

Leuctra, and how, in ancient times, a little band of Spartans, in a defile of the mountains, had withstood a whole army. I did not then know what war was; but my cheeks burned, I knew not why, and I clasped the knees of that venerable man, until my mother, parting the hair from off my forehead, kissed my throbbing temples, and bade me go to rest and think no more of those old tales and savage wars. That very night the Romans landed on our coast. I saw the breast that had nourished me trampled by the hoof of the war-horse, the bleeding body of my father flung amidst the blazing rafters of our dwelling! To-day I killed a man in the arena; and when I broke his helmet clasps, behold! it was my friend. He knew me, smiled faintly, gasped, and died; the same sweet smile upon his lips that I had marked when, in adventurous boyhood, we scaled the lofty cliff to pluck the first ripe grapes and bear them home in childish triumph. I told the prætor that the dead man had been my friend, generous and brave, and I begged that I might bear away the body to burn it on a funeral-pile and mourn over its ashes. Ay! upon my knees, amid the dust and blood of the arena, I begged that poor boon, while all the assembled maids and matrons, and the holy virgins they call vestals, and the rabble shouted in derision; deeming it rare sport, forsooth, to see Rome's fiercest gladiator turn pale and tremble at the sight of that piece of bleeding clay! And the prætor drew back as if I were pollution, and sternly