

to a certain extent in a false position. No amount of public interest will stop up the little chinks and corners, so to speak, which are intended by Nature to contain the petty cares and pleasures and vexations of domestic life. Without the constant association—the daily friction—of wife and children, a cynical disposition becomes selfish and morose; a kind one, melancholy and forlorn.

Licinius feels a blank in his existence, which nothing he has yet found serves to fill; and he often wonders in himself why the barbarian slave should be almost the only creature in Rome for whom he entertains a feeling of interest and regard.

As he takes his place on the couch by the supper-table, Esca gives him to drink; and the patrician cannot help thinking the while, how he would like to have such a son, tall and handsome, with so warlike an air; a son whom he could instruct in all the intricacies of his glorious profession, whose mind he could educate, whose genius he could foster, and whose happiness he could watch over and insure.

They converse freely enough during the general's temperate meal—an egg, a morsel of kid, a few grapes, and a flask of common Sabine wine. Esca tells his master the encounter of the previous evening, and the friendship he had made in consequence, after nightfall. Licinius laughs at his account of the skirmish, and the eunuch's discomfort.

"Nevertheless," says he, "I trust he did not recognise you: It can have been none other than Spado, whom you treated so unceremoniously; and Spado is just now a prime favorite with Cæsar. I might find it difficult to protect you if he knew where to find you, for charms and philtres are deadliest weapons in such hands as his, than sword and spear in yours and mine. Did he take note of your person, think you, Esca, ere he went down?"

"I can hardly believe it," answered Esca. "The evening was dark, and the confusion great. Moreover, I fled with the poor girl they had surrounded, the very instant I could snatch her out of the throng."

"And you saw these Jews in their home, you say?" pursued Licinius gravely. "I have heard much of that people, and, indeed, served against them in Syria. Are they not morose, cruel, bloodthirsty? Slayers of men, devourers of children? Have they not fearful orgies in which they feast upon human flesh? And one day in the week that they devote to solitude and silence, and schemes of hatred against all mankind? Are you sure that your entertainers belonged to this detestable nation?"

"Christians and Jews," replied Esca, who had caught the sound of the former title in the course of his conversation with Calcha.

"Are they not the same?" returned Licinius, and to this question the barbarian was unable to furnish a reply.

CHAPTER X.

A TRIBUNE OF THE LEGIONS.

Under the porch of one of the most luxurious houses in Rome, two men jostled in the dubious light of early morning. Exclamations of impatience were succeeded by a mutual recognition, and a hearty laugh, as Damasippus and Oarses, freedmen and staunch clients of Julius Placidus, recognised each other's eagerness to pay court to their joint patron. They had risen from their beds while it was yet dark, and hurried hither in order to be the first to salute the Tribune at his morning levee. Yet they found the great hall filling already with a bustling crowd of friends, retainers, clients, and dependants. Damasippus was a short, square, beetle-browed man, with a villanous leer; Oarses, a pale, sedate, and somewhat precise personage. But with this marked difference of exterior, an expression of unscrupulous and thorough-paced knavery was common

to both. Said Damasippus to Oarses, with a shrug of affected disgust:

"It may be hours yet ere he will see us! Look at this wretched crowd of parasites and flatterers! They will follow the patron to his bath! They will besiege him in his very bed! Oh, my friend! Rome is no longer the place for an honest man."

To which Oarses replied, in subdued and humble tones:

"The flies gather round the honey, though it is only for what they can get. But the sincerest gratitude and affection draw you and me, my dear companion, to the side of the illustrious Tribune."

"You speak truth," returned Damasippus. "It is sad to see how few clients are uninfluenced by mean and sordid thoughts. An honest man is becoming as rare at Rome as at Athens. It was not so in the days of the republic—in the golden age—in the good old times!"

"Oh for the good old times!" exclaimed Oarses, still in the same low and unmoved voice.

"Oh for the good old times!" echoed Damasippus; and the two knaves, with their arms on each other's shoulders, fell to pacing the extremity of the hall, and exchanging spiteful remarks on the concourse with which it was filled.

The Tribune's house was the most perfect of its kind in the whole city. Standing apart and surrounded by a wall and garden of its own, it combined the luxurious splendour of a palace with the comfort and seclusion of a private residence. Everything of ornament that was most costly and gorgeous, had been procured by Placidus to decorate his mansion. Everything of art that was most conspicuous and effective hung on his walls, stood in picturesque groups about his apartments, or lay scattered in rich profusion on his floor. The hangings that veiled his own sleeping-room from the public eye, were embroidered crimson silk, woven in the looms of Asia, and probably taken by the strong hand of the successful soldier as spoils of war. The very pavement of the hall was of the richest mosaic, traced in fanciful patterns and inlaid with gold.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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