

the warmth and light is to leave the soul in darkness, which is restlessness. So with outstretched hands we gropingly seek the exit."

"Have you found it yourself?"

"I sought and did not find it. Thou soughtest it in luxury, I in meditation, and both of us are surrounded with darkness. Know, therefore, that not only thou sufferest, but that in thee suffers the soul of the whole world. No doubt, long ago thou didst cease to believe in the gods."

"In Rome they worship the gods still publicly, and even get new ones from Asia and Egypt, but perhaps only the vegetable vendors, who in the morning come from the country to the city, believe sincerely in them."

"And they alone are peaceful."

"Just as they who here bow to cats and onions."

"Just as the animals who after gorging themselves desire sleep."

"In such a case is life worth living?"

"Do you know where death will bring us?"

"So what is the difference between the skeptics and you?"

"Skeptics accept the darkness or they pretend to accept, while I am tortured in it."

"And you see no salvation?"

Timon remained silent for a time, then answered slowly and with a certain hesitation: "I wait for it."

"Where from?"

"I do not know."

He leaned his head upon his hand, and as if influenced by the silence that reigned upon the terrace, he began to speak in a low, gentle voice:

"It is a wonderful thing and it seems to me sometimes that if the world had contained nothing more than that which we now know, and if we could be nothing more than that which we now are, restlessness would not be in us. Thus in sickness we have the hope of health. The faith in Olympus and philosophy is dead, but the health is perhaps some new truth which I know not."

Contrary to his expectation, to Cinna this conversation brought great relief. Learning that not only he, but the whole world, was weighed down with sin and sorrow, he experienced the feeling as if a heavy load was taken from his shoulders and shared by thousands of others.

CHAPTER III.

Since then the friendship between Cinna and the old Greek became closer. They visited each other more frequently and shared their thoughts as bread is divided at a feast. Although Cinna felt that sense of weariness which always follows enjoyment, still he was too young a man for life to lose all its attractions, and such an attraction he found in Anthia, the only daughter of Timon.

Her name in Alexandria was not less than that of her father. She was adored by honorable Romans, who visited the house of Timon. She was adored by the Greeks, who were adored by the philosophers of the Serapeum, and she was adored by the people. Timon did not shut her up in the gynaeceum as other women were confined, and he carefully instructed her in all his knowledge.

When she had passed her childhood he read with her Greek books, and even Roman and Hebrew; being gifted with an extraordinary memory, and reared in polyglot Alexandria, she had learned to speak these languages fluently. She was his companion in his thoughts, often took part in discussions, which in the time of the symposiums took place in the house of Timon: often in the labyrinth of difficult problems, she never lost herself, and like Ariadne, she safely led out others. Her father regarded her with great admiration and honor. Besides, she was surrounded by a mysterious enchantment verging on holiness for the reason that she had prophetic dreams and visions in which she saw things invisible to the eyes of mortals. The old sage loved her as his own soul, and for that reason he was afraid to lose her, because she often said that in her dreams appeared some malignant spirits and a wondrous light. She knew not whether it were the fountain of life or death.

Meanwhile she was surrounded by love. Egyptians who visited the house of Timon called her Lotus, because that flower was worshipped on the banks of the Nile, or perhaps because he who saw her once might forget the whole world.

Her beauty was equal to her wisdom. Egyptian suns had not bronzed her face, in which the rosy rays of dawn seemed to be inclosed in the transparency of a pearly shell: her eyes were as blue as the Nile, and her glances seemed to come from distances as unknown as do the waters of this mysterious river. When Cinna saw and heard her the first time, on returning to his home he felt inclined to rear an altar to her honor in the atrium of her house, and sacrifice on it white doves. He had met in his life thousands of women, beginning with the maidens of the far north, with white eyelashes and hair of the color of ripened corn, to Numidians, black as lava, but until now he had never met such a form, nor such a soul.

The more he saw of her, the better he knew her; the more he heard her speak, the greater grew his astonished admiration. Sometimes he who did not believe in the gods thought that Anthia could not be the daughter of Timon, but of some god, and that she was half a woman and half an immortal.

Soon Cinna found that he loved her with a great and unconquerable love, as different from any feeling awakened before as Anthia was different from all other women. He wanted to possess her only to worship her. For this he

was ready to give his life. He felt that he would rather be a pauper with her than Caesar without her. And as the vortex of an ocean whirlpool engulfs with its irresistible power all that approaches its circle, so Cinna's love absorbed his soul, heart, thoughts: his days, nights and all that composed his life.

At last this great love engulfed Anthia.

"Tu felix, Cinna," said his friends to him. "Tu felix, Cinna," he repeated to himself. And when at last he wedded her, and her divine lips had uttered the sacramental words, "Where thou art, Caius, there am I, Caius," then it seemed to him that his happiness would be as an inexhaustible and limitless sea.

CHAPTER IV.

A year passed and the young wife continued to receive honor and homage as if accorded to one divine. She was to her husband as the apple of his eye, love, wisdom, light. But Cinna, comparing his happiness to the sea, forgot that the sea ebbs and flows. After a year Anthia was afflicted with a cruel and unknown disease. Her dreams changed into terrible visions which exhausted her life. In her face died out the light of dawn and there only remained the transparency of the pearly shells; her hands became translucent, her eyes sank away, and the rosy lotus became as white as a marble statue. It was observed that the buzzards hovered over Cinna's house, which was considered an omen of death in Egypt. Her terrifying visions increased.

When in the mid day hours the sun flooded the world with its brilliant whiteness and the city was submerged in silence, it appeared to Anthia that she heard around herself the quick steps of some invisible beings, and that in the depths of the air she saw a dry, yellow, corpse like face, looking on her with its black eyes. Those eyes looked into her piercingly, as if calling her to follow it somewhere into gloomy darkness, full of mystery and terror. Then Anthia's body began to tremble, as if in a fever, her forehead was covered with pallor and drops of cold sweat, and this worshipped priestess of the fireside was changing into a defenseless and frightened child, who, hiding herself on the breast of her husband, repeated with whitened lips, "Save me, Caius! defend me!"

Caius was ready to fight every specter from the subterranean caves of Proserpine, but vainly his eyes searched space. As usual at the noon hour the place was deserted. The white light flooded the city; the sea seemed to burn in the sun, and in the silence was heard only the cry of the buzzards, circling over the house.

The visions became more frequent, then they occurred daily. They persecuted Anthia no less outside of the house than they did in the atrium and living rooms. Cinna, by the advice of physicians, brought Egyptian Sambrucins and Bedouins to play on porcelain flutes, so that their noisy music might drown the voices of the invisible beings. But this was of no avail. Anthia heard these voices in the midst of the greatest noise, and when the sun was so high in the heavens that shadows lay around the feet as a robe dropped from the shoulders, there in the heated, trembling air appeared the corpse like face gazing on Anthia with its beady eyes receding slowly, as if saying, "Follow me."

Sometimes it seemed to Anthia as if the lips of the corpse moved slowly. Sometimes it seemed that there issued from them black, repulsive beetles, which flew to her through the air. The very memory of this vision filled her eyes with terror, and in the end her life became so frightful a torture that she implored Cinna to hold his sword so that she might kill herself, or that he would let her partake of poison.

This he knew he could not do. He was willing with his sword to let out his own life's blood, but kill her he could not. When he imagined her dead face, with closed eyelids, pale with the cold quietude of death and her breast torn with his sword, he felt that to do so he must first become mad.

A certain Greek physician said to him that it was Hecate who appeared to Anthia, and that those invisible beings whose rustlings terrified the patient belonged to the band of that painful divinity. According to him there was no help for Anthia, since all those who saw Hecate must die.

Then Cinna, who not long ago would have sneered at a belief in Hecate, offered sacrifices to this goddess of a hecatomb. But the offering availed not, and the next day the spectral eyes gazed at Anthia.

They tried to veil her head, but she saw the corpse like face even through the thickest covering. When she was confined in a darkened room the face looked upon her from the walls, dispelling the darkness with a pale, ghost-like phosphorescence. In the evening-tide the patient felt better. Then she lapsed into such a profound sleep that it seemed to both Cinna and Timon that she would never awaken again. Soon she got so weak that she could not walk unassisted. They carried her in a litter.

The old restlessness of Cinna returned again with a hundredfold force, and completely took possession of him. There was in him a great fear for Anthia's life, and a strange feeling that somehow, in some way, her sickness had a mysterious relation to those unsolvable problems which he had discussed with Timon in their first serious conversation. It may have been that the old sage thought likewise, but Cinna did not wish and was afraid to question him about it. Meanwhile the patient was fading like a flower in

whose cup nestles the poisonous spider.

Cinna, battling with despair, yet tried all means to save her. First, he carried her to the plains in the vicinity of Memphis, but when the deep silence of the pyramids did not relieve her, he returned to Alexandria and surrounded her with fortune-tellers and magicians, soothsayers and a motley crowd of pretenders, who duped credulous people with their so-called miraculous medicines. He had no choice and grasped every means in sight.

At this time there arrived in Alexandria from Caesarea a famous Jewish physician by the name of Joseph, son of Khuzza. Cinna brought him at once to his wife, and for a moment hope returned to his heart. Joseph, who did not believe in the Greek and Roman gods, discarded with derision every thought of Hecate. He contended that it was demons that possessed the patient and advised them to leave Egypt, where beside demons, the miasma of the swampy Delta impaired her health. He advised also, perhaps for the reason that he was a Jew, they should go to Jerusalem, as a city to which demons have no access, and where the air is dry and healthy.

Cinna still more willingly followed this advice, first, because he had no other advice to follow, and secondly, that over Jerusalem rules a Procurator who was known to him, and whose ancestors in the olden times had been clients of the house of Cinna.

When they arrived in Jerusalem, Procurator Pontius Pilate received them with great hospitality, presented them his summer villa, near the walls of the city, in which to reside. Even before his arrival the hope of Cinna was shattered. The corpse-like face looked on Anthia even on the deck of the ship, and after their arrival at their destination the patient awaited the noon hour with the same deadly fear as previously in Alexandria.

Thus their days were passed with feelings of oppression, fear, despair and expectation of death.

CHAPTER V.

In the atrium, despite the fountain near by, the shady portico and the early hour, it was intensely hot; the marble radiated the heat of the vernal sun, and close by the house grew an old and large pistachio tree, which threw its shade over a great space. The breeze played in the open space, and Cinna commanded a chair, decked with hyacinths and apple blossoms, to be placed under the tree for Anthia. Then seating himself by her side he placed his palm on her white and wasted hand, and said:

"Is it good for thee, here, Carrisima?"

"It is good," answered she in a faint voice.

She closed her eyes as if sleeping gently. Silence ensued; the breeze sighed through the branches of the pistachio tree and on the ground around the chair played golden cicadas of light falling through the leaves, and the locusts chirped in the crevices of the stones.

Shortly the patient opened her eyes. "Caius," she said, "is it true that in this land appeared a Philosopher who healed the sick?"

"Here they call this one a prophet," answered Cinna. "I have heard of him and intended to call him to thee, but it appears that he was a false miracle-worker. Besides, he blasphemed against the temple and the law of the land, therefore Pilate gave him up to death, and to day he will be crucified."

Anthia bowed her head.

"Time will heal thee," said Cinna, seeing her sorrow, which was reflected on his face.

"Time is in the service of death, not life," answered she slowly.

Again silence ensued: around her constantly played the golden cicadas; the locusts chirped still louder, and from the crevices of the rocks glided small lizards and chameleons seeking sunny spots.

Cinna's glance rested tenderly on Anthia and for the thousandth time despairing thoughts passed through his mind, that all means of help were exhausted, that not a spark of hope remained, and that soon this loved form would become only a fleeting shadow and a handful of dust inured in a columbarium.

Reclining there in the blossom bedecked chair she looked as if death had called her his own.

"I will follow thee, too," thought Cinna.

Suddenly was heard the sound of approaching footsteps. Anthia's face became at once deadly white, her half-parted lips breathed convulsively, her breast heaved quickly—the unhappy martyr felt that it was the band of her invisible tormentors which always heralded the appearance of the hideous corpse with the horrible glaring eyes. But Cinna, taking her hand, reassured her, saying:

"Anthia, fear not. I also hear the footsteps."

Shortly he added:

"This is Pontius, coming to visit us."

And truly there appeared in a bend of the path the Procurator, accompanied by two slaves. He was not a young man. He had a round, carefully shaven face, which showed an assumption of authority commingled with an air of weariness.

"I salute thee, noble Cinna, and thee, divine Anthia!" said he, entering under the shade of the pistachio.

"After the cool night the day is now warm. Oh, that it would be fortunate to you both that the health of Anthia would blossom as the hyacinths and apple buds that adorn her chair."

"Peace to thee, and welcome," answered Cinna.

The Procurator, seating himself upon a fragment of rock, looked at Anthia anxiously and said:

"Loneliness gives birth to melancholy and sickness, and in the midst of crowds one cannot be afraid, so I will give thee counsel. To our misfortune this is neither Antioch nor Caesarea, there are no gladiatorial contests or races, and if a circus should appear these fanatics would tear it to pieces the second day. Here you hear on the one word, 'law,' and this 'I will' opposes everything. I would rather be in Scythia than here."

"What speaketh thou about, Pilate?"

"True 'tis, I wandered away from the subject. But my troubles are the cause of it. I said that in the midst of crowds there was no place for fear. To day you have a chance of witnessing a sight. In Jerusalem we should be satisfied with that which we can get, and above all it is necessary that at noon-time Anthia should be amidst the crowd. To day will die on the cross three men. It is better to see this than nothing. Besides, on account of the Passover, there has gathered in the city a strange, grotesque crowd of religious fanatics from all over the country; you can observe them. I will order a good position reserved for you near the crosses. I hope the condemned men will die bravely. One of them is a strange character; he says he is the Son of God. He is sweet as a dove, and truly has done nothing for which he could deserve death."

"And thou condemnest him to the cross?"

"I wished to drop trouble from my hands, and at the same time not to arouse the nest of hornets that swarmed around the temple. They are sending complaints to Rome about me anyway. Besides, why bother about one who is not a Roman citizen?"

"He will not suffer the less on that account."

The Procurator did not answer and shortly began to speak, as if to himself: "There is one thing I do not like; that is, extremism. When this is proclaimed to me it robs me of my pleasure for the whole day. The golden mean, according to my opinion, is what common sense commands us to observe. There is no place in the world where this principle is more neglected than here. Oh, how all this tortures me! Oh, how it tortures me! There is no quietness, no equilibrium, either in man or nature; for instance, now it is spring, the nights are cold, and in the day time it is so hot that one cannot walk on the stones. Noon is far off—look how it is! And as for people—let us not speak of them! I am here since I cannot help it—why speak of it? I would again wander from the subject. Go and see the Crucifixion. I am sure that this Nazarene will die bravely. I ordered him scourged, thinking by this to save him from death. I am not a cruel man. When he was scourged he was as patient as a lamb and blessed the people. When his blood was dripping he lifted his eyes upward and prayed. He is the most wonderful man I have seen in my life. On his account my wife did not give me any peace or moment's rest. 'Do not let the innocent die,' from the early dawn she constantly said. I wished to save him. Twice I climbed the Bima and addressed the fanatical priests and this unclean crowd. They clamored with one voice, throwing back their heads and opening wide their mouths, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!'"

"And thou didst yield?" said Cinna.

"Because in the city would have occurred turbulent riots, and I am placed here to preserve the peace. I must do my duty. I do not like excesses, and besides I am very tired; but when I once decide to do something I do not hesitate to sacrifice, for the general good, the life of one man, especially if he is an unknown man about whom none will inquire. It is bad for him that he is not a Roman citizen."

"The sun shines not over Rome alone," whispered Anthia.

"Divine Anthia," replied the Procurator, "I would answer thee that over this whole earth the sun shines on the Roman empire, and for its good it behooves us to sacrifice all, and riots undermine our dignity. But before all I pray thee, do not ask me that I change my decree. Cinna will tell thee also that it cannot be, and when a decree is once promulgated Caesar alone could change it. Even if I desired I could not. Is not that the truth, Caius?"

"It is so."

To Anthia these words caused a visible agitation, and she said, thinking perhaps of herself:

"So, then, it is possible to suffer and die without guilt."

"No one is without guilt," answered Pontius. "This Nazarene did not commit any crime, therefore as Procurator I washed my hands. But as a man I condemned his doctrine. For a purpose, I conversed with him freely, desiring to examine him, and I was convinced he proclaimed unheard-of things. It is difficult! The world must rest on cool reason. Who denies that virtue is needed? Certainly not I. But only the stoics teach us to bear adversity with serenity, and they do not require us to renounce everything, from our estates to our dinner. Cinna, thou art a reasonable man; I what wouldst thou think of me if I should give this house in which thou livest to the ragged beggars who sun themselves at the city gates? And this is what He requires. Again he says that we should love all people equally; Jews the same as Romans, Romans as Egyptians, Egyptians as Africans. I confess I have had enough

of it. At the critical time when I spoke with him he did not seem concerned about his life, but he behaved as if the question concerned some one else; he was preaching and praying. I am not called upon to save a man who cares little to save himself. Then, he calls himself the Son of God, and destroys the foundation upon which the world rests, and therefore harms men. Let him think what he pleases in his own mind, but not destroy. As a man I protest against his doctrine. If I do not believe, for instance, in the gods, 'tis my affair. Yet, I acknowledge the need of religion, and announce it publicly, since I recognize that religion for the people is a bridge. The horses must be securely fastened. Besides, to this Nazarene death should have no terrors, for he affirms that he will arise from the dead."

Cinna and Anthia looked at each other with astonishment.

"That He will arise from the dead?"

"No more, no less; after three days. So at least announce His disciples. I forgot to ask him. That is of little consequence, as death frees us from all promises. Even if he does not arise from the dead he will lose nothing, for according to his teachings true happiness, together with life eternal, begins only after death. He really speaks of it as one who is certain. His hordes are more bright than our sunny world, and the more one suffers here the more surely he will enter there, he must only love, love, and love."

"A wonderful doctrine," said Anthia.

"And they clamored to thee, 'Crucify him?'" queried Cinna.

"I even do not wonder hatred is the soul of these people. What then, if not hatred, would clamor for the cross, for love?"

Anthia placed her wasted hand upon her forehead.

"And is he sure that we will live and be happy—after death?"

"On this account neither the cross nor death affrights him."

"How good that would be, Cinna."

Shortly she asked again:

"How does he know all this?"

The Procurator, making a dissenting gesture with his hand, answered:

"He says that he knows it from the Father of all men which is for the Jews the same as Jupiter is to us, with this difference, according to the Nazarene, that He is One alone and all merciful."

"How good that would be, Caius," repeated the patient.

Cinna opened his lips as if he would speak, but remained silent, and the conversation ceased.

Pontius evidently meditated further on the strange teachings of the Nazarene, for he shook his head negatively, and at intervals shrugged his shoulders. At last he rose and began saying farewell.

Suddenly Anthia said:

"Caius, let us hence and see this Nazarene."

"Hasten," said the departing Pilate, "soon the procession will start."

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