plain; a small newly-built church leaned against its eastern declivity, and it was fortified on all sides by walls and dikes, behind which the citizens found shelter when they were threatened by the Saracen robbers of the oasis. This hill passed for a particularly sacred

spot. Moses was supposed to have prayed on its summit during the battle with the Amalekites while his arms were held up by Aaron and Hur.

But there were other notable spots in the neighborhood of the oasis. There farther to the north was the rock whence Moses had struck the water; there higher up, and more to the south-east, was the hill, where the Lord had spoken to the law-giver face to face, and where he had seen the burning bush; there again was the spring where he had met the daughters of Jethro, Zippora and Ledja, so called in the legend. Pious pilgrims came to these holy places in great numbers, and among them many natives of the peninsula, particularly Nabateans, who had previously visited the holy mountain in order to sacrifice on its summit to their gods, the sun, moon, and planets. At the outlet, towards the north, stood a castle, which ever since the Syrian Prefect, Cornelius Palma, had subdued Arabia Petraea in the time of Trajan, had been held by a Roman garrison for the protection of the blooming city of the desert against the incursions of the marauding Saracens and Blemmyes.

But the citizens of Pharan themselves had taken measures for the security of their property. On the topmost cliffs of the jagged crown of the giant mountain--the most favorable spots for a look-out far and wide--they placed sentinels, who day and night scanned the distance, so as to give a warning-signal in case of approaching clanger. Each house resembled a citadel, for it was built of strong masonry, and the younger men were all well exercised bowmen. The more distinguished families dwelt near the church-hill, and there too stood the houses of the Bishop Agapitus, and of the city councillors of Pharan.

Among these the Senator Petrus enjoyed the greatest respect, partly by reason of his solid abilities, and of his possessions in quarries, garden-ground, date palms, and cattle; partly in consequence of the rare qualities of his wife, the deaconess Dorothea, the granddaughter of the long-deceased and venerable Bishop Chaeremon, who had fled hither with his wife during the persecution of the Christians under Decius, and who had converted many of the Pharanites to the knowledge of the Redeemer.

The house of Petrus was of strong and well-joined stone, and the palm garden adjoining was carefully tended. Twenty slaves, many camels, and even two horses belonged to him, and the centurion in command of the Imperial garrison, the Gaul Phoebicius, and his wife Sirona, lived as lodgers under his roof; not quite to the satisfaction of the councillor, for the centurion was no Christian, but a worshipper of Mithras, in whose mysteries the wild Gaul had risen to the grade of a 'Lion,' whence his people, and with them the Pharanites in general, were wont to speak of him as "the Lion."

His predecessor had been an officer of much lower rank but a believing Christian, whom Petrus had himself requested to live in his house, and when, about a year since, the Lion Phoebicius had taken the place of the pious Pankratius, the senator could not refuse him the quarters, which had become a right.

Hermas went shyly and timidly towards the court of Petrus' house, and his embarrassment increased when he found himself in the hall of the stately stone-house, which he had entered without let or hindrance, and did not know which way to turn. There was no one there to direct him, and he dared not go up the stairs which led to the upper story, although it seemed that Petrus must be there. Yes, there was no doubt, for he heard talking overhead and clearly distinguished the senator's deep voice.

Hermas advanced, and set his foot on the first step of the stairs; but he had scarcely begun to go up with some decision, and feeling ashamed of his bashfulness, when he heard a door fly open just above him, and from it there poured a flood of fresh laughing children's voices, like a pent up stream when the miller opens the sluice gate.

He glanced upwards in surprise, but there was no time for consideration, for the shouting troop of released little ones had already reached the stairs. In front of all hastened a beautiful young woman with golden hair; she was laughing gaily, and held a gaudily-dressed doll high above her head. She came backwards towards the steps, turning her fair face beaming with fun and delight towards the children, who, full of their longing, half demanding, half begging, half laughing, half crying, shouted in confusion, "Let us be, Sirona," "Do not take it away again, Sirona," "Do stay here, Sirona," again and again, "Sirona--Sirona."

A lovely six year old maiden stretched up as far as she could to reach the round white arm that held the play-thing; with her left hand, which was free, she gaily pushed away three smaller children, who tried to cling to her knees and exclaimed, still stepping backwards, "No, no; you shall not have it till it has a new gown; it shall be as long and as gay as the Emperors's robe. Let me go, Caecilia, or you will fall down as naughty Nikon did the other day."

By this time she had reached the steps; she turned suddenly, and with outstretched arms she stopped the way of the narrow stair on which Hermas was standing, gazing open-mouthed at the merry scene above his head. Just as Sirona was preparing to run down, she perceived him and started; but when she saw that the anchorite from pure embarrassment could find no words in which to answer her question as to what he wanted, she laughed heartily again and called out: "Come up, we shall not hurt you--shall we children?"

Meanwhile Hermas had found courage enough to give utterance to his wish to speak with the senator, and the young woman, who looked with complacency on his strong and youthful frame, offered to conduct him to him.

Petrus had been talking to his grown up elder sons; they were tall men, but their father was even taller than they, and of unusual breadth of shoulder.

While the young men were speaking, he stroked his short grey beard and looked down at the ground in sombre gravity, as it might have seemed to the careless observer; but any one who looked closer might quickly perceive that not seldom a pleased smile, though not less often a somewhat bitter one, played upon the lips of the prudent and judicious man. He was one of those who can play with their children like a young mother, take the sorrows of another as much to heart as if they were their own, and yet who look so gloomy, and allow themselves to make such sharp speeches, that only those who are on terms of perfect confidence with them, cease to misunderstand them and fear them. There was something fretting the soul of this man, who nevertheless possessed all that could contribute to human happiness. His was a thankful nature, and yet he was conscious that he might have been destined to something greater than fate had permitted him to achieve or to be. He had remained a stone-cutter, but his sons had both completed their education in good schools in Alexandria. The elder, Antonius, who already had a house of his own and a wife and children, was an architect and artist-mechanic; the younger,

Polykarp, was a gifted young sculptor. The noble church of the oasis-city had been built under the direction of the elder; Polykarp, who had only come home a month since, was preparing to establish and carry on works of great extent in his father's quarries, for he had received a commission to decorate the new court of the Sebasteion or Caesareum, as it was called--a grand pile in Alexandria--with twenty granite lions. More than thirty artists had competed with him for this work, but the prize was unanimously adjudged to his models by qualified judges. The architect whose function it was to construct the colonnades and pavement of the court was his friend, and had agreed to procure the blocks of granite, the flags and the columns which he required from Petrus' quarries, and not, as had formerly been the custom, from those of Syene by the first Cataract.

Antonius and Polykarp were now standing with their father before a large table, explaining to him a plan which they had worked out together and traced on the thin wax surface of a wooden tablet. The young architect's proposal was to bridge over a deep but narrow gorge, which the beasts of burden were obliged to avoid by making a wide circuit, and so to make a new way from the quarries to the sea, which should be shorter by a third than the old one. The cost of this structure would soon be recouped by the saving in labor, and with perfect certainty, if only the transport-ships were laden at Clysma with a profitable return freight of Alexandrian manufactures, instead of returning empty as they had hitherto done. Petrus, who could shine as a speaker in the council-meetings, in private life spoke but little. At each of his son's new projects he raised his eyes to the speaker's face, as if to see whether the young man had not lost his wits, while his mouth, only half hidden by his grey beard, smiled approvingly.

When Antonius began to unfold his plan for remedying the inconvenience of the ravine that impeded the way, the senator muttered, "Only get feathers to grow on the slaves, and turn the black ones into ravens and the white ones into gulls, and then they might fly across. What do not people learn in the metropolis!"

When he heard the word 'bridge' he stared at the young artist. "The only question," said he, "is whether Heaven will lend us a rainbow." But when Polykarp proposed to get some cedar trunks from Syria through his friend in Alexandria, and when his elder son explained his drawings of the arch with which he promised to span the gorge and make it strong and safe, he followed their words with attention; at the same time he knit his eyebrows as gloomily and looked as stern as if he were listening to some narrative of crime. Still, he let them speak on to the end, and though at first he only muttered that it was mere "fancy-work" or "Aye, indeed, if I were the emperor;" he afterwards asked clear and precise questions, to which he received positive and well considered answers. Antonius proved by figures that the profit on the delivery of material for the Caesareum only would cover more than three quarters of the outlay. Then Polykarp began to speak and declared that the granite of the Holy Mountain was finer in color and in larger blocks than that from Syene.

"We work cheaper here than at the Cataract," interrupted Antonius. "And the transport of the blocks will not come too dear when we have the bridge and command the road to the sea, and avail ourselves of the canal of Trajan, which joins the Nile to the Red Sea, and which in a few months will again be navigable."

"And if my lions are a success," added Polykarp, "and if Zenodotus is

satisfied with our stone and our work, it may easily happen that we outstrip Syene in competition, and that some of the enormous orders that now flow from Constantine's new residence to the quarries at Syene, may find their way to us."

"Polykarp is not over sanguine," continued Antonius, "for the emperor is beautifying and adding to Byzantium with eager haste. Whoever erects a new house has a yearly allowance of corn, and in order to attract folks of our stamp--of whom he cannot get enough--he promises entire exemption from taxation to all sculptors, architects, and even to skilled laborers. If we finish the blocks and pillars here exactly to the designs, they will take up no superfluous room in the ships, and no one will be able to deliver them so cheaply as we."

"No, nor so good," cried Polykarp, "for you yourself are an artist, father, and understand stone-work as well as any man. I never saw a finer or more equally colored granite than the block you picked out for my first lion. I am finishing it here on the spot, and I fancy it will make a show. Certainly it will be difficult to take a foremost place among the noble works of the most splendid period of art, which already fill the Caesareum, but I will do my best."

"The Lions will be admirable," cried Antonius with a glance of pride at his brother. "Nothing like them has been done by any one these ten years, and I know the Alexandrians. If the master's work is praised that is made out of granite from the Holy Mountain, all the world will have granite from thence and from no where else. It all depends on whether the transport of the stone to the sea can be made less difficult and costly."

"Let us try it then," said Petrus, who during his son's talk had walked up and down before them in silence. "Let us try the building of the bridge in the name of the Lord. We will work out the road if the municipality will declare themselves ready to bear half the cost; not otherwise, and I tell you frankly, you have both grown most able men."

The younger son grasped his father's hand and pressed it with warm affection to his lips. Petrus hastily stroked his brown locks, then he offered his strong right hand to his eldest-born and said: "We must increase the number of our slaves. Call your mother, Polykarp." The youth obeyed with cheerful alacrity, and when Dame Dorothea--who was sitting at the loom with her daughter Marthana and some of her female slaves--saw him rush into the women's room with a glowing face, she rose with youthful briskness in spite of her stout and dignified figure, and called out to her son:

"He has approved of your plans?"

"Bridge and all, mother, everything," cried the young man. "Finer granite for my lions, than my father has picked out for me is nowhere to be found, and how glad I am for Antonius! only we must have patience about the roadway. He wants to speak to you at once."

Dorothea signed to her son to moderate his ecstasy, for he had seized her hand, and was pulling her away with him, but the tears that stood in her kind eyes testified how deeply she sympathized in her favorite's excitement.

"Patience, patience, I am coming directly," cried she, drawing away her hand in order to arrange her dress and her grey hair, which was abundant

and carefully dressed, and formed a meet setting for her still pleasing and unwrinkled face.

"I knew it would be so; when you have a reasonable thing to propose to your father, he will always listen to you and agree with you without my intervention; women should not mix themselves up with men's work. Youth draws a strong bow and often shoots beyond the mark. It would be a pretty thing if out of foolish affection for you I were to try to play the siren that should ensnare the steersman of the house--your father--with flattering words. You laugh at the grey-haired siren? But love overlooks the ravages of years and has a good memory for all that was once pleasing. Besides, men have not always wax in their ears when they should have. Come now to your father."

Dorothea went out past Polykarp and her daughter. The former held his sister back by the hand and asked--"Was not Sirona with you?"

The sculptor tried to appear quite indifferent, but he blushed as he spoke; Marthana observed this and replied not without a roguish glance: "She did show us her pretty face; but important business called her away."

"Sirona?" asked Polykarp incredulously.

"Certainly, why not!" answered Marthana laughing. "She had to sew a new gown for the children's doll."

"Why do you mock at her kindness?" said Polykarp reproachfully.

"How sensitive you are!" said Marthana softly. "Sirona is as kind and sweet as an angel; but you had better look at her rather less, for she is not one of us, and repulsive as the choleric centurion is to me--"

She said no more, for Dame Dorothea, having reached the door of the sitting-room, looked around for her children.

Petrus received his wife with no less gravity than was usual with him, but there was an arch sparkle in his half closed eyes as he asked: "You scarcely know what is going on, I suppose?"

"You are madmen, who would fain take Heaven by storm," she answered gaily.

"If the undertaking fails," said Petrus, pointing to his sons, "those young ones will feel the loss longer than we shall."

"But it will succeed," cried Dorothea. "An old commander and young soldiers can win any battle." She held out her small plump hand with frank briskness to her husband, he clasped it cheerily and said: "I think I can carry the project for the road through the Senate. To build our bridge we must also procure helping hands, and for that we need your aid, Dorothea. Our slaves will not suffice."

"Wait," cried the lady eagerly; she went to the window and called, "Jethro, Jethro!"

The person thus addressed, the old house-steward, appeared, and Dorothea began to discuss with him as to which of the inhabitants of the oasis might be disposed to let them have some able-bodied men, and whether it

might not be possible to employ one or another of the house-slaves at the building.

All that she said was judicious and precise, and showed that she herself superintended her household in every detail, and was accustomed to command with complete freedom.

"That tall Anubis then is really indispensable in the stable?" she asked in conclusion. The steward, who up to this moment had spoken shortly and intelligently, hesitated to answer; at the same time he looked up at Petrus, who, sunk in the contemplation of the plan, had his back to him; his glance, and a deprecating movement, expressed very clearly that he had something to tell, but feared to speak in the presence of his master. Dame Dorothea was quick of comprehension, and she quite understood Jethro's meaning; it was for that very reason that she said with more of surprise than displeasure: "What does the man mean with his winks? What I may hear, Petrus may hear too."

The senator turned, and looked at the steward from head to foot with so dark a glance, that he drew back, and began to speak quickly. But he was interrupted by the children's clamors on the stairs and by Sirona, who brought Hermas to the senator, and said laughing: "I found this great fellow on the stairs, he was seeking you."

Petrus looked at the youth, not very kindly, and asked: "Who are you? what is your business?" Hermas struggled in vain for speech; the presence of so many human beings, of whom three were women, filled him with the utmost confusion. His fingers twisted the woolly curls on his sheep-skin, and his lips moved but gave no sound; at last he succeeded in stammering out, "I am the son of old Stephanus, who was wounded in the last raid of the Saracens. My father has hardly slept these five nights, and now Paulus has sent me to you--the pious Paulus of Alexandria--but you know--and so I--"

"I see, I see," said Petrus with encouraging kindness. "You want some medicine for the old man. See Dorothea, what a fine young fellow he is grown, this is the little man that the Antiochian took with him up the mountain."

Hermas colored, and drew himself up; then he observed with great satisfaction that he was taller than the senator's sons, who were of about the same age as he, and for whom he had a stronger feeling, allied to aversion and fear, than even for their stern father. Polykarp measured him with a glance, and said aloud to Sirona, with whom he had exchanged a greeting, are off whom he had never once taken his eyes since she had come in: "If we could get twenty slaves with such shoulders as those, we should get on well. There is work to be done here, you big fellow--"

"My name is not 'fellow,' but Hermas," said the anchorite, and the veins of his forehead began to swell. Polykarp felt that his father's visitor was something more than his poor clothing would seem to indicate and that he had hurt his feelings. He had certainly seen some old anchorites, who led a contemplative and penitential life up on the sacred mountain, but it had never occurred to him that a strong youth could be long to the brotherhood of hermits. So he said to him kindly: "Hermas--is that your name? We all use our hands here and labor is no disgrace; what is your handicraft?"

This question roused the young anchorite to the highest excitement, and

Dame Dorothea, who perceives what was passing in his mind, said with quick decision: "He nurses his sick father. That is what you do, my son is it not? Petrus will not refuse you his help."

"Certainly not," the senator added, "I will accompany you by-and-bye to see him. You must know my children, that this youth's father was a great Lord, who gave up rich possessions in order to forget the world, where he had gone through bitter experiences, and to serve God in his own way, which we ought to respect though it is not our own. Sit down there, my son. First we must finish some important business, and then I will go with you."

"We live high up on the mountain," stammered Hermas.

"Then the air will be all the purer," replied the senator. "But stay--perhaps the old man is alone no? The good Paulus, you say, is with him? Then he is in good hands, and you may wait."

For a moment Petrus stood considering, then he beckoned to his sons, and said, "Antonius, go at once and see about some slaves--you, Polykarp, find some strong beasts of burden. You are generally rather easy with your money, and in this case it is worth while to buy the dearest. The sooner you return well supplied the better. Action must not halt behind decision, but follow it quickly and sharply, as the sound follows the blow. You, Marthana, mix some of the brown fever-potion, and prepare some bandages; you have the key."

"I will help her," cried Sirona, who was glad to prove herself useful, and who was sincerely sorry for the sick old hermit; besides, Hermas seemed to her like a discovery of her own, for whom she involuntarily felt more consideration since she had learned that he was the son of a man of rank.

While the young women were busy at the medicine-cupboard, Antonius and Polykarp left the room.

The latter had already crossed the threshold, when he turned once more, and cast a long look at Sirona. Then, with a hasty movement, he went on, closed the door, and with a heavy sigh descended the stairs.

As soon as his sons were gone, Petrus turned to the steward again.

"What is wrong with the slave Anubis?" he asked.

"He is--wounded, hurt," answered Jethro, "and for the next few days will be useless. The goat-girl Miriam--the wild cat--cut his forehead with her reaping hook."

"Why did I not hear of this sooner?" cried Dorothea reprovingly. "What have you done to the girl?"

"We have shut her up in the hay loft," answered Jethro, "and there she is raging and storming."

The mistress shook her head disapprovingly. "The girl will not be improved by that treatment," she said. "Go and bring her to me."

As soon as the intendant had left the room, she exclaimed, turning to her husband, "One may well be perplexed about these poor creatures, when one

sees how they behave to each other. I have seen it a thousand times! No judgment is so hard as that dealt by a slave to slaves!"

Jethro and a woman now led Miriam into the room. The girl's hands were bound with thick cords, and dry grass clung to her dress and rough black hair. A dark fire glowed in her eyes, and the muscles of her face moved incessantly, as if she had St. Vitus' dance. When Dorothea looked at her she drew herself up defiantly, and looked around the room, as if to estimate the strength of her enemies.

She then perceived Hermas; the blood left her lips, with a violent effort she tore her slender hands out of the loops that confined them, covering her face with them, and fled to the door. But Jethro put himself in her way, and seized her shoulder with a strong grasp. Miriam shrieked aloud, and the senator's daughter, who had set down the medicines she had had in her hand, and had watched the girl's movements with much sympathy, hastened towards her. She pushed away the old man's hand, and said, "Do not be frightened, Miriam. Whatever you may have done, my father can forgive you."

Her voice had a tone of sisterly affection, and the shepherdess followed Marthana unresistingly to the table, on which the plans for the bridge were lying, and stood there by her side.

For a minute all were silent; at last Dame Dorothea went up to Miriam, and asked, "What did they do to you, my poor child, that you could so forget yourself?"

Miriam could not understand what was happening to her; she had been prepared for scoldings and blows, nay for bonds and imprisonment, and now these gentle words and kind looks! Her defiant spirit was quelled, her eyes met the friendly eyes of her mistress, and she said in a low voice: "he had followed me for such a long time, and wanted to ask you for me as his wife; but I cannot bear him--I hate him as I do all your slaves." At these words her eyes sparkled wildly again, and with her old fire she went on, "I wish I had only hit him with a stick instead of a sickle; but I took what first came to hand to defend myself. When a man touches me--I cannot bear it, it is horrible, dreadful! Yesterday I came home later than usual with the beasts, and by the time I had milked the goats, and was going to bed, every one in the house was asleep. Then Anubis met me, and began chattering about love; I repelled him, but he seized me, and held me with his hand here on my head and wanted to kiss me; then my blood rose, I caught hold of my reaping hook, that hung by my side, and it was not till I saw him roaring on the ground, that I saw I had done wrong. How it happened I really cannot tell--something seemed to rise up in me--something--I don't know what to call it. It drives me on as the wind drives the leaves that lie on the road, and I cannot help it. The best thing you can do is to let me die, for then you would be safe once for all from my wickedness, and all would be over and done with."

"How can you speak so?" interrupted Marthana. "You are wild and ungovernable, but not wicked."

"Only ask him!" cried the girl, pointing with flashing eyes to Hermas, who, on his part, looked down at the floor in confusion. The senator exchanged a hasty glance with his wife, they were accustomed to understand each other without speech, and Dorothea said: "He who feels that he is not what he ought to be is already on the high-road to amendment. We let you keep the goats because you were always running after the flocks,

and never can rest in the house. You are up on the mountain before morning-prayer, and never come home till after supper is over, and no one takes any thought for the better part of you. Half of your guilt recoils upon us, and we have no right to punish you. You need not be so astonished; every one some times does wrong. Petrus and I are human beings like you, neither more nor less; but we are Christians, and it is our duty to look after the souls which God has entrusted to our care, be they our children or our slaves. You must go no more up the mountain, but shall stay with us in the house. I shall willingly forgive your hasty deed if Petrus does not think it necessary to punish you."

The senator gravely shook his head in sign of agreement, and Dorothea turned to enquire of Jethro: "Is Anubis badly wounded and does he need any care?"

"He is lying in a fever and wanders in his talk," was the answer. "Old Praxinoa is cooling his wound with water."

"Then Miriam can take her place and try to remedy the mischief which she was the cause of," said Dorothea. "Half of your guilt will be atoned for, girl, if Anubis recovers under your care. I will come presently with Marthana, and show you how to make a bandage." The shepherdess cast down her eyes, and passively allowed herself to be conducted to the wounded man.

Meanwhile Marthana had prepared the brown mixture. Petrus had his staff and felt-hat brought to him, gave Hermas the medicine and desired him to follow him.

Sirona looked after the couple as they went. "What a pity for such a fine lad!" she exclaimed. "A purple coat would suit him better than that wretched sheepskin."

The mistress shrugged her shoulders, and signing to her daughter said: "Come to work, Marthana, the sun is already high. How the days fly! the older one grows the quicker the hours hurry away."

"I must be very young then," said the centurion's wife, "for in this wilderness time seems to me to creep along frightfully slow. One day is the same as another, and I often feel as if life were standing perfectly still, and my heart pulses with it. What should I be without your house and the children?--always the same mountain, the same palm-trees, the same faces!--"

"But the mountain is glorious, the trees are beautiful!" answered Dorothea. "And if we love the people with whom we are in daily intercourse, even here we may be contented and happy. At least we ourselves are, so far as the difficulties of life allow. I have often told you, what you want is work."

"Work! but for whom?" asked Sirona. "If indeed I had children like you! Even in Rome I was not happy, far from it; and yet there was plenty to do and to think about. Here a procession, there a theatre; but here! And for whom should I dress even? My jewels grow dull in my chest, and the moths eat my best clothes. I am making doll's clothes now of my colored cloak for your little ones. If some demon were to transform me into a hedge-hog or a grey owl, it would be all the same to me."

"Do not be so sinful," said Dorothea gravely, but looking with kindly

admiration at the golden hair and lovely sweet face of the young woman. "It ought to be a pleasure to you to dress yourself for your husband."

"For him?" said Sirona. "He never looks at me, or if he does it is only to abuse me. The only wonder to me is that I can still be merry at all; nor am I, except in your house, and not there even but when I forget him altogether."

"I will not hear such things said--not another word," interrupted Dorothea severely. "Take the linen and cooling lotion, Marthana, we will go and bind up Anubis' wound."

CHAPTER IV.

Petrus went up the mountain side with Hermas. The old man followed the youth, who showed him the way, and as he raised his eyes from time to time, he glanced with admiration at his guide's broad shoulders and elastic limbs. The road grew broader when it reached a little mountain plateau, and from thence the two men walked on side by side, but for some time without speaking till the senator asked: "How long now has your father lived up on the mountain?"

"Many years," answered Hermas. "But I do not know how many--and it is all one. No one enquires about time up here among us."

The senator stood still a moment and measured his companion with a glance.

"You have been with your father ever since he came?" he asked.

"He never lets me out of his sight;" replied Hermas. "I have been only twice into the oasis, even to go to the church."

"Then you have been to no school?"

"To what school should I go! My father has taught me to read the Gospels and I could write, but I have nearly forgotten how. Of what use would it be to me? We live like praying beasts."

Deep bitterness sounded in the last words, and Petrus could see into the troubled spirit of his companion, overflowing as it was with weary disgust, and he perceived how the active powers of youth revolted in aversion against the slothful waste of life, to which he was condemned. He was grieved for the boy, and he was not one of those who pass by those in peril without helping them. Then he thought of his own sons, who had grown up in the exercise and fulfilment of serious duties, and he owned to himself that the fine young fellow by his side was in no way their inferior, and needed nothing but to be guided aright. He thoughtfully looked first at the youth and then on the ground, and muttered unintelligible words into his grey beard as they walked on. Suddenly he drew himself up and nodded decisively; he would make an attempt to save Hermas, and faithful to his own nature, action trod on the heels of resolve. Where the little level ended the road divided, one path continued to lead upwards, the other deviated to the valley and ended at the quarries. Petrus was for taking the latter, but Hermas cried out, "That is not the way to our cave; you must follow me."

"Follow thou me!" replied the senator, and the words were spoken with a tone and expression, that left no doubt in the youth's mind as to their double meaning. "The day is yet before us, and we will see what my laborers are doing. Do you know the spot where they quarry the stone?"

"How should I not know it?" said Hermas, passing the senator to lead the way. "I know every path from our mountain to the oasis, and to the sea. A panther had its lair in the ravine behind your quarries."

"So we have learnt," said Petrus. "The thievish beasts have slaughtered two young camels, and the people can neither catch them in their toils nor run them down with dogs."

"They will leave you in peace now," said the boy laughing. "I brought down the male from the rock up there with an arrow, and I found the mother in a hollow with her young ones. I had a harder job with her; my knife is so bad, and the copper blade bent with the blow; I had to strangle the gaudy devil with my hands, and she tore my shoulder and bit my arm. Look! there are the scars. But thank God, my wounds heal quicker than my father's. Paulus says, I am like an, earth-worm; when it is cut in two the two halves say good-bye to each other, and crawl off sound and gay, one way, and the other another way. The young panthers were so funny and helpless, I would not kill them, but I did them up in my sheepskin, and brought them to my father. He laughed at the little beggars, and then a Nabataean took them to be sold at Clysma to a merchant from Rome. There and at Byzantium, there is a demand for all kinds of living beasts of prey. I got some money for them, and for the skins of the old ones, and kept it to pay for my journey, when I went with the others to Alexandria to ask the blessing of the new Patriarch."

"You went to the metropolis?" asked Petrus. "You saw the great structures, that secure the coast from the inroads of the sea, the tall Pharos with the far-shining fire, the strong bridges, the churches, the palaces and temples with their obelisks, pillars, and beautiful paved courts? Did it never enter your mind to think that it would be a proud thing to construct such buildings?"

Hermas shook his head. "Certainly I would rather live in an airy house with colonnades than in our dingy cavern, but building would never be in my way. What a long time it takes to put one stone on another! I am not patient, and when I leave my father I will do something that shall win me fame. But there are the quarries--" Petrus did not let his companion finish his sentence, but interrupted him with all the warmth of youth, exclaiming: "And do you mean to say that fame cannot be won by the arts of building? Look there at the blocks and flags, here at the pillars of hard stone. These are all to be sent to Aila, and there my son Antonius, the elder of the two that you saw just now, is going to build a House of God, with strong walls and pillars, much larger and handsomer than our church in the oasis, and that is his work too. He is not much older than you are, and already he is famous among the people far and wide. Out of those red blocks down there my younger son Polykarp will hew noble lions, which are destined to decorate the finest building in the capital itself. When you and I, and all that are now living, shall have been long since forgotten, still it will be said these are the work of the Master Polykarp, the son of Petrus, the Pharanite. What he can do is certainly a thing peculiar to himself, no one who is not one of the chosen and gifted ones can say, 'I will learn to do that.' But you have a sound understanding, strong hands and open eyes, and who can tell what else

there is hidden in you. If you could begin to learn soon, it would not yet be too late to make a worthy master of you, but of course he who would rise so high must not be afraid of work. Is your mind set upon fame? That is quite right, and I am very glad of it; but you must know that he who would gather that rare fruit must water it, as a noble heathen once said, with the sweat of his brow. Without trouble and labor and struggles there can be no victory, and men rarely earn fame without fighting for victory."

The old man's vehemence was contagious; the lad's spirit was roused, and he exclaimed warmly: "What do you say? that I am afraid of struggles and trouble? I am ready to stake everything, even my life, only to win fame. But to measure stone, to batter defenceless blocks with a mallet and chisel, or to join the squares with accurate pains--that does not tempt me. I should like to win the wreath in the Palaestra by flinging the strongest to the ground, or surpass all others as a warrior in battle; my father was a soldier too, and he may talk as much as he will of 'peace,' and nothing but 'peace,' all the same in his dreams he speaks of bloody strife and burning wounds. If you only cure him I will stay no longer on this lonely mountain, even if I must steal away in secret. For what did God give me these arms, if not to use them?"

Petrus made no answer to these words, which came as a stormy flood from Hermas' lips, but he stroked his grey beard, and thought to himself, "The young of the eagle does not catch flies. I shall never win over this soldier's son to our peaceful handicraft, but he shall not remain on the mountain among these queer sluggards, for there he is being ruined, and yet he is not of a common sort."

When he had given a few orders to the overseer of his workmen, he followed the young man to see his suffering father.

It was now some hours since Hermas and Paulus had left the wounded anchorite, and he still lay alone in his cave. The sun, as it rose higher and higher, blazed down upon the rocks, which began to radiate their heat, and the hermit's dwelling was suffocatingly hot. The pain of the poor man's wound increased, his fever was greater, and he was very thirsty. There stood the jug, which Paulus had given him, but it was long since empty, and neither Paulus nor Hermas had come back. He listened anxiously to the sounds in the distance, and fancied at first that he heard the Alexandrian's footstep, and then that he heard loud words and suppressed groans coming from his cave. Stephanus tried to call out, but he himself could hardly hear the feeble sound, which, with his wounded breast and parched mouth, he succeeded in uttering. Then he fain would have prayed, but fearful mental anguish disturbed his devotion. All the horrors of desertion came upon him, and he who had lived a life overflowing with action and enjoyment, with disenchantment and satiety, who now in solitude carried on an incessant spiritual struggle for the highest goal--this man felt himself as disconsolate and lonely as a bewildered child that has lost its mother.

He lay on his bed of pain softly crying, and when he observed by the shadow of the rock that the sun had passed its noonday height, indignation and bitter feeling were added to pain, thirst and weariness. He doubled his fists and muttered words which sounded like soldier's oaths, and with them the name now of Paulus, now of his son. At last anguish gained the upperhand of his anger, and it seemed to him, as though he were living over again the most miserable hour of his life, an hour now long since past and gone.

He thought he was returning from a noisy banquet in the palace of the Caesars. His slaves had taken the garlands of roses and poplar leaves from his brow and breast, and robed him in his night-dress; now, with a silver lamp in his hand, he was approaching his bedroom, and he smiled, for his young wife was awaiting him, the mother of his Hermas. She was fair and he loved her well, and he had brought home witty sayings to repeat to her from the table of the emperor. He, if any one, had a right to smile. Now he was in the ante-room, in which two slave-women were accustomed to keep watch; he found only one, and she was sleeping and breathing deeply; he still smiled as he threw the light upon her face--how stupid she looked with her mouth open! An alabaster lamp shed a dim light in the bed-room, softly and still smiling he went up to Glycera's ivory couch, and held up his lamp, and stared at the empty and undisturbed bed--and the smile faded from his lips. The smile of that evening came back to him no more through all the long years, for Glycera had betrayed him, and left him--him and her child. All this had happened twenty years since, and to-day all that he had then felt had returned to him, and he saw his wife's empty couch with his "mind's eye," as plainly as he had then seen it, and he felt as lonely and as miserable as in that night. But now a shadow appeared before the opening of the cave, and he breathed a deep sigh as he felt himself released from the hideous vision, for he had recognized Paulus, who came up and knelt down beside him.

"Water, water!" Stephanus implored in a low voice, and Paulus, who was cut to the heart by the moaning of the old man, which he had not heard till he entered the cave, seized the pitcher. He looked into it, and, finding it quite dry, he rushed down to the spring as if he were running for a wager, filled it to the brim and brought it to the lips of the sick man, who gulped the grateful drink down with deep draughts, and at last exclaimed with a sigh of relief; "That is better; why were you so long away? I was so thirsty!" Paulus who had fallen again on his knees by the old man, pressed his brow against the couch, and made no reply. Stephanus gazed in astonishment at his companion, but perceiving that he was weeping passionately he asked no further questions. Perfect stillness reigned in the cave for about an hour; at last Paulus raised his face, and said, "Forgive me Stephanus. I forgot your necessity in prayer and scourging, in order to recover the peace of mind I had trifled away--no heathen would have done such a thing!" The sick man stroked his friend's arm affectionately; but Paulus murmured, "Egoism, miserable egoism guides and governs us. Which of us ever thinks of the needs of others? And we--we who profess to walk in the way of the Lamb!"

He sighed deeply, and leaned his head on the sick man's breast, who lovingly stroked his rough hair, and it was thus that the senator found him, when he entered the cave with Hermas.

The idle way of life of the anchorites was wholly repulsive to his views of the task for men and for Christians, but he succored those whom he could, and made no enquiries about the condition of the sufferer. The pathetic union in which he found the two men touched his heart, and, turning to Paulus, he said kindly: "I can leave you in perfect comfort, for you seem to me to have a faithful nurse."

The Alexandrian reddened; he shook his head, and replied: "I? I thought of no one but myself, and left him to suffer and thirst in neglect, but now I will not quit him--no, indeed, I will not, and by God's help and yours, he shall recover."

Petrus gave him a friendly nod, for he did not believe in the anchorite's self-accusation, though he did in his good-will; and before he left the cave, he desired Hermas to come to him early on the following day to give him news of his father's state. He wished not only to cure Stephanus, but to continue his relations with the youth, who had excited his interest in the highest degree, and he had resolved to help him to escape from the inactive life which was weighing upon him.

Paulus declined to share the simple supper that the father and son were eating, but expressed his intention of remaining with the sick man. He desired Hermas to pass the night in his dwelling, as the scanty limits of the cave left but narrow room for the lad.

A new life had this day dawned upon the young man; all the grievances and desires which had filled his soul ever since his journey to Alexandria, crowding together in dull confusion, had taken form and color, and he knew now that he could not remain an anchorite, but must try his over abundant strength in real life.

"My father," thought he, "was a warrior, and lived in a palace, before he retired into our dingy cave; Paulus was Menander, and to this day has not forgotten how to throw the discus; I am young, strong, and free-born as they were, and Petrus says, I might have been a fine man. I will not hew and chisel stones like his sons, but Caesar needs soldiers, and among all the Amalekites, nay among the Romans in the oasis, I saw none with whom I might not match myself."

While thus he thought he stretched his limbs, and struck his hands on his broad breast, and when he was asleep, he dreamed of the wrestling school, and of a purple robe that Paulus held out to him, of a wreath of poplar leaves that rested on his scented curls, and of the beautiful woman who had met him on the stairs of the senator's house.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Action trod on the heels of resolve
Homo sum; humani nil a me alienum puto
I am human, nothing that is human can I regard as alien to me
Love is at once the easiest and the most difficult
Love overlooks the ravages of years and has a good memory
No judgment is so hard as that dealt by a slave to slaves
No man is more than man, and many men are less
Sky as bare of cloud as the rocks are of shrubs and herbs
Sleep avoided them both, and each knew that the other was awake
The older one grows the quicker the hours hurry away
To pray is better than to bathe
Wakefulness may prolong the little term of life

HOMO SUM

By Georg Ebers

Volume 2.

CHAPTER V.

Thanks to the senator's potion Stephanus soon fell asleep. Paulus sat near him and did not stir; he held his breath, and painfully suppressed even an impulse to cough, so as not to disturb the sick man's light slumbers.

An hour after midnight the old man awoke, and after he had lain meditating for some time with his eyes open, he said thoughtfully: "You called yourself and us all egotistic, and I certainly am so. I have often said so to myself; not for the first time to day, but for weeks past, since Hermas came back from Alexandria, and seems to have forgotten how to laugh. He is not happy, and when I ask myself what is to become of him when I am dead, and if he turns from the Lord and seeks the pleasures of the world, my heart sickens. I meant it for the best when I brought him with me up to the Holy Mountain, but that was not the only motive--it seemed to me too hard to part altogether from the child. My God! the young of brutes are secure of their mother's faithful love, and his never asked for him when she fled from my house with her seducer. I thought he should at least not lose his father, and that if he grew up far away from the world he would be spared all the sorrow that it had so profusely heaped upon me, I would have brought him up fit for Heaven, and yet through a life devoid of suffering. And now--and now? If he is miserable it will be through me, and added to all my other troubles comes this grief."

"You have sought out the way for him," interrupted Paulus, "and the rest will be sure to come; he loves you and will certainly not leave you so long as you are suffering."

"Certainly not?" asked the sick man sadly. "And what weapons has he to fight through life with?"

"You gave him the Saviour for a guide; that is enough," said Paulus soothingly. "There is no smooth road from earth to Heaven, and none can win salvation for another."

Stephanus was silent for a long time, then he said: "It is not even allowed to a father to earn the wretched experience of life for his son, or to a teacher for his pupil. We may point out the goal, but the way thither is by a different road for each of us."

"And we may thank God for that," cried Paulus. "For Hermas has been started on the road which you and I had first to find for ourselves."

"You and I," repeated the sick man thoughtfully. "Yes, each of us has sought his own way, but has enquired only which was his own way, and has never concerned himself about that of the other. Self! self!--How many years we have dwelt close together, and I have never felt impelled to ask you what you could recall to mind about your youth, and how you were led to grace. I learnt by accident that you were an Alexandrian, and had been a heathen, and had suffered much for the faith, and with that I was satisfied. Indeed you do not seem very ready to speak of those long past days. Our neighbor should be as dear to us as our self, and who is nearer to me than you? Aye, self and selfishness! There are many gulfs on the road towards God."

"I have not much to tell," said Paulus. "But a man never forgets what he once has been. We may cast the old man from us, and believe we have shaken ourselves free, when lo! it is there again and greets us as an old acquaintance. If a frog only once comes down from his tree he hops back into the pond again."

"It is true, memory can never die!" cried the sick man. "I can not sleep any more; tell me about your early life and how you became a Christian. When two men have journeyed by the same road, and the moment of parting is at hand, they are fain to ask each other's name and where they came from."

Paulus gazed for some time into space, and then he began: "The companions of my youth called me Menander, the son of Herophilus. Besides that, I know for certain very little of my youth, for as I have already told you, I have long since ceased to allow myself to think of the world. He who abandons a thing, but clings to the idea of the thing, continues--"

"That sounds like Plato," said Stephanus with a smile.

"All that heathen farrago comes back to me today," cried Paulus. "I used to know it well, and I have often thought that his face must have resembled that of the Saviour."

"But only as a beautiful song might resemble the voice of an angel," said Stephanus somewhat drily. "He who plunges into the depths of philosophic systems--"

"That never was quite my case," said Paulus. "I did indeed go through the whole educational course; Grammar, Rhetoric, Dialectic and Music--"

"And Arithmetic, Geometry, and Astronomy," added Stephanus.

"Those were left to the learned many years since," continued Paulus, "and I was never very eager for learning. In the school of Rhetoric I remained far behind my fellows, and if Plato was dear to me I owe it to Paedonomus of Athens, a worthy man whom my father engaged to teach us."

"They say he had been a great merchant," interrupted Stephanus. "Can it be that you were the son of that rich Herophilus, whose business in Antioch was conducted by the worthy Jew Urbib?"

"Yes indeed," replied Paulus, looking down at the ground in some confusion. "Our mode of life was almost royal, and the multitude of our slaves quite sinful. When I look back on all the vain trifles that my father had to care for, I feel quite giddy. Twenty sea-going ships in the harbor of Eunostus, and eighty Nile-boats on Lake Mareotis belonged to him. His profits on the manufacture of papyrus might have maintained a cityfull of poor. But we needed our revenues for other things. Our Cyraenian horses stood in marble stalls, and the great hall, in which my father's friends were wont to meet, was like a temple. But you see how the world takes possession of us, when we begin to think about it! Rather let us leave the past in peace. You want me to tell you more of myself? Well; my childhood passed like that of a thousand other rich citizens' sons, only my mother, indeed, was exceptionally beautiful and sweet, and of angelic goodness."

"Every child thinks his own mother the best of mothers," murmured the

sick man.

"Mine certainly was the best to me," cried Paulus. "And yet she was a heathen. When my father hurt me with severe words of blame, she always had a kind word and loving glance for me. There was little enough, indeed, to praise in me. Learning was utterly distasteful to me, and even if I had done better at school, it would hardly have counted for much to my credit, for my brother Apollonius, who was about a year younger than I, learned all the most difficult things as if they were mere child's play, and in dialectic exercises there soon was no rhetorician in Alexandria who could compete with him. No system was unknown to him, and though no one ever knew of his troubling himself particularly to study, he nevertheless was master of many departments of learning. There were but two things in which I could beat him--in music, and in all athletic exercises; while he was studying and disputing I was winning garlands in the palaestra. But at that time the best master of rhetoric and argument was the best man, and my father, who himself could shine in the senate as an ardent and elegant orator, looked upon me as a half idiotic ne'er-do-weel, until one day a learned client of our house presented him with a pebble on which was carved an epigram to this effect: 'He who would see the noblest gifts of the Greek race, should visit the house of Herophilus, for there he might admire strength and vigor of body in Menander, and the same qualities of mind in Apollonius.' These lines, which were written in the form of a lute, passed from mouth to mouth, and gratified my father's ambition; from that time he had words of praise for me when my quadriga won the race in the Hippodrome, or when I came home crowned from the wrestling-ring, or the singing match. My whole life was spent in the baths and the palaestra, or in gay feasting."

"I know it all," exclaimed Stephanus interrupting him, "and the memory of it all often disturbs me. Did you find it easy to banish these images from your mind?"

"At first I had a hard fight," sighed Paulus. "But for some time now, since I have passed my fortieth year, the temptations of the world torment me less often. Only I must keep out of the way of the carriers who bring fish from the fishing towns on the sea, and from Raithu to the oasis."

Stephanus looked enquiringly at the speaker, and Paulus went on: "Yes, it is very strange. I may see men or women--the sea yonder or the mountain here, without ever thinking of Alexandria, but only of sacred things; but when the savor of fish rises up to my nostrils I see the market and fish stalls and the oysters--"

"Those of Kanopus are famous," interrupted Steplianus, "they make little pasties there--" Paulus passed the back of his hand over his bearded lips, exclaiming, "At the shop of the fat cook--Philemon--in the street of Herakleotis." But he broke off, and cried with an impulse of shame, "It were better that I should cease telling of my past life. The day does not dawn yet, and you must try to sleep."

"I cannot sleep," sighed Stephanus; "if you love me go on with your story."

"But do not interrupt me again then," said Paulus, and he went on: "With all this gay life I was not happy--by no means. When I was alone sometimes, and no longer sitting in the crowd of merry boon-companions and complaisant wenches, emptying the wine cup and crowned with poplar, I

often felt as if I were walking on the brink of a dark abyss as if every thing in myself and around me were utterly hollow and empty. I could stand gazing for hours at the sea, and as the waves rose only to sink again and vanish, I often reflected that I was like them, and that the future of my frivolous present must be a mere empty nothing. Our gods were of little account with us. My mother sacrificed now in one temple, and now in another, according to the needs of the moment; my father took part in the high festivals, but he laughed at the belief of the multitude, and my brother talked of the 'Primaeval Unity,' and dealt with all sorts of demons, and magic formulas. He accepted the doctrine of Iamblichus, Ablavius, and the other Neoplatonic philosophers, which to my poor understanding seemed either superhumanly profound or else debasingly foolish; nevertheless my memory retains many of his sayings, which I have learned to understand here in my loneliness. It is vain to seek reason outside ourselves; the highest to which we can attain is for reason to behold itself in us! As often as the world sinks into nothingness in my soul, and I live in God only, and have Him, and comprehend Him, and feel Him only--then that doctrine recurs to me. How all these fools sought and listened everywhere for the truth which was being proclaimed in their very ears! There were Christians everywhere about me, and at that time they had no need to conceal themselves, but I had nothing to do with them. Twice only did they cross my path; once I was not a little annoyed when, on the Hippodrome, a Christian's horses which had been blessed by a Nazarite, beat mine; and on another occasion it seemed strange to me when I myself received the blessing of an old Christian dock-laborer, having pulled his son out of the water.

"Years went on; my parents died. My mother's last glance was directed at me, for I had always been her favorite child. They said too that I was like her, I and my sister Arsinoe, who, soon after my father's death, married the Prefect Pompey. At the division of the property I gave up to my brother the manufactories and the management of the business, nay even the house in the city, though, as the elder brother, I had a right to it, and I took in exchange the land near the Kanopic gate, and filled the stables there with splendid horses, and the lofts with not less noble wine. This I needed, because I gave up the days to baths and contests in the arena, and the nights to feasting, sometimes at my own house, sometimes at a friend's, and sometimes in the taverns of Kanopus, where the fairest Greek girls seasoned the feasts with singing and dancing.

"What have these details of the vainest worldly pleasure to do with my conversion, you will ask. But listen a while. When Saul went forth to seek his father's asses he found a crown.

"One day we had gone out in our gilded boats, and the Lesbian girl Archidike had made ready a feast for us in her house, a feast such as could scarcely be offered even in Rome.

"Since the taking of our city by Diocletian, after the insurrection of Achilleus, the Imperial troops who came to Alexandria behaved insolently enough. Between some of my friends, and certain of the young officers of Roman patrician families, there had been a good deal of rough banter for some months past, as to their horses, women--I know not what; and it happened that we met these very gentry at the house of Archidike.

"Sharp speeches were made, which the soldiers replied to after their fashion, and at last they came to insulting words, and as the wine heated us and them, to loud threats.

"The Romans left the house of entertainment before we did. Crowned with garlands, singing, and utterly careless, we followed soon after them, and had almost reached the quay, when a noisy troop rushed out of a side street, and fell upon us with naked weapons. The moon was high in the heavens, and I could recognize some of our adversaries. I threw myself on a tall tribune, throttled him, and, as he fell, I fell with him in the dust. I am but dimly conscious of what followed, for sword-strokes were showered upon me, and all grew black before my eyes. I only know what I thought then, face to face with death."

"Well--?" asked Stephanus.

"I thought," said Paulus reddening, "of my fighting-quails at Alexandria, and whether they had had any water. Then my dull heavy unconsciousness increased; for weeks I lay in that state, for I was hacked like sausage-meat; I had twelve wounds, not counting the slighter ones, and any one else would have died of any one of them. You have often wondered at my scars."

"And whom did the Lord choose then to be the means of your salvation?"

"When I recovered my senses," continued Paulus, "I was lying in a large, clean room behind a curtain of light material; I could not raise myself, but just as if I had been sleeping so many minutes instead of days, I thought again directly of my quails. In their last fight my best cock had severely handled handsome Nikander's, and yet he wanted to dispute the stakes with me, but I would assert my rights! At least the quails should fight again, and if Nikander should refuse I would force him to fight me with his fists in the Palaestra, and give him a blue reminder of his debt on the eye. My hands were still weak, and yet I clenched them as I thought of the vexatious affair. 'I will punish him,' I muttered to myself.

"Then I heard the door of the room open, and I saw three men respectfully approaching a fourth. He greeted them with dignity, but yet with friendliness, and rolled up a scroll which he had been reading, I would have called out, but I could not open my parched lips, and yet I saw and heard all that was going on around me in the room.

"It all seemed strange enough to me then; even the man's mode of greeting was unusual. I soon perceived that he who sat in the chair was a judge, and that the others had come as complainants; they were all three old and poor, but some good men had left them the use and interest of a piece of land. During seed-time one of them, a fine old man with long white hair, had been ill, and he had not been able to help in the harvest either; 'and now they want to withhold his portion of the corn,' thought I; but it was quite otherwise. The two men who were in health had taken a third part of the produce to the house of the sick man, and he obstinately refused to accept the corn because he had helped neither to sow nor to reap it, and he demanded of the judge that he should signify to the other two that he had no right to receive goods which he had not earned.

"The judge had so far kept silence. But he now raised his sagacious and kindly face and asked the old man, 'Did you pray for your companions and for the increase of their labors?'

"'I did,' replied the other.

"'Then by your intercession you helped them,' the judge decided, 'and the

third part of the produce is yours and you must keep it.'

"The old man bowed, the three men shook hands, and in a few minutes the judge was alone in the room again.

"I did not know what had come over me; the complaint of the men and the decision of the judge seemed to me senseless, and yet both the one and the other touched my heart. I went to sleep again, and when I awoke refreshed the next morning the judge came up to me and gave me medicine, not only for my body but also for my soul, which certainly was not less in need of it than my poor wounded limbs."

"Who was the judge?" asked Stephanus.

"Eusebius, the Presbyter of Kanopus. Some Christians had found me half dead on the road, and had carried me into his house, for the widow Theodora, his sister, was the deaconess of the town. The two had nursed me as if I were their dearest brother. It was not till I grew stronger that they showed me the cross and the crown of thorns of Him who for my sake also had taken upon Him such far more cruel suffering than mine, and they taught me to love His wounds, and to bear my own with submission. In the dry wood of despair soon budded green shoots of hope, and instead of annihilation at the end of this life they showed me Heaven and all its joys.

"I became a new man, and before me there lay in the future an eternal and blessed existence; after this life I now learned to look forward to eternity. The gates of Heaven were wide open before me, and I was baptized at Kanopus.

"In Alexandria they had mourned for me as dead, and my sister Arsinoe, as heiress to my property, had already moved into my country-house with her husband, the prefect. I willingly left her there, and now lived again in the city, in order to support the brethren, as the persecutions had begun again.

"This was easy for me, as through my brother-in-law I could visit all the prisons; at last I was obliged to confess the faith, and I suffered much on the rack and in the porphyry quarries; but every pain was dear to me, for it seemed to bring me nearer to the goal of my longings, and if I find ought to complain of up here on the Holy Mountain, it is only that the Lord deems me unworthy to suffer harder things, when his beloved and only Son took such bitter torments on himself for me and for every wretched sinner."

"Ah! saintly man!" murmured Stephanus, devoutly kissing Paulus' sheep-skin; but Paulus pulled it from him, exclaiming hastily:

"Cease, pray cease--he who approaches me with honors now in this life throws a rock in my way to the life of the blessed. Now I will go to the spring and fetch you some fresh water."

When Paulus returned with the water-jar he found Hermas, who had come to wish his father good-morning before he went down to the oasis to fetch some new medicine from the senator.

CHAPTER VI.

Sirona was sitting at the open window of her bedroom, having her hair arranged by a black woman that her husband had bought in Rome. She sighed, while the slave lightly touched the shining tresses here and there with perfumed oil which she had poured into the palm of her hand; then she firmly grasped the long thick waving mass of golden hair and was parting it to make a plait, when Sirona stopped her, saying, "Give me the mirror."

For some minutes she looked with a melancholy gaze at the image in the polished metal, then she sighed again; she picked up the little greyhound that lay at her feet, and placing it in her lap, showed the animal its image in the mirror.

"There, poor lambe," she said, "if we two, inside these four walls, want to see anything like a pleasing sight we must look at ourselves."

Then she went on, turning to the slave. "How the poor little beast trembles! I believe it longs to be back again at Arelas, and is afraid we shall linger too long under this burning sky. Give me my sandals."

The black woman reached her mistress two little slippers with gilt ornaments on the slight straps, but Sirona flung her hair off her face with the back of her hand, exclaiming, "The old ones, not these. Wooden shoes even would do here."

And with these words she pointed to the court-yard under the window, which was in fact as ill contrived, as though gilt sandals had never yet trodden it. It was surrounded by buildings; on one side was a wall with a gateway, and on the others buildings which formed a sharply bent horseshoe.

Opposite the wing in which Sirona and her husband had found a home stood the much higher house of Petrus, and both had attached to them, in the background of the court-yard, sheds constructed of rough reddish brown stones, and covered with a thatch of palm-branches; in these the agricultural implements were stored, and the senator's slaves lived. In front lay a heap of black charcoal, which was made on the spot by burning the wood of the thorny sajala species of acacia; and there too lay a goodly row of well smoothed mill-stones, which were shaped in the quarry, and exported to Egypt. At this early hour the whole unlovely domain lay in deep shadow, and was crowded with fowls and pigeons. Sirona's window alone was touched by the morning sun. If she could have known what a charm the golden light shed over her figure, on her rose and white face, and her shining hair, she would have welcomed the day-star, instead of complaining that it had too early waked her from sleep--her best comfort in her solitude.

Besides a few adjoining rooms she was mistress of a larger room, the dwelling room, which look out upon the street.

She shaded her eyes with her hand, exclaiming, "Oh! the wearisome sun. It looks at us the first thing in the morning through the window; as if the day were not long enough. The beds must be put in the front room; I insist upon it."

The slave shook her head, and stammered an answer, "Phoebicius will not have it so."

Sirona's eyes flashed angrily, and her voice, which was particularly sweet, trembled slightly as she asked, "What is wrong with him again?"

"He says," replied the slave, "that the senator's son, Polykarp, goes oftener past your window than altogether pleases him, and it seems to him, that you occupy yourself more than is necessary with his little brothers and sisters, and the other children up there."

"Is he still in there?" asked Sirona with glowing cheeks, and she pointed threateningly to the dwelling-room.

"The master is out," stuttered the old woman. "He went out before sunrise. You are not to wait for breakfast, he will not return till late."

The Gaulish lady made no answer, but her head fell, and the deepest melancholy overspread her features. The greyhound seemed to feel for the troubles of his mistress, for he fawned upon her, as if to kiss her. The solitary woman pressed the little creature, which had come with her from her home, closely to her bosom; for an unwonted sense of wretchedness weighed upon her heart, and she felt as lonely, friendless, and abandoned, as if she were driving alone--alone--over a wide and shoreless sea. She shuddered, as if she were cold--for she thought of her husband, the man who here in the desert should have been all in all to her, but whose presence filled her with aversion, whose indifference had ceased to wound her, and whose tenderness she feared far more than his wild irritability--she had never loved him.

She had grown up free from care among a number of brothers and sisters. Her father had been the chief accountant of the decurions' college in his native town, and he had lived opposite the circus, where, being of a stern temper, he had never permitted his daughters to look on at the games; but he could not prevent their

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