

"A Nubian brought it hither, with a prayer that I would instantly present it to Hypatia of Alexandria."

"Comes he from a distance then?"

"I know not, he waits in the palace hall; shall I summon him to your presence?"

"Nay, not so, give me the letter; now withdraw, I will call you when I want you,—see that the stranger is amply cared for."

She took the scroll, and pressing a spring near the serpent's mouth, the clasp flew open, and the manuscript spread itself out before her. She glanced at it, and the colour mounted to her pale cheek, and she muttered a gesture of impatience, but she compelled herself to read it through, and having done so, she re-entered her palace, and calling her slave, signed for parchment and a stylus, and seated herself to reply to the missive, that had so deeply moved her usually placid spirit. She opened it before her, and ere she commenced her reply she again read the scroll, which contained these words:—

To Hypatia of Alexandria.

Greeting: This from Cyril, Bishop of Antioch.—I know not whether I ought to rejoice or regret the cause which induces me to address thee, the wisest of women—I know thou hast most admirable qualities of mind and heart; thou art graceful as the lotus, and fair and chaste as the silver moon; but wanting the one thing in my eyes, thou wantest everything—wert thou a Christian, I, even I, Hypatia, could lay my bishop's mitre at thy feet. As it is, thou art darkness, not light, to me; but Ernestos, my well beloved nephew, has seen thee, and his heart yearns for thy love. He is a Christian, a bright light in the church, and he feels as if he could kindle the true light within thee, and he has craved of me to write thee forthwith, to ask if thou wilt bless him with thy love; if thou wilt be baptized with our holy faith, abjure the false philosophy, which has dazzled thy pure mind, sit reverently at the feet of Jesus, and learn of him rather than thy atheistic philosophy?

Thou knowest Ernestos, and methinks thou wilt gladly take him for thy protector and friend; but know, Hypatia, unless thou consentest to receive his religion, the church cannot bless thee, and even Ernestos will tear thy loved image from his heart, sooner than press to it one soiled by the worship of the cursed multitude of gods, which the mingled religion of the Greek and Egyptian mythology presents. Think well, Hypatia; my Nubian will wait thy leisure for a reply. Thine, with God's best blessing upon thee.

CYRIL, Bishop of Antioch.

With hurried and impatient hand Hypatia wrote the following reply to this somewhat arrogant letter:

Hypatia of Alexandria, to Cyril,

Greeting: Thy letter is before me, and only that I deemed its somewhat rude expressions were dictated by a kind heart, I should fain commit it to the flames, and give it no further heed, but I think not the wound was intentional. Thou didst not imagine Hypatia's gods were as dear to her, as thy one immovable Divinity is to thee; but learn, Cyril of Antioch, that the devotion of Hypatia to the gods of her fathers is deeper and stronger than the life current in her veins, and that she would sooner plunge into the sacred waters of the Nile, than abjure one iota of her faith. As for the bribe held out of the hand of Ernestos the Christian, it weighs nought with me; I esteem the youth because he is good and true, but no living mortal shall ever call Hypatia wife; she is wedded to divine philosophy; married to the study of the soul, and shall she form ties which will interfere with the glorious pursuits to which she has devoted herself? No, she spurns the thought. Do not think, holy father, that I spurn thy nephew Ernestos. No, I thank him for his preference. I thank him for his desire to lead me to what he considers the higher light, but he seemeth to me to be walking in darkness, whilst the pure effulgence of heaven's light shineth on my revered master.

Pardon me if I seem obstinate, and I pray thee trouble me no more on this subject. Orestes encourages thy sect; it is fast gaining ground in this our beautiful city. The christian temples are rising around me, and I daily see worshippers added to thy "unknown God," and I think with the Roman martyr, though with a different application, "Ye worship ye know not what;" but I, I have the true light. But though distrusting the new faith, I can yet honor the professors of it. May the gods enlighten thee. This from

HYPATIA OF ALEXANDRIA.

The letter was rolled up, a delicate band of silk wound around it; it was then placed in the hands of the slave, with orders to give it to the Nubian in waiting, and bid him carry it with all speed to his master.

The anxiety of the Christians to convert Hypatia was very great; they saw the influence her lovely pure life was having upon all around her; they, many of them, listened to the lectures she gave at the Academy, not only before the wise ones of Alexandria, but of Rosetta, Thebes and Memphis, gathered together by her fame, and thus her power was widely extending. The Platonic philosophy, as explained by her,