

did not wish to follow Sonnica, who had just armed herself with sword and shield to sally forth against the besieging camp and die fighting. It was repugnant to them to think of struggling with rude, half-savage soldiers, to inhale their wild-beast odours, and to fall with their painted faces cleft by a blow, covered with blood, and wallowing in gore like a beheaded ox; neither did it please them to stab themselves—that was a means reserved for heroes. They preferred to die in the flames; they recollected the sacrifice of the Asiatic queens who perished in a fire of perfumed woods. What a pity that this fire smelled so ill! But it was not a moment for refinements; drawing their mantles over their eyes, shoving their little slave-boys before them with their depilated and perfumed arms, one after the other the elegant young gallants walked into the fire with tranquil step, as if still dwelling in those days of peace when they strolled through the Forum, gratified by the scandal caused by their feminine adornments.

Sonnica gathered her tunic around her waist in order to run with greater freedom, leaving disclosed the resplendent whiteness of her limbs.

"We are going to die, Euphobias," she said to the philosopher, who stood absorbed in contemplation before this spectacle of destruction.

For the first time the philosopher failed to display his insolent and ironic manner. He was grave and frowning; gazing at the people whom he had so often ridiculed, beholding the heroism of their death.

"Die?" he exclaimed. "Must we die? Do you think so, Sonnica?"

"Yes; he who is not willing to be a slave must die. Get a sword and follow me!"