

ting the inheritance be satisfactorily determined. The young man accordingly sails for Italy, and, after the usual casualties of such a voyage, reaches the mansion of his kinsman Caius Licinius, who is represented as a lawyer in great practice, a consummate orator, and, withal, a man of ambitious views. Licinius has a son, a fine youth, called Sextus, who is in love with Sempronia, a light-hearted flirting damsel; and Valerius, our hero, finding himself in company with the young persons now named, together with a cousin of the lady, whose name was Athanasia, contrives likewise to fall head and ears in love, at first sight, with this beautiful and contemplative maiden.

These events take place in the beginning of the reign of the Emperor Trajan, who, as is well known, was induced by certain motives of state policy to persecute the Christians, at that time increasing in numbers throughout the Roman dominions. Athanasia, it soon turns out, is a convert to the new faith, and in the habit of attending private meetings, and visiting the afflicted members of that reviled and calumniated body. Valerius, of course, becomes her confidant, receives instruction, and in a short time finds himself almost a Christian. Going one evening to a prison, in company with a centurion, named Sabinus, who had sailed with him in the same ship from Britain, he has an opportunity of conversing with a poor Christian soldier, who was next day to be torn in pieces by wild beasts in the Amphitheatre, unless he openly abjured the faith in Christ; and being requested by the expectant martyr to be present at the horrid spectacle on the ensuing morning, he reluctantly gives his promise that he would appear.—Athanasia had likewise obtained permission to see the unfortunate veteran in prison to comfort him, and to join with him in his last acts of Christian devotion. The following little trait of character, connected with this meeting, is somewhat affecting, and affords at the same time a fair specimen of the author's style.

"Now, when we had entered into the guard-room, we found it crowded with spearmen, of Sabinus's band, some of whom were playing at dice, others carousing jovially, and many wrapt up in their mantles, and asleep upon the floor; while a few only were sitting beneath the porch, with their spears in their hands, and leaning upon their bucklers. From one of the elder of these, the Centurion, after having drawn him aside out of the company, made inquiry straightway concerning the names and condition of the prisoners, and whether as yet they had received any intelligence of that which was to come to pass on the morrow. The soldier, who was a grave man, and well stricken in years, made answer that of a surety the men were free born and of decent estate, and that he had not heard of any thing else being laid to their charge excepting that which concerned their religion. Since they have been here," he continued, "I have been several times set on the watch over them, and twice have I lain with one of them in his dungeon; yet have I heard no complaints from any of them, for in all things they are patient. One of them only is to suffer to-morrow—but for him I am especially concerned, for he was known to me of old, having served often with me when I was an horseman in the army of Titus, all through the war of Palestine, and at the siege of Jerusalem."