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"TANGLED PATHS," "MAY
BROOKE," ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER VI.

LIFE IN ROME-ELEAZER BEN ASA. The jealous suspicions which had made the beautiful Laodice so unhappy being lulled to rest, she began with fresh zest to exercise her most fascinwiles to captivate Nemesius That he has reputed invulnerable did not deter her in the least, for the fact would only increase her triumph should her efforts to win him be crowned with success; but he, all unconscious of he purpose, received her coquettish advances with such genuine unconcern and an indifference almost verging on rudeness, that she was sometimes furi-ous, and again discouraged and de-If he ever gave her an spondent. after thought, it was a regret that one so beautiful should be lacking in that delicate reserve which above all things enhances a woman's natural attrac

She tried to reach his heart when ever the opportunity offered, by show-ing a tender interest in his child, by affecting the deepest sympathy for h misfortune and his sorrow, by glowing praise of her loveliness, and oft-re-peated entreaties that she should be brought to make her a visit, promising that nothing should be spared to give her happiness; but Nemesius, knowing exactly what constituted his little Claudia's happiness, and how ineffect-ual all efforts would be to give her either pleasure or content separated from himself and the simple joys of her home life, felt it best to he supposed was a well-meant kind

In the egoism of his great love for his d child, it was no surprise to the fond father to hear Claudia's loveliness admired, and tender, gentle, pitying words spoken of her sad case—for who that once looked upon her could avoid eeling such sentiments ?-but the vol uptuous beauty of this woman, her languishing airs, the rich perfumes that made the atmosphere heavy around her the magnificence of her attire, the pro fusion of her jewels, the half-veiled fire of her dark, handsome eyes, indicated to his keen perceptions not only a vain, shallow nature, but a something inde finable which awakened his distrust, and made him resolve to shield his guileless one from her influence, how-ever kind her intentions might ap-

Many presents of rare fruits and deconfections, with sweet mes-which could not be declined without offence, found their way from Laodice to the little blind girl at the villa, and at last, self-invited, she came in person to seek a better acquaintance her, secure from the repulse of a cold reception; for she chose her opportunity for the visit at a time when she knew that Nemesius would be ab-sent on duty, and there would be no danger of her being surprised by his unexpected appearance, — her plan being to win the affection of his child without offending his austere sense of propriety.

an absence of several days, Nemesius found himself at liberty to spend an afternoon at his home on the Aventine. The first joyous welcome and fond embraces over, little Claudia, as usual, began to tell him how she had spent her time, and all that had hap-pened during the interval of his ab-The most important events ere, of course, the three visits of the strange lady, who brought me flowers, and said many things to me that sounded kind, and tried to caress me; but I ran from her!"

Zilla ; but Zilla, not having heard her knew, and while a flush of displeasure darkened his face, he only said :

"She is kind to come so far to see such a lonely little one as my Clau-

dia."
"I am not lonely!" exclaimed the child, with a flush of angry emotion; and I do not wish her to come again. I hate her! She made me shiver all when she touched me.'

"I can not forbid her visits, my child," he said, soothingly. "If she is the one I think, she is not only a beautiful lady, but a relative of the Emperor, against whom it would be rude to clos my doors. Do not be unreasonable little one, when one means only kindness to thee; for my sake do not show thy aversion, but try to be more ami-able should she come again." "For thy sake?—yes, to please thee I will be more amiable," the child an-

swered, hesitatingly.

The man's heart was troubled within

him ; he did not wish his child's guile less nature to be ruffled by a knowledge of evil, or her trust in human nature to be rudely disturbed; he had, therefore, suppressed all that he felt, but resolved the same time to confide such in ns to Zilla and Symphronius as would prevent a continuance of the in-tercourse which he thought best should cease. Then he tenderly kissed the sweet face pleadingly lifted towards his; he was satisfied that her instinct of aversion would be her best preservative, in case his precautions should fail and she be again brought in contact with her unwelcome and self-invited guest. But underlying all, there was in his mind a secret premonition of the evil this woman was capable of towards any one who might incur her dislike or thwart her designs, which gave him many an anxious thought in the night of unrest that followed; and although he tried to persuade himself that he was mistaken and judged her unfairly, was mistaken and juuged her untarry, he resolved to be on his guard. Naturally unsuspicious, his impressions had greater weight, and he found it im-possible to shake them off even when the bright golden sunshine of an un-

clouded sky, streaming through the vines that shaded his window, told him

his affection had now grown to be the overmastering sentiment of his being, and she the one object before which all others were dwarfed and unreal. When with her, he allowed no hand but his own to guide and serve her; together, the measure of their content was full separated, each felt as if something had gone out of his or her life ; she was the sunshine, the music, the sweet pain and precious jewel of his existence, and their hearts were knit together by ties stronger than death. He had but me wish, one hope for her and for him-elf, which haunted him day and night as well in the deep stillness of the silent hours as through all the turmoil and excitement of his daily life-like a low, persistent threnody attuned to the outery of his heart: "Oh, that my outery of his heart ; child could see !'

And he continued to pour out his gold with lavish hand for the renewal of burnt-offerings on the altars of Rome, for special intercessions to his Rome, for special intercessions to his deaf gods, for superstitions rites in the Laodice, who would not be innermost sanctuaries of the temples pulsed, although her advances he deaf gods, for superstitious rites in the innermost sanctuaries of the temples by augurs and priests, for mysterious incantations and choral hymns by the Vestals as they circled in solemn measure around the sacred fire upon their shrines,—all, all was done, and the cost not counted, that her blind eyes might be opened; and, although of no avail, his loyal heart did not for a moment distrust the power of the gods—he only thought that through ome faults of his own they had refused to be propitious. What, then, was required to appease their anger? could not tell; for had he not done everything except sacrifice his own life? And how willing he was to do even that, on the least hope that it would avail, his own heart attested.

Stung by this last disappointment of his hopes, frustrated, and almost des-pairing, the Jew healer of whom Fabian had told him was for the time forgotten, until one day, awakened by the natural process of reaction from his gloomy despondency, Nemesius suddenly recollected all that he had heard from Fabian ed all that he had heard from Fabian about his wonderful skill. Again a glimmer of hope shone as if from afar, yet within reach, and he determined to seek him forthwith, and test his skill. But where was he? Fabian Caecilius had told him, shortly after the Emperor's visit to the villa, that the Jew had returned to Borne, but since that had returned to Rome; but since that occasion weeks had elapsed, and he had

seen neither one nor the other.
Obeying the impulse, Nemesius went direct to Fabian's palace, and was informed by the porter that his master had been suddenly called to Neapol's on some urgent affair. Not satisfied with such meagre information, he directed the man to summon steward, who promptly appeared, bowing obsequiously, and with deprecatory grimace, to learn his will. But when questioned, he could only repeat the fact as stated by the porter, with the additional information that his master additional information had named no time for his Nemesius was about to leave the house when the words. "But there's a letter, oble sir, perhaps for you," his steps, and, confronting the steward,

he said:
"Where is the letter? Fetch it here, that I may see if it is addressed

There was authority in his air and tone, which suggested to aind that he had possibly got himsel into difficulties by his negligence; and he quickly returned with the missive, which Nemesius at a glance saw directed to himself.
"Why was this not sent to me imme-

diately?" he demanded. "The name upon it is plainly written, and there are none in Rome to whom it is un-known, so there is no excuse for its de-

tention. "None, noble sir; at the very moment you summoned me, it was in the hands of a messenger, who had orders to place it in your illustrious Who was the lady?" he asked hands. The delay was owing altogether and what did she do but put it under a little silver statue of Prosperity, that stands on my master's table, to keep it from blowing out of the window, while she gathered up his things that he left strewn over everything; and by the time she got through, she couldn't retime she got through, and can be a member where she put it, and has had the whole house in a stir searching for it; and it was only about an hour ago on my veracity, noble sir!—that it was found. And I hope I shall not be blamed for the misdoings of an old woman, who has no merit to boast of except having nursed my master's noble mother; and he is that soft-hearted about her that if she burnt the house down over his head, he'd not even give her a frown. Will the illustrious cap-tain be pleased to walk into the atrium, this scorching heat, while he reads the letter and refreshes himself?

Nemesius stood listening to the voluable stream of words without seeking to interrupt it; and although inwardly fuming, his countenance, as usual, showed no trace of his irritation, and showed no trace of his irritation, and he followed the stewart through the vestibule into the atrium, preferring to be alone when he read Fabian's letter. Here the delicious shade, the fragrant air, and the soft play of the fountain, brought instant and soothing refresh ment; and, throwing himself upon a couch, he snapped the silk cords and couch, he snapped the silk cords and seal of the letter with almost feverish haste to get at the contents. It was only a few hastily-scribbled lines, after all, that met his eye:

"The Jew has again flitted from Rome. May Cerberus devour him! I go to Neapolis in great haste, but, unless the Fates decree otherwise, I shall be back within ten days. "FABIAN."

Nemesius crumpled the scrap of papy rus in his hand, swallowed a draught of the cooled wine brought for his refreshmeut, and, drawing his toga around him, went away with a heavy heart to occupy himself with duties which, although revolting to his noble instincts, were, according to his lights, imperahim as a loyal Roman and high official of the imperial Government.

As time speed on, nearer and more dear became his blind child to the strong, noble heart of Nemesius, until

persecution against the Christians. One day there was a special entertainment at the imperial palace in honor of Valerian's birthday, at which all the most illustrious, beautiful, and distinguished persons who composed Roman society were present. Among these was a noble matron, whose personal charms were only surpassed by her virtues and the dignity of her character. Her husband was a high official of ter. Her husband was a high official of the Empire, and they had two sons, beautiful striplings, who both gave promise of a distinguished future. She was a daughter of the Ancinii, a family which had always ranked high amon he old patrician houses of the Empire. On this occasion the noble lady ap-

peared richly attired, as became

state, but also modestly, and was as usual the centre of all that was

usual the centre of all that best worth knowing in the est circles of Rome. Among the who aspired to her friendship Among those thronged around her ee, who would not be tofore had been civilly but coldly received. The apartments being over-crowded, the heat, combined with the erowded, the heat, combined who the stifling perfume of flowers with which they were profusely decorated, became insupportable, and the beautiful matron Sabina fainted in the arms of her friends, who bore her to a couch, and were zealous in their efforts to restore her; none being more so than Laodice who, kneeling beside her, unclasped, whe jewelled cincture around her waist and was removing the folds of spangled Syrian gauze from her throat and when a large ruby, a single stone set in gold of Etrurian workmanship which was suspended from her neck by which was suspended from her neck by a long string of fine pearls, fell out in full view. (Roman ladies of rank who were secretly Christians wore gems on which were cut the image of the Rewhich were cut the image of the Re-deemer, or that of His sinless Mother. Very small images of both, in silver and

The size and splendor of the gleaming under a strong light before their eyes, attracted the attention of the group around Sabina, especially of Laodice, whose passion for precious stones was so inordinate that, involuntarily, she lifted the ornament in her long white fingers, and holding it up to the light, scanned the carving upon it, then, with a ray of horror, threw it from her as if it had been an asp. Another, moved by curiosity, examined it, and saw represented on the face of the ruby, in fine, skillfully cut lines, the "image of Him who was crucified," and it was known by this sign that she image of Him who wore it was a Christian. was instantly reported to Valerian, who purple with rage, approached the noble lady just as she recovered conscious

gold, were also worn concealed on the

"What means this, woman roared, almost inarticulate with fury, as he held the gem dangling on the string of pearls before her eyes.

She gazed upon the blood-red gleam ing object for an instant, while a strange smile irradiated her features; then, rising and fixing her calm eyes e answered aloud, so that all might hear:

'It means that I am a Christian!" It was but a short distance from this cene of imperial splendor to the torure-chamber, and not far thence to the the rible dungeons of the Tullion, to which her broken body, still palpitating with life, was a few hours later onveyed. In one of them twenty feet elow the surface of the earth, shut in by immense walls reeking with noisome nildews, and closed overhead by vaulted roof of stone, through which no ray of light could penetrate, no breath of air come to sweeten the foul smells arising from the great sewer underneath, that drained off the Mamertine, of which it was part—wet, cold, dark, and filled with creeping things, this noble matron, delicately nurtured from her cradle, orders to place it in young altogether hands. The delay was owing altogether to my master's having charged old Bianca—a perfect marplot, believe me Bianca—a perfect marplot, believe me ful and luxurious, was consigned to perish, cut off from every dearest perish, cut off from every dearest perish, cut off from every dearest perish. fession of Jesus Christ.

On the same day the palace of Sabina was surrounded by soldiers, and searched. Her husband and sons, bewas surrounded ing absent from home, were ignorant of what had occurred, and all that awaited their return. The quest of the perse-cutors was rewarded by a confirmation of the fact they had come to ascertain What else did it mean but that the entire family were Christians, when the intruders found upon the shrines, in place of the Penates who had so long reigned there, small figures in silver and gold representing Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mother, and the Apostles? What more evident proof was neces sary? On being arrested under their own roof, where the soldiers were in ambush awaiting their arrival, the heroes of Christ replied to the accusa-tion against them by declaring themselves Christians, and glorying in their confession. The trial was made short by their resolute firmness: they were by their resolute firmless: they were tortured, cajoled, bribed, tortured again, and finally condemned to die. They were sentenced to be turned into the arena with tigers from India, and when the hour came the Flavian Amphitheatre was packed.

The circumstances, and the high rank The circumstances, and the high rank of the victims, made the present occasion more notable than any which had preceded it. The Emperor and his court, occupying their usual conspension court, occupying their usual conspicu-ous place under gold-broidered and gold-fringed canopies, presented an array of imperial splendor that dazzled the multitude. The appearance of the victims in the arena, in short white tunics, girdled about the waist by a cord—handsome, of noble bearing, full of dignified courage and high resolve, was greeted with a savage roar, with outcries and yells from the tens of thousands who were present to enjoy the spectacle, and who were hushed to a breathless silence only when the iron that separated the cages of the wild beasts from the arena was thrown open, and, through the bars that still withheld them, the tigers were seen withheld them, the tigers were seen ramping and raging about the narrow that confined them, while the space that confined them, while the sound of their savage growls filled the

At length—how long it seemed to hose who thirsted for blood! how long to those who awaited the moment of eternal deliverance and triumph!—the reaking bars were drawn aside, the gers bounded into the arena, and, after making a short circle around the wide-open space in which they so suddenly found themselves, their lithe, sinuous forms undulating with wondrous grace as they moved, they suddenly halted, crouched uttering low, savage growls, their eyes gleaming like scintillating flames, their red tongues lapping their white-fanged aws, and their tails swaying slowly and fro. The delay was but for a mo-ment: then followed the deadly spring. which buried their teeth and sharp iron claws in the unresisting flesh of the noble Christians, which had been set as banquet before them.

hanquet before them.

How it happened—whether the people ere suddenly and mysteriously touched by some electric force of humanity which revolted at so cruel and unequa humanity contest, or experienced for the ment the natural impulse of man against beast, which made them involntarily take sides with the men who vere being rent and torn by the tigers before their eyes; or whether they were glutted with blood, and beginning to sicken at the sight of such horrors r whether it was given as a sign and a warning to the imperial tyrant whose vile heart gloated over the inhuman spectacle—none may say: but all at once, by a sudden, simultaneous move-ment, the great multitude, who but a few moments before were ravening for blood, sprang to their feet, their hands thumbs turned down (this praise sign expressed the will of the audience that the cruelties of the arena should cease) uttering roars that made the canvas roof of the Amphitheatre rise and strain its fastenings, as if a hurr cane raged under it. But Valerian, enraged nearly to frenzy, turning leaf ear to the voice of the people and a blind eye to their down-turned thumbs signalled to the guards below that the struggle should continue to the death as it did-no, not to death, except that of the body, but unto a glorious and eternal life, whose joys it had a entered into the heart of man even conceive! And so, not with despair ing cries and moans of bitter pain, but with loud, exulting words of praise the husband and sons of the noble Roman matron Sabina glorified their confession of Christ, and sealed their

testimony with their blood. Nothing that had yet happened ha Nothing that had yet happened had so infuriated Valerian as the late demonstration of the people in the Flavian Amphitheatre. Was it a sign that the new false system was infecting the populace? In his secret soul he was afraid, and knew not whom to trust, since some even of his own household. nd other whom he had most h and confided in, had abandoned the old sacred traditions of which cast dishonor on the gods and threatened a disruption of the Empire. His hatred of the Christian increased tenfold; he wished, with Nero, that collectively they had but and head, that he might destroy them and head, that he might destroy them by a single blow. Then he remembered that they had a chief bishop, their Pontifex Maximus, whom they claimed as their head—Pope he was called—one head.—Pope he was called—one head. as their near the state of the that this Stephen should be destroyed, and made a signal example of, to strike greater terror into the hearts of his followers. He would set a price on his head, and when he was put to death he would employ every engine of power at his command to root out and extermin-

ate the abhorred sect. To rout great armies and destroy kingdoms were the achievements most gloried in by imperial Rome, the subjugation of nations her pastime; but these arrogant heathen did not know that as long as time endured, the Pope, the head of the despised Christian Church, would survive all that the ers and principalities. hell itself, could do for his destruction.
They believed the story of the phoenix,
but failed to read the mysterious significance of the symbol.

It is recorded that after the long and farious persecution under Maxentius associates in power, the former and his a boasted that at last Christian exterminated, and that ere the Christianity wa boasted that at another day he would destroy the Pope, who had hitherto escaped the vigilant search of his soldiers, but whose place of concealment they had just discovered. This was on the eve of a great and decisive battle, on the fortunes of which he would win or lose all. Far into the night he threw himself upon his couch to snatch an hour's sleep, after having arranged with his generals all the military minutice of his plans for the follow-ing day, when word came to him that the Pope was slain. "The gods are pro-Pope was slain. "The gods are pitious!" he doubtless exclaimed, accepting the news as a sign of their avor, while a serene consciousness stole over him of having nothing more to dread from that source, he fell asleep But when he marched at day-dawn accompanied by a splendid army in all the pomp and panoply of war, the in-vincible Roman eagles overhead, a messenger breathless with haste brought nim the tidings that there was still Pope, one having been elected as the other drew his last breath! Elected? By whom? The Christians, but By whom? The Christians, and the Pope were not all destroyed, and the Pope were not all destroyed, bronzed countries. lived! The Emperor's tenance grew pallid, his haughty spirit quailed within him; for that noment realized that he had been contending with a mightier power than his own, and his guilty soul accepted the sad tidings as an omen of defeat—an omen which was verified by the utter rout and rain of his army before the day closed. (Because certain historical events are so well known to the merest yros in learning as to have become almost commonplace, it is no reason why they should be omitted in a narrative of the times in which they happened, when needed to illustrate an idea.)

Leaving Valerian to vent his fury against the Christians, by issuing an edict against the holy Pope Stephen, and approving stratagems for his arrest, which were so well planned that

his escape from their toils seemed impossible, we resume the thread of the arrative.

One day, as he was mounting his One day, as he was mounting his horse near the Forum, Nemesius heard a gay and familar voice behind him, and, turning his head as he vaulted in-to the saddle, saw Fabian Caecilius spring from his chariot, and, with graceful wave of his hand, come towards him, his short curly locks bare, as was the Roman fashion, his fine white lamb's-wool toga gracefully disposed over his rich attire, and his count ance wearning its accustomed bland expression of amiable cynicism. There as the usual crowd on the spot ; much hurrying of those who were full of business, and loitering of idlers, who were there either for amusement or as spies; and the meeting of the gay patrician with the illustrious commander did not fail to attract attention, both of them being well known by sight to the

I salute thee, Nemesius! Accept my embrace on trust, unless thou wouldst prefer my spring up behind thee, or thou dismount for it—only it is not worth the trouble," he said, laughing lightly, while he drew as near as he could without getting his feet

inder the horse's hoofs.

"Hast been taking a drive with Phaeton, and been dropped out of the clouds?" returned Nemesius, with a grim smile. "Per Fidius! one never grim smile. "Per Fidius! one never knows whether thou art here, or

"Here I am, at least for the presnt," was the good natured reply.
But hold! what in the name of Ethon is the matter with this bit? Thy grooms deserve the rack for such care-lessness. See what they have done!" Fabian had suddenly seized the bridle, and drawn the horse's head around. Nemesius leaned over to see what mischief had been done, brought his face near that of Fabian, who was still fumbling with the bit at the expense of his jewelled fingers, which were bespattered with froth, the

spirited animal resenting his familiari "It is nothing at all," he said, in the lowest tone; "I only wanted to tell thee, without its being noticed or overheard, that the Jew is back. He has been to Capua. Expect him to morrow. The stones have ears—the very air itself. Gods! what times to There, it is all right now ! he said aloud, as he relinquished the bridle with which he had been trifling.

"Thanks, Fabian ; do not disappoint me, for my last hope hangs upon him, whispered Nemesius, whose hopes wer once more rekindled.

"I would commend thee, Achates, to be moderate in that respect. The Fates hold the threads and my experience has taught me that he who hopes the less gets the more. Now farewell, my Nemesius! I am on my way to visit the fair Laodice, whose ells have not yet, I fear, subdued thy bdurate heart. Afterwards, lest thou shouldst deem me altogether frivolous, am going the rounds of the porticoes to try and discover if the philosopher have yet found an antidote for this miserable existence, the mortal necess sities of which render life unendurable learn that some letters of Seneca have just been found in one of the confiscated palaces—original, it is said—and as his life was not of a piece with the austere morals of his pen, I may get from them a hint of what I seek.'

Nemesius laughed. Fabian's affecta-Nemesius laugued. Fabian's allecta-tions always amused him, for he knew how keenly he sought and enjoyed the sensuous pleasures of life, and that he was at heart a perfect Sybarite. Then quick farewell was exchanged, and

they separated. With the Emperor's permission, Ne-

with the Emperor's permission, Nemesius spent the following day at his villa. That morning when Claudia, half-awake, called Zilla, a soft kiss upon her rosy mouth and his voice told who was there waiting beside her couch until she should stir from her slumbers. She was soon in readiness rant, dewy gardens, loitering here and there beside the fountains, pausing in the shaded alleys to listen to the clear, for a stroll with him weet warblings of thrushes and night-Ingales; then to the dove-cote to feed er white-winged pets, and laugh delightedly when they fluttered caress-ingly to her shoulder, some alighting on her golden head, and others on her outstretched hand,—a group symbolizing Innocence fairer than sculptor had ever wrought, or Nemesius ever imagined, and which never faded from his memory. Then back to the cool atrium, to the light morning repast awaiting them, where, after pouring the customary libation as a thank-offering in honor of the gods, they partook of the meal with appetites to which the sweet morning had given healthful zest.

While the moments sped joyously on, the happiness of Nemesius was tempered by forebodings and expectation. Were his hopes to be realized, or forever crushed? Would the Jew appear? He knew that his thinking more vould not alter or change matters in the least, but only unfit him for the issue, whatever it might be; so restraining his impatience and dread, he straining his impatience and dread, he drew a roll of papprus from his bosom, and began to read to his little Claudia the fables of one Esop, which had just appeared in Rome. Enchanted, she eaned against his shoulder, listening to every word, and keenly appreciating the moral so wittily conveyed through the medium of beasts and birds, as well as of men. While they were thus engaged, Symphronius appeared, to announce the arrival of "an old man, the arrival of nounce who waits without, with samples wine, and insists on seeing the master of the villa."
"It is he of whom I spoke some

ime ago," answered Bring him hither." Nemesius.

"I beg my noble master to be care-ful of wines at hazards from irresponsible persons," replied Symphronius, in a tone of remonstrance. "My kinsman, Fabian Cæcilius, re-

nds him to me : but be assured my faithful Symphronius, that no wine shall go into my vaults without thy approval; for I put thy skill as a taster and judge before that of the world," said Nemesius; upon which

the old steward, well pleased, bowed his thanks, and went away to bring the stranger.
"Do not be frightened, my timid

dove, when this man enters; he comes by my request, and I trust him. But perhaps thou wouldst prefer to go to Zilla for a little while?" said Nemesius, an imperceptible tremor in his voice. his brave heart strained to the utmost

on the issue of this last effort to give sight to his child.

"No! no! I would not leave thee for one single moment of this precious day; for when shall I have thee all to myself again? Let the old man-ten old men, if thou wilt-come: I am not afraid—here!" she exclaimed, with impetuous fondness, as she clung closes to him, his arm around her.

Symphronius now appeared, conducting a man who, but for his bowed shoulders, would have been of stately height. He was clad in dark, flowing segments and his head, which he will be head. garments, and his head, which overed on entering, was white; his features were cast in a noble m his large black eyes, while full of intelligence, had yet a furtive expres sion, as if ever on the outlook for den danger; and his hands, half con-cealed by the folds of his wide sleeves, were long and shapely. Across his forehead, stretched an oblique scar, forehead, stretched an oblique s which, however, did not impair dignity of his countenance. girdle hung several straw-covered flasks, which contained samples of rare rines. He made a low obeisance to Nemesius, who returned a gracious salutation.

Thy name ?" he asked.

"Thy name?" he assed.
"Eleazer ben Asa, my lord," replied
the Jew, in a low but distinct voice.
"Thou art most welcome," said
Nemesius, who then inquired as to the quality of his wines, their country, vintage, and age, with other question familiar to epicures. The old was summoned, who brought small crystal cups as thin and transparent as air, and the samples were tasted, and

found satisfactory. " But this surpasses all !" mesius, tasting some which he poured from the last flask; "it is worth an from the last mask; "It is worth an aureus a drop. Anoint thy lips with this nectar, Symphronius," he added, passing the cup to him; "and leave the merchant with me to settle terms. I have no wines to equal these samples take the flasks with thee, and try them

all."
The steward, jealous of the reputation of his wine-cellar, put up his underlip, gave one or two quick nods intimating that the assertion was doubtful, and bore the flasks and cups to his own sunny apartment, where after subject-ing them to the most critical and approved tests, he was obliged to acknow ledge himself vanquished-which some. what lowered his proud conceit.

In the meantime, this is what was passing in the atrium. As soon as the steward had left them (too well trained to return unless summoned) said, in kindly, courteous tones :

" Be seated, I pray thee, Ben Asa." But the Jew, who seemed not to hear him, was standing as if spellbound, his piercing gaze fixed on the blind child, whose head rested against her father's shoulder, her beautiful, wide-open eyes staring blankly. Some memory, that brought with it a sharp and cruel pang, swept through the man's heart, which turned his face like marble, and almost stifled his breath; but it was only for a moment; for he had been taught by fiery trials to hold his emotions control, and appear as impassive as if he had no right to human passions. Presently, as if starting from a dream,

"I am at thy service, illustrious sir;

may I proceed?"
"At once," answered Nemesius, wondering if the Jew were not some

dreamy visionary.

"I have brought a pretty toy for thee, fair child," he said, gently, as he drew a small box from his bosom.
"May I offer it, noble sir? It was fashioned by a skilful artist in Memphis, when Egypt was in he when Egypt was in her giory, and mine by inheritance. It is very old, but it will please her, I think." Our friend offers thee a pretty gift,

my Claudia; what sayest thou?

Nemesius.
"His voice is kind and true: I like him. But why give me a thing prizes himself?" she asked.

"It is thine, fair child; make me happy by accepting it," said Ben Asa; then murmured in his native tongue: It was hers who was so like thee; thought, when I looked upon thee, that she had come back to me from the

While these inarticulate words escaped his lips, he had produced a small key, with which he wound up some fine mechanism inside the box, the lid of which suddenly opened, and a beautiful bird, its wings half open, sprang out, and, perching upon it, poured out the most transporting notes Claudia's delight was unspeakable;

she could not be persuaded that it was not a living bird; she touched it daintily with the tips of her fingers; she telt its eyes, its open bill and the vibra-tions of its body, as the fine mechanism forced the wild trills and soft warblings through its throat. While she listened, her eyes distended with delight, the Jew suddenly flashed from a small, strong hand-mirror a sharp ray of sunlight full into her darkened but she neither blenched nor winked; they might have been of stone, so im pervious were they to any impression. The bird sang on, she all intent, and Ben Asa produced a magnifying glass of great power, and, leaning nearer to her, scanned her eyes through it, Nemesius watching every moveme as if life or death hung on the fat.

"Just a nearer scutiny, and I shall e more sure," murgured the Jew. be more sure," muraured the Jew. "May I look into thy eyes, sweet child? may I touch them very lightly?

will not harm thee."
Claudia turned her face quickly towards her father; her lips quivered, vague fright distressed her; she could not understand why this stranger should

wish to touch her eyes.
"Thou wilt consent, my child? I wish it, and thou lovest me too well to

refuse me so sma wered to her mute The bird was song; the child in around her, and awakened any s like: on the cont accents were so every one who a onlsion o ertainly no rep impression of parand submission. "I am not af father's hand to what thou wilt, do not hurt ther sharp pain,

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them."
"Turn her fa said Ben Asa, being tenderly gentle touch to can the beautil powerful crysta maining perfection maining perfect maining per he had ascertai as he opened a

touched her ex perfume around eyes, and how art very kind she said, holdi with sweet co held it for a n then bent dow

lips. an undertone now to Zilla. the wonderfu Nemesius, ris lew words in

here, then I v She is dearly." The bird child," was t clapping her never thank Oh, when I ing to the she answere with the pre was led away "God of

with a burn seemed to q

flow; "it is face of my or breast of he the Sepulch refuge, whil knowing th and my litt been as ash earth has n loods have Approach mosaic floo rolled his resumed h ountenand

" What shall be th child," sai "She w hast skill " I wou she hath can give t can give One-''

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a Jew, a

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His Alm "The -the Ch sponded then wor 'Thy treasons to give

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