

"Rhanto, shepherdess, listen to me ! Now I understand why I longed to see you ; why your memory came to me so often in Rome whenever I thought of Saguntum. Live and be to Actæon the last spring of his existence ! I love you, Rhanto ! You are my last love ; the flower which blooms in the winter of my life ! I love you, Rhanto ! I have loved you since that day when I saw you revealed like a goddess. Live and let me be your Erotion !"

The girl, her face clouded by the shadow of death, smiled, murmuring :

"Actæon, good Greek, thank you, thank you !"

Her head slipped from between Actæon's hands and fell heavily on the ground. The Athenian remained motionless, mutely gazing at the body of the girl. The silence which suddenly fell on the wall seemed to arouse him from his painful stupor. The besiegers had suspended the attack. The Greek stood up, but he knelt again to press kisses on the still warm mouth of the shepherdess and upon her unquivering wide-open eyes, in which the red splendour of the setting sun was reflected as in quiet waters.

As he arose he was startled by Sonnica standing quietly before him, with cold, ironic stare.

"Sonnica ! You !"

"I came to tell you to hasten to the Forum. A messenger from the hostile camp has presented himself at the gates of the city asking to speak to the Elders. The people are gathered in the Forum."

Despite the importance of the news Actæon did not stir. He was transfixed by Sonnica's cold rigidity.

"How long have you been here ?"

"Long enough to see how you bade my slave farewell forever !"