

# DION AND THE SIBYLS

By Miles Gerald Keon

A CLASSIC CHRISTIAN NOVEL.

are more to be esteemed, and valued, and loved than my sister and my mother, or it is not true that the mere power of Tiberius, combined with the brutish inclination to do a thing, terminates the question whether it is right to do it. The moment I like to do anything, if I can do it, is it necessarily right that I should do it? The moment two persons have a difference, is it right for either of them, and equally right for each of them, to murder the other? But if it was the intention of this great being, this god who is expected to appear immediately among us, that we should be dependent upon each other, each doing for the other what the other cannot do for himself—and I am sure of it—then it will please him, Dion, if I consider what is helpful and just and generous. Or am I wrong? Is virtue a dream? Are contrary things in the same cases equally good? Are contrary things in the same cases equally beautiful?

"Are my brutish instincts or inclinations, which vary as things vary round me, my only law? Is each of us intended by this great being to be at war with the rest? to regard the positive power each of us may have as our sole restriction? to destroy and injure all the others by whom we could be served, if we would for our parts also serve and help? And must women, for instance, being the weaker, be brutally used? Tell me, Dion, will it please this great being if I try to renderservice to my fellowmen, who must have the same natural claims to his consideration as I have? or does he wish me to hurt them and them to hurt me, according as we may each have the power? Is there nothing higher in a man than his external power of action? Answer—you are a philosopher."

The countenance of Dion blazed for one instant, as if the light of a passing torch had been shed upon a mirror, and then resumed the less vivid effulgence of that permanent intellectual beauty which was its ordinary characteristic. He replied:

"All the philosophy that ever was taught or thought could not lead you to truer conclusions."

"Then," returned Paulus, "come back with me to the other end of the room."

"Benigna," said Paulus, "your kindness to my sister and mother, and your natural probity, had something, I think, to do with beginning this trouble in which you and your intended find yourselves. As you were not unmindful of us, it is but right that we should not be unmindful of you. Tiberius permits any friend of Claudius the slave to be a substitute in breaking the horse Sejanus; and Claudius is to have his freedom and fifty thousand sesterces, and to marry you, whom I see to be a good, honorable-hearted girl, all the same as if he had complied with the terms in person. This was thoughtful, and, I suppose, generous of Tiberius Caesar."

"Would any of these youths who hear me," added he, turning round, "like to break the fine-looking steed at the games, before all the people, instead of Claudius?"

No one replied.

"It will be a distinguished act," persisted he.

Dead silence still.

"Then I will do it myself," he said. "Magister, make a formal note of the matter in your tablets, and be so good as to inform the Caesar of it, in order that I, on my side, may learn place and time."

The magister, with a low bow and a face expressing the most generous and boundless astonishment, grasped his prettily-mounted stylus, and taking the pengillar from his girdle drew a long breath, and requested Paulus to favor him with his name and address.

"I am," replied he, "the knight Paulus Lepidus Aemilius, son of one of the victors at Philippin, nephew of the ex-triumvir. I reside at Crispus's inn, and am at pres-

ent a promised prisoner of Velleius Paterculus, the military tribune."

While the steward wrote in his tablets, Benigna uttered one or two little gasps and fairly fainted away. The slave Claudius saved her from falling, and he now placed her on a bench against the wall.

Paulus, intimating that he would like to return to Crispus's hostelry before dark, and having learnt, in reply to a question, that Claudius could procure from Thellus, the gladiator, a vehicle for Benigna, and that he would request Thellus himself to convey her home, turned to take leave of Dion.

The Athenian, however, said he would show him the way out of the palace. They went silent and thoughtful. In the impluvium they found a little crowd surrounding Augustus, who had returned from his promenade to the calp, and who was throwing crumbs of bread among some pigeons near the central fountain.

Two ladies were of the company, one of whom, in advanced age, was evidently the Empress Livia, but for whose influence and management Germanicus—certainly not her ungrateful son Tiberius—would have been the next master of the world. The other lady, who was past her prime, had still abundant vestiges of a beauty which must once have been very remarkable.

She was painted red and plastered white, with immense care, to look some fifteen years younger than she truly was.

Her countenance betrayed to a good physiognomist, at first glance, the horrible life she had led. Paulus, whose experience was little, and, although she fastened upon him a flaming glance, which she intended to be full both of condescension and fascination, thought that he had seldom seen a woman either more repulsive or more insanely haughty.

It was Julia, the new and abhorred wife of Tiberius. Not long before, at the request of Augustus, who was always planning to dispose of Julia, Tiberius had given up for her the only woman he ever loved, Agrippina Marcella.

Tiberius so loved her, if it deserves to be termed love, that when, being thus deserted, she took another husband, (Asinius Gallus,) he, mad with jealousy, threw him into a dungeon and kept him there till he died, as Suetonius and Tacitus record.

"Ah my Athenian!" said the emperor to Dionysius, placing a hand affectionately on the youth's shoulder, "could you satisfy me that those splendid theories of yours are more than dreams and fancies; that really there is one eternal, all-wise, and omnipotent spirit, who made this universal frame of things, and governs it as an absolute monarch; that he made us; that in us he made a spirit, a soul, a ghost, a thinking principle, which will never die; and that I, who am going down to the tomb, am only to change my mode of existence; that I shall not wholly descend thither; that an urn will not contain every thing which will remain of me; and all this is a very different sense from that which poor Horace meant. But why speak of it? Has not Plato failed?"

"Plato," replied Dionysius, "neither quite failed nor is quite understood, illustrious emperor. But you were saying, if I could satisfy you. Be pleased to finish. Grant I could satisfy you; what then?"

"Satisfy me that one eternal sovereign of the universe lives, and that what now thinks in me," returned the emperor, while the courtly group made a circle, "will never cease to think; that what is now conscious within me will be conscious for ever; that now, in more than a mere poetical allusion to my fame—and on the word of Augustus Caesar, there is no reasonable request within the entire reach and compass of my power which I will refuse you."

"And what sort of a hearing, emperor," inquired Dion, "and under what circumstances, and upon what conditions, will you be pleas-



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ed to give me? and when? and where?"

"In this palace, before the games end," replied Augustus. "The hearing shall form an evenings entertainment for our whole circle and attendance. You shall sustain your doctrines, while our celebrated advocates and orators, Antistius Labio and Domitius Afer, who disagree with them, I know, shall oppose you. Let me see. The Caesars, Tiberius and Germanicus, with their ladies, and our host Mamurra and his family, and all our circle, shall be present. Titus Livy, Lucius Varius, Velleius Paterculus, and the greatest orator Rome ever produced, except Cicero" (the old man mentioned with watery eyes the incomparable genius to whose murder he had consented in his youth)—"I mean Quintus Haterius—shall form a judicial jury. Haterius shall pronounce the sentence. Dare you face such an ordeal?"

"I will accept it," replied the Athenian, blushing; "I will accept the ordeal with fear. Daring is contrasted with trembling; but, although my daring trembles, yet my trepidation dares."

"Oh! how enchanting!" cried the august Julia; "we shall hear the eloquent Athenian." And she clasped her hands and sent an unutterable glance toward Dion, who saw it not.

"It will be very interesting indeed," added the aged empress, "Better for once than even the mighty comedy of the palace," said Lucius Varius.

"Better than the gladiators," added Velleius Paterculus.

"An idea worthy of the time of Virgil and Maecenas," said Titus Livy.

"Worthy of Augustus's time," subjoined Tiberius, who was leaning against one of the pillars which supported the gallery of the impluvium.

"Worthy of his dotage," muttered Cneius Piso to Tiberius, with a scowl.

(To be continued)

## Obituary

The funeral of Nora Christina Halliwell, aged 6 years, took place at 2.30 Thursday afternoon from the parlors of Clark Bros. & Hughes to St. Mary's church and thence to St. Mary's cemetery.

The funeral of the late Owen Murphy, who died on Sunday last from pneumonia, took place from his late residence, 164 Austin street, on Wednesday. The remains were taken to the Church of the Immaculate Conception and thence to St. Mary's cemetery. The pallbearers were Messrs. P. Maron, T. Jobin, J. Tomlison, T. Gingras, C. Gingras and E. Gingras.

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