

dore. "It seems to me that the course I took was right and one pleasing to God, since it has given me my husband for myself, although, it is true, wickedly robbed of his eyes."

"For yourself! Can you say so while Martina is always at his side?" she asked in a musing voice. "Well, it may be, for in this world strange things happen."

She paused, and I heard both Heliodore and Jodd move as though in anger, for her bitter shaft had gone home. Then she went on softly,

"Lady, may I tell you that, in my judgment, your beauty is even greater than it was, though it is true it has grown from bud to flower. Few bear their years and a mother's burdens so lightly in these hot lands."

Heliodore did not answer, for at that moment Martina entered. Seeing Irene for the first time, she forgot everything that had passed and curtseyed to her in the old fashion, murmuring the familiar words,

"Thy servant greets thee, Augusta."

"Nay, use not that title, Martina, to one who has done with the world and its vanities. Call me 'Mother' if you will, for that is the only name of honour by which those of my religious order may be known. In truth, as your mother in God, I welcome you and bless you, from my heart forgiving you those ills which you have worked against me, being, as I know well, driven by a love that is greater than any woman bears to woman. But that eating fire of passion scorned is the heritage of both of us, and of it we will talk afterwards. I must not waste the time of the General Olaf, whom destiny, in return for many recent griefs, has appointed to be my jailer. Oh! Olaf," she added with a little laugh, "some foresight of the future must have taught me to train you for the post. Let us then be silent,