

She immediately soothed the suppliant with words of kindness, and gave her many assurances of favour and protection. She ministered to her wants, and sought by every gentle means to make her forget the ills which she endured. Every passing moment added to the interest she had awakened in the breast of Pulcheria, and the latter at length began to indulge secret thoughts of making her the wife of her brother.

Theodosius was at that period about twenty years of age. Although possessing few of the illustrious qualities of his grandfather, the elder Theodosius, he was a youth of virtuous heart and fine endowments of mind. His education had been carefully superintended by his older and more imperial-minded sister, Pulcheria, and she had also scrupulously instructed him in all the graces and dignities of royalty. He was deeply imbued with the sublime spirit of Christianity; then fast dispelling the errors of Paganism from the world, and all his acts were guided and governed by its divine precepts. His mildness, his benevolence, and his piety caused him to be respected and beloved by all who surrounded him.

A short time after her fair suppliant's arrival at the palace, Pulcheria sought an interview with Theodosius. In tones of pleasure she addressed him—

"My brother, I have this day seen and conversed with a young Grecian maiden, who is, in every respect, worthy to be the wife of the future Emperor of Rome. Listen while I describe a being such as fancy never pictured to your mind. Imagine a form of lofty stature and graceful proportions, invested with all the charms of youth, yet merging into the richer beauty of womanhood; a brow white and pure as the unsullied snow-flake, around which cluster locks of the softest texture and richest luxuriance; an eye that eloquently expresses every tender emotion of the soul, yet darts around such fires as flash from the noon-day sun; a cheek where the first rose of spring seems to have nestled long and loving, and tinted its resting-place with its own delicate and beautiful hue; a mouth that expresses at once sweetness and intelligence, whose voice is music and whose smile, like the rainbow of peace, can charm away all storms from the heart. Add to all these external graces, a mind lighted by nature with the divine fire of genius, and stored by education with the wisdom and learning of a sage; a heart where every generous and kindly emotion has found a home; a virtue that has been tried in the fiery ordeal of war, and

found pure as the shining ore that emerges from the severest test, without spot and without blemish; a character, in short, my brother, which, like the sunbeam of Heaven, must shed universal brightness and gladness around."

Theodosius had listened with looks of wondering delight to his sister's glowing description of the young Grecian, and when she closed, he said—

"You have, indeed, dear Pulcheria, described a wondrous being—such an one as only the brightest day-dreams have ever imaged to my soul, and my spirit pines to behold her. But if she is all you so brightly picture, she is surely capable of feeling an elevated and noble attachment—a love founded on pure and divine principles. Such a love I have long sighed to awaken—such a true and sincere affection have I ardently wished to inspire. But, surrounded by a host of admiring friends and followers who applaud and flatter and offer me the servile homage of interested hearts, I still vainly seek and pine for that unalloyed affection which all desire to obtain. The attentions, the praises, the adulations which are paid to my rank, are not to myself, are distasteful, and satisfy me not; as the drooping flower thirsts for the dew, my soul thirsts for the language of truth—the words of pure and sincere esteem. If I could woo this young maiden as a lowly and humble individual, might I not win a love that the favoured of fortune seldom possess, as that kings often sigh for in vain?"

Pulcheria approves her brother's sentiments, and assures him that his desire can be gratified. They arrange that he is to gaze unseen upon the fair stranger, and then, unknown, seek to win her love. Concealed behind the drapery in his sister's apartment, he awaits the entrance of Athenais, who has been summoned to the presence of Pulcheria. With what delight he beholds her radiant face, and listens to her every voice! His radiant imagination finds the original fairer, if possible, than the picture his sister had so vividly drawn, and his youthful heart beats rapidly beneath the touch of Love. He can scarcely await the fitting season for the interview, and longs impatiently for the appointed hour.

As he led a quiet and secluded life, it was easy for Theodosius to practice the innocence and deception which he had planned, and in a humble garb he was introduced to Athenais, one of the tutors of the young Emperor. Pulcheria daily devised excuses for an interview between the young pair, and by that means the lover had the necessary opportunities to carry