

DION AND THE SIBYLS

By Miles Gerald Keon

A CLASSIC CHRISTIAN NOVEL.

"I hear it! I hear it!" cried the child, in a sort of ecstasy. "What follows now? Has the knight Paulus mounted?"

"No, my lord; he has—"

"He shrinks, does he not?" interrupted the other with a taunting giggle.

"The horse trembles in every limb," said the slave; his nostrils dilate and quiver, and show scarlet, as if on fire; and his eyes shoot forth a blood-red gleam, and he has stooped his head, and—"

"But the man, the man?" screamed Caius; "what of him? Has he not failed, I say—lost heart?"

The most profound stillness had succeeded to the hubbub of blended sounds which a moment previously filled the air.

A trumpet blew a shrill prolonged minor note, and the child, laying his hand upon Claudius's shoulder, and shaking him violently, cried to him to proceed with his descriptions; addressing to him again the query, "Has that young man mounted? And if so, in what style, with what success?"

Notwithstanding the despotic impatience with which the inquiries were urged, the slave Claudius did not at first reply; and the infant heard rapid eager murmurs on all sides follow the trumpet blast, then a general burst of exclamations, which were instantly hushed.

"Why do you not speak?" said Caius, in a species of whispered scream.

"Pardon a momentary abstraction," replied Claudius. "While the trumpet was yet sounding, the young knight Paulus took off his hat quickly, and bowed toward Tiberius Caesar and the emperor; and replacing his hat, he beckoned to the freedman Philip. This last has approached him, and they are even now speaking together."

"Ha! ha!" interrupted the child; "then he has not mounted. He neither dares or can he."

"Philip," pursued Claudius, "has opened the lantern; his young master is thrusting the staves toward the light; the ends have caught fire, in a dull degree, with some smoke accompanying the flame. He turns quickly away from the freedman, and holding the staves still in his left hand, and a little away, he approaches the horse; now he stands with his feet close together. Oh! he has sprung clean from the ground; he is in his seat. He has seized the bridle in his right hand, and carried it to his mouth; he takes it between his teeth. He is now relieving his left hand of one of those torches; he holds one in each hand, somewhat away from the body, nearly horizontal. The canvasson-holders at a distance are removing the muzzle, and the rider sends his feet firmly, yet I think not very far, through those rests which the illustrious Cneius Piso mentioned, those stapedes of hide, the like of which I never saw before. I wonder they are not always used."

"What of the horse? Is he motionless?"

"Not less so than a statue," replied the slave; "excepting the eyes and nostrils, which last exhibit a tremulous movement, and show scarlet, like hollow leaves or thin shells on fire. The brute's concave head, from the scarlet nostril to the lurid eye, looks wicked and dire."

"How looks the rider?"

"Calm and heedful; the slight occasional breath of air from the east carries away to the front the slow flame, blent with a little smoke of those torches which he holds one in each hand."

"What can they be for?"

"I know not," replied Claudius.

"I suppose they are intended," said the child, "to compel the Sejan horse to keep his head straight. Thus your volunteer-substitute need not fear the beast's teeth. The issue seems then to be reduced to a trial of sheer horsemanship."

"And in such a trial, most honored sir," replied the slave, "I begin to have hopes. You should see the youth. The leading reins are now loose. The muzzle is snatched away, and the contest has begun. Surely it seems one between a wild beast and a demigod."

"Is he thrown?"

"No; yes; so help me! he is off, but is off standing."

"Explain; proceed—I tell you, proceed!"

"The horse, after a series of violent plunges, suddenly reared till he had nearly gained a perpendicular position upon his hind-legs, the fore-feet pawing the air. The rider who seemed to be as little liable to fall as though he had been part of the animal, then quickly passed his right foot out of the far stapeda, and dropping the bridle from his teeth, slipped down on the hither side. Hark! did you hear the crash with which the fore-paws have come down? The steed seemed to be very near falling backward, but after a struggle of two or three seconds, recovered himself; the centre of his weight had not been carried rearward of the vertical line; and, O ye gods! just as you heard that ponderous thud with which he descended upon his fore-feet, the youth darted from the ground with a spring like his first, and he is now on the brute's back as before. He stoops to the horse's neck; he has caught the bridle in his teeth, and lifts that brave clear face again. Listen to the multitude! Oh! how the euge, euge, thunders from a hundred thousand sympathetic voices!"

"Ah my sight!" cried the child Caligula.

"Ha! ha!" continued Claudius, transported out of himself. "I shall get my liberty today! Nor will my benefactor be injured. Ha! ha! The fell beast of a horse seems astonished. How he writhes his back, curving it like some monstrous catamount. And lo! now he leaps from the ground with all four feet at the same time! I never saw the like, except in animals of the cervine tribe. Ha! ha! leap away! Yes, stoop that ferocious-looking head, and shake it; and lash out with your death dealing hoofs. Your master is upon you, in his chair of power, and you'll shake your head off before you dislodge him from it. It is not with the poor literary slave Claudius that you have to deal! Oh! what a patoxysm of plunges. I was frightened for you, then, brave young knight; but there you sit yet, calm and clear-faced. If I was frightened for you, you are not frightened for yourself."

"Oh! for a few minutes' sight!" said the child. "Has not the horse tried to twist his head round, and so to bring his teeth into play?"

"Even now he tries," replied Claudius; "but he is met on either side by the torch. The fiercest beast of the desert shrinks from fire. Prudent and fortunate device! Lo! the horse seems at last to have ascertained that he who has this day mounted him is worthy of his services; do you hear the tread of his hoofs, as he traces the circle of the arena, guided by those steady hands from which flames appear to flow. Faster and faster rushes the steed, always restrained and turned by the outer torch, which is brought near his head, while the inner is held further to the rear. His sides are flecked with foam. The pace grows too rapid for a short curve, and the steed is now guided straight for the western opening in the arena opposite to where we sit; while the light breeze from the east counteracts the current of air made by the animal's own career, and keeps the flare of those torches almost even. They are gone; and again hark! Is not that shout like the roar of waters on a storm-beaten shore, as a hundred thousand men proclaim the success of a generous and brave youth, who could face the chance of being torn limb from limb in order to give to a poor slave like me, condemned to a frightful death, his life and his liberty, a home and a future?"

"But surely," said the imperial child, "it is not over so soon. It is like a dream."

"I have tried to make you see what I saw," returned Claudius. "It was a wonderful struggle—the youth looked beautiful; and in the swift whirl, as you beheld the graceful and perfect rider, his hands apparently streaming with flames, and his face so calm and clear, you would have imagined that it was one of those beings whom the poets have feigned and sung, as being gifts superior to the gifts of ordinary mortals, who was delivering some terror-stricken land from a demon, from a cruel monster, and compelling ferocity, craft, uproar, and violence to bend to far higher forces, to man's cool courage and man's keen wit."

(To be continued)

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Imp. Lim.	Selkirk, Rat Portage, Fort William, Port Arthur, Toronto, Detroit, Niagara Falls, Buffalo, Montreal, Quebec, New York, Boston, Portland, St. John, Halifax, daily	Imp. Lim.
6 45	Molson, Buchan, Milner, Lac du Bonnet, daily	21 10
7 00	Selkirk, Molson, Rat Portage and intermediate points daily except Sunday	19 30
8 00	Keewatin, Rat Portage, during July and August, daily except Sunday	18 30
13 30	Sat. only, Mon. only, Keewatin, Rat Portage, Fort William, Port Arthur, Toronto, Detroit, Niagara Falls, Buffalo, Montreal, Quebec, New York, Boston, Portland, St. John, Halifax, and all points east, daily	12 00
Tr's Pass.	WEST	Tr's Pass.
7 45	Portage la Prairie, Gladstone, Neepawa, Minnedosa, Yorkton, and intermediate points, daily except Sun.	18 40
8 50	Morris, Winkler, Morden, Manitou, Pilot Mound, Crystal City, Killarney, Boissevain, Deloraine, and intermediate points, daily except Sun.	17 00
Tr's Pass.	Portage la Prairie, MacGregor, Carberry, Brandon, Oak Lake, Virden, Elkhorn, Moosomin, Regina, Moose Jaw, Medicine Hat, Calgary, Banff, Revelstoke, and all points on Pacific Coast; Lethbridge, McLeod, Fernie, and all points in East and West Kootenay, daily	Tr's Pass.
9 20	Headingley, Carman, Holland, Cypress River, Glenboro, Souris and intermediate points, daily except Sun.	19 00
9 40	Portage la Prairie, Carberry, Brandon, and intermediate points, daily except Sun.	15 20
16 40	Portage la Prairie, Brandon, Broadview, Regina, Moose Jaw, Medicine Hat, Calgary, Banff, Revelstoke, and all points on Pacific Coast and in East and West Kootenay, daily	12 20
Imp. Lim.	NORTH	Imp. Lim.
22 00	Stony Mountain, Stonewall, Balmoral, Teulon, daily except Sunday	5 55
16 00	Middlechurch, Parkdale, Victoria Park, Lower Fort Garry, West Selkirk, Clandeboye, Netley, and Winnipeg Beach, Tues., Thurs., Sat.	10 20
16 15	Winnipeg Beach, Mon., Wed., Fri.	9 45
17 15	Winnipeg Beach, Tues., Thurs., Sat.	8 45
14 00	SOUTH	13 40
15 45	Morris, Greta, Grafton, Grand Forks, Crookston, Fargo, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Duluth, Chicago, and all points south, daily	10 45
	St. Norbert, Carey, Arnaud, Dominion City, Emerson, daily except Sunday	

Canadian Northern

Lv.	EAST	Ar.
10 20	"Winnipeg to Fort Frances," St. Anne, Giroux, Warroad, Beaudette, Rainy River, Pinewood, Emo, Fort Frances, daily except Sun.	16 25
8 05	"Fort Frances to Port Arthur," Mine Centre, Atikokan, Stanley Jct., Fort William, Port Arthur, daily, Mon., Wed., Fri.	21 05
	Tues., Thurs., Sat.	
	SOUTH	
17 20	Twin City Express between Winnipeg, Minneapolis and St. Paul, 14hrs. 20min., via Can. Nor. and Great Nor. Rys. Morris, Emerson, St. Vincent, Crookston, Fergus Falls, Sauk Centre, St. Cloud, Elk River, Minneapolis, St. Paul, daily	10 10
13 45	Minneapolis and St. Paul Express via Can. Nor. and Nor. Pac. Rys. Morris, St. Jean, Letellier, Emerson, Pembina, Grafton, Grand Forks, Crookston, Minneapolis, St. Paul, Duluth, The Superiors, daily	13 30
	WEST	
10 45	Headingley, Eli, Portage la Prairie, Gladstone, Dauphin, and all intermediate points, Tues., Thurs., Sat.	16 15
10 45	Headingley, Eli, Portage la Prairie, Neepawa, Dauphin, and all intermediate points, Mon., Wed., Fri.	16 15
10 45	Tues., Thurs., Sat., Gilbert Plains, Grand View, Kamsack, and intermediate points, Tues., Thurs., Sat.	16 15
10 45	Mon., Wed., Fri., Sifton, Minitonas, Swan River, and all intermediate points, Wed., Thurs., Sat.	16 15
10 45	Mon., Wed., Fri., Bowsman, Birch River, Erwood and intermediate points, Mon., Wed., Fri.	16 15
10 45	Fork River, Winnipegosis, Fri., Sat., Tues., Oak Bluff, Carman, Leary's and intermediate points, Mon., Wed., Fri.	17 50
11 06	St. Norbert, Morris, Roland, Wawanesa, Brandon, Hartney, and intermediate points, daily except Sun.	16 30