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HIS LEGENDS AND TALES.

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NO. 1.—THE SLAVE AND THE HOSTAGE.

CHAPTER III.

'That is the deed which I now call upon thee to confirm,' said Nantia. 'It is, thou mayest perceive, in the regular form.'

'And thus,' said Adrian, 'in presence of thy witnesses do I treat a deed that recites a falsehood, for never didst thou lend me ten besants, and so speaking, the old man tore the parchment and trampled it under foot. Mark me, Nantia, continued Adrian, perceiving the latter laying his hand upon his sword, 'violence may deprive me of life, but will at the same time acquit the debt I have contracted—a debt that in presence of thy witnesses I acknowledge, but of which in their presence also, I now tender the payment.'

'The money—the money—old babbling fool—pay me the money at once, and quit my sight then for ever,' said Nantia.

'I have no coin wherewith to pay thee, remarked Adrian.

'No money! then thou art a madman to speak as thou hast done,' observed Nantia. 'Thou hast insulted me in presence of my friends, and if I do not revenge myself on the spot, it is because I desire to punish—severely punish thee as my slave.'

'I know thee, Nantia, well,' said Adrian. 'I am aware that thou art a proud, haughty, purse-proud, cruel man; but I also know that, of all thy vices the strongest is avarice, and therefore I do not fear thy threats, for I am sure that thou wilt accept the payment that I tender to thee.'

'Thy drivelling tires me, Adrian, but I tolerate it, because thy back, as a slave, shall pay the penalties of this liberty of tongue in which thou dost now indulge thyself as a freeman.'

'In coming hither,' said Adrian, 'thy sole expectation was that thou wouldst have me as a slave, that thy malice would be indulged in daily witnessing the miseries of one who, if he had never known thee, would still be poor, but still contented and happy. In indulging thy cruel disposition thou wouldst have lost money, for my services could not repay thee for the cost of my feeding and maintenance. Instead of an old man for thy slave, I tender thee a young man. In the slave-market no one would purchase me; but here is one that, by his youth and agility alone, is worth at least, double the amount of the debt thou dost claim from me.'

'What!—is it possible! this young man, thy slave,' cried Nantia, as his eyes twinkled with the joy of a miser, as he gazed upon the noble proportions of the dark youth who stood before him. 'What! the miserable half-starved Adrian to be master of a slave like that! Oh, it is impossible! Come hither, sirrah,' said Nantia to Leo, who in a meek and humble attitude approached to him. 'Dost thou acknowledge thyself to be the slave of Adrian?'

'I acknowledge, as slave, that Adrian has full power to dispose of me as he pleases.'

'It is well, it is well!' said Nantia, chuckling with delight, and as he did so, placing his hand upon the broad and naked shoulder of Leo, and in vain endeavoring to produce a pressure with his finger upon the mass of muscular flesh which resisted him as if it were not flesh, but hardened iron.

'The slave is in rude health,' observed Nantia. 'Thou must be a man of marvelous strength, slave. Art thou as active as thou art vigorous?'

'This is my answer,' said Leo; and, as he spoke, he bounded up from the earth four feet high, caught in the one hand the branch of a tree which had formerly shaded the statue of Yedus, then letting his body hang by the grasp of a single hand, he changed so that the whole weight of his body should depend upon the other hand, and then running with steady hand grasps along to the extremity of the branch, he brought it down until the uttermost point was touching the soil, when, with a sudden bound to the earth, and a dexterous twist to the bending branch at the same moment, he snapped it in two, and then wrenching it off, laid the huge fragment of the green growing tree at the feet of Nantia.

'Art thou skilled in anything beyond feats of agility?' asked Nantia, delighted, but at the same time endeavoring to discover some deficiency which would enable him to depreciate, in the eyes of Adrian, the value of a slave for the possession of which he was most anxious.

'May I speak candidly of myself, Master?' said Leo, bowing his head to Adrian.

'Assuredly, Leo, thou mayest do so. Let Nantia know thy value.' 'I own, that if I could act in accordance with my own good will, thou shouldst never be his slave.'

'I thank thee, Master, most kind,' said Leo 'but blame me not when I say I would prefer

the service of the wealthy Nantia to thine. My gifts are lost in the house of a poor man, for know, rich citizen of Treves, that as a vine dresser, a shepherd, a carpenter, or a blacksmith, no fault has yet been found with me. I do all those things as well as others. None do them better; but there is one science, or mystery, in which I venture to say I am matchless in my skill.'

'And what is that?' asked Nantia, eagerly.

'It is as a cook,' answered Leo.

'Oh, rare!' cried Nantia, who was devoted to the pleasures of the table. 'I have all my life been seeking for a good slave-cook, and never yet could discover one.'

'Then I stake my life I shall please you,' said Leo. 'I am descended from a race of slaves who have all been illustrious cooks. It is a tradition amongst us, that one of my ancestors was the favorite cook of the good Emperor Vitellius, and immortalized him by the invention of a dish, 'the shield of Minerva,' which all ages have wondered at. What think you of one single dinner alone costing 400,000 sesterces (about £3,230.) What think you of serving up at the same table two thousand fishes and seven thousand birds?'

'Oh! most rare and delicious!' exclaimed the gluttonous Nantia, licking his lips at the mere mention of such gross luxury. 'But art thou sure, Leo, thou art good at dressing and cooking fowl for table? We abound with poultry of all kinds in this country.'

'Am I sure, forsooth!' said Leo, laughing.—'Why, I know everything that pertains to the table, and can discharge the offices of cup-bearer, butler, and carver; and as to fowl, of which you ask my knowledge, all I can say is, wait until you taste the liver of a capon steeped in milk, or a beccafico warmed with pepper by me. Marry! the flavor of either will be a consolation to your stomach, and a joy to your heart for a week afterwards. Ducks, doves, woodcocks, peacocks, appear, with my sauces, to be birds that have been fed on honey, and to have been saturated with nought else than the most sweet juices.'

'Enough, enough,' exclaimed the now impatient Nantia, 'I shall love thee, Leo, as if thou wert my own child, if thou canst but perform half of what thou hast now promised. Here, neighbors,' he added, turning to those by whom he had been accompanied, 'Be ye witnesses that I accept this man, the slave of Adrian, as my slave, giving in exchange for him a full and free discharge of that debt which he had contracted to pay me this day. Are you—for I find I must address you, Adrian, as a free man—are you content that all our dealings with each other should thus be brought to a conclusion?'

'I am content,' answered Adrian. 'When the rich propose terms to the poor, the latter must say content, for they are the weak and must submit to the strong. From this moment, the slave, Leo, is yours; but before parting from him I would wish to speak a word in private. I love Leo, and it is with pain that I separate from him.'

'Be it so,' said Nantia; 'but let your words be brief, for I can not permit him to be a moment out of my sight. Leo, when thou hast spoken with thy late master, follow me with all speed. I shall walk slowly back to Treves.'

Nantia with these words departed and left Adrian alone.

'Good, kind and generous youth,' said Adrian, 'if it were not unbecoming for a freeman, I would kneel before thee, though a slave, and thank thee for the service thou hast rendered me. I am now returning to Langres. Can I do there ought to serve you?'

'Yes,' replied Leo. 'The moment you reach Langres, see the bishop, and tell him what has occurred; and should you, as it is most probable you will, meet with your daughter, tell her that you have been saved from slavery by a slave, and that slave was named Leo.'

CHAPTER IV.

The heats of the mid-day had diminished, although the first cooling breath of the coming evening was as yet unfelt and seemed to be far distant. The time allotted for the meridian cessation of toil had not as yet expired; and hence, even the ever exacting task-master, Nantia, could not have manifested any displeasure if he had looked from the tent in which he lay, upon the broad, open, grassy field that stretched down to the shallow waters of that little river now known as the Weberbach (but formerly called the Olebia), and if, in the most distant part of that field, his weary and jealous eyes had detected the forms of two of his slaves, both resting upon the earth, and apparently buried in profound sleep.

Had Nantia known the antecedents of these two new slaves his jealousy would have been excited and his suspicions justified; for these two—his slaves—were Attalus and Leo. They lay in the midst of the wide field, at least sixty yards apart, and, as their backs were turned towards each other, the spectator at a distance could never suspect that they were carrying on a

conversation; whilst, at the same time, by their faces being directed towards opposite sides, they afforded a mutual protection to one another against the chance of their conversation being overheard. The eyes of Leo were turned towards the tent of Nantia—the watchful vision of Attalus was fixed upon the stream of the Weberbach and the country beyond it.

'This very night,' said Leo, 'we must make attempt to escape, if those two horses—the best which Nantia owns, and to which I have already directed your attention—are in a fit condition for a speedy flight.'

'The steeds will run as if they had wings, and each of us was mounted on a Pegasus,' said Attalus. 'But wherefore, Leo, do you deem it necessary to make the attempt this very night. I have nought but a shield and a short hunting spear. I can not go without a sword to protect both liberty and life, in case we should be followed, and overtaken by our pursuers.'

'I consider it necessary to fly to-night,' said Leo, 'because I am not sure that the favor I now enjoy with Nantia will continue another day. I have exhausted my invention as a cook seeking to gratify his capricious gluttony, and to soothe his malignant, passionate, and brutal temper. If I now attempt to make another new dish for him, I know not but I may poison him, and my ingenuity be rewarded by a death—amidst the most exquisite tortures.'

'Poor Leo!' sighed the gentle Attalus. 'For myself I care not,' observed the generous slave, 'my grief in case of failure would not be for myself; and for you, for your generous uncle, and my beloved wife, and for my dear, dear child. This night then the attempt will be made. Nantia gives this day in the tent at which I am looking, a magnificent banquet.—It is in honor of the marriage of that daughter whom you rejected. It is probable that Nantia, as well as his guests, will indulge in strong potations of wine. In the midst of these rejoicings none will attend to you, and you will be perfectly free to prepare the horses for flight. Be here then on this very spot at midnight. Here I shall meet you, and here bring to your own sword—that sword of which you were so wrongfully deprived, and that is now placed by the side of Nantia, and close to the couch on which he sleeps. Stir not your head now round, Attalus, for your life. The folds of the tent of Nantia are withdrawn. He stands at the opening; he is gazing around him; he has not as yet recognized either of us. Oh, he stops; his eye remains fixed in this direction. He pauses; he is about to call me. He must do so more than once, in order that he may fancy I have been sleeping.'

The word 'Leo' here came as a distant and indistinct sound to the ears of the two young men.

'He must speak louder than that, Attalus,' remarked Leo, retaining the motionless position in which the conversation had been carried on.

'Le—o' as the distant sound of two distinct words came pealing over the field; but was listened to by the slave and seemed to be as yet unheard by him.

'He must call a third time,' remarked Leo, 'before I pretend to awake.'

At this instant, the name 'Leo,' was uttered in the harsh, hoarse tones of an angry and impatient man; and then the slave was seen by Nantia to start suddenly up, to rub his eyes, and the moment he saw his master to speed towards him with all the eager haste of a sedulous servant.

'Thou sleepest soundly, Leo,' said Nantia.

'I was not sleeping,' answered Leo.

'Not sleeping!' exclaimed Nantia.

'I was thinking of a device; by which I hope I may surprise you,' was the truthful answer of Leo.

'Oh, I perceive,' remarked Nantia, smiling; for he supposed that Leo had unconsciously fallen asleep. 'Thou wert puzzling thy brain about some new condiment, and in thy dreams fancied thou hadst discovered it, when my voice spoiled the recipe. But who was the slave sleeping near to thee?'

'I saw one slave sleeping near me,' said Leo.

'I am sure it was Attalus,' remarked Nantia.

'Ha! yes, I am correct—it was Attalus. Leo, he too has risen from the grass on which he was lying, and is now directed his footsteps towards the stalls of the horses, the care of which are confided to him.'

'It may be so,' said Leo. 'But this I am sure of, he was not lying in the field when I sat myself down there; for I had looked most carefully around me, and saw that there was then no one near me.'

'I suppose,' remarked Nantia, 'he went there after thou didst lie down to think, as thou sayest, of that device by which thou hopest to surprise me and observing that thou wast so deeply absorbed in thy contemplations, he did not wish to disturb thee. But let us think of something more important. Hast thou arranged all things for the banquet?'

'I venture to promise,' answered Leo, 'a feast for your guests that will equal in splendor of decoration and variety of viands any that could be laid before them, though king Thierry himself were their host.'

'Good youth! good youth!' said Nantia, in high spirits. 'Now speed thee to thy task. I love thee much, Leo; for whatever thou dost promise is faithfully performed by thee.'

The promise which Leo gave was, in this instance, fully realized, in the estimation of Nantia, of his new son-in-law, and of his guests.—The banquet was prolonged to a late hour, and when the moment for all to retire came, it was manifest that neither Nantia nor those he entertained had restrained their appetite in any way; and that as they had eaten a large quantity of food, so also had they imbibed an inordinate quantity of wine.

'Excellent slave,' said the half-intoxicated Nantia to Leo, as he flung himself on his couch, 'one more goblet of pure cold wine, that I may cool my throat, before I abandoned myself to sleep.'

Leo filled out the wine, and presenting the brimming goblet to his master, said, 'I wish you as sound a sleep as if I desired to steal from your service, and was anxious you should not know of my flight until morning.'

'Ha, ha, thou art a merry as well as a good slave, Leo,' said Nantia; and then tossing off the wine, he continued as in a jesting mood, but what wouldst thou do if thou hadst a fleet steed, Leo, at thy command. Wouldst leave thy old master, Nantia?'

'I would this very night,' answered Leo.

'Excellent, excellent,' said the intoxicated Nantia, now bursting into a roar of laughter.—'Well, then, for the future I must tell the other slaves to keep a strict watch upon thee. Remember me, Leo, in the morning of what thou hast said to-night, lest I should forget it.' As he spoke these words he flung himself back on his couch, and closing his eyes, muttered to himself—'Leo is a wag—says—run away—such a cook—what a capon—fly away—no, no, no.'

The words ceased; Nantia's senses were already buried in the deep, profound and consciousness sleep of the drunkard.

Leo stood motionless before his sleeping master. Not a limb moved until he heard the loud, heavy, regular snore of the intoxicated man, and then believing that the moment had come when he might, with perfect security, remove the sword of Attalus, which, crossed with that of Nantia, formed a sort of support to the shield of the latter, which was fastened to the wall over the spot on which he slept. Leo stretched forth his hand, grasped the hilt of Attalus' sword; but as he was in the act of removing it, Nantia turned suddenly round, though still sleeping, and Leo, in bounding back from the couch, unfixed the sword and shield that still rested against the wall, and both now fell on the earth with a loud clash, the shield, in its descent, striking with its ponderous metal rim the head of Nantia, and arousing him, by the agony of pain, from the heavy sleep he was indulging.

Nantia bounded up with a loud execration in his mouth, and as he did so, he beheld Leo before him, and at his feet the shield and the two swords.

'Vile slave,' cried Nantia, 'what means this? Wherefore remainest thou here? And how comes it that my head is racked with such awful pain?'

'I pray your pardon,' answered Leo; 'I have heard trampling as of horses in the enclosure in which they are confined for the night, and not knowing but a wild beast may have made its way in amongst them, I desired to have one of these swords as a protection for myself, in case I should be attacked by a ferocious beast. In seeking to remove the sword without disturbing you, I have displaced the shield which has struck you.'

'My brain throbs with intensity of anguish.—I forgive thee however, for the sake of thy vigilance. Another goblet of wine may allay my sufferings. Give it, Leo. Then take one of the swords and speed to the enclosure. My horses are of great value, and I would not part with any one of them for the price of two slaves.'

Leo did as he was directed; and then seeing his master throw himself back upon the couch, he hurried from the apartment.

The pain in Nantia's head would not suffer him to rest again, and the wile which he had taken added to the fever which the pain had produced. Instead, then, of sleeping again, as Leo supposed he would have done, he lay awake tossing from side to side in agony, and cursing as he did so, Leo for that awkwardness which had inflicted unnecessarily such suffering upon him.

As Nantia lay thus awake, he was astonished to hear, upon a sudden, the regular rapid paces of two horses, which seemed to be urged to the very utmost of their speed. As long as these sounds were in his ear, he did not move.—They momentarily became weaker, and at last they died away, and were succeeded by a stillness so complete, that even the most gentle rustling of a leaf could have been heard in the midst of

it. Confused by pain, and dulled by previous intoxication, the faculties of Nantia slept, although his senses were aroused. All the circumstances of the day came in confusion back to his memory. At last the natural suspicion of his mind was stirred from the torpor into which it had been immersed, and as it became active, it afforded him a clue to that which had previously been incomprehensible.

The slaves in the field together! Attalus, with the care of the horses! Leo but lately here—and lo! the sword of Attalus has disappeared! the words of Leo this very night. They have planned a flight. By all the gods of Treves they have effected it! Ho! cried Nantia, bounding out of bed, and clattering together his sword and shield, to make the greater noise, 'Ho! ho! to the pursuit. Two of my slaves, Leo and Attalus, have fled. Pursue! pursue! and five besants for the head of either, whether living or dead. Up! up! To horse! to horse!'

CHAPTER V.

Leo and Attalus, from the moment that the feet of the horses on which they rode had passed beyond the inclosure within which they had been confined, fled at their utmost speed, because from that moment, both were aware that they had rendered themselves amenable to those awful punishments or rather tortures, which the ancient laws had assigned to the fugitive slaves. They fled as men fly who know that they are pursued by the malicious revenge of a relentless enemy. But as they passed beyond the boundaries of the lands of Nantia, neither surmised that their escape had been observed even at the very moment they had made the attempt. Unconscious that their danger was so imminent, they still acted as if they had been apprised of it. During the whole of the night they urged their steeds onward, and never paused to rest until the break of day. They then halted for a brief period, not for their own sakes, but for that of the faithful animals who had borne them thus far in safety. They rested, but neither thought of sleeping.

Brief as was the period allotted to repose, it was not passed by Leo without uneasiness; for instead of that perfect stillness which he had hoped to find in the midst of the deep wood in which he sheltered, he thought he could feel, rather than hear, the uncertain and distant murmur of men's voices. It appeared to him that at the very moment he had hoped their escape would have been first discovered, that pursuers were, or might be, on their track. No sooner did this fact gain upon his faculties, than he again mounted his horse, and followed by Attalus, pushed on in the direction of the river Meuse.

Again were the horses of Nantia urged on by his two slaves to their topmost speed. All day did they thus travel, until the approach of evening, when the fugitives became aware that they were not only pursued, but their pursuers were fast gaining upon them. The shouts of those who followed could at times be plainly heard, and, once or twice, when Leo looked back, he saw the precise place in which Nantia was riding, by the flashing gleams of his burnished helmet, as it reflected back the red rays of the setting sun.

'Attalus,' he said, 'we are lost if we attempt to cross on any of the well known fords of the Meuse. Our only chance for safety now, as it is the only means of baffling those who seek our lives, is to dash at once into the adjoining forests which skirt the river for miles, and there seek some place that we may cross unscathed.'

The forest was gained by them, as they hoped unperceived. At once they rode through it, as quickly as the horses would bear them, and never did they rest until the roar of the waters reached their ears. Leo found that he was travelling upon a high bank of steep rocks, down which there was no means of descent to the river's side.

Placed in these circumstances, Leo deemed it to be most wise to stop—again for himself and his companion to rest their weary limbs, by stretching themselves on the earth—and again to allow their horses to repose; and if they could find any nutriment at the root of trees to eat, so that they might be the better able to resume their art.

Leo, at the first dawn of day, rose from the ground, and was rejoiced to perceive that Attalus was sleeping as soundly and calmly as if all the perils of the journey were over. Desirous to prolong his repose, Leo cautiously withdrew from his side, proceeded to the river's bank, and saw that there was a narrow ravine which led down to the stream, and that the horses might be brought there without any peril. As soon as he perceived this, he instantly returned, roused up Attalus, and both again mounted their horses, proceeded to the river.

Leo had given directions to Attalus to guide his horse in a direct line after him across the river, when they heard upon the high mountainous rocky steep, which formed one side of the entrance to the ravine, the voice of Nantia, exclaiming: 'This is the only place for twenty