

Arachne, Volume 5.

Georg Ebers

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ARACHNE

By Georg Ebers

Volume 5.

While the market place in Tennis was filling, Archias's white house had become a heap of smouldering ruins. Hundreds of men and women were standing around the scene of the conflagration, but no one saw the statue of Demeter, which had been removed from Hermon's studio just in time. The nomarch had had it locked up in the neighbouring temple of the goddess.

It was rumoured that the divinity had saved her own statue by a miracle; Pamaut, the police officer, said that he had seen her himself as, surrounded by a brilliant light, she soared upward on the smoke that poured from the burning house. The strategist and the nomarch used every means in their power to capture the robbers, but without the least success.

As it had become known that Paseth, Gula's husband, had cast off his wife because she had gone to Hermon's studio, the magistrates believed that the attack had been made by the Biamites; yet Paseth was absent from the city during the assault, and the innocence of the others could also be proved.

Since, for two entire years, piracy had entirely ceased in this neighbourhood, no one thought of corsairs, and the bodies of the incendiaries having been consumed by the flames with the white house, it could not be ascertained to what class the marauders belonged.

The blinded sculptor could only testify that one of the robbers was a negro, or at any rate had had his face blackened, and that the size of another had appeared to him almost superhuman. This circumstance gave rise to the fable that, during the terrible storm of the previous day, Hades had opened and spirits of darkness had rushed into the studio of the Greek betrayer.

The strategist, it is true, did not believe such tales, but the superstition of the Biamites, who, moreover, aided the Greeks reluctantly to punish a crime which threatened to involve their own countrymen, put obstacles in the way of his measures.

Not until he heard of Ledscha's disappearance, and was informed by the priest of Nemesis of the handsome sum which had been found in the offering box of the temple shortly after the attack, did he arrive at a conjecture not very far from the real state of affairs; only it was still incomprehensible to him what body of men could have placed themselves at the disposal of a girl's vengeful plan.

On the second day after the fire, the epistrategus of the whole Delta, who had accidentally come to the border fortress, arrived at Tennis on the galley of the commandant of Pelusium, and with him Proclus, the grammateus of the Dionysian artists, the Lady Thyone, Daphne, and her companion Chrysilla.

The old hero Philippos was detained in the fortress by the preparations for war.

Althea had returned to Alexandria, and Philotas, who disliked her, had gone there himself, as Chrysilla intimated to him that he could hope for no success in his suit to her ward so long as Daphne had to devote herself to the care of the blinded Hermon.

The epistrategus proceeded with great caution, but his efforts also remained futile. He ordered a report to be made of all the vessels which had entered the harbours and bays of the northeastern Delta, but those commanded by Satabus and his sons gave no cause for investigation; they had come into the Tanite arm of the Nile as lumber ships from Pontus, and had discharged beams and planks for the account of a well-known commercial house in Sinope.

Yet the official ordered the Owl's Nest to be searched. In doing this he made himself guilty of an act of violence, as the island's right of asylum still existed, and this incensed the irritable and refractory Biamites the more violently, the deeper was the reverent awe with which the nation regarded Tabus, who, according to their belief, was over a hundred years old. The Biamites honoured her not only as an enchantress and a leech, but as the ancestress of a race of mighty men. By molesting this aged woman, and interfering with an ancient privilege, the epistrategus lost the aid of the hostile fishermen, sailors, and weavers. Any information from their ranks to him was regarded as treachery; and, besides, his stay in Tennis could be but brief, as the King, on account of the impending war, had summoned him back to the capital.

On the third day after his arrival he left Tennis and sailed from Tanis for Alexandria. He had had little time to attend to Thyone and her guests.

Proclus, too, could not devote himself to them until after the departure of the epistrategus, since he had gone immediately to Tanis, where, as head of the Dionysian artists of all Egypt, he had been occupied in attending to the affairs of the newly established theatre.

On his return to Tennis he had instantly requested to be conducted to the Temple of Demeter, to inspect the blinded Hermon's rescued work.

He had entered the cella of the sanctuary with the expectation of finding a peculiar, probably a powerful work, but one repugnant to his taste, and left it fairly overpowered by the beauty of this noble work of art.

What he had formerly seen of Hermon's productions had prejudiced him against the artist, whose talent was great, but who, instead of dedicating it to the service of the beautiful and the sublime, chose subjects which, to Proclus, did not seem worthy of artistic treatment, or, when they were, sedulously deprived them of that by which, in his eyes, they gained genuine value. In Hermon's Olympian Banquet he--who also held the office of a high priest of Apollo in Alexandria--had even

seen an insult to the dignity of the deity. In the Street Boy Eating Figs, the connoisseur's eye had recognised a peculiar masterpiece, but he had been repelled by this also; for, instead of a handsome boy, it represented a starving, emaciated vagabond.

True to life as this figure might be, it seemed to him reprehensible, for it had already induced others to choose similar vulgar subjects.

When recently at Althea's performance he had met Hermon and saw how quickly his beautiful travelling companion allowed herself to be induced to bestow the wreath on the handsome, black-bearded fellow, it vexed him, and he had therefore treated him with distant coldness, and allowed him to perceive the disapproval which the direction taken by his art had awakened in his mind.

In the presence of Hermon's Demeter, the opinion of the experienced man and intelligent connoisseur had suddenly changed.

The creator of this work was not only one of the foremost artists of his day, nay, he had also been permitted to fathom the nature of the deity and to bestow upon it a perfect form.

This Demeter was the most successful personification of the divine goodness which rewards the sowing of seed with the harvest. When Hermon created it, Daphne's image had hovered before his mind, even if he had not been permitted to use her as a model, and of all the maidens whom he knew there was scarcely one better suited to serve as the type for the Demeter.

So what he had seen in Pelusium, and learned from women, was true. The heart and mind of the artist who had created this work were not filled with the image of Althea--who during the journey had bestowed many a mark of favour upon the aging man, and with whom he was obliged to work hand in hand for Queen Arsinoe's plans--but the daughter of Archias, and this circumstance also aided in producing his change of view.

Hermon's blindness, it was to be hoped, would be cured.

Duty, and perhaps also interest, commanded him to show him frankly how highly he estimated his art and his last work.

After the arrival of Thyone and Daphne, Hermon had consented to accompany them on board the Proserpina, their spacious galley. True, he had yielded reluctantly to this arrangement of his parents' old friend, and neither she nor Daphne had hitherto succeeded in soothing the fierce resentment against fate which filled his soul after the loss of his sight and his dearest friend. As yet every attempt to induce him to bear his terrible misfortune with even a certain degree of composure had failed.

The Tennis leech, trained by the Egyptian priests at Sais in the art of healing, who was attached as a pastophorus to the Temple of Isis, in the city of weavers, had covered the artist's scorched face with bandages, and earnestly adjured him never in his absence to raise them, and to keep every ray of light from his blinded eyes. But the agitation which had mastered Hermon's whole being was so great that, in spite of the woman's protestations, he lifted the covering again and again to see whether he could not perceive once more at least a glimmer of the sunlight whose warming power he felt. The thought of living in darkness until the end of his life seemed unendurable, especially as now all the horrors which,

hitherto, had only visited him in times of trial during the night assailed him with never-ceasing cruelty.

The image of the spider often forced itself upon him, and he fancied that the busy insect was spreading its quickly made web over his blinded eyes, which he was not to touch, yet over which he passed his hand to free them from the repulsive veil.

The myth related that because Athene's blow had struck the ambitious weaver Arachne, she had resolved, before the goddess transformed her into a spider, to put an end to her disgrace.

How infinitely harder was the one dealt to him! How much better reason he had to use the privilege in which man possesses an advantage over the immortals, of putting himself to death with his own hand when he deems the fitting time has come! What should he, the artist, to whom his eyes brought whatever made life valuable, do longer in this hideous black night, brightened by no sunbeam?

He was often overwhelmed, too, by the remembrance of the terrible end of the friend in whom he saw the only person who might have given him consolation in this distress, and the painful thought of his poverty.

He was supported solely by what his art brought and his wealthy uncle allowed him. The Demeter which Archias had ordered had been partially paid for in advance, and he had intended to use the gold--a considerable sum--to pay debts in Alexandria. But it was consumed with the rest of his property--tools, clothing, mementoes of his dead parents, and a few books which contained his favourite poems and the writings of his master, Straton.

These precious rolls had aided him to maintain the proud conviction of owing everything which he attained or possessed solely to himself. It had again become perfectly clear to him that the destiny of earth-born mortals was not directed by the gods whom men had invented after their own likeness, in order to find causes for the effects which they perceived, but by deaf and blind chance. Else how could even worse misfortune, according to the opinion of most people, have befallen the pure, guiltless Myrtilus, who so deeply revered the Olympians and understood how to honour them so magnificently by his art, than himself, the despiser of the gods?

But was the death for which he longed a misfortune?

Was the Nemesis who had so swiftly and fully granted the fervent prayer of an ill-used girl also only an image conjured up by the power of human imagination?

It was scarcely possible!

Yet if there was one goddess, did not that admit the probability of the existence of all the others?

He shuddered at the idea; for if the immortals thought, felt, acted, how terribly his already cruel fate would still develop! He had denied and insulted almost all the Olympians, and not even stirred a finger to the praise and honour of a single one.

What marvel if they should choose him for the target of their resentment

and revenge?

He had just believed that the heaviest misfortune which can befall a man and an artist had already stricken him. Now he felt that this, too, had been an error; for, like a physical pain, he realized the collapse of the proud delusion of being independent of every power except himself, freely and arbitrarily controlling his own destiny, owing no gratitude except to his own might, and being compelled to yield to nothing save the enigmatical, pitiless power of eternal laws or their co-operation, so incomprehensible to the human intellect, called "chance," which took no heed of merit or unworthiness.

Must he, who had learned to silence and to starve every covetous desire, in order to require no gifts from his own uncle and his wealthy kinsman and friend, and be able to continue to hold his head high, as the most independent of the independent, now, in addition to all his other woe, be forced to believe in powers that exercised an influence over his every act? Must he recognise praying to them and thanking them as the demand of justice, of duty, and wisdom? Was this possible either?

And, believing himself alone, since he could not see Thyone and Daphne, who were close by him, he struck his scorched brow with his clinched fist, because he felt like a free man who suddenly realizes that a rope which he can not break is bound around his hands and feet, and a giant pulls and loosens it at his pleasure.

Yet no! Better die than become for gods and men a puppet that obeys every jerk of visible and invisible hands.

Starting up in violent excitement, he tore the bandage from his face and eyes, declaring, as Thyone seriously reprimanded him, that he would go away, no matter where, and earn his daily bread at the handmill, like the blind Ethiopian slave whom he had seen in the cabinetmaker's house at Tennis.

Then Daphne spoke to him tenderly, but her soothing voice caused him keener pain than his old friend's stern one.

To sit still longer seemed unendurable, and, with the intention of

regaining his lost composure by pacing to and fro, he began to walk; but at the first free step he struck against the little table in front of Thyone's couch, and as it upset and the vessels containing water fell with it, clinking and breaking, he stopped and, as if utterly crushed, groped his way back, with both arms outstretched, to the armchair he had quitted.

If he could only have seen Daphne press her handkerchief first to her eyes, from which tears were streaming, and then to her lips, that he might not hear her sobs, if he could have perceived how Thyone's wrinkled old face contracted as if she were swallowing a colocynth apple, while at the same time she patted his strong shoulder briskly, exclaiming with forced cheerfulness: "Go on, my boy! The steed rears when the hornet stings! Try again, if it only soothes you! We will take everything out of your way. You need not mind the water-jars. The potter will make new ones!"

Then Hermon threw back his burning head, rested it against the back of the chair, and did not stir until the bandage was renewed.

How comfortable it felt!

He knew, too, that he owed it to Daphne; the matron's fingers could not be so slender and delicate, and he would have been more than glad to raise them to his lips and thank her; but he denied himself the pleasure.

If she really did love him, the bond between them must now be severed; for, even if her goodness of heart extended far enough to induce her to unite her blooming young existence to his crippled one, how could he have accepted the sacrifice without humiliating himself? Whether such a marriage would have made her happy or miserable he did not ask, but he was all the more keenly aware that if, in this condition, he became her husband, he would be the recipient of alms, and he would far rather, he mentally repeated, share the fate of the negro at the handmill.

The expression of his features revealed the current of his thoughts to Daphne, and, much as she wished to speak to him, she forced herself to remain silent, that the tones of her voice might not betray how deeply she was suffering with him; but he himself now longed for a kind word from her lips, and he had just asked if she was still there when Thyone announced a visit from the grammateus Proclus.

He had recently felt that this man was unfriendly to him, and again his anger burst forth. To be exposed in the midst of his misery to the scorn of a despiser of his art was too much for his exhausted patience.

But here he was interrupted by Proclus himself, who had entered the darkened cabin where the blind man remained very soon after Thyone.

Hermon's last words had betrayed to the experienced courtier how well he remembered his unkind remarks, so he deferred the expression of his approval, and began by delivering the farewell message of the epistrategus, who had been summoned away so quickly.

He stated that his investigations had discovered nothing of importance, except, perhaps, the confirmation of the sorrowful apprehension that the admirable Myrtilus had been killed by the marauders. A carved stone had been found under the ashes, and Chello, the Tennis goldsmith, said he had had in his own workshop the gem set in the hapless artist's shoulder clasp, and supplied it with a new pin.

While speaking, he took Hermon's hand and gave him the stone, but the artist instantly used his finger tips to feel it.

Perhaps it really did belong to the clasp Myrtilus wore, for, although still unpractised in groping, he recognised that a human head was carved in relief upon the stone, and Myrtilus's had been adorned with the likeness of the Epicurean.

The damaged little work of art, in the opinion of Proclus and Daphne, appeared to represent this philosopher, and at the thought that his friend had fallen a victim to the flames Hermon bowed his head and exerted all his strength of will in order not to betray by violent sobs how deeply this idea pierced his heart.

Thyone, shrugging her shoulders mournfully, pointed to the suffering artist. Proclus nodded significantly, and, moving nearer to Hermon, informed him that he had sought out his Demeter and found the statue

uninjured. He was well aware that it would be presumptuous to offer consolation in so heavy an affliction, and after the loss of his dearest friend, yet perhaps Hermon would be glad to hear his assurance that he, whose judgment was certainly not unpractised, numbered his work among the most perfect which the sculptor's art had created in recent years.

"I myself best know the value of this Demeter," the sculptor broke in harshly. "Your praise is the bit of honey which is put into the mouth of the hurt child."

"No, my friend," Proclus protested with grave decision. "I should express no less warmly the ardent admiration with which this noble figure of the goddess fills me if you were well and still possessed your sight. You were right just now when you alluded to my aversion, or, let us say, lack of appreciation of the individuality of your art; but this noble work changes everything, and nothing affords me more pleasure than that I am to be the first to assure you how magnificently you have succeeded in this statue."

"The first!" Hermon again interrupted harshly. "But the second and third will be lacking in Alexandria. What a pleasure it is to pour the gifts of sympathy upon one to whom we wish ill! But, however successful my Demeter may be, you would have awarded the prize twice over to the one by Myrtilus."

"Wrong, my young friend!" the statesman protested with honest zeal. "All honour to the great dead, whose end was so lamentable; but in this contest--let me swear it by the goddess herself!--you would have remained victor; for, at the utmost, nothing can rank with the incomparable save a work of equal merit, and--I know life and art--two artists rarely or never succeed in producing anything so perfect as this masterpiece at the same time and in the same place."

"Enough!" gasped Hermon, hoarse with excitement; but Proclus, with increasing animation, continued: "Brief as is our acquaintance, you have probably perceived that I do not belong to the class of flatterers, and in Alexandria it has hardly remained unknown to you that the younger artists number me, to whom the office of judge so often falls, among the sterner critics. Only because I desire their best good do I frankly point out their errors. The multitude provides the praise. It will soon flow upon you also in torrents, I can see its approach, and as this blindness, if the august Aesculapius and healing Isis aid, will pass away like a dreary winter night, it would seem to me criminal to deceive you about your own ability and success. I already behold you creating other works to the delight of gods and men; but this Demeter extorts boundless, enthusiastic appreciation; both as a whole, and in detail, it is faultless and worthy of the most ardent praise. Oh, how long it is, my dear, unfortunate friend, since I could congratulate any other Alexandrian with such joyful confidence upon the most magnificent success! Every word--you may believe it!--which comes to you in commendation of this last work from lips unused to eulogy is sincerely meant, and as I utter it to you I shall repeat it in the presence of the King, Archias, and the other judges."

Daphne, with hurried breath, deeply flushed cheeks, and sparkling eyes, had fairly hung upon the lips of the clever connoisseur. She knew Proclus, and his dreaded, absolutely inconsiderate acuteness, and was aware that this praise expressed his deepest conviction. Had he been dissatisfied with the statue of Demeter, or even merely superficially

touched by its beauty, he might have shrunk from wounding the unfortunate artist by censure, and remained silent; but only something grand, consummate, could lead him to such warmth of recognition.

She now felt it a misfortune that she and Thyone had hitherto been prevented, by anxiety for their patient, from admiring his work. Had it still been light, she would have gone to the temple of Demeter at once; but the sun had just set, and Proclus was obliged to beg her to have patience.

As the cases were standing finished at the cabinetmaker's, the statue had been packed immediately, under his own direction, and carried on board his ship, which would convey it with him to the capital the next day.

While this arrangement called forth loud expressions of regret from Daphne and the vivacious matron, Hermon assented to it, for it would at least secure the ladies, until their arrival in Alexandria, from a painful disappointment.

"Rather," Proclus protested with firm dissent, "it will rob you for some time of a great pleasure, and you, noble daughter of Archias, probably of the deepest emotion of gratitude with which the favour of the immortals has hitherto rendered you happy; yet the master who created this genuine goddess owes the best part of it to your own face."

"He told me himself that he thought of me while at work," Daphne admitted, and a flood of the warmest love reached Hermon's ears in her agitated tones, while, greatly perplexed, he wondered with increasing anxiety whether the stern critic Proclus had really been serious in the extravagant eulogium, so alien to his reputation in the city.

Myrtilus, too, had admired the head of his Demeter, and--this he himself might admit--he had succeeded in it, and yet ought not the figure, with its too pronounced inclination forward, which, it is true, corresponded with Daphne's usual bearing, and the somewhat angular bend of the arms, have induced this keen-sighted connoisseur to moderate the exalted strain of his praise? Or was the whole really so admirable that it would have seemed petty to find fault with the less successful details? At any rate, Proclus's eulogy ought to give him twofold pleasure, because his art had formerly repelled him, and Hermon tried to let it produce this effect upon him. But it would not do; he was continually overpowered by the feeling that under the enthusiastic homage of the intriguing Queen Arsinoe's favourite lurked a sting which he should some day feel. Or could Proclus have been persuaded by Thyone and Daphne to help them reconcile the hapless blind man to his hard fate?

Hermon's every movement betrayed the great anxiety which filled his mind, and it by no means escaped Proclus's attention, but he attributed it to the blinded sculptor's anguish in being prevented, after so great a success, from pursuing his art further.

Sincerely touched, he laid his slender hand on the sufferer's muscular arm, saying: "A more severe trial than yours, my young friend, can scarcely be imposed upon the artist who has just attained the highest goal, but three things warrant you to hope for recovery--your vigorous youth, the skill of our Alexandrian leeches, and the favour of the immortal gods. You shrug your shoulders? Yet I insist that you have won this favour by your Demeter. True, you owe it less to yourself than to yonder maiden. What pleasure it affords one whom, like myself, taste and

office bind to the arts, to perceive such a revolution in an artist's course of creation, and trace it to its source! I indulged myself in it and, if you will listen, I should like to show you the result."

"Speak," replied Hermon dully, bowing his head as if submitting to the inevitable, while Proclus began:

"Hitherto your art imitated, not without success, what your eyes showed you, and if this was filled with the warm breath of life, your work succeeded. All respect to your Boy Eating Figs, in whose presence you would feel the pleasure he himself enjoyed while consuming the sweet fruit. Here, among the works of Egyptian antiquity, there is imminent danger of falling under the tyranny of the canon of proportions which can be expressed in figures, or merely even the demands of the style hallowed by thousands of years, but in a subject like the 'Fig-eater' such a reproach is not to be feared. He speaks his own intelligible language, and whoever reproduces it without turning to the right or left has won, for he has created a work whose value every true friend of art, no matter to what school he belongs, prizes highly.

"To me personally such works of living reality are cordially welcome. Yet art neither can nor will be satisfied with snatches of what is close at hand; but you are late-born, sons of a time when the two great tendencies of art have nearly reached the limits of what is attainable to them. You were everywhere confronted with completed work, and you are right when you refuse to sink to mere imitators of earlier works, and therefore return to Nature, with which we Hellenes, and perhaps the Egyptians also, began. The latter forgot her; the former--we Greeks--continued to cling to her closely."

"Some few," Hermon eagerly interrupted the other, "still think it worth the trouble to take from her what she alone can bestow. They save themselves the toilsome search for the model which others so successfully used before them, and bronze and marble still keep wonderfully well. Bring out the old masterpieces. Take the head from this one, the arm from that, etc. The pupil impresses the proportions on his mind. Only so far as the longing for the beautiful permits do even the better ones remain faithful to Nature, not a finger's breadth more."

"Quite right," the other went on calmly. "But your objection only brings one nearer the goal. How many who care only for applause content themselves to-day, unfortunately, with Nature at second hand! Without returning to her eternally fresh, inexhaustible spring, they draw from the conveniently accessible wells which the great ancients dug for them."

"I know these many," Hermon wrathfully exclaimed. "They are the brothers of the Homeric poets, who take verses from the Iliad and Odyssey to piece out from them their own pitiful poems."

"Excellent, my son!" exclaimed Thyone, laughing, and Daphne remarked that the poet Cleon had surprised her father with such a poem a few weeks before. It was a marvellous bit of botchwork, and yet there was a certain meaning in the production, compiled solely from Homeric verses.

"Diomed's Hecuba," observed Proclus, "and the Aphrodite by Hippias, which were executed in marble, originated in the same way, and deserve no better fate, although they please the great multitude. But, praised be my lord, Apollo, our age can also boast of other artists. Filled with the spirit of the god, they are able to model truthfully and faithfully

even the forms of the immortals invisible to the physical eye. They stand before the spectator as if borrowed from Nature, for their creators have filled them with their own healthy vigour. Our poor Myrtilus belonged to this class and, after your Demeter, the world will include you in it also."

"And yet," answered Hermon in a tone of dissent, "I remained faithful to myself, and put nothing, nothing at all of my own personality, into the forms borrowed from Nature."

"What need of that was there?" asked Proclus with a subtle smile. "Your model spared you the task. And this at last brings me to the goal I desired to reach. As the great Athenians created types for eternity, so also does Nature at times in a happy hour, for her own pleasure, and such a model you found in our Daphne.-No contradiction, my dear young lady! The outlines of the figure--By the dog! Hermon might possibly have found forms no less beautiful in the Aphrosion, but how charming and lifelike is the somewhat unusual yet graceful pose of yours! And then the heart, the soul! In your companionship our artist had nothing to do except lovingly to share your feelings in order to have at his disposal everything which renders so dear to us all the giver of bread, the preserver of peace, the protector of marriage, the creator and supporter of the law of moderation in Nature, as well as in human existence. Where would all these traits be found more perfectly united in a single human being than in your person, Daphne, your quiet, kindly rule?"

"Oh, stop!" the girl entreated. "I am only too well aware--"

"That you also are not free from human frailties," Proclus continued, undismayed. "We will take them, great or small as they may be, into the bargain. The secret ones do not concern the sculptor, who does not or will not see them. What he perceives in you, what you enable him to recognise through every feature of your sweet, tranquillizing face, is enough for the genuine artist to imagine the goddess; for the distinction between the mortal and the immortal is only the degree of perfection, and the human intellect and artist soul can find nothing more perfect in the whole domain of Demeter's jurisdiction than is presented to them in your nature. Our friend yonder seized it, and his magnificent work of art proves how nearly it approaches the purest and loftiest conception we form of the goddess whom he had to represent. It is not that he deified you, Daphne; he merely bestowed on the divinity forms which he recognised in you."

Just at that moment, obeying an uncontrollable impulse, Hermon pulled the bandage from his eyes to see once more the woman to whom this warm homage was paid.

Was the experienced connoisseur of art and the artist soul in the right?

He had told himself the same thing when he selected Daphne for a model, and her head reproduced what Proclus praised as the common possession of Daphne and Demeter. Truthful Myrtilus had also seen it. Perhaps his work had really been so marvellously successful because, while he was engaged upon it, his friend had constantly stood before his mind in all the charm of her inexhaustible goodness.

Animated by the ardent desire to gaze once more at the beloved face, to which he now owed also this unexpectedly great success, he turned toward the spot whence her voice had reached him; but a wall of violet mist,

dotted with black specks, was all that his blinded eyes showed him, and with a low groan he drew the linen cloth over the burns.

This time Proclus also perceived what was passing in the poor artist's mind, and when he took leave of him it was with the resolve to do his utmost to brighten with the stars of recognition and renown the dark night of suffering which enshrouded this highly gifted sculptor, whose unexpectedly great modesty had prepossessed him still more in his favour.

CHAPTER II.

After the grammateus had retired, Daphne insisted upon leaving Tennis the next day.

The desire to see Hermon's masterpiece drew her back to Alexandria even more strongly than the knowledge of being missed by her father.

Only the separation from Thyone rendered the departure difficult, for the motherless girl had found in her something for which she had long yearned, and most sorely missed in her companion Chrysilla, who from expediency approved of everything she did or said.

The matron, too, had become warmly attached to Daphne, and would gladly have done all that lay in her power to lighten Hermon's sad fate, yet she persisted in her determination to return speedily to her old husband in Pelusium.

But she did not fully realize how difficult this departure would be for her until the blind man, after a long silence, asked whether it was night, if the stars were in the sky, and if she really intended to leave him.

Then burning sympathy filled her compassionate soul, and she could no longer restrain her tears. Daphne, too, covered her face, and imposed the strongest restraint upon herself that she might not sob aloud.

So it seemed a boon to both when Hermon expressed the desire to spend part of the night on deck.

This desire contained a summons to action, and to be able to bestir themselves in useful service appeared like a favour to Thyone and Daphne.

Without calling upon a slave, a female servant, or even Chrysilla for the smallest office, the two prepared a couch on deck for the blind man, and, leaning on the girl's stronger arm, he went up into the open air.

There he stretched both arms heavenward, inhaled deep breaths of the cool night breeze, and thirstily emptied the goblet of wine which Daphne mixed and gave him with her own hand.

Then, with a sigh of relief, he said: "Everything has not grown black yet. A delightful feeling of pleasure takes possession even of the blind man when the open air refreshes him and the wine warms his blood in the sunshine of your kindness."

"And much better things are still in prospect," Daphne assured him.

"Just think what rapture it will be when you are permitted to see the light again after so long a period of darkness!"

"When--" repeated Hermon, his head drooping as he spoke.

"It must, it must be so!" rang with confident assurance from Thyone's lips.

"And then," added Daphne, gazing sometimes upward to the firmament strewn with shining stars, sometimes across the broad, rippling expanse of the water, in which the reflection of the heavenly bodies shimmered in glittering, silvery radiance, "yes, Hermon, who would not be glad to exchange with you then? You may shake your head, but I would take your place quickly and with joyous courage. There is a proof of the existence of the gods, which so exactly suits the hour when you will again see, enjoy, admire what this dreary darkness now hides from you. It was a philosopher who used it; I no longer know which one. How often I have thought of it since this cruel misfortune befell you! And now--"

"Go on," Hermon interrupted with a smile of superiority. "You are thinking of Aristotle's man who grew up in a dark cave. The conditions which must precede the devout astonishment of the liberated youth when he first emerged into the light and the verdant world would certainly exist in me."

"Oh, not in that way," pleaded the wounded girl; and Thyone exclaimed: "What is the story of the man you mention? We don't talk about Aristotle and such subjects in Pelusium."

"Perhaps they are only too much discussed in Alexandria," said the blind artist. "The Stagirite, as you have just heard, seeks to prove the existence of the gods by the man of whom I spoke."

"No, he does prove it," protested Daphne. "Just listen, Mother Thyone. A little boy grows up from earliest childhood into a youth in a dark cave. Then suddenly its doors are opened to him. For the first time he sees the sun, moon, and stars, flowers and trees, perhaps even a beautiful human face. But at the moment when all these things rush upon him like so many incomprehensible marvels, must he not ask himself who created all this magnificence? And the answer which comes to him--"

"There is only one," cried the matron; "the omnipotent gods. Do you shrug your shoulders at that, son of the pious Erigone? Why, of course! The child who still feels the blows probably rebels against his earthly father. But if I see aright, the resentment will not last when you, like the man, go out of the cave and your darkness also passes away. Then the power from which you turned defiantly will force itself upon you, and you will raise your hands in grateful prayer to the rescuing divinity. As to us women, we need not be drawn out of a cave to recognise it. A mother who reared three stalwart sons--I will say nothing of the daughters--can not live without them. Why are they so necessary to her? Because we love our children twice as much as ourselves, and the danger which threatens them alarms the poor mother's heart thrice as much as her own. Then it needs the helping powers. Even though they often refuse their aid, we may still be grateful for the expectation of relief. I have poured forth many prayers for the three, I assure you, and after doing so with my whole soul, then, my son, no matter how wildly the storm had raged within my breast, calmness returned, and Hope again took her place at the helm. In the school of the denier of the gods, you forgot the

immortals above and depended on yourself alone. Now you need a guide, or even two or three of them, in order to find the way. If your mother were still alive, you would run back to her to hide your face in her lap. But she is dead, and if I were as proud as you, before clasping the sustaining hand of another mortal I would first try whether one would not be voluntarily extended from among the Olympians. If I were you, I would begin with Demeter, whom you honoured by so marvellous a work."

Hermon waved his hand as if brushing away a troublesome fly, exclaiming impatiently: "The gods, always the gods! I know by my own mother, Thyone, what you women are, though I was only seven years old when I was bereft of her by the same powers that you call good and wise, and who have also robbed me of my eyesight, my friend, and all else that was dear. I thank you for your kind intention, and you, too, Daphne, for recalling the beautiful allegory. How often we have argued over its meaning! If we continued the discussion, perhaps it might pleasantly shorten the next few hours, which I dread as I do my whole future existence, but I should be obliged in the outset to yield the victory to you. The great Herophilus is right when he transfers the seat of thought from the heart to the head. What a wild tumult is raging here behind my brow, and how one voice drowns another! The medley baffles description. I could more easily count with my blind eyes the cells in a honeycomb than refute with my bewildered brain even one shrewd objection. It seems to me that we need our eyes to understand things. We certainly do to taste. Whatever I eat and drink—langustae and melons, light Mareotic wine and the dark liquor of Byblus my tongue can scarcely distinguish it. The leech assures me that this will pass away, but until the chaos within merges into enduring order there is nothing better for me than solitude and rest, rest, rest."

"We will not deny them to you," replied Thyone, glancing significantly at Daphne. "Proclus's enthusiastic judgment was sincerely meant. Begin by rejoicing over it in the inmost depths of your heart, and vividly imagining what a wealth of exquisite joys will be yours through your last masterpiece."

"Willingly, if I can," replied the blind man, gratefully extending his hand. "If I could only escape the doubt whether the most cruel tyrant could devise anything baser than to rob the artist, the very person to whom it is everything, of his sight."

"Yes, it is terrible," Daphne assented. "Yet it seems to me that a richer compensation for the lost gift is at the disposal of you artists than of us other mortals, for you understand how to look with the eyes of the soul. With them you retain what you have seen, and illumine it with a special radiance. Homer was blind, and for that very reason, I think, the world and life became clear and transfigured for him though a veil concealed both from his physical vision."

"The poet!" Hermon exclaimed. "He draws from his own soul what sight, and sight alone, brings to us sculptors. And, besides, his spirit remained free from the horrible darkness that assailed mine. Joy itself, Daphne, has lost its illuminating power within. What, girl, what is to become of the heart in which even hope was destroyed?"

"Defend it manfully and keep up your courage," she answered softly; but he pressed her hand firmly, and, in order not to betray how self-compassion was melting his own soul, burst forth impetuously: "Say rather: Crush the wish whose fulfilment is self-humiliation! I will go

back to Alexandria. Even the blind and crippled can find ways to earn their bread there. Now grant me rest, and leave me alone!"

Thyone drew the girl away with her into the ship's cabin.

A short time after, the steward Gras went to Hermon to entreat him to yield to Thyone's entreaties and leave the deck.

The leech had directed the sufferer to protect himself from draughts and dampness, and the cool night mists were rising more and more densely from the water.

Hermon doubtless felt them, but the thought of returning to the close cabin was unendurable. He fancied that his torturing thoughts would stifle him in the gloom where even fresh air was denied him.

He allowed the careful Bithynian to throw a coverlet over him and draw the hood of his cloak over his head, but his entreaties and warnings were futile.

The steward's watchful nursing reminded Hermon of his own solicitude for his friend and of his faithful slave Bias, both of whom he had lost. Then he remembered the eulogy of the grammateus, and it brought up the question whether Myrtilus would have agreed with him. Like Proclus, his keen-sighted and honest friend had called Daphne the best model for the kindly goddess. He, too, had given to his statue the features of the daughter of Archias, and admitted that he had been less successful. But the figure! Perhaps he, Hermon, in his perpetual dissatisfaction with himself had condemned his own work too severely, but that it lacked the proper harmony had escaped neither Myrtilus nor himself. Now he recalled the whole creation to his remembrance, and its weaknesses forced themselves upon him so strongly and objectionably that the extravagant praise of the stern critic awakened fresh doubts in his mind.

Yet a man like the grammateus, who on the morrow or the day following it would be obliged to repeat his opinion before the King and the judges, certainly would not have allowed himself to be carried away by mere compassion to so great a falsification of his judgment.

Or was he himself sharing the experience of many a fellow-artist? How often the creator deceived himself concerning the value of his own work! He had expected the greatest success from his Polyphemus hurling the rock at Odysseus escaping in the boat, and a gigantic smith had posed for a model. Yet the judges had condemned it in the severest manner as a work far exceeding the bounds of moderation, and arousing positive dislike. The clay figure had not been executed in stone or metal, and crumbled away. The opposite would probably now happen with the Demeter. Her bending attitude had seemed to him daring, nay, hazardous; but the acute critic Proclus had perceived that it was in accord with one of Daphne's habits, and therefore numbered it among the excellences of the statue.

If the judges who awarded the prize agreed with the verdict of the grammateus, he must accustom himself to value his own work higher, perhaps even above that of Myrtilus.

But was this possible?

He saw his friend's Demeter as though it was standing before him, and again he recognised in it the noblest masterpiece its maker had ever

created. What praise this marvellous work would have deserved if his own really merited such high encomiums!

Suddenly an idea came to him, which at first he rejected as inconceivable; but it would not allow itself to be thrust aside, and its consideration made his breath fail.

What if his own Demeter had been destroyed and Myrtilus's statue saved? If the latter was falsely believed to be his work, then Proclus's judgment was explained--then--then---

Seized by a torturing anguish, he groaned aloud, and the steward Gras inquired what he wanted.

Hermon hastily grasped the Bithynian's arm, and asked what he knew about the rescue of his statue.

The answer was by no means satisfying. Gras had only heard that, after being found uninjured in his studio, it had been dragged with great exertion into the open air. The goldsmith Chello had directed the work.

Hermon remembered all this himself, yet, with an imperious curtness in marked contrast to his usual pleasant manner to this worthy servant, he hoarsely commanded him to bring Chello to him early the next morning, and then again relapsed into his solitary meditations.

If the terrible conjecture which had just entered his mind should be confirmed, no course remained save to extinguish the only new light which now illumined the darkness of his night, or to become a cheat.

Yet his resolution was instantly formed. If the goldsmith corroborated his fear, he would publicly attribute the rescued work to the man who created it. And he persisted in this intention, indignantly silencing the secret voice which strove to shake it. It temptingly urged that Myrtilus, so rich in successes, needed no new garland. His lost sight would permit him, Hermon, from reaping fresh laurels, and his friend would so gladly bestow this one upon him. But he angrily closed his ears to these enticements, and felt it a humiliation that they dared to approach him.

With proud self-reliance he threw back his head, saying to himself that, though Myrtilus should permit him ten times over to deck him self with his feathers, he would reject them. He would remain himself, and was conscious of possessing powers which perhaps surpassed his friend's. He was as well qualified to create a genuine work of art as the best sculptor, only hitherto the Muse had denied him success in awakening pleasure, and blindness would put an end to creating anything of his own.

The more vividly he recalled to memory his own work and his friend's, the more probable appeared his disquieting supposition.

He also saw Myrtilus's figure before him, and in imagination heard his friend again promise that, with the Arachne, he would wrest the prize even from him.

During the terrible events of the last hours he had thought but seldom and briefly of the weaver, whom it had seemed a rare piece of good fortune to be permitted to represent. Now the remembrance of her took possession of his soul with fresh power.

The image of Arachne illumined by the lamplight, which Althea had showed him, appeared like worthless jugglery, and he soon drove it back into the darkness which surrounded him. Ledscha's figure, however, rose before him all the more radiantly. The desire to possess her had flown to the four winds; but he thought he had never before beheld anything more peculiar, more powerful, or better worth modelling than the Biamite girl as he saw her in the Temple of Nemesis, with uplifted hand, invoking the vengeance of the goddess upon him, and there--he discovered it now--Daphne was not at all mistaken. Images never presented themselves as distinctly to those who could see as to the blind man in his darkness. If he was ever permitted to receive his sight, what a statue of the avenging goddess he could create from this greatest event in the history of his vision!

After this work--of that he was sure--he would no longer need the borrowed fame which, moreover, he rejected with honest indignation.

CHAPTER III.

It must be late, for Hermon felt the cool breeze, which in this region rose between midnight and sunrise, on his burned face and, shivering, drew his mantle closer round him.

Yet it seemed impossible to return to the cabin; the memory of Ledscha imploring vengeance, and the stern image of the avenging goddess in the cella of the little Temple of Nemesis, completely mastered him. In the close cabin these terrible visions, united with the fear of having reaped undeserved praise, would have crouched upon his breast like harpies and stifled or driven him mad. After what had happened, to number the swift granting of the insulted Biamite's prayer among the freaks of chance was probably a more arbitrary and foolish proceeding than, with so many others, to recognise the incomprehensible power of Nemesis. Ledscha had loosed it against him and his health, perhaps even his life, and he imagined that she was standing before him with the bridle and wheel, threatening him afresh.

Shivering, as if chilled to the bone, overwhelmed by intense horror, he turned his blinded eyes upward to the blackness above and raised his hand, for the first time since he had joined the pupils of Straton in the Museum, to pray. He besought Nemesis to be content, and not add to blindness new tortures to augment the terrible ones which rent his soul, and he did so with all the ardour of his passionate nature.

The steward Gras had received orders to wake the Lady Thyone if anything unusual happened to the blind man, and when he heard the unfortunate artist groan so pitifully that it would have moved a stone, and saw him raise his hand despairingly to his head, he thought it was time to utter words of consolation, and a short time after the anxious matron followed him.

Her low exclamation startled Hermon. To be disturbed in the first prayer after so long a time, in the midst of the cries of distress of a despairing soul, is scarcely endurable, and the blind man imposed little restraint upon himself when his old friend asked what had occurred, and urged him not to expose himself longer to the damp night air.

At first he resolutely resisted, declaring that he should lose his senses alone in the close cabin.

Then, in her cordial, simple way, she offered to bear him company in the cabin. She could not sleep longer, at any rate; she must leave him early in the morning, and they still had many things to confide to each other.

Touched by so much kindness, he yielded and, leaning on the Bithynian's arm, followed her, not into his little cabin, but into the captain's spacious sitting room.

Only a single lamp dimly lighted the wainscoting, composed of ebony, ivory, and tortoise shell, the gay rug carpet, and the giraffe and panther skins hung on the walls and doors and flung on the couches and the floor.

Thyone needed no brilliant illumination for this conversation, and the blinded man was ordered to avoid it.

The matron was glad to be permitted to communicate to Hermon so speedily all that filled her own heart.

While he remained on deck, she had gone to Daphne's cabin.

She had already retired, and when Thyone went to the side of the couch she found the girl, with her cheeks wet with tears, still weeping, and easily succeeded in leading the motherless maiden to make a frank confession.

Both cousins had been dear to her from childhood; but while Myrtilus, though often impeded by his pitiable sufferings, had reached by a smooth pathway the highest recognition, Hermon's impetuous toiling and striving had constantly compelled her to watch his course with anxious solicitude and, often unobserved, extend a helping hand.

Sympathy, disapproval, and fear, which, however, was always blended with admiration of his transcendent powers, had merged into love. Though he had disdained to return it, it had nevertheless been perfectly evident that he needed her, and valued her and her opinion. Often as their views differed, the obstinate boy and youth had never allowed any one except herself a strong influence over his acts and conduct. But, far as he seemed to wander from the paths which she believed the right ones, she had always held fast to the conviction that he was a man of noble nature, and an artist who, if he only once fixed his eyes upon the true goal, would far surpass by his mighty power the other Alexandrian sculptors, whatever names they bore, and perhaps even Myrtilus.

To the great vexation of her father who, after her mother's death, in an hour when his heart was softened, had promised that he would never impose any constraint upon her in the choice of a husband, she had hitherto rejected every suitor. She had showed even the distinguished Philotas in Pelusium, without the least reserve, that he was seeking her in vain; for just at that time she thought she had perceived that Hermon returned her love, and after his abrupt departure it had become perfectly evident that the happiness of her life depended upon him.

The terrible misfortune which had now befallen him had only bound her more firmly to the man she loved. She felt that she belonged to him

indissolubly, and the leech's positive assurance that his blindness was incurable had only increased the magic of the thought of being and affording tenfold more to the man bereft of sight than when, possessing his vision, the world, life, and art belonged to him. To be able to lavish everything upon the most beloved of mortals, and do whatever her warm, ever-helpful heart prompted, seemed to her a special favour of the gods in whom she believed.

That it was Demeter, to the ranks of whose priestesses she belonged, who was so closely associated with his blinding, also seemed to her no mere work of chance. The goddess on whom Hermon had bestowed the features of her own face had deprived him of sight to confer upon her the happiness of brightening and beautifying the darkness of his life.

If she saw aright, and it was only the fear of obtaining, with herself, her wealth, that still kept him from her, the path which would finally unite them must be found at last. She hoped to conquer also her father's reluctance to give his only child in marriage to a blind man, especially as Hermon's last work promised to give him the right to rank with the best artists of his age.

The matron had listened to this confession with an agitated heart. She had transported herself in imagination into the soul of the girl's mother, and brought before her mind what objections the dead woman would have made to her daughter's union with a man deprived of sight; but Daphne had firmly insisted upon her wish, and supported it by many a sensible and surprising answer. She was beyond childhood, and her three-and-twenty years enabled her to realize the consequences which so unusual a marriage threatened to entail.

As for Thyone herself, she was always disposed to look on the bright side, and the thought that this vigorous young man, this artist crowned with the highest success, must remain in darkness to the end of his life, was utterly incompatible with her belief in the goodness of the gods. But if Hermon was cured, a rare wealth of the greatest happiness awaited him in the union with Daphne.

The mood in which she found the blind man had wounded and troubled her. Now she renewed the bandage, saying: "How gladly I would continue to use my old hands for you, but this will be the last time in a long while that I am permitted to do this for the son of my Erigone; I must leave you to-morrow."

Hermon clasped her hand closely, exclaiming with affectionate warmth: "You must not go, Thyone! Stay here, even if it is only a few days longer."

What pleasure these words gave her, and how gladly she would have fulfilled his wish! But it could not be, and he did not venture to detain her by fresh entreaties after she had described how her aged husband was suffering from her absence.

"I often ask myself what he still finds in me," she said. "True, so long a period of wedded life is a firm tie. If I am gone and he does not find me when he returns home from inspections, he wanders about as if lost, and does not even relish his food, though the same cook has prepared it for years. And he, who forgets nothing and knows by name a large number of the many thousand men he commands, would very probably, when I am away, join the troops with only sandals on his feet. To miss my ugly old

face really can not be so difficult! When he wooed me, of course I looked very different. And so--he confessed it himself--so he always sees me, and most plainly when I am absent from his sight. But that, Hermon, will be your good fortune also. All you now know as young and beautiful will continue so to you as long as this sorrowful blindness lasts, and on that very account you must not remain alone, my boy--that is, if your heart has already decided in favour of any one--and that is the case, unless these old eyes deceive me."

"Daphne," he answered dejectedly, "why should I deny that she is dear to me? And yet, how dare the blind man take upon himself the sin of binding her young life--"

"Stop! stop!" Thyone interrupted with eager warmth. "She loves you, and to be everything to you is the greatest happiness she can imagine."

"Until repentance awakes, and it is too late," he answered gravely. "But even were her love strong enough to share her husband's misfortune patiently--nay, perhaps with joyous courage--it would still be contemptible baseness were I to profit by that love and seek her hand."

"Hermon!" the matron now exclaimed reproachfully; but he repeated with strong emphasis: "Yes, it would be baseness so great that even her most ardent love could not save me from the reproach of having committed it. I will not speak of her father, to whom I am so greatly indebted. It may be that it might satisfy Daphne, full of kindness as she is, to devote herself, body and soul, to the service of her helpless companion. But I? Far from thinking constantly, like her, solely of others and their welfare, I should only too often, selfish as I now am, be mindful of myself. But when I realize who I am, I see before me a blind man who is poorer than a beggar, because the scorching flames melted even the gold which was to help him pay his debts."

"Folly!" cried the matron. "For what did Archias gather his boundless treasures? And when his daughter is once yours--"

"Then," Hermon went on bitterly, "the blinded artist's poverty will be over. That is your opinion, and the majority of people will share it. But I have my peculiarities, and the thought of being rescued from hunger and thirst by the woman I love, and who ought to see in me the man from whom she receives the best gifts--to be dependent on her as the recipient of her alms--seems to me worse than if I were once more to lose my sight. I could not endure it at all! Every mouthful would choke me. Just because she is so dear to me, I can not seek her hand; for, in return for her great self-sacrificing love, I could give her nothing save the keen discontent which seizes the proud soul that is forced constantly to accept benefits, as surely as the ringing sound follows the blow upon the brass. My whole future life would become a chain of humiliations, and do you know whither this unfortunate marriage would lead? My teacher Straton once said that a man learns to hate no one more easily than the person from whom he receives benefits which it is out of his power to repay. That is wise, and before I will see my great love for Daphne transformed to hate, I will again try the starving which, while I was a sculptor at Rhodes, I learned tolerably well."

"But would not a great love," asked Thyone, "suffice to repay tenfold the perishable gifts that can be bought with gold and silver?"

"No, and again no!" Hermon answered in an agitated tone. "Something else

would blend with the love I brought to the marriage, something that must destroy all the compensation it might offer; for I see myself becoming a resentful misanthrope if I am compelled to relinquish the pleasure of creating and, condemned to dull inaction, can do nothing except allow myself to be tended, drink, eat, and sleep. The gloomy mood of her unfortunate husband would sadden Daphne's existence even more than my own; for, Thyone, though I should strive with all my strength to bear patiently, with her dear aid, the burden imposed upon me, and move on through the darkness with joyous courage, like many another blind man, I could not succeed."

"You are a man," the matron exclaimed indignantly, "and what thousands have done before you--"

"There," he loudly protested, "I should surely fail; for, you dear woman, who mean so kindly by me, my fate is worse than theirs. Do you know what just forced from my lips the exclamation of pain which alarmed you? I, the only child of the devout Erigone, for whose sake you are so well disposed toward me, am doomed to misfortune as surely as the victim dragged to the altar is certain of death. Of all the goddesses, there is only one in whose power I believe, and to whom I just raised my hands in prayer. It is the terrible one to whom I was delivered by hate and the deceived love which is now dragging me by the hair, and will rob and torture me till I despair of life. I mean the gray daughter of Night, whom no one escapes, dread Nemesis."

Thyone sank down into the chair by the blind artist's side, asking softly, "And what gave you into her avenging hands, hapless boy?"

"My own abominable folly," he answered mournfully and, with the feeling that it would relieve his heart to pour out to this true friend what he would usually have confided only to his Myrtilus, he hurriedly related how he had recognised in Ledscha the best model for his Arachne, how he had sought her love, and then, detained by Althea, left her in the lurch and most deeply offended and insulted her. Lastly, he gave a brief but vivid description of his meeting with the vengeful barbarian girl in the Temple of Nemesis, how Ledscha had invoked upon him the wrath of the terrible goddess, and how the most horrible punishment had fallen upon him directly after the harsh accusation of the Biamite.

The matron had listened to this confession in breathless suspense. Now she fixed her eyes on the floor, shook her gray head gently, and said anxiously: "Is that it? It certainly puts things in a different light. As the son of your never-to-be-forgotten mother, you are indeed dear to my heart; but Daphne is not less dear to me, and though in your marriage I just saw happiness for you both, that is now past. What is poverty, what is blindness! Eros would reconcile far more difficult problems, but his arrows are shattered on the armour of Nemesis. Where there is a pair of lovers, and she raises her scourge against one of them, the other will also be struck. Until you feel that you are freed from this persecutor, it would be criminal to bind a loving woman to you and your destiny. It is not easy to find the right path for you both, for even Nemesis and her power do not make the slightest change in the fact that you need faithful care and watching in your blindness. Daylight brings wisdom, and we will talk further to-morrow."

She rose as she spoke; but Hermon detained her, while from his lips escaped the anxious question, "So you will take Daphne away from me, and leave me alone in my blindness?"

"You in your blindness?" cried Thyone, and the mere reproachful tone of the question banished the fear. "I would as quickly deprive my own son of my support as I would you just at this time, my poor boy; but whether my conscience will permit me to let Daphne remain near you only grant me, I repeat it, until sunrise to-morrow for reflection. My old heart will then find the right way."

"Yet whatever you may decide concerning us," pleaded the blind man, "tell Daphne that, on the eve of losing her, I first felt in its full power how warmly I love her. Even without Nemesis, the joy of making her mine would have been denied me. Fate will never permit me to possess her; yet never again to hear her gentle voice, never more to feel her dear presence, would be blinding me a second time."

"It need not be imposed upon you long," said the matron soothingly.

Then she went close to him, laid her hand on his shoulder, and said: "The power of the goddess who punishes the misdeeds of the reckless is called irresistible and uncontrollable; but one thing softens even her, and checks her usually resistless wheel: it is a mother's prayer. I heard this from my own mother, and experienced it myself, especially in my oldest son Eumedes, who from the wildest madcap became an ornament of his class, and to whom the King--you doubtless know it--intrusted the command of the fleet which is to open the Ethiopian land of elephants to the Egyptian power. Yo

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