

Then he gave a signal to the leader of the music, and again the voices and citharæ were heard. They sang "Harmodius;" next the song of Anacreon resounded, — that song in which he complained that on a time he had found Aphrodite's boy chilled and weeping under trees; that he brought him in, warmed him, dried his wings, and the ungrateful child pierced his heart with an arrow, — from that moment peace had deserted the poet.

Petronius and Eunice, resting against each other, beautiful as two divinities, listened, smiling and growing pale. At the end of the song Petronius gave directions to serve more wine and food; then he conversed with the guests sitting near him of trifling but pleasant things, such as are mentioned usually at feasts. Finally, he called to the Greek to bind his arm for a moment; for he said that sleep was tormenting him, and he wanted to yield himself to Hypnos before Thanatos put him to sleep forever.

In fact, he fell asleep. When he woke, the head of Eunice was lying on his breast like a white flower. He placed it on the pillow to look at it once more. After that his veins were opened again.

At his signal the singers raised the song of Anacreon anew, and the citharæ accompanied them so softly as not to drown a word. Petronius grew paler and paler; but when the last sound had ceased, he turned to his guests again and said, —

"Friends, confess that with us perishes —"

But he had not power to finish; his arm with its last movement embraced Eunice, his head fell on the pillow, and he died.

The guests looking at those two white forms, which resembled two wonderful statues, understood well that with them perished all that was left to their world at that time, — poetry and beauty.